

Community Participation in Sustainable Tourism: A case study in Balige, Indonesia

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Abstract

The current tourism industry always incorporates the concept of sustainability. Escalating the economy of a region is achievable by employing sustainable tourism. Balige is a priority destination on the national development agenda. As tourism evolves, community participation may promote various aspects of sustainability. If the community actively participates in the tourism activities, Balige has a great opportunity to develop its economy. The purpose of this research is to determine what forms of community participation can be employed to develop the economy. This is a descriptive study that utilizes a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The research concludes with recommendations to develop the economy through community participation, helping to achieve sustainable tourism in Balige.

Keywords: Community Participation; Economic Aspect; Sustainable Tourism

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1.0 Introduction

The concept of sustainability is currently being used in developing tourism. Sustainable tourism can be defined as a form of tourism that can improve local people's quality of life, providing a high-quality experience for visitors while maintaining the quality of the environment. The tourism community is also progressing in a good direction because of the increasing income and improving quality of life (Ginting & Wahid, 2015). By participating in tourism, the community can obtain significant and balanced benefits from developing tourism in their area. It also results in a more positive attitude to tourism development and the conservation of local resources.

Balige is the capital of Toba Samosir Regency, a developing tourist area located on the shores of Lake Toba. There are various types of attractions in Balige. It is essential to involve the community and provide understanding regarding tourism so that the influence of tourism can be directly felt by the community (Suwanda, 2019). The poverty problem can also be overcome by developing the tourism aspect in Balige (Sinaga, 2019). Developing tourism will not be easy. One of which obstacles that need to be overcome is community participation (Asdhianna, 2019). Community participation in the development of an area has a significant influence, and the government must involve the community in making decisions about the area's development (Veronica, 2016). Balige current situation shows no

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significant development in their tourism. Community participation plays an important role in economic development and promotes the local community's economic development, a critical strategy for tourism development in emerging economies (Wang et al., 2021; Eyisi et al., 2021). This research aims to establish community participation which will develop the economic aspect of sustainable tourism in Balige.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism aims to improve the quality of life of local people by increasing benefits and minimizing the consequences found in a destination (Ginting & Halim, 2019). Based on previous research, one of the aspects that should be considered in developing sustainable tourism is the economic aspect (Wang et al., 2021; Eyisi et al., 2021; United Nations Environment Programme. Division of Technology, & Economics, 2005; Lu & Nepal, 2009; Franzoni, 2015).

Given the lack of industry and manufacturing in many of these countries, tourism can be one of the few ways to achieve this goal of improving living standards and lowering the rate of poverty (Bojanic, 2011). Sustainable economic growth will require society to create conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that stimulate the economy (Bramwell et al., 2017; Gössling, 2016; Lyon et al., 2017).

There are two main aspects of tourism development, the opportunities to increase the economic benefits of the existing tourism system and economic stability in which the tourism economy is more stable and less affected by financial instability (Gössling et al., 2015). Ensuring long-term economic operations, including stable employment opportunities and income for local people, is important in the economic aspect. It also includes contributing to solving the problem of poverty to create prosperity for the community (Gössling, 2016; Lyon et al., 2017). In conclusion, having employment opportunities, having income stability, and having a job is the aspect that should be considered in term of developing the economic aspect of sustainable tourism.

2.2 Community Participation

Effective community participation is believed to influence the achievement of a goal. A lack of community participation can affect the failure of these goals to be achieved (Sadiqi et al., 2017). Previous research suggests that the form of community participation is where (1) the community participates in management and (2) decision making (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018). In other research, forms of community participation are (1) providing a variety of attractions, (2) developing infrastructure and facilities, (3) joining a conservation group, and (4) participating in treating waste from tourism activities (Vitasurya, 2016). Other forms are (1) being involved in providing ideas, (2) the economy, (3) improving infrastructure, and (4) using various skills (Munawaroh, 2017). Other forms of community participation are (1) following and giving ideas in meeting forums, (2) doing art activities, and (3) building public facilities (Susilo, 2018).

There are four kinds of community participation in terms of developing the economic aspect of sustainable tourism. Those are participating in decision making, providing goods or services, developing infrastructures and facilities, and environmental conservation (Eyisi et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018; Vitasurya, 2016; Munawaroh, 2017; Susilo, 2018). Based on aspects of participating in decision making, people can feel a sense of respect for their lifestyle and cultural values (Eyisi et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018). Based on participating in providing goods or services, people who have a business can prosper their economy and have a higher quality of life (Munawaroh, 2017; Susilo, 2018). Based on participating in the development of infrastructures and facilities, the community can improve infrastructures and facilities that can attract tourists to visit the area (Eyisi et al., 2021; Vitasurya, 2016). Based on aspects of participating in environmental conservation, where environmental conservation is needed to keep the area sustainable. This is also done to avoid various kinds of pollution (Vitasurya, 2016).

3.0 Methodology



Fig. 1: Research methodology of community participation and economic aspect of sustainable tourism
(Source: Author)

The purpose of this research is to determine what forms of community participation can be employed to develop the economy through a case study from Balige. This is a descriptive study that utilizes a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The data analysis involves the correlation of economic aspects of sustainable

tourism with various forms of community participation. The broad literature employed in this research is synthesized from earlier case studies under the topics of economic improvement from community participation in tourism destinations. This research is focused on four locations in Balige that are often visited by tourists Balerong Onan Market, Lumban Bulbul Beach, DI Panjaitan Monument, and TB Silalahi Center Museum. Based on the results of a theoretical study, the chart below is used to find the connections between the economic aspects of sustainable tourism and community participation (Figure 1).

4.0 Findings

There are four forms of community participation: participating in decision making; participating in providing goods or services; participating in the development of infrastructure and facilities; and participating in environmental conservation. The research concludes with several recommendations to develop the economy through community participation, helping to achieve sustainable tourism in Balige.

4.1 Respondents

This study involves 100 respondents, divided into four study areas: the people living around the tourists Balerong Onan Market, Lumban Bulbul Beach, DI Panjaitan Monument, and TB Silalahi Center Museum by distributing 25 questionnaires at each tourist attraction location. In this research. In this study, interviews are conducted towards informants who were considered to have competence in the object under study.

4.2 Community Participation in Decision Making

Participating in decision making can increase public awareness about the benefits of tourism, and communities can play a role in implementing subjects (Eyisi et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017; Setini et al., 2021). In Balige, people who generally work in the tourism sector have their respective businesses. Communities can open their jobs with government permission. The community has also formed a Pokdarwis (Kelompok Sadar Wisata or Tourism Awareness Group), which creates enchantments towards the tourism area, improving security, order, and cleanliness. As the Department of Tourism and Culture noted:

"The village council is being held periodically. The government ask the community how to develop the tourism sector without disrespecting the local wisdom culture. In that opportunity, Pokdarwis is able to present their suggestions and input toward tourism development. (Hercules Butarbutar, Civil Service Employee of the Department of Tourism and Culture)"

The community will get economic benefits because of their direct participation in tourism development. Public opinion on their participation in decision making towards economic aspects of sustainable tourism can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Public Opinion on Participation in Decision Making

No.	Code	Statement	T	L	D	B	Mean
1.	P1	My participation in decision making to increase employment opportunities can develop sustainable tourism	3.7	4.1	3.2	3.9	3.72
2.	P2	My participation in decision making to have a stable income can develop sustainable tourism	3.8	3.4	3.8	4	3.75
3.	P3	My participation in decision making to have a job can develop sustainable tourism	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.72
Mean			3.73	3.7	3.56	3.93	3.73

T: TB Silalahi Center Museum; L: Lumban Bulbul Beach; D: DI Panjaitan Monument; B: Balerong Onan Market
(Source: Author)

Based on the data obtained from table 1, the community agreed that participating in decision making related to employment opportunities (3.72), stable income (3.75), and having a job (3.75) is a form of participation that can develop sustainable tourism. Of the four tourist objects in Balige, the people who live around Lumban Bulbul Beach (3.7) and DI Panjaitan Monument (3.56) have values that are below the average value of the four attractions (3.73).

4.3 Community Participation in Providing Goods or Services

Table 2. Public Opinion on Participation in Providing Goods or Services

No.	Code	Statement	T	L	D	B	Mean
1.	B1	My participation in providing goods or services to increase employment opportunities can develop sustainable tourism	3.6	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.67
2.	B2	My participation in providing goods or services to have a stable income can develop sustainable tourism	3.4	3.2	3.7	3.6	3.47
3.	B3	My participation in providing goods or services to have a job can develop sustainable tourism	3.8	3.2	3.9	3.6	3.62
Mean			3.6	3.33	3.8	3.63	3.59

T: TB Silalahi Center Museum; L: Lumban Bulbul Beach; D: DI Panjaitan Monument; B: Balerong Onan Market
(Source: Author)

Communities can contribute to support various tourism development activities, such selling food, souvenirs, and provide goods as a means of infrastructure for community service (Munawaroh, 2017). To ensure the sustainability of tourism, the community as perpetrators must always be involved to understand every aspect of the problem. Public opinion on its participation in providing goods or services towards economic aspects of sustainable tourism can be seen in table 2.

Based on data obtained from table 2, the community agreed that participating in providing goods or services in order to increase employment opportunities (3.67), having a stable income (3.47), and having a job (3.62) is a form of participation that can develop sustainable tourism. Of the four tourist objects in Balige, the people who live around Lumban Bulbul Beach (3.33) have values below the average value of the four attractions (3.59).

4.4 Community Participation in the Development of Infrastructure and Facilities

Developing and maintaining infrastructure and tourism support facilities are needed to develop tourism (Munawaroh, 2017; Setini et al., 2021). According to the Department of Tourism and Culture, the infrastructures and facilities in Balige are managed in the following manner:

"The infrastructure and facilities at the Balige tourism object are all built by the government with input from the community through deliberations. It is intended that development does not violate local culture and local wisdom. The community then manages the infrastructure and facilities that have been built. (Hercules Butarbutar, Civil Service Employee of the Department of Tourism and Culture)"

Public opinion on its participation in the development of infrastructure and facilities towards economic aspects of sustainable tourism can be seen in table 3.

Table 3. Public Opinion on Participation in Developing Infrastructures and Facilities

No.	Code	Statement	T	L	D	B	Mean
1.	I1	My participation in the development of infrastructure and facilities to increase employment opportunities can develop sustainable tourism	3.2	3.8	3	3.4	3.35
2.	I2	My participation in the development of infrastructure and facilities to have a stable income can develop sustainable tourism	3	3	3.2	3.4	3.15
3.	I3	My participation in the development of infrastructure and facilities to have a job can develop sustainable tourism	3.6	3.8	3.4	3.7	3.62
Mean			3.26	3.53	3.2	3.5	3.37

T: TB Silalahi Center Museum; L: Lumban Bulbul Beach; D: DI Panjaitan Monument; B: Balerong Onan Market

(Source: Author)

Based on data from table 3, the community agreed that participating in developing infrastructure and facilities to have a job (3.62) is a form of participation that can develop sustainable tourism. However, participating in developing infrastructure and facilities to increase employment opportunities (3.35) and have a stable income (3.15) falls into the neutral category. Of the four attractions in Balige, the people who live around the TB Silalahi Center Museum (3.26) and DI Panjaitan Monument (3.2) have values below the average value of the four attractions (3.37).

4.5 Community Participation in Environmental Conservation

Environmental conservation has a direct impact on all aspects of people's lives. Environmental conservation is to prevent, preserve, improve, restore, and repair (Kongpet et al., 2022). The community must participate in managing waste originating from tourism activities to avoid environmental pollution and keep the environment clean so that tourists will feel welcome (Vitasurya, 2016). People who live near the tourism area own a homestay business. The concept of homestay is where the community provides several rooms in their homes for rent. Public opinion on their participation in the environmental conservation of the economic aspects of sustainable tourism can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. Public Opinion on Participation in Environmental Conservation

No.	Code	Statement	T	L	D	B	Mean
1.	K1	My participation in environmental conservation to increase employment opportunities can develop sustainable tourism	3.4	3.6	2.9	3	3.22
2.	K2	My participation in environmental conservation to have a stable income can develop sustainable tourism	3.2	3.6	3.2	3.4	3.35
3.	K3	My participation in environmental conservation to have a job can develop sustainable tourism	3.6	4	3.4	3.6	3.65
Mean			3.4	3.73	3.16	3.33	3.4

T: TB Silalahi Center Museum; L: Lumban Bulbul Beach; D: DI Panjaitan Monument; B: Balerong Onan Market

(Source: Author)

Based on data from table 4, the community agreed that participating in nature conservation to have a job (3.65) is a form of participation that can develop sustainable tourism. However, participating in nature conservation to increase employment opportunities (3.22) and having a stable income (3.35) falls into the neutral category. Of the four attractions in Balige, the people who live around the DI Panjaitan Monument (3.16) and Balerong Onan Market (3.33) have values that are below the average value of the four attractions (3.4).

4.6 Public Opinion on Community Participation

According to the public opinion on each kind of community participation, participation in decision making has the highest point, followed by providing goods or services, with developing infrastructures and facilities being the last. The point shows how significant the public thinks of community participation in decision making with how most of the development in Balige needs to consider community so that it will not offend the community and the culture.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 Community Participation in Decision Making

Community participation in decision making in the economic field can create jobs in the tourism sector so that the community can earn more income (Munawaroh, 2017). As the Head of the Subdistrict noted:

"The ultimate goal of tourism is to create economic opportunities for the community. To achieve that goal, the community need to participate in the development, such as making the policy of nature and culture-based tourism to be able to understand every aspect of the problem and guarantee its sustainability. (Pantun Joshua Pardede, Balige Head of Subdistrict)"

In Balige, people participating in this economic aspect are fully responsible for work opportunities and income without government intervention. The community also has their stand in interfering in development that affects their culture. Therefore, participating in the community in making decisions related to employment opportunities, stable income, and having a job is expected to improve the economy in Balige and participate in developing sustainable tourism.

5.2 Community Participation in Providing Goods or Services

Providing services for the tourist generates income for the local people (Kuklina et al., 2021). The community must have a role and participation in managing or marketing tourism products to become a potential source for the region, which can improve the community's economic welfare (Munawaroh, 2017). Balige community's economy depends greatly on marketing its products or providing services. This also has been stated by the Department of Tourism and Culture:

"Providing goods or services which are all owned by the community is the activity that develops the community's economy the most. (Hercules Butarbutar, Civil Service Employee of the Department of Tourism and Culture)"

The Balige community has participated in providing goods and services related to economic aspects. This can be seen from the community's participation at Balerong Onan Market (figure 2) where people come to shop or sell crops and livestock.



Fig. 2: Balerong Onan Market
(Source: Author)

The community also provides goods or services at Lumban Bulbul Beach, where the community sells, provides water bikes, and rents out canoes and tires for tourist attractions, increasing local people's income. The community had the opportunity to open up employment, and the percentage of employed people continues to increase. Therefore, participating in the community by providing goods or services to increase employment opportunities, have a stable income, and have a job are expected to improve the economy in Balige and participate in developing sustainable tourism.

5.3 Community Participation in the Development of Infrastructures and Facilities

As shown in the following figures, the condition of facilities found at Lumban Bulbul Beach is sufficient (figure 3). Having neat and clean facilities is enough to attract more tourists (Rizal, 2021). Gazebo (a), toilet (b), and seating area (c) at Lumban Bulbul Beach are well-maintained and well-functioning.

On the contrary, the infrastructures at DI Panjaitan Monument need to be appropriately maintained (figure 4). As it shown on public opinion before, participation in development of infrastructures and facilities being in the last means that the community thinks that it show no significant effect to the economic development. The park is not maintained at all. Vandalism also can be seen on the wall of the monument platform (b). Next to it, the pond surrounding the monument (c) is also unkempt. The government and community must improve the facilities and infrastructures to attract more visitors. The Head of the Subdistrict then stated:

"It is important to form a sense of ownership of the facilities and infrastructures built in the vicinity to help the sustainability. (Pantun Joshua Pardede, Balige Head of Subdistrict)"

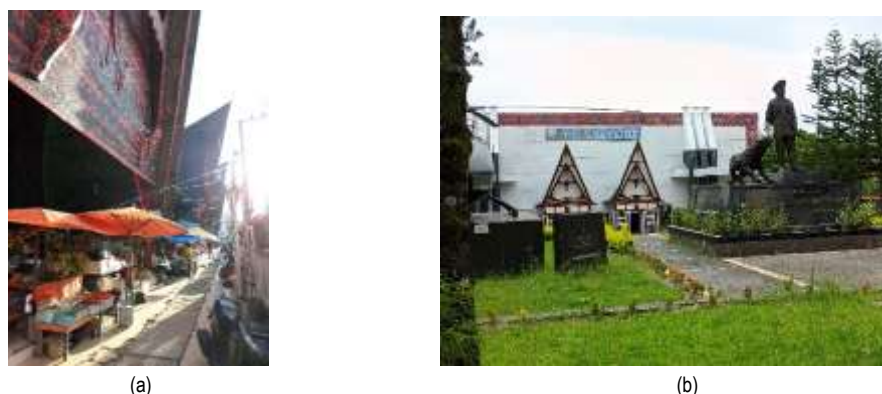


Fig. 4. Infrastructure at DI Panjaitan Monument: (a) Park; (b) Monument platform; (c) Pond surrounding the monument
(Source: Author)

Adequate facilities and infrastructure available in a tourist attraction will impact the high level of tourist visits, which leads to new job opportunities (Rizal, 2021). Balige region is still very dependent on its tax revenue, and only some comply with paying taxes. People also tend to avoid correctly reporting their land and buildings' sale and purchase price. If the revenue target is achieved, the infrastructure and facilities in Balige can develop. Therefore, participating in developing infrastructure and facilities to increase employment opportunities, have a stable income, and have quality jobs are expected to improve the economy in Balige and participate in developing sustainable tourism.

5.4 Community Participation in Environmental Conservation

The environmental conditions in Balige tourism objects (a), (b), (c) are quite clean and organized except for the DI Panjaitan Monument (d), which still unappealing and the air is also polluted because it is in the middle of the city which is often passed by motorized vehicles (figure 5).





(c)



(d)

Fig. 5. Environmental conditions in Balige: (a) Balerong Onan Market; (b) TB Silalahi Center Museum; (c) Lumban Bulbul Beach; (d) DI Panjaitan Monument

(Source: Author)

There have been many houses around the attractions in Balige that have been converted into homestays. This attracts tourists because they can have a place to stay while also enjoying the tourist attraction in Balige. Homestay business plays a role in developing the land as a tourism area that can develop the area's accommodation, giving the locals economic benefits (Damiasih, 2014; Chan et al., 2021). As the Department of Tourism and Culture noted:

"It is important to have a clean area to provide the best experience for tourists while staying at the homestays. By taking care of the environment surrounding the homestays area, more tourist is willing to choose to stay in homestays, which directly help the community's economic (Hercules Butarbutar, Civil Service Employee of the Department of Tourism and Culture)"

People who have diverted their residences as homestays participate in conserving the environment and improving economic aspects (Kongpet et al., 2022). The areas are being well maintained to be able to run the homestays business. Therefore, participating in nature conservation to increase employment opportunities, have a stable income, and have jobs are expected to improve the economy in Balige and participate in developing sustainable tourism.

6.0 Conclusion& Recommendations

The most effective form of community participation in developing sustainable tourism in Balige is providing goods or services. Providing goods or services has no interference from the government. Therefore, all the benefits are directed to the community based on their hard work. The community's profit depended on their sense of responsibility. The number on the table also support the effectiveness of community participation by providing goods or services. On the other hand, there are still areas for improvement in other forms of participation. Balige's income still depends on taxes, and only a few comply with paying taxes. Balige needs to engage the community to participate more so that the benefits achieved in the tourist attraction area in Balige can also continue to grow. This research is limited to the economic aspect of sustainable tourism so that further research regarding other aspect such as environment aspect and socio-culture aspect is needed to support the development of tourism in Balige.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This research contributes to the development of Balige as a sustainable tourism destination by examining on how Balige can improve their economic aspect of sustainable tourism and community participation.

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