

Women's Empowerment in The Super Premium Tourist Destination Area of Lake Toba, North Sumatera

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Abstract. Women's empowerment has been determined to be one of the goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The role of women in managing the tourism industry is considered important, because the skills inherited by the ancestors are mostly occupied by women. These skills are cultural treasures that are not owned by other tourist areas, so that they become the hallmark of a tourist area. The approach taken by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy is to empower women by encouraging women's MSMEs in North Sumatera and providing technical guidance on creative buying in Lake Toba. This study uses a qualitative method. The results of this study indicate that the government and women in North Sumatera have a similar view that women's empowerment can be carried out efficiently through women's MSMEs in the tourist area of the super-premium destination of Lake Toba, North Sumatera.

Keywords: Women's Empowerment; Tourism; Sustainable Economic Development

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the sectors that experienced a serious impact from the Covid-19 pandemic which was detected in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. The first case of Covid-19 in Indonesia was detected in March 2020. Since then, Tourism and the Creative Economy have Indonesia's mainstay sector is facing an existential threat from the impact of the global Covid-19 epidemic. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), since February 2020 the number of foreign tourists has decreased drastically, and the number continued to decline until its peak in April 2020 the number of foreign tourists was only 158.7 thousand tourists. The decline in the number of tourist visits was caused by the implementation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) policies in several regions, as well as several countries imposing international access closures (lockdowns) which had made the tourism industry slump.

The tourism industry is one of the world's major industries. The existence of the tourism industry is at the forefront of national and international policies. Tourism activities have a fundamental impact on economic growth and development through the creation of higher export revenues, resulting in a positive balance of payments (BOP) position.

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy noted that throughout 2019 with the number of foreign tourist arrivals reaching 16.2 people, they managed to add additional foreign exchange in the tourism sector by Rp. 10 trillion compared to the previous year, so

that the foreign exchange in the tourism sector in 2019 reached Rp. 280 trillion. The contribution of the tourism sector to national GDP also reached 4.8% and succeeded in absorbing up to 13 million workers.

The significant growth in the tourism sector from year to year has motivated the Advanced Indonesia Cabinet under the leadership of President Jokowi to initiate the development of five “New Bali” super-priority destinations, namely Lake Toba, Borobudur, Mandalika, Labuan Bajo, and Likupang. The idea of a super-priority destination aims to increase the contribution of the tourism sector to foreign exchange earnings. The government no longer pursues the volume of tourists but focuses on the quality of visiting tourists.

The tourism approach that puts forward narratives, creative content, living culture, and uses the power of culture to widely introduce tourist destinations is one way of introduction applied by Indonesian tourism. As one of the super-premium tourist destinations of Lake Toba in the province of North Sumatra, which has been named the largest lake in Southeast Asia and the second largest in the world, behind its splendor holds interesting storynomics tourism that can be developed, namely the legend of the formation of Lake Toba which is rarely known by tourists.

The tourism potential in North Sumatra Province comes from several panoramic views of natural beauty and cultural wealth that can be optimized into super premium tourist destinations. North Sumatra is ranked the 4th province with the largest population in Indonesia, which is 12.98 million people. The existence of the Lake Toba super premium tourist destination development program carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy can be used as an opportunity or momentum for the implementation of sustainable development in North Sumatra. However, in practice, sustainable development in Indonesia faces challenges from culture in society that is not fully in favor of gender equality.

The people of North Sumatra are known to adhere to a customary family system that regulates the flow of descent from the male side, namely the patrilineal system. However, in everyday life the patrilineal system is still equated with the patriarchal system or patriarchy. This causes the implementation of the patrilineal system theory to be inconsistent with the law of kinship and customary inheritance.

BPS data shows that in North Sumatra until 2021, the position of achieving the Human Development Index (HDI) for women at 69.08 points is still below the HDI for men at 76.14 points. Then, the Gender Development Index (GDI) in 2020 decreased by 0.14. The economy in North Sumatra is dominated by men, resulting in the practice of economic disparity, especially in the number of wages/salaries received by women, which is a real form of gender inequality which has implications for the per capita expenditure of women in North Sumatra.

Seeing the potential of traditional clothing weaving skills, traditional dance dancing skills, and cooking skills possessed by Batak women can be optimized to become an additional attraction for the super-premium tourist destination of Lake Toba. This potential is social capital to encourage the participation of women in North Sumatra to become entrepreneurs and to be involved in decision-making in the public sphere.

Empowerment has a multi-dimensional concept. Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long (2014) developed social exchange theory into three main dimension scales of empowerment, namely psychological, social, and political. Psychological empowerment is related to feelings of pride and self-esteem of local communities because they have unique cultural heritage and attractiveness assets (Abou-Shouk, Manna, & Elbaz (2021). Politically, women's empowerment is intended to help women live their lives with power, independence, and dignity at the individual, organizational, and social levels (Elshaer, Moustafa, Sobaih, Aliedan, & Azazz, 2021). Women's political empowerment aims to help women have opportunities,

have their voices heard, and leave a mark in society (Sundström, Paxton, Wang, & Lindberg, 2017). The fundamental area of realizing women's social empowerment is culture and social practice (Bayeh, 2016). Empowerment is a multi-field process that removes norms to gain full dominance in life freely.

The underrepresentation of women in the management of the tourism industry underlies researchers to focus on empowering women in the super premium tourist area of Lake Toba, North Sumatra.

2 Research Method

This research uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research methods emphasize more on aspects of a deeper understanding of a problem. The qualitative method was developed with five approaches, namely a phenomenological approach, an ethnographic approach, a grounded theory approach, a case study approach, and a narrative approach. Qualitative research methods are research for natural objects, so that researchers become the key instrument (Sugiyono, 2005). According to Moleong (2005), research with qualitative methods intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, views, motivations, actions, and so on holistically, explained descriptively.

The resource persons in this study are subjects who experience and are directly involved with the research problem.

3 Analysis

The application of the patrilineal kinship system adopted by the people in North Sumatra in its application is misinterpreted as a patriarchal or patriarchal system. This phenomenon causes men to dominate in all fields. Women in North Sumatra admit that they have the courage to express their opinion, but to make decisions women must wait for approval from the men. In North Sumatra, the Life Expectancy Rate of women is always higher than that of men. The life expectancy rate for women is 71.21 years, while men are 67.35 years. This means that women live 3.86 years longer than men. One of the components that affect women's life expectancy is reinforced by the fact that more women live and settle in North Sumatra. The high expectancy rate of women shows that empowerment must be carried out as a form of provision for the independence of women in North Sumatra in their old age.

Several women in North Sumatra claimed to have taken empowerment programs from the local government. They began to actively play a role in managing the tourism industry in the Lake Toba area, North Sumatra. The empowerment of women carried out by local governments is carried out with a labor-intensive program, so that the skills that have been inherited by the ancestors can be directed to become tourist attractions that have a selling value.

Efforts made by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy to encourage the super-premium tourist area of Lake Toba to encourage creative economy business by conducting technical guidance on creative buying of Lake Toba, which was carried out in Silalahi Village, Dairi Regency on February 22, 2021. Participation in this technical guidance not limited by gender, so the government strives that the trend of creative economy business can be occupied by women.

Most women in North Sumatra are currently engaged in trade, agriculture, and the clothing industry. Women's empowerment in North Sumatra is carried out by encouraging and developing the potential of women's Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the North Sumatra region. This is expected to advance the economy, women's independence, and attractiveness in the North Sumatra region.

The women in North Sumatra think that the government's policy that needs to be improved is to develop women's MSMEs in North Sumatra. The steps for developing MSMEs can be by making it easier for women in North Sumatra to take credit loans for business capital to be developed, holding training programs and technology guidance for women to encourage the development of creative economy businesses. The training expected by women in North Sumatra is to optimize the skills that have been inherited from their ancestors, so that women can manage the tourism industry and preserve the cultural wealth of the super-premium tourist area of Lake Toba, North Sumatra.

4 Conclusion

Empowerment of women with the tourism industry generates the potential for development and the increasing number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the super premium tourist area of Lake Toba. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and the local government of North Sumatra have carried out several women's empowerment programs and have been actively followed by women in North Sumatra. This shows that the development of the super-premium destination of Lake Toba will meet the goals of sustainable development.

This research is qualitative research that needs to be developed with an empirical approach. The results of this study also still need confirmation from further research that discusses women's empowerment with the tourism industry.

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