

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Evaluation Of Tourism Object Development Of Bukit Kandis In Central Bengkulu Regency

Yusuarsono¹⁾, Bando Amin C. Kader²⁾, Elisa Agustina³⁾

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the development of Bukit Kandis tourist destination located in Durian Demang Village, Central Bengkulu Regency. The evaluation focuses on three main aspects: infrastructure, socio-economic impact on the local community, and environmental-cultural sustainability. A qualitative descriptive method was applied, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation involving members of the tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) and surrounding residents. The findings reveal that the development of Bukit Kandis tourism site has had a positive effect on increasing local income and creating new employment opportunities. Economic activities such as food stalls, parking services, and recreational facility rentals have grown significantly. However, several challenges remain, including inadequate tourism service training, limited supporting infrastructure, and insufficient promotional efforts. Continuous support from the local government and multi-stakeholder collaboration is required to ensure the site's sustainability. The study concludes that community-based participatory management is the key to successful and sustainable rural tourism development.

Keyword: Tourism Object, Bukit Kandis, Development Evaluation, Community Empowerment, Sustainability.

Introduction

Tourism has developed into a strategic sector in national and regional development, not only as a driver of economic growth, but also as an instrument for community empowerment and preservation of the environment and local culture (Sunaryo, 2013). In the context of globalization and competition between regions, tourism potential based on natural resources and culture becomes a comparative advantage that must be managed sustainably. This management requires integration between development planning, community involvement, and the provision of adequate supporting infrastructure (Cooper et al., 2008). The change in development paradigm from top-down to bottom-up has opened up a wide space for community participation in the process of developing tourist destinations, especially in rural areas. Local governments are currently required not only to act as providers of facilities, but also as facilitators who are able to encourage multi-party collaboration in building community-based tourism. Within this framework, the development of tourist attractions must pay attention to aspects of active participation of local communities, local cultural values, and the preservation of the physical environment (Scheyvens, 1999). Central Bengkulu Regency is one of the areas in Bengkulu Province that has natural tourism potential that has not been optimally developed. One of these potentials is Bukit Kandis, located in Durian Demang Village. This area has geological characteristics in the form of interesting limestone formations and is suitable for development as a rock

climbing destination, educational tourism, and adventure-based ecotourism. The development of this tourist area has begun gradually with the support of the local government and local community groups that are members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis). However, like many other community-based tourism initiatives, the development of Bukit Kandis faces various challenges that require comprehensive evaluation. Normatively, the development of tourist attractions must meet the principle of sustainability, namely not only pursuing short-term economic benefits, but also ensuring ecological sustainability and socio-cultural integrity. In practice, many tourist destinations fail to develop due to weak integration between the dimensions of planning, community participation, and local institutional capacity (Yoeti, 1996). Therefore, it is important to examine the extent to which the development of Bukit Kandis has met these principles. Limited infrastructure such as road access, sanitation facilities, and other supporting facilities are still the main obstacles in increasing the tourist appeal of Bukit Kandis. In addition, community involvement in the planning and management of the area is considered suboptimal, both in terms of technical capacity, ownership of tourism assets, and direct economic benefits. Tourism promotion has also not been carried out strategically and still relies on informal activities and individual social media. The development of this tourism area, if not studied in depth, has the potential to cause further problems such as land use conflicts, environmental degradation, and alienation of local communities from tourism assets in their own areas. Therefore, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the development of the Bukit Kandis tourism area is important to determine the extent to which development interventions have been carried out in accordance with existing local needs, potentials, and values. Based on this background, this study was designed to answer the main question: To what extent has the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction in Central Bengkulu Regency been effective in terms of infrastructure, socio-economic impacts on local communities, and environmental and cultural

Universitas Dehasen Bengkulu

**) corresponding author*

Yusuarsono

Email: yusuarsono@unived.ac.id

sustainability? This problem formulation arises from the need to assess not only the physical output of development, but also the multidimensional processes and impacts of the development of the tourism area. The main objective of this study is to evaluate the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction by examining in depth three main aspects. First, an evaluation of the availability and quality of supporting infrastructure that is a basic prerequisite for the success of a tourist destination. Second, an analysis of the social and economic impacts on the surrounding community, especially in terms of job creation, local economic empowerment, and involvement in decision-making. Third, an assessment of environmental sustainability and preservation of local cultural values as part of the foundation of sustainable tourism development. The results of this study are expected to provide conceptual contributions in the study of regional tourism development as well as practical contributions for local governments and communities in formulating strategies for developing inclusive, sustainable, and local potential-based tourism objects. In addition, this study is expected to be an input in the formation of a rural tourism development evaluation model that is responsive to the local social and ecological context.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction in Central Bengkulu Regency. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for studying social phenomena contextually, and is able to capture reality from the perspective of local actors who are directly involved in the development process. This method allows researchers to present rich and detailed interpretive narratives regarding infrastructure, socio-economic impacts, and sustainability aspects related to tourism development (Creswell, 2013).

The study was conducted in Durian Demang Village, Karang Tinggi District, which is the main location of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction. The location was selected purposively based on considerations of local community involvement in development activities and management of the tourist area. Informants in the study consisted of members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), village officials, micro-business actors, and surrounding communities who were directly or indirectly affected by tourism activities. The determination of informants was carried out using a purposive sampling technique, namely selecting respondents based on the depth of information they had and their involvement in the issues being studied (Patton, 2002).

Data were collected through three main techniques, namely in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to obtain information on informants' experiences, perceptions, and evaluations of the development of Bukit Kandis. Observations were conducted to directly observe the condition of infrastructure, tourist activities, and social interaction patterns. Meanwhile, documentation studies were conducted on planning documents, Pokdarwis activity reports, and local media coverage. These three techniques complement each other to produce a complete and accurate picture.

Data validity was maintained through source and method triangulation techniques. Data from interviews were verified with observation results and official documents, and their consistency was tested by comparing information from various informants. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model from Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Researchers filtered relevant data, grouped them based on certain themes, then compiled interpretations inductively to answer the formulation of the research problem.

Through this approach, the study is expected to be able to describe the effectiveness of the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction from the perspective of local actors, as

well as identify challenges and opportunities in community-based tourism management. The method used also allows the disclosure of non-structural aspects such as motivation, perception, and social values that are often missed in quantitative approaches. Thus, the results of this study not only contribute to academic literature, but can also be a practical reference for the formulation of sustainable tourism development policies at the local level.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to evaluate the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction in Central Bengkulu Regency through three main aspects: supporting infrastructure, socio-economic impacts on local communities, and environmental and cultural sustainability. The results of the analysis show that although development has made a positive contribution to local dynamics, there are still a number of structural and substantial issues that need attention within the framework of sustainable tourism development. The first aspect that is the focus of the evaluation is tourism infrastructure. Field data shows that accessibility to the Bukit Kandis area is not yet fully adequate. The connecting road from the village center to the tourist location is mostly still rocky and unpaved, making it difficult for visitors to move around, especially during the rainy season. This infrastructure obstacle has a direct impact on the interest of visitors and the level of comfort of tourists. This condition is exacerbated by the absence of public facilities that support a complete tourist experience. Observations show that there are no public toilets, prayer facilities, tourist information posts, or adequate trash bins at the location. Facilities such as seating, shelters, and safety signs are also not yet available, so that tourist activities take place without the minimum service standards that should be applied in the management of tourist destinations (Gunn & Var, 2002). On the other hand, infrastructure development efforts are still highly dependent on sporadic local initiatives. Several simple facilities such as stalls, emergency parking lots, and gazebos were built independently by Pokdarwis members and local residents. However, the absence of systematic support from the local government in the form of budget allocations or technical assistance has caused development to be slow and unintegrated. Evaluation of the socio-economic impact aspect shows more progressive results. The existence of tourist attractions has created new economic opportunities for the surrounding community, especially in the form of culinary businesses, parking services, recreational equipment rentals, and sales of local products. This additional income has a direct impact on improving household welfare, although its contribution is not evenly distributed across all levels of society. Field findings show that local women and youth are starting to get involved in productive activities in the tourism sector, especially in processing snacks, serving visitors, and online promotions through social media. This involvement not only has an impact on the family economy, but also encourages social transformation in the form of increasing the participation of marginalized groups in village public spaces. However, the absence of regulations or mechanisms for the distribution of fair economic benefits has led to the potential for horizontal conflict among community groups. Some residents believe that the benefits are enjoyed more by certain groups, especially those who are members of Pokdarwis, while other communities have not received equal access. This condition reflects the need for more accountable and inclusive institutional governance. From a social perspective, tourism development has also created new dynamics in the village's social structure. Mutual cooperation activities, training, and coaching of Pokdarwis have strengthened social capital and formed networks between residents. However, this transformation has not fully taken root, given the limited deliberative forum for collective decision-making and the low level of tourism literacy in some communities. The third aspect is environmental and cultural sustainability, which is an important indicator in assessing the long-term development of a tourist destination. Ecologically, Bukit Kandis is a karst area

with biodiversity that needs to be protected. However, the absence of a zoning system, conservation signs, or reforestation program means that the potential for environmental damage remains high. Mild erosion on hiking trails and the accumulation of plastic waste are early signs of unmonitored ecological degradation. The ecological awareness of the community is still relatively low, as reflected in the minimal waste management and the absence of community-based environmental regulations. In fact, the sustainability of a destination is largely determined by community participation in maintaining the ecological integrity of the area (UNWTO, 2013). The lack of active involvement of village youth in conservation programs also strengthens concerns about the sustainability of environmental carrying capacity. In terms of culture, the study found that the people of Durian Demang Village still maintain a number of traditional values in social interactions and tourism services. Friendly attitudes, openness to guests, and the use of local languages in welcoming visitors reflect valuable local wisdom. However, there has been no systematic effort to make local culture part of a tourist attraction or educational product with economic value. The potential for developing culture-based tourism is still wide open, considering that the community has culinary traditions, handicrafts, and local narratives that can be packaged as part of an authentic tourism experience. Unfortunately, institutional unpreparedness and the absence of facilitation from related agencies are the main obstacles in developing structured culture-based tourism. Overall, the results of the study show that the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction is in the early stages which are promising but not yet structured. The contribution to the local economy is quite significant, but is still overshadowed by the issue of distribution of benefits and disparities in access. Meanwhile, aspects of infrastructure and sustainability still require serious intervention so that this area can develop as a viable and sustainable tourist destination.

These findings strengthen the view that tourism development in rural areas requires a cross-sectoral approach involving state actors, civil society, and market players in a collaborative manner. Without the presence of progressive public policies and participatory management systems, tourism development risks becoming exploitative and unsustainable. The implication of these results is the importance of formulating tourism development strategies that integrate technical planning with strengthening community social capacity. Local governments need to encourage community-based tourism governance that is not only responsive to economic potential, but also sensitive to local socio-ecological and cultural contexts.

Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction has made an initial contribution to strengthening the local economy and community participation, but still faces various obstacles in terms of infrastructure, institutional governance, and resource sustainability. This finding reflects the typical dynamics of rural tourism development that is in tension between local potential and structural limitations (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008).

From the infrastructure aspect, the physical condition of the tourist area is still at a basic stage and has not met the minimum service standards as stated by Gunn and Var (2002), who stated that accessibility, public facilities, and comfort are the main prerequisites in developing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. The limitations of access roads, sanitation facilities, and safety signs in Bukit Kandis are the main obstacles that reduce tourist appeal and hold back the growth in the number of visits. The lack of intervention from the local government in the form of budget allocation or technical assistance indicates weak institutional support for rural tourism infrastructure.

In the socio-economic dimension, tourism development has shown more positive results. The economic activities of residents, the involvement of women and youth, and the increase in micro-enterprises are indicators that tourism is able

to play a role as a driver of community-based local development (Scheyvens, 1999). However, the uneven distribution of economic benefits and the absence of a transparent profit-sharing system create the potential for social exclusion. This strengthens the argument that the success of tourism development is not only determined by the magnitude of economic benefits, but also by distributional justice and participatory governance (Sunaryo, 2013).

These results strengthen the importance of the community-based tourism (CBT) model, which emphasizes that local communities must be the main actors and beneficiaries of tourism activities (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). In the context of Bukit Kandis, the existence of Pokdarwis is a strategic institutional potential, but requires strengthening of institutional capacity, managerial assistance, and regulatory support so that it does not become exclusive or centralized in limited groups. Symbolic participation without substantial control will create the illusion of empowerment.

The aspects of environmental and cultural sustainability are still weak points in the development of Bukit Kandis. The results of the study showed that there was no conservation-based environmental management system, which is the main prerequisite in the concept of sustainable tourism according to UNWTO (2013). The potential for ecological damage such as erosion, waste, and pressure on endemic vegetation pose a serious threat if not immediately addressed through a mitigative approach and zoning-based management. In addition, the ecological awareness of the community and tourists is still low, reflecting the need for massive and sustainable environmental education.

In terms of culture, although local values such as friendliness and social solidarity are still maintained, there has been no integration of culture into tourism products. This indicates a weak exploration of cultural potential as a unique and sustainable tourism asset. In fact, culture-based tourism has a competitive advantage because it presents authentic experiences and strengthens local identity (Richards, 2007). The absence of cultural attractions such as art performances, traditional cuisine, or guides based on local narratives shows that there has been no synergy between cultural preservation and tourism development.

This context strengthens Scheyvens' (1999) findings that cultural empowerment is an important aspect in the development of community-based tourism. When culture is only a background, and not part of the tourism product, then social sustainability will be difficult to achieve. Tourism development should act as an instrument for revitalizing local culture, not just an economic instrument.

Overall, the research findings confirm that the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction is in a transitional stage between local initiatives and the need for more structured strategic planning. Initial success in socio-economic aspects needs to be supported by institutional reform, investment in basic infrastructure, and public policies that support a holistic and sustainable tourism management system. Without the integration of these three aspects, development risks stagnating and creating new inequalities at the local level. This discussion strengthens the conclusion that rural tourism development must be positioned as a multi-sector development strategy, involving infrastructure, social, economic, cultural, and environmental sectors simultaneously. A partial development model that only focuses on physical or economic aspects will result in development disparities that are difficult to restore in the future. Therefore, the development of Bukit Kandis requires a policy direction based on collaborative, inclusive, and sustainable principles.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the development of the Bukit Kandis tourist attraction has made a positive contribution to the social and economic dynamics of the Durian Demang Village community, but has not fully met the principles of sustainable tourism

development. There have been significant achievements in terms of increasing local economic activity, community participation, and the formation of Pokdarwis institutions as a driving force for community initiatives. However, this success is still partial and has not been supported by a planned, structured, and cross-sector management system.

In terms of infrastructure, the Bukit Kandis area still faces limitations in terms of accessibility, basic facilities, and visitor safety. The absence of institutional support from the local government in terms of planning and infrastructure investment has caused development to be slow and unintegrated. This reduces the quality of the destination and limits the competitiveness of the area as a leading regional tourist attraction.

In terms of socio-economics, the impact of development is quite significant in creating business opportunities, increasing community income, and strengthening the participation of previously marginalized groups, such as women and youth. However, the unavailability of a fair benefit distribution mechanism creates the potential for social exclusion and internal inequality that need to be responded to immediately through inclusive and accountable institutional governance.

In terms of sustainability, it was found that environmental management is still weak, both in terms of community ecological awareness and support for conservation systems. The potential for pressure on the environment due to increased visits has not been balanced with community-based mitigation strategies. Meanwhile, cultural aspects have not been optimally integrated into tourism activities, even though local values can be symbolic and differentiating capital in the development of identity-based tourism. Overall, the development of Bukit Kandis is still in the early stages which requires strengthening institutional foundations, policy support, and integration between physical, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions in order to develop as an inclusive and sustainable village tourism destination.

Suggestions are:

1. **Strengthening Basic Infrastructure**
Local governments need to allocate a special budget for the development of supporting tourism infrastructure such as road access, sanitation facilities, information posts, and safety facilities. Physical improvements to the area are an absolute prerequisite in building comfort and security for visitors.
2. **Institutional Governance Reform**
A community-based tourism management system needs to be developed that includes a transparent economic benefit distribution mechanism, clear roles between Pokdarwis and the village government, and community involvement in every stage of development planning and evaluation.
3. **Increasing Human Resource Capacity**
Periodic technical and managerial training is needed for the community, especially in the fields of tourism services, digital promotion, environmental conservation, and management of local culture-based attractions so that the quality of service can be improved sustainably.
4. **Strengthening the Environmental and Cultural Dimensions**
Environmental preservation strategies based on zoning, participatory waste management, and supervision of tourist routes must be immediately developed and implemented. On the other hand, local cultural potential needs to be integrated in the form of educational tourist attractions that can strengthen regional identity and increase economic added value.
5. **Cross-Sector Collaboration**
The development of Bukit Kandis requires synergy between local governments, community organizations, academics, business actors, and the media in the form of data-based, community-based, and long-term sustainability-oriented tourism development partnerships.

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