

From Barren Land into Tourist Destination (Study of Local Community-Based Tourism in Bleberan village, Playen, Gunungkidul)

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Abstract

Gunung Kidul is an area with limestone hills. The topography makes this area lack of water. Drought often hit and makes agriculture in this area infertile. Gunung Kidul has stigma as a dry region with population in poor life and low education as well as high suicide rates. Nevertheless, some villagers in Bleberan, Playen Palyen, sub District try to eradicate the stigma, and they make Bleberan as a tourist village. Oyan river flows through the village. The water comes from waterfall and natural cave called Sri Gethuk and Rancang Kencono consecutively. Visitors can row boat in the river or they explore the natural cave. In average tourists visiting Bleveran village amount 400 people in normal days, 600 on weekend and 6000 in Eid Holiday. Last year the village authority earned Rp. 1,9 billion from tourism sector. It is not surprising that in the past year Bleberan village got the Best Tourism Village in Yogyakarta. This article will look at the efforts made by Bleberan Village Tourism to develop its natural resources and therefore Bleberan villagers will improve their life quality. The method used in this research is qualitative descriptive case study. The conclusion is that Bleberan villagers try to overcome poverty stigma by establishing such a modern-solid organization involving all parties in their activities.

Keywords: local-based community; tourism

1. Introduction

Gunungkidul is a district located in the South of Yogyakarta Special Region. The district capital is Wonosari located 39 kilometers in the southeast of the Provincial Capital of Yogyakarta (<http://www.gunungkidulkab.go.id/> downloaded on August 18, 2016 at 12.15 West Indonesia Time). Total area amounts to 46.63% of Yogyakarta Special Region.

Gunungkidul district is a barren and dry land. Most of Gunungkidul land area consists of limestone, and therefore it is difficult for water to absorb into the land. (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** downloaded at August 18, 2016 at 12.16 West Indonesia Time).

Based on the 2010 Population Census, total population of Gunungkidul district reaches 680.406 people. These include 328,878 men and

351.528 women (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** downloaded on August 18, 2015, 12.19 West Indonesia Time).

Plants we can see in Gunungkidul district are mostly jati tree, peanuts, corn and cashew nuts or *anacardium occidentale*. The cashew nuts can grow fast in the land area when Gunungkidul district is dominantly limestone-contained land. Local farmers plant peanuts to increase nutrient elements in the land.

Behind the barren and dry land of Gunungkidul region, limestone-contained land area appears extraordinarily potential natural tourism object.

Potential tourism objects that Gunungkidul district has include natural assets. These cover 60 beaches, 770 caves, 12 waterfalls, 13 forest land area and 16 mountain and hill

locations (<http://sorotgunungkidul.com/berita-gunungkidul-16964-gunungkidul-daerah-tandus-yang-kaya-obyek-wisata.html>, downloaded on August 18, 2016 at 12.36 West Indonesia Time).

Creativity and initiatives among local people are important. It will trigger the pioneer of tourism objects. However, it has been carried out by local people in Bleberan Village, Playen Sub-District. It is absolutely admitted that they live in dry nature, so they should not depend on the agricultural sector.

They consider potential tourism object in their village, i.e. Sri Gethuk Waterfall. The waterfall is the spring of Oya river flowing through rather high cliff in the East of Rancang Kencono Cave. To develop the two potential tourism objects, local people established an traditional organization in 2010.

Sri Gethuk Waterfall and Rancang Kencono Cave have been promoted as alternative tourism objects in Gunungkidul District in 2010. Vice Major of Gunungkidul District inaugurated the two tourism objects on July 3, 2010. The tourism objects get attraction from Yogyakartaans and its surroundings.

The paper will look at activities carried out by the organization of Bleberan Tourism Village in the development of village natural resources. These will increase their life standards.

2. Method

This research use qualitative approaches. According to John Creswell researches use qualitative approaches to explore the behavior, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people and what lies the core of people lives (<https://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL.../001-025%5B1%5D.pdf>).

Carrie Williams cites Creswell by saying that qualitative research is the approach to data collection, analysis, and report writing differing from the traditional, quantitative approaches (2007: 1).

Moreover, the method used in this research is case study. According to Robert K. Yin, the case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

To analyze a phenomenon then takes appropriate methods. Furthermore, Yin explained that the case study can be divided into three types. The first that is descriptive case study method that focuses on outlining the cases studied. Secondly

exploratory that investigation carried out in depth. And third explanatory when the researcher explains the cases studied (Yin: 2006).

3. Result and discussion

Half of 18 sub-districts in Gunungkidul district are stated as poor. These include the Sub-District of Wonosari, Karangmojo, Playen, Semin, Ngawen, Patuk, Saptosari, Ponjong dan Nglipar (**Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** West Indonesia Time). The condition contributes to Yogyakarta Special Region considered as a poorest province in Java. The poverty rate reaches 13.20% in 2015 and the number is higher than national rate of 11.13% (<http://economy.okezone.com/read/2016/07/19/320/1441413/yogyakarta-termiskin-di-pulau-jawa>, downloaded at 07.10 West Indonesia Time).

Poor people are those who have average expense per capita per month below the line of poverty. The line of poverty in March 2010 was Rp. 211,726 per capita per month (<http://bisnis.news.viva.co.id/news/read/173118-10-propinsi-paling-miskin-di-indonesia>, downloaded on September 5, 2016 at 06.53 West Indonesia Time).

Two poverty-pocket districts in Yogyakarta Special Region are Gunungkidul and Kulonprogo (<http://economy.okezone.com/read/2016/07/19/320/1441413/yogyakarta-termiskin-di-pulau-jawa>, downloaded on September 06, 2016 at 07.21 West Indonesia Time).

Gunungkidul District is also known as a region with high suicide rate. Carla R. Machira said socio economic condition among local people becomes the trigger factor of suicide in the district. According to Machira, suicidal person in Gunungkidul district is due to the loss of job and livelihoods. The others relate to the loss of unexpectedly income source for migration, harvest failure, financial crisis and natural disaster. (<http://m.tempo.co/read/news/2014/03/25/173565255/Kemiskinan-Penyebab-Bunuh-Diri-di-Gunungkidul>- downloaded on September 06, 2016 at 07.26 West Indonesia Time).

In view of land condition and its effect of drought that occurs in Bleberan village frequently, it was established a Tourism Village organization to manage natural tourism objects in 2010. The organization includes the management, traders and village people. There are 79 employees who work as tour guides, cleaning service, motor boat driver, parking lot, security, the coordinators of buoyage and snack shops as well as marketing staff. They are paid Rp. 45,000 per day including the coordinator.

Visitors have to pay entry ticket of Rp.7,000 per person and parking lot cost of Rp.5,000 per car. From the entry ticket of Rp.7,000 per person, it is divided into Rp.5,000 paid for the treasury of the Tourism Village management and Rp. 2,000 for Gunungkidul District Government. There are 400 visitors to Sri Gethuk Waterfall in work days and 600 in weekend. The number rises to 6000 visitors when Eid al-Fitr and New Year (interview with Tri Harjono, Head of Bleberan Village Unit on May 1, 2015 at 11.00 West Indonesia Time).

Each Eid al-Fitr and New Year, the management only allows 4,000 visitors who can row a boat. It relates to limited motor boats the management has, i.e. four boats. The visit time only prevails to five o'clock in the afternoon for the visitors' safety.

The favorite tourism objects that visitors will see are Sri Gethuk Waterfall and Rancang Kencono Cave. They have to row a local-made boat with total capacity of 15 passengers. The boat cost amounts to Rp.10 million and therefore each visitor has to pay the boat ticket cost of Rp.10,000 per passenger.

Before the visitors walk down the steep cliff to the dock of motor boats, they will walk through a group of snack shops that Tourism Village management lease to local people with total cost of Rp. 15,000 per month. These shops sell soft drink, *baso* (meatball noodle soup), soto (traditional Indonesia soup), coffee, *thiwul* (traditional cassava-made food) and snack. The leased snack shops are expected to increase local people's economic life.

The Tourism Village management also serves homestay in local people's houses. Moreover, there are fishing and camping ground for some interested visitors. During their homestay, the visitors are offered to plant rice in paddy field or participate in traditional Javanese ritual carried out in the village.

The following are some tourism package offered to visitors to Bleberan village, Playen, Gunungkidul district:

- a. General Tourism Package. It is always offered to visitors who come to Bleberan village any time. The entry ticket cost is Rp. 7,000 plus Rp.10,000 when a visitor leases motor boat. When a visitor take the complete tourism package, he/she will be charged Rp. 55,000. The package includes the exploring activities of Rancang Kencono Cave, river boat raw, body rafting, lunch, tour guide and Jasa Raharja insurance.
- b. Outing. The package is prepared for corporate employees with at least number of 30 people with each cost of Rp. 80,000. It contains welcome drink in a kind of soybean milk, meeting in the cave, lunch, body rafting, tour guide and Jasa Raharja insurance.
- c. *Live In*. In the package, the visitors are able to stay in villagers' house, to enjoy Gungkidul local food, to watch Jathilan dance, leather puppet, campursari (*Javanese song*) and to adventure Bleberan village.
- d. Outbond Team Building. The package will be offered Rp. 115,000 per package for at least 30 people.
- e. Outbond for Kids. The package segment include kindergarden, elementary school and junior high school with the cost of Rp60,000 per package.
- f. Culture Tourism Package. It is a special tourism package and it is offered once a year in the traditional ritual events of "Kenduri Robyong" and "Kenduri Rasulan." Kenduri Robyong is a ritual event of thanksgiving that Bleberan villagers do by carrying out such a social gathering. Moreover, Kenduri Rasulan is a ritual event of village cleaning activities. When the visitors participate in the ritual event packages, they will watch Javanese song and traditional arts from reog, karawitan, leather puppet to kethoprak. They will also participate with local people in *kenduri* (traditional banquet) and social gathering called "kembul bujono".

Some cooperation between the Tourism Village management and other parties, such as Bank BNI are carried out. Bank BNI allocates total fund value of Rp. 400 million for buoyage purchase. The buoyage should be weared when visitors row the boat or swim in Oya River.

In the Tourism Village promotion, the management uses a variety of new media, such as Facebook. However, two facebook accounts that the management has, i.e. account "Desa Wisata Bleberan" and "Kampung Wisata Bleberan" are not used properly. The last uploaded photo was on November 10, 2014 and the question asked on October 18, 2015 was not answered yet. For the second account, it is a public group with 665 members. The last active account was seen on January 17, 2015. Moreover, it publishes new website, i.e. www.desawisatableberanjojja.com despite the website was not developed at first. The management uses new media, according to Tri Harjono, will reduce promotion costs.

Tri Harjono said that the management has made some cooperations with those from travel agents to road show to public schools in Purbalingga, Cirebon, Rembang and Pemalang. The road show is expected to attract students from the cities to do study tour in Bleberan village.

The hard work of developing tourism village object from the management to local people is able to contribute total income of Rp. 1,3 billion to village government's treasury and Rp. 200 million for Gunungkidul Regional Government in 2014. The management got the award of the Best Tourism Village from Yogyakarta Special Region Government in 2015 when Bleberan village could contribute Rp. 1,9 billion. Foreign tourists reach 10% of total visitors to Bleberan Village each year. Majority of them come from the Netherlands, Australian, countries in ASEAN particularly Vietnam and Malaysia.

Natural beauty of Sri Gethuk Waterfall and Oya River in Bleberan Village is mixed to traditional cultural attraction. The management considers road access to the location. It is far to 41 kilometers from Capital City of Yogyakarta. It also provides amenities such as adequate infrastructure facilities supporting the tourism village.

4. Conclusion

Playen is a poorest sub-district in Gunungkidul district. Drought often occurs in the region for limestone-contained land structure. However, local people in Bleberan village fights against the poverty stigma in the village by establishing Bleberan Tourism village organization. The organization involves various village parties. It

develops modern management structure and hires 79 employees. It also leases land for the establishment of small snack shops. Moreover, it promotes the tourism object of Sri Gethuk Waterfall and Rancang Kencono Cave in new media. It also makes a variety of tourism packages for different market segment. In the smart way it offers the cultural ritual events in the village, i.e. "Kenduri Rasulan" and "Kenduri Robyong" to the visitors. The last but not least, it also offers the tourism package of homestay in local people's house and plant rice in paddy field.

With the entry ticket of Rp. 7,000 per package, the visitors are able to enjoy tourism objects along Oya River. Two thousand rupiah of the entry ticket is for Gunungkidul District Government's treasury. More than Rp. 300 million in 2015 the Tourism Village management contributed to the Regional Government.

If it is necessary, the management should provide more variation of water play facilities, such as swimming pool or banana boat. Villagers should be trained hard in service skills as well. At the last, the management should think over again, such as souvenir typical to Bleberan village and small shop to sell handmade crafts or local food produced by the villagers as souvenir.

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