

## **RURAL TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN GUBUGKLAKAH VILLAGE MALANG (INDONESIA): ROAD TO THE ASEAN TOURISM FORUM (ATF) AWARDS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This article is the result of our study on the rural tourism management strategies in Gubugklakah Village Malang. The study aims to investigate how the strategies applied based on the standardization of the vision of the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia in seeking for tourism destinations to be nominated in ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) awards. Based on the findings, we proposed the restructuring of management comprising the formation of institutional structure, the initiation of tourist village program, the establishing of secretariat, and social media promotion. This proposal has been adjusted with the standards set by the ministry. The method used was in-depth interview on the management and local authority to obtain the relevant data. This proposal is expected to be used by the ministry as reference to realize the vision.*

**KEYWORDS:** ASEAN Tourism Forum, local tourism, standardization, Gubugklakah Village

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Indonesia is known as the “heaven on earth” for its cultural diversity and natural beauty. The diversity indicates the sign of aesthetic civilization and thus the culture becomes the national identity. Meanwhile, the natural richness encompassing the biodiversity and landscapes are the treasures to be proud of by the people. There are many potential resources that have not been explored yet. It is no wonder that countries such as the Netherlands, Britain, and Japan invaded Indonesia for its natural resources.

Regarding these facts, it is important to independently manage the resources for a rather humanistic purpose. It means that the resources as the source of livelihood are utilized effectively and responsibly for the sake of both human and nature. A lot of mismanagement of natural resources occurred since people did not cogitate the harmful effects on surrounding environment, particularly in the field of natural tourism.

### **Conceptualization of Sustainable Management**

The damage and loss caused by mismanagement denote the lack of awareness on the importance of natural tourism. This leads to the exploitation of resources for mere economic purpose. In fact, to develop a sustainable natural tourism, three aspects of tourism development comprising the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects should be balanced, especially in rural tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) states:

*Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability (UNEP-UNWTO, p. 11, 2005)*

In the aspect of economy, the development of sustainable tourism should benefit both the government and community. In the aspect of environment, the management of tourism duly conducted in environment-friendly way. Meanwhile, from the socio-economic aspect, the management should conserve the local values of the tourism spot and protect them from the negative effects of development.

Bramwell and Lane define management as interaction between stakeholders in using their power and authority (Bramwell and Lane, p. 412, 2011). It is essential in managing rural tourism. The stakeholders have the privilege to use the power and authority based on the principles set by UNWTO in its conceptualization.

### **Common Tourism Problems in Malang Regency**

Currently, biodiversity has changed from being massively exploited without economic consideration to effectively used for the benefit of country and local people. This can be seen on the vast opening of tourism destinations in remote areas. In the past, under the invasion of British colony, Malang was entitled as “Switzerland of Indonesia” (<https://www.baliadvertiser.biz>). This proves that Malang is strategic for both economically and geographically.

From these facts, serious management that benefits the local authority, central government, and local community is required. One of local potentials that needs to be elaborated is natural tourism on both highland and downland (all natural-based tourism such as waterfall, beach, mountaineering, lake, biosphere reserves, garden tourism, etc.) (<http://www.disparbud.jabarpov.go.id>). These kinds of tourism have their inherent benefits compared to the modern ones. Hence, they need more effective and sustainable management. Natural-based rural tourism is popular around the world nowadays.

Moreover, the criteria for the ATF awards are the fine institutional management, the transportation and infrastructure system, and the dwelling concept for the tourists. Unfortunately, GUBUGKLAKAH has not met all these criteria yet. Hence this study focuses on the local management system and the government’s role in realizing a tourism destination based on the criteria set by the ATF as a regional tourism forum with slogan “Visit ASEAN as A Single Destination. This study was conducted in Gubugklakah Village, Malang Regency.

Malang has several developing areas that attract domestic, national, and international tourists. The Misnistry of Tourism selected two villages in Malang as part of the ten villages representing Indonesia in ATF (<http://www.kemenpar.go.id>). Through this competition, Indonesia will have opportunity to introduce its wonderful natural tourism destinations and to actively involve realizing sustainable economy with the concept of natural tourism management. Since Gubugklakah is still traditionally managed by the community (<http://www.kemenpar.go.id>), it needs the participation of local authority and the central government. The cooperation will contribute to the national income, considering the fact that tourism sector is the latest trend to support the national economy.

Referring to its topography, Gubugklakah is located near Mount Bromo and rich of natural ecosystem with range of green hills and waterfalls (<https://malang.merdeka.com>). Besides its natural beauty, it provides the locals business opportunities such as tour guiding, vehicle rent, and homestay rent. The natural spots in Malang is continually explored by the government to

be developed into tourism destinations that contribute to the increase of the Locally-Generated Revenue through retribution benefitting both the local authority and community. Due to these aspects, Gubugklakah placed third in the National Contest on Rural Tourism Destinatinons on 27 September 2014 (<http://ngalam.id>). The award was directly honoured to the Head of Desa Wisata Gubugklakah (DWG) Institution Purnomo Anshori by the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy Mari Elka Pangestu. Along with Gubugklakah, Sumber Sekar village was also selected by the ministry to represent Malang in the competition held by ATF.

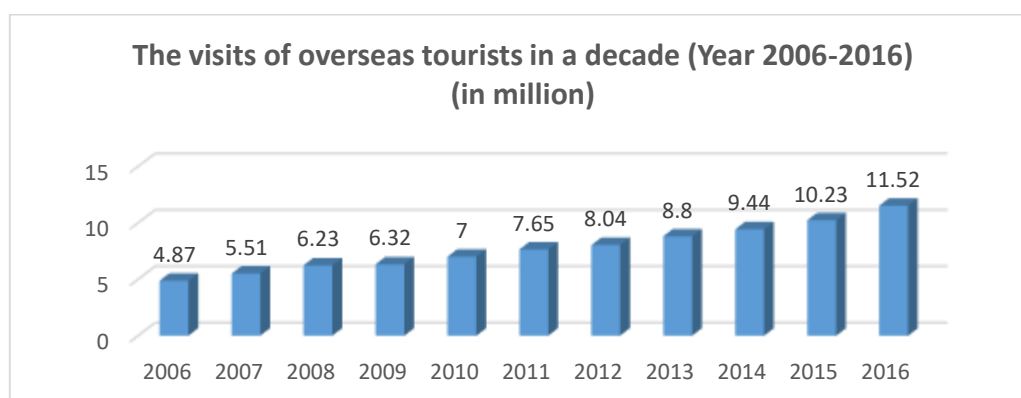
However, the development of Gubugklakah as tourism destination is far from ideal due to the infrastructural and instritutional shortcomings. There is lack of integrated management between the local authority and the community. The locals applied a rather conventional way in managing their source of income. Moreover, poor access to the village makes it less attractive for visitors. As the consequence, the village is less popular among both domestic and foreign tourists.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Tourism as One of Economic Indicators

Besides contributing to the community economics development, tourism sector also crucial for the national one. This is indicated by the annual increase of the number of foreign visitors. Accordng to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS), in the last decade there have been enormous increases of foreign visitors in Indonesia: 4,87 million in 2006, 5,51 million in 2007, 6,23 million in 2008, 6,32 in 2009, 7,00 million in 2010, 7,65 million in 2011, 8,04 million in 2012, 8,80 in 2013, 9,44 million in 2014, 10,23 million in 2015, and 11,52 in 2016 (BPS, 2010, 2013 & 2016). Below is the figure representing the overseas tourists' rates:

**Figure: Overseas Tourists' Visits**



From the figure above, the visit rates significantly increase in the past decade from 2006 to 2016. This indicates that the tourism activities affect the country's foreign exchange income and is in line with the Indonesia's sustainable and promising movement of economic balance. This also supported by the government policy regarding both the macroscale and microscale fields supporting the economic growth, for example the Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDES).

Even though Gubugklakah does not have any BUMDES, the local community has developed a cooperative management system by involving all elements of the community incorporated in the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) of DWS (Desa Wisata Gubugklakah). According to H. Anshari, S.E, M.M and colleagues, Gubugklakah should be a place that functions not merely as a stopover for the tourists heading to Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park, but also as a tourism destination as well. Together with colleagues, he encouraged the local community to turn Gubugklakah into a tourism destination (<http://disparbud.malangkab.go.id>). The community enthusiasm is one of the bases of autonomy that should be encouraged by the government for the sake of microscale economy development.

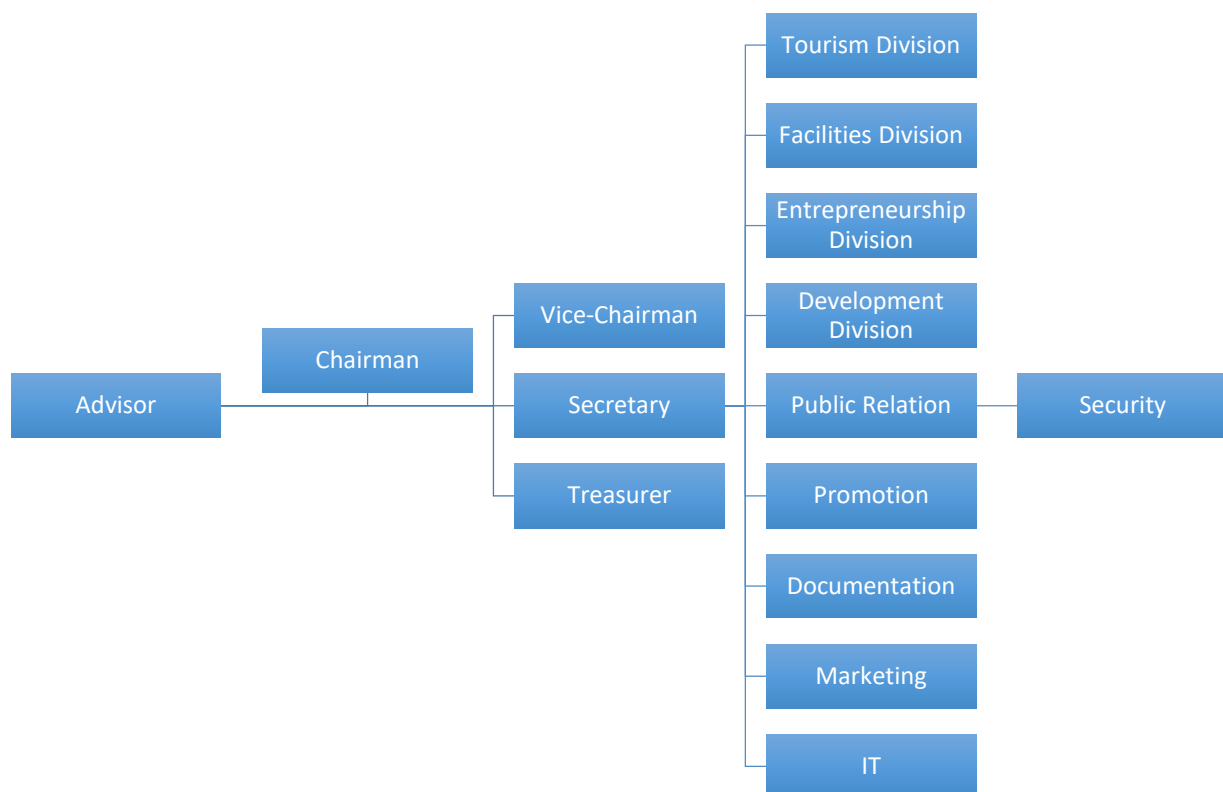
### **Government Policy on Sustainable Tourism Destination**

As a multi-sectoral activity with far-reaching implications, tourism prompted the government of Indonesia to develop the potential of new rural tourism destinations. This is denoted by the National Long-Term Development Plan (RPJPN) 2004-2024, Presidential Decrees, and the national teams for the improvement of export, investment, and compatible units in cross-ministerial cooperation (OECD, 2010). The roles of tourism sector in the RPJPN are encouraging economic activities, improving the country's image, improving the community welfare, expanding new job opportunities, and carefully managing the nature as tourism asset. These can generate economic activities conforming to the development of national cultures.

At the same time, the government of Indonesia has committed to actively participate the RPJPN and to completely conform to the policy of United Nations especially regarding the sustainable economic, ecological, cultural, and social developments. This is important to increase the capacity of the community in establishing sustainable socio-economic development. Therefore, it requires the cooperation between community, groups, and government to restructure the management system.

### **Restructuring of Gubugklakah Tourism Management and Policy**

Based on the the Regulation of Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia Year 2016 Number 14 pertaining to the guidelines for sustainable tourism destination article 2 and 3, the management of tourism destination should involve the stakeholders and local authorities in developing sustainable tourism destination; and the development should consider the aspect of management, cultural and environmental conservation, and local economics. The regulation becomes the basis for the local authority and stakeholders to develop equally-impacting and sustainable development. The effort is prioritizing the development agenda to provide facilities and infrastructure of the rural tourism destination. It conforms to the vision of the Government of Malang Regency which is "Realizing the Community-Based Tourism in Malang Regency" (<http://disparbud.malangkab.go.id>) by developing tourism attraction, providing facilities and infrastructure, improving service quality, and encouraging community involvement; as a unity in realizing competitive rural tourism destination. Below is the institutional restructuring of Gubugklakah rural tourism management.

**Figure 1. The Institutional Structure**

The institutional structure above has fulfilled the standard set by the Ministry of Tourism and the vision and mission of the Government of Malang Regency. It is also one of the requirements to join the competition held by ATF. The administration standard of the competition comprises the availability of institutional structure of the rural tourism management, document of statutes and bylaws, Medium-Term Development Plan, secretariat, guest book, asset ownership record, attendance list, minutes, savings book on behalf of the institution, promotion, and achievements gained by the village.

### **Standardization of Tourist Village Program**

#### **Standardization of Home Stay**

To develop new tourism destinations, East Asian countries refer to the terms set by the Tourism Division of ASEAN as international standards in determining the reference of destination. These standards are used by the stakeholders to compete in the global tourism market, where the sector optimization focuses on service modality. Thus, there are many aspects assessed in the competition: attraction, authenticity, basic first aid, biodiversity, booking, code of conduct, communal activity, community centre/area, communication equipment, community-to-community training, culture, database, emergency rescue, environmentally friendly aspect,

familiarization trip, guest, hands-on-approach training, homestay, homestay provider, host, interpretation skill, management, manual, micro enterprise, nature, package, reservation system, social media network, target market, Unique Selling Proposition (USP), and village (ASEAN Homestay Standard, 2016). Moreover, ASEAN also set some criteria such as host, accommodation, activities, management, location, hygiene and cleanliness, safety and security, marketing and promotion, and sustainability principles (ASEAN Homestay Standard, p. 1-5, 2016). These standards are made to spur the economic growth of ASEAN countries through tourism and to provide them benchmark to compete each other in the event held by ATF.

### **The Implementation of “Homestay” Concept in Gubugklakah**

Early preparation and effective communication are two crucial aspects for tourism development. These have been anticipated by the community of Gubugklakah. Pioneered by H. Ansari, the community established an internal organization to manage the village's natural resources as both the main and additional income supporting the tourism activities. One of the efforts made was encouraging the local apple farmers to turn their farms into fruit-picking tourism destination. With a slight change in management, the farmers not only take role as apple producers, but also as tourism providers.

### **Tourist Village Promotion**

Tourism objects promotion and marketing are important to attract tourists. These activities are centralized through tourism promotion by the government. To introduce the tourism destinations in Malang Regency, the Department of Tourism and Culture Malang held exhibitions both in and outside Malang. Furthermore, the government also promotes the tourism destinations through the official websites of the Department of Tourism and Culture Malang and the Local Government of Malang Regency. It is considered as effective communication strategy since it reaches out all circles of society and people all over the world. People can directly access the description of the tourism destinations.

The activity of promoting and marketing the tourism objects or destinations is basically the act of introducing tourism products. Thus, it should meet the tourists' expectation and interest. As “customers”, tourists need to know all “products” offered on the destinations. The online marketing is highly promising since most people nowadays use electronic devices to explore and obtain information regarding tourism. Basically, the orientation of marketing activity should cover all information regarding the tourism objects and destinations (ASEAN Homestay Standard, p. 10, 2016).

From these facts, the development of local tourism seems positive as reported by the Secretary-General of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Taleb Rifai who stated that the tourism sector on global economic growth highly contributes to the provision of employments and national development around the world. He also added that the sector contributes up to 10% of total GDP. Moreover, the Chairman of Global Tourism Economy Research Centre (GTERC) Pansy Ho stated that the number of cross-country travelers reached 1 million in 2012 and 1,2 million in 2015 (Asia Tourism Trends, 2016). These trends are the results of promotion and marketing. Rifai and Ho explained that the numbers are derived from the data of tourist traffics from all over the world to Asia Pasific including Indonesia. Besides the local and central government, the promotion and marketing are also conducted online by private sectors through blogs.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, we have several conclusions. First, based on its geography and topography, Gubugklakah has great potentials as tourism destination. It also provides housing accommodation for tourists who visit Mount Bromo since it is located nearby. Second, Gubugklakah offers exotic landscapes like none other. However, the village lacks of infrastructure such as signposts and accessible roads. Third, referring to the standards set by ATF, Gubugklakah has poor homestay management. Therefore, the actions taken by the local authority and community are restructuring the institution and managing homestay based on the standards. Fourth, in relation to the promotion and marketing, the central government provides website containing information about Gubugklakah and conducts national and international exhibitions. The community involvement by providing blogs with detail information about the location mapping and transportations to the destination also supports the tourism development.

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