



Ecotourism Commodification from A Socio-Economic Perspective (A Case Study of Tanjung Puting National Park, Indonesia)

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ABSTRACT: This research aims to determine the socio-economic impact of the commodification of ecotourism occurs in Tanjung Puting National Park. Data in this study were obtained using a case study method. The economic indicators used include income and employment opportunities. Meanwhile, social indicators include cultural acculturation and the community's skill level. The results show that the development of this ecotourism is able to create more job opportunities for the public in the tourism sectors such as tour guide, food and beverages service, and travel agents. Public who taking opportunities will generate another source of income. In addition to contributing income to the local community, this ecotourism also contributes Non-Tax Government Revenue (PNBP). The social impact that arises is shifting of the public lifestyle becomes more westernized and an increase in the level of creativity of the public in business entrepreneurship.

KEYWORDS: Commodification, Ecotourism, Socio, Economic, case study

INTRODUCTION

Now, the Indonesian government is actively promoting nature-based tourism as an implementation of sustainable tourism. This initiative is based on the consideration that ecotourism can balance between social, economic, and environmental impact for public. Tanjung Puting National Park is one of 56 national parks owned by Indonesia, while doing job as a home for endemic species such as orangutan and Proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*). This area also stands as the largest orangutan conservation center in the world, housing a total of 1000-1200 individuals. Tanjung Puting ecotourism is listed among the top 10 largest national parks in Indonesia.

Table 1. Largest National Park in Indonesia

| No | Name | Location | Area (Ha) |
|----|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Lorentz (Cyclops) | Papua | 2.450.000,00 |
| 2 | Teluk Cendrawasih | Papua | 1.453.500,00 |
| 3 | Wakatobi | Sulawesi | 1.390.000,00 |
| 4 | Kerinci Seblat | Sumatra | 1.375.349,87 |
| 5 | Kayan Mentarang | Kalimantan | 1.360.500,00 |
| 6 | Gunung Leuser | Sumatra | 1.094.692,00 |
| 7 | Betung Kerihun | Kalimantan | 800.000,00 |
| 8 | Taka Bonerate | Sulawesi | 530.765,00 |
| 9 | Wasur | Papua | 413.810,00 |
| 10 | Tanjung Puting | Kalimantan Tengah | 411.410,97 |

Tanjung Puting have a tremendous potential for Central Kalimantan Province because it is able to boost the regional economy through tourism activities. Tanjung Puting National Park have a large natural resource can be used for "Natural Tourism Model". Ecotourism is initiated by Budowski in 1976 combine natural tourism and conservation (Budowski, 1976). Ecotourism in Tanjung Puting National Park is for support conservative cost and granting economic benefit to community. Ecotourism is a way to converting nature value into economic benefit, e.g., trading. The nature's appeal there is an exchange between economy value standardization and transformation of nature commodity with tourist. One of the purpose of Tanjung Puting is for ecotourism.



Table 2. Tanjung Puting National Park Visitor

| Total Visitors | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|-------|------|--------|--------|
| Citizenship | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Indonesian citizens | 10.937 | 2232 | 946 | 6646 | 5158 |
| Foreign nationals | 14.552 | 1.250 | 346 | 18.677 | 26.232 |

Overall ecotourism visitor is dominated by foreign tourist. International tourist came from Spain, Germany, United States of America, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Italia and Poland. Current development pushing capitalism changing the original object for more profitable. This created paradox between preservation cultural heritage or commodification for more profit (Cave et al., 2007). Nature transition for more environment friendly create using advanced technology to attract for tourist (Fairhead et al., 2012).

The tourism industry has become a way for create cultural objects into commodities and traded for a profit (Irianto, 2016; Su, 2011). Commodification is a term associated with various phenomena such as monetization, privatization, financialization, marketization, itemization, capitalization, and commercialization, which are processes of transforming an object into profit economic commodity (Smessaert et al., 2020). Commodification occurs due to capitalism, pursue profit by altering the quality of an object (Barker, 2000).

Tourism industry has led to a contradictory commodification the opposite of peacefulness. In the process of commodification produce both positive and negative impacts on social, cultural, and economic domain. The positive impacts felt from the phenomenon of commodification include maintaining value of cultural existence, increasing local community income, regional revenue or tax, better occupation, transforming mindsets towards progress and prosperity (Apria, 2020; Yulianie, 2018; Swanson & Timothy, 2012; Rafique, 2022). In contrast, commodification brings negative impacts causing cultural characteristics to fade, decline historical values, leaving only collective values as a communal memory (Agusta et al., 2017; Komariyah, 2015).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research conducted using qualitative with study case method. Data collected with multi technique, e.g., documentation, observation, and direct interview with informant. Analysis method in this research using content analysis. Study site is Tanjung Puting National Park in Central Kalimantan Province. Objective of this research to unveil social economy impact from ecotourism commodification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

General Overview Tanjung Puting National Park

Tanjung Puting National Park located in Kumai, Kotawaringin Barat City, Province Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. National park area size is 411.410,97 hectare. Based on the map below, Tanjung Puting National Park managed with zone (*region base*) systems as follow:

- a. Core Zone covers an area of 64.673,42 hektare.
- b. Forest Zone covers an area of 108.646,24 hektare
- c. Marine Protection Zone covers an area of 11.085,20 hektare
- d. Utilization Zone covers an area of 36.083,97 hektare
- e. Traditional Zone covers an area of 37.765,36 hektare
- f. Rehabilitation Zone covers an area of 136.435,02
- g. Religious-Cultural Zone covers an area of 0,15 hektare
- h. Special Zone covers an area of 16.721,61 hektare

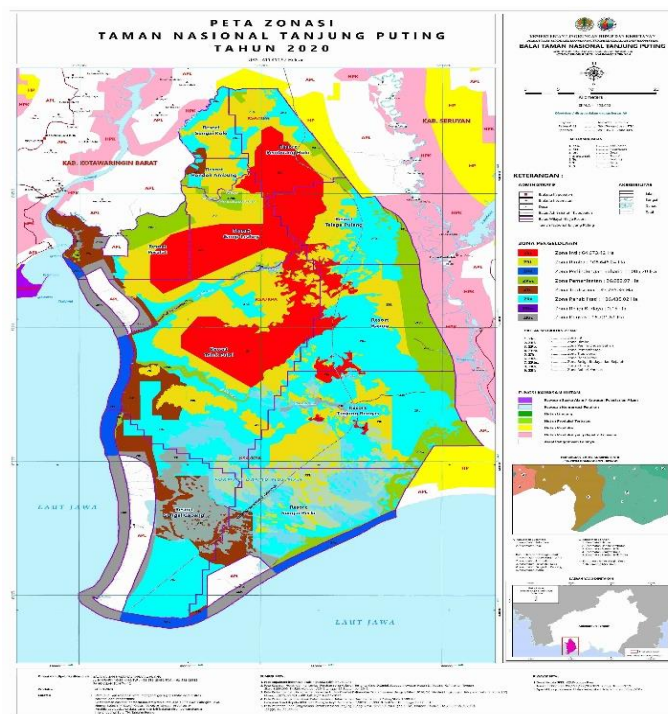


Figure 1. Map of Tanjung Puting National Park

Tanjung Puting National Park operational area divided with 3 sections of managements (SPTN):

Table 1. Tanjung Puting National Park Operational Area

| No | National Park Management Section | Resort |
|----|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | SPTN Wilayah I Pembuang Hulu | Resort Telaga Pulang |
| | | Resort Pembuang Hulu |
| | | Resort Sungai Kole |
| | | Resort Pondok Ambung |
| 2 | SPTN Wilayah II Kuala Pembuang | Resort Tanjung Rengas |
| | | Resort Baung |
| | | Resort Sungai Perlu |
| 3 | SPTN Wilayah III Tanjung Harapan | Resort Camp Leakey |
| | | Resort Pesalat |
| | | Resort Sungai Cabang |
| | | Resort Teluk Pulau |

Ecotourism Commodification

The conservative of the Tanjung Puting began with an awareness during the Dutch East Indies government preserve the area due to the presence of endemic species that were a priority for protection and conservation, namely the Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and the Proboscis Monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*). As historical records indicate Tanjung Puting started with a mandate conveyed by the Sultan of Kotawaringin to establish Tanjung Puting as a protected area then followed up by the Indonesian



Government issuing decisions by the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Forestry. The initial decision began in 1936, through Decree Number 24 regarding the Appointment of the Kotawaringin Wildlife Sanctuary, where the Sultan of Kotawaringin designated the Kotawaringin Wildlife Sanctuary with an area of 100,000 hectares. Subsequently, in 1937, the Governor General of the Dutch East Indies issued Decision Number 39 staatblad 1937 No. 495 regarding the Appointment of the Sampit Wildlife Sanctuary as a subsequent action of the Sultan of Kotawaringin, with an area of 205,000 hectares.

The Indonesian Government formally decided Tanjung Puting as a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1978 through Minister of Agriculture Decree Number: 43/Ktps/Dj/I/1978, merger of West Kotawaringin Wildlife Sanctuary (1936) with the Sampit Wildlife Sanctuary (1937). After assessing the geographical border, Tanjung Puting established to cover an area of 270,040 hectares. However, in the same year, pursuant to Minister of Agriculture Decree No. 698/Kpts/Um/II/1978, the area underwent an expansion to encompass 300,040 hectares.

Tanjung Puting was first announced as a candidate National Park in 1982 during the World National Parks Congress held in Bali. This status officially changed to a National Park on October 25, 1996, based on Minister of Forestry Decree Number: 687/Kpts-II/1996 regarding the change of function and appointment of Tanjung Puting National Park covering an area of 415,040 hectares located in the Districts of Kotawaringin Barat and Kotawaringin Timur, Central Kalimantan Province. The aim of establishing a national park within the conservation area is for protection and to combine education development with visitor interests (tourism activities).

Commodification process occurs through efforts to preserve and expansion Tanjung Puting National Park, which was previously a Wildlife Sanctuary inherited from the Sultan of Kotawaringin. The ecotourism commodification identified in this research involves transforming the environment assets of the Tanjung Puting forest into more economically valuable commodity. Economic benefits are obtained by packaging nature as a tourist backdrop and showcasing Orangutans at feeding platforms. Nature becomes a point where generates economic value (Ni'am et al., 2021).

The shape of commodification occurs in Tanjung Puting National Park can be seen from the various attractions it offers to tourist. Across the journey to the meeting point or site tourists can enjoy and cherish the beauty of Tanjung Puting's natural panorama. Boating, trekking (observing the situation inside the forest), seeing wild animals, and staying overnight in the middle of the forest using a "klotok" (a type of traditional boat) is one of the example of another charm created by community to the tourist. During night tourists have ability to saw fireflies perched on the nipah trees. Meanwhile, the main event for tourists visiting Tanjung Puting is the life of orangutans. These attractions are spread across three sites: Camp Leakey, Tanjung Harapan, and Pondok Tanggui. Two sites are located at Pesalat Resort and one site at Camp Leakey Resort. The trip can only be visited using water transportation such as speedboats and "klotok".

Socio-Economic Impact

1. Income

The level of tourist activity in Tanjung Puting National Park will have a positive impact on the economy. Income is a direct impact for community and this is the main impact expected from the ecotourism commodification of Tanjung Puting National Park. The expected revenue is revenue for local community and for government in non tax revenue. Higher rate of tourist led local economies have the chance to generate more revenues. Having economies stability open onto more prosperous community.

Table 2. Non-Tax Revenue 2019-2023

| No | Non-Tax Revenue | |
|----|-----------------|----------------|
| | Year | Total (Rupiah) |
| 1 | 2019 | 6.151.865.895 |
| 2 | 2020 | 697.711.000 |
| 3 | 2021 | 82.542.000 |
| 4 | 2022 | 4.949.375.000 |
| 5 | 2023 | 9.908.302.500 |



2. Employment Opportunities

Tanjung Puting National Park boost public economy sector, increasing the tourist arrival create new employment opportunity such as travel agent, tour guide, food and beverages service, souvenir retailing, and accommodation. Individuals with strong creative and innovative skills often pioneer new industries, products, and services, leading to job creation in various sectors. Their ability to think outside the box and find novel solutions can drive economic growth and employment opportunities. An example is the miniature craftsman.

Based on data certified chef in Tourist Cook Association (TCA) Kotawaringin Barat have 90 on board members. There are tour guide associated with Indonesian Tourist Guides Association have 170 members. Meanwhile, Agen Association of The Indonesian Tours And Travel Agencies (ASITA) have 30 members. ASITA is a travel agent association that offers tour packages to Tanjung Puting.

3. Improving Community Skills

Due to growth of tourist activity public have become more sensitive in expanse business opportunities by becoming more creative, such as making and selling souvenirs for tourist. Tourist is from international or local come to here. Community will present and showcase their local culture. In order for communication being effective, many public are willing to learn English, currently this cultural acculturation occurs.

4. Culture Acculturation

Acculturation is a cross-cultural process occurs when society has a future orientation that encourages to adapt to the development of time and external cultures. When an object is opened as a tourist attraction, the local community must be ready to accept the changes. Most tourists who visit Tanjung Puting National Park are foreign tourists. Over time, they adopt element of the new culture, such as language, behaviour, and fashion style, and social norms. They will to be more Westernized but their still maintaining some aspects of ther own cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of ecotourism commodification begins to be arise when nature and its richness are used as an alibi for tourist attractions. Tanjung Puting is a special interest tourism where orangutan “feeding time” as the main show of attraction. In the tourism, orangutan attractions sold for entertainment. Alongside the nature, Orangutans also become commodities with economic value. Other attractions offered include natural scenery, boating, and staying on a kelotok in the tropical rainforest.

As a result of this phenomenon, changes occur in various aspects, especially in the social and economic of the surrounding communities. The positive impact for the community is tourism activity led to better income, job opportunities, and encouraging the creativity and skills of the community. Meanwhile, the negative impact that occur is cultural acculturation. Tourists visiting are dominated by international tourists, and communities with open minded manner observe and imitate what they see. Another social impact include the emergence of awareness among local communities to learn foreign languages in order to interact with foreign tourists. The environment is also affected, as the use of water transportation as accommodation causes air pollution.

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