A STRUGGLING PHASE OF A TOURISM VILLAGE: A CASE STUDY ON KEMIRI TOURISM VILLAGE JEMBER

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ABSTRACT

Since its opening on March 2021, Kemiri Tourism Village was, still, facing a number of problematic issues. The decreasing number of visitors was an alarming sign for the destination. Investigating the current condition of the tourism village was essential to get a comprehensive picture of what really happened. Based on that purpose, this case study was conducted by utilizing the concept of 4 As tourism components covering attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary. The data was collected through interview with Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis), tourism awareness group, of Kemiri, observation to the destination, and content analysis on visitors’ reviews and other accessible sources regarding the tourism village. The results of the data analysis showed that the tourism village faced a number of issues based on the 4 As tourism components. Regarding the attraction, the tourism village needed to discover its unique attractiveness to make the destination distinctive from other tourism villages. In addition, when dealing with amenities, Kemiri Tourism Village should make a big effort to rebuild the destination due to the fact that there were a number of facilities that did not exist any longer when compared to its initial condition. Widening and strengthening partnerships were also essential to achieve better networking that would be beneficial to improve promotions.

Keywords: Kemiri Tourism Village, tourism village, 4 As Tourism Components

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is undoubtedly a promising sector that contributes to a country’s economic development. As a country with enormous tourism potential, it is unquestionable that Indonesia pays special concern of the development of tourism sector specifically in the post-pandemic era. As an important note, the tourism industry contributed to Indonesia gross domestic product (GDP) at 4.6% to 4.9% prior to the global crisis (Mun’im, 2022; The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2020). Indeed, regaining the positive tourism performance is a crucial and inseparable part of national economic recovery of Indonesia.

A logical consequence of the effort to rebuild the tourism industry is utilizing any potential resources that will lead to the achievement of the purpose. Relying on natural types of tourism may not be sufficient since today’s tourism industry has transformed into wider spectrum. Probably, one of the most obvious changes in tourism industry, in
Indonesian context, is the increase of tourism villages in recent years. At the time being, Jejaring Desa Wisata, also known as Jadesta, a networking platform of communication for tourism villages, reported that there were 4,726 tourism villages in Indonesia (Jejaring Desa Wisata, 2023). From those, 3,478 were still in their initial stage of development, 942 were developing, 284 were advanced, and 23 were categorized as independent tourism villages. The number shows that the desire to transform villages into interesting destinations to attract visitors to come, experience, and learn the authentic uniqueness, along with each potential characteristic (Sudibya, 2018) is quite exceptional. When compared to the data in 2018 with 1,734 and in 2022 with 3,524 tourism villages (Fasa et al., 2022), the increase was significant enough.

Considering the increasing number of tourism villages in Indonesia, it is essential to question the impact of the existence of tourism villages on tourism industry. Interestingly, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy claimed that around 44% of tourists chose to travel to tourism villages in the post-pandemic era (The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2023). With such a notable contribution, the development of tourism villages should be taken into serious consideration. For sure, it is expected that this will lead to improved national economic growth.

The promising potential of tourism village has also attracted the attentions of tourism actors as well as local governments including in Jember, East Java. It is important to note that Jember has shown great efforts in developing the tourism industry (Kamal et al., 2023). For sure, the initiation and development of tourism villages in the area were also done to support the exertion. At the time being, there were 8 tourism villages located in Jember (Jejaring Desa Wisata, 2023), one of which is Kemiri Tourism Village which was officially opened on March 2021 (Pemerintah Daerah Kabupaten Jember, 2021). The opening of Kemiri Tourism Village was expected to positively contribute to the villagers in Kemiri, specifically to the economic growth.

Kemiri Tourism Village is located in Panti Sub-district, around 17 km to the southwest direction of Jember’s downtown. The village is located on the slope of Argopuro Mountain with a countryside atmosphere. The main tourism destination within the village is Dusun Delima where Kemiri Resort, Kemiri Resto, and Rumah Jamur (mushroom cultivation house) are located, along with Dusun Sodong for sport activities and Dusun Danci with its coffee plantation (Kholifah & Nusanto, 2022). The tourism village, at the time being, was managed by Pokdarwis (tourism awareness group) of Kemiri, a group of individuals who were incorporated in a community or organization with specific concern and role in developing and managing the tourism village (Asmoro et al., 2019), and had been verified by the local government tourism office. Identified as an educational tourism, widely known as edu-tourism, destination, the tourism village offered the visitors with various spots including Mushroom House, Jember Coffee Center (JCC), Kemiri Resto, bread factory, liquid smoke production, and more. In addition, Kemiri Tourism Village also offered several tour packages including bike package, walking package, family education package, romantic dinner at Kemiri Resto, village tour, Edufan at JCC, outbound, and more.

With such intriguing offers, especially by considering the fact that the destination has been open for public since 2021, it is essential to question whether Kemiri Tourism Village was able to keep attracting visitors to come. As a matter of fact, based on the preliminary study through an informal interview with a member of the Pokdarwis of Kemiri, the tourism village got great public attention shortly after its official opening. Many tourists visited the destination. However, starting from the second semester of
2022, the visits started to decrease. Since then, Kemiri Tourism Village was experiencing a struggling situation.

The current condition of Kemiri Tourism Village triggered a question of what actually happened. To answer that, it was essential to carry out a careful analysis to help the destination understand fundamental problems that needed to improve for better future. In this case, the concept of 4 As tourism components can be adapted as the basis of analysis to examine the existing condition of the destination (Kamal et al., 2023). This concept covers 4 important components of tourism including attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary.

Attraction, one of the 4 As tourism components, is probably considered as the most important component of tourism. This is simply the main reason why tourists visit a destination and enjoy and experience what it offers (Fletcher et al., 2018). Without a doubt, a particular place will never be a tourist destination if it does not offer any attraction. For instance, in tourism village context, an attraction can be the beauty of the nature in the village, the culture, and any valuable potential to be offered to visitors. As a logical consequence, attraction is the very first aspect to consider before initiating and developing a destination. In addition, in the context of tourism village, it is also important to remember that attraction also refers to what mainly distinguishes one tourism village to another.

The next important component is accessibility. This one is related to infrastructure and means of transportation that influence visitors to, or not to, visit a destination (Kamal et al., 2023). It means that accessibility discusses about the physical condition of the infrastructure to get to the destination as well as the means of transportation to get to the tourism village, either public or personal ones. In most contexts, the easier it is to get to a destination the higher the chances of the one to be visited by, many, tourists.

Amenities come next as one of the 4 As tourism components. This one covers any facilities at or near a destination including accommodation, food and beverages, and any adequate facilities enabling visitors to enjoy their leisure time at the destination in a period of time (Andrianto & Sugiama, 2016). When visiting a destination, travellers may ask about the availability of hotels, homestays, restaurants, shops, parking spaces, toilets, and others. In many cases, visitors complain about unexpected experiences because of inconvenient facilities making them leave bad reviews about the place and do not want to revisit the location in the, near, future.

The last component is ancillary that is related to the extras that tourists get when visiting a destination (Ismail & Rohman, 2019). Even though this aspect seems to deal only with any additional or complementary values, still, this will lead to satisfaction and even loyalty from the visitors. In some cases, ancillary is also related to people’s roles in developing and managing a destination that includes policy makers, communities and groups, and individuals (Kamal et al., 2023). In other cases, this component is related to different aspects such as the availability of tour guide, communication network, security personnel, electricity, and trash bin (Tsani et al., 2021).

Considering the struggle faced by Kemiri Tourism Village, it was important to investigate the current condition by considering the 4 As components. Therefore, this study aimed at how was Kemiri Tourism Village at the time being. By answering the question, it was expected that the tourism village would get comprehensive data related to what to improve to regain visitors’ interest to come to the destination.
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METHOD

This study was carried out qualitatively by implementing a case study. As Ary et al. (2010) suggested, a case study focused on a single unit, in this case Kemiri Tourism Village, to produce a rich and holistic in-depth description, specifically related to the focus of the discussion. This case study aimed at investigating the actual current condition at the tourism village by adapting the concept of 4 As tourism components.

The data was collected by implementing interview, observation, and content analysis. The interview was conducted by asking open-ended questions to the management of Kemiri Tourism Village. In this case, the open-ended interview was carried out in an informal atmosphere in form of a group discussion. After conducting the interview, an observation followed. This was done by visiting the tourism village in order to see the real condition of the destination. To complete the data, a content analysis was also done. The analyzed contents were the testimonies written by individuals who had visited the destination, especially the negative ones. Finally, the collected data, then, was analyzed and presented descriptively in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It has been explained clearly that this study focused on investigating the current condition of Kemiri Tourism Village especially regarding the struggle faced at the time being. The analysis was based on the concept of 4 As tourism components covering attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary. The data was collected through interview, observation, and content analysis. The results and discussion are presented below.

Attraction

Attraction is unquestionably the soul of any tourism destination due to the fact that travellers visit a place because they want to see, experience, and/do something, which is related to what attraction means in its simplest definition. Kemiri Tourism Village was no exception. This aspect was still one of biggest concerns in the tourism village.

Kemiri Tourism Village was basically a destination with the natural atmosphere of a village where visitors could do various activities especially culinary. This is supported by reviews written by travellers who had visited the place. However, this seemed to be insufficient. The tourism village needed to find specific and unique characteristic(s) making it distinctive when compared to other tourism villages.

From the interview with the Pokdarwis of Kemiri, it was revealed that they, as the management of the tourism village, realized that the destination needed to find the most interesting feature of the village as the main attraction. The leader of the Pokdarwis stated that relying on the natural features was not enough because other villages in the area simply had the similar. Showcasing the cultural aspect was quite problematic as it was very difficult to find a prominent cultural tradition originally from the village. Therefore, this group chose to bring the concept of educational tourism village in its initial stage. Nevertheless, the concept was not as interesting as expected.

“Our initial concept was to develop an educational tourism village. Unfortunately, visitors who come are more interested only to have fun.”

(Interview with the leader of the Pokdarwis)
The fact that Kemiri Tourism Village offered educational activities covering the visits to Rumah Jamur, Jember Coffee Center (JCC), Kemiri Resto, bread factory, and liquid smoke production, and to experience an activity called One Day as a Farmer did not really attract the visitors. Mostly, they came because the news regarding the opening of the tourism village went viral and they wanted to be the part of the hype.

Kemiri Tourism Village was actually quite successful to attract people to visit the destination at the beginning. Besides the intriguing news regarding the opening, the fact that the Pokdarwis of Kemiri made such a great effort to beautify the resort as the main point of the destination had influenced visitors’ decision to visit the tourism village. In this case, the Pokdarwis built various constructions including Kemiri sign, bamboo decks, and gazebos. On one hand, this was done to beautify the site which was related to the attraction component. On the other hand, this was also related to amenity component especially the constructions that were built for functionality.

Based on the interview, it was revealed that the Pokdarwis invested a great amount of investment to build the constructions. Unfortunately, the choice of utilizing natural materials like bamboo brought unexpected consequence. The constructions did not last long enough so that the management had to disassemble them for safety reason. At the time being, based on the observation, the bamboo decks and gazebos were did not exist any longer.

From the explanations regarding the attraction, it is clear that there were several aspects that contributed to the problems. The fact that Kemiri Tourism Village had not found its unique characteristic(s) made the tourism village need to discover its distinctive feature(s) as the main attraction to offer. As an important note, many tourism villages in Indonesia have successfully discovered their unique attractions so that they are able to provide something different for travellers.

As a comparison, for instance, Bangsring Tourism Village, located in Banyuwangi, East Java, is a tourism village that offers the natural beauty of coral reefs as its main attraction where visitors can go snorkeling at the coral reefs conservation-based ecotourism (Lailatufa et al., 2019). Kemiren Tourism Village in Banyuwangi, East Java, is another example of tourism village with a distinctive attraction where visitors are offered with the authentic culture of Osing, native ethnic of Banyuwangi (Silalahi & Asy’ari, 2022). Another one is Kelor Tourism Village which is located on the slope of Merapi, one of the most active volcanoes in Indonesia, where a historical building of joglo, Javanese traditional house, which is very distinctive and has significant historical value is located (Wardani et al., 2023). From those tourism villages, it can be concluded that a tourism village must have specific attraction that can come from any different perspectives including natural, cultural, and historical ones.

**Accessibility**

Kemiri Tourism Village is located in Panti Sub-district, around 17 kilometers to the northwest of Jember’s downtown. The tourism village is located in a rural area and can be accessed via two main routes. Unfortunately, at the time being, there was no public transportation that visitors could take to go directly to the destination. In this case, private vehicles, both motorcycles and cars, were the options to choose.

Actually, the local government of Jember did an innovation by launching Angkot Sultan, city transportation that could be rented by visitors to explore tourism destinations in Jember including Kemiri Tourism Village. As implied, this was not a regular-based
transportation in which visitors could utilize this by order only. It means that a specific plan to visit the destination should be made first.

In general, based on the observation, the road to the destination was adequate. Only a small portion of road, from the main road to the Kemiri Resort, that was still an unpaved village road. Even though there was a statement by a visitor criticizing this condition, from the Google reviews, to be frankly, this was quite problematic to comment on this issue. The improvement of the transportation infrastructure could only be made by policy makers at the higher levels; not the Pokdarwis as the management of the tourism village as stated by the leader in the interview.

Typically, the improvement regarding accessibility becomes necessary when a destination keeps attracting more people to visit. In a simple assumption, when Kemiri Tourism Village is successful to attract a bigger number of visitors, there will be a priority to help the destination improve including the accessibility. In addition, it is also essential to consider the accessibility for visitors with disabilities. This is due to the fact that people with disabilities today are willing to practice tourism and the number keeps increasing over the time (Benedetto, 2023).

In addition to the explanation above, it was also found that there was no signage that specifically provided directions to the tourism village. It was quite difficult for travellers who had never visited the destination before to go there, especially the ones from outside Jember. Fortunately, web services providing the information about the area, along with the directions, such as Google Maps has been sufficient to help travellers go to Kemiri Tourism Village.

**Amenities**

Since its opening, Kemiri Tourism Village had developed several aspects including the ones regarding amenities. It is also important to take into account partnership aspect regarding this component. In this case, there were facilities, either public and private, that became integrated part of the tourism village.

Kemiri Tourism Village was known with its culinary delight. Visitors could enjoy various types of traditional food especially mushroom satay at the Kemiri Resort. Here, the visitors were offered the natural view of paddy field while enjoying the food at available huts. In addition, there was also Kemiri Resto where visitors could enjoy traditional menus at a restaurant with traditional architecture.

Other facilities were mosque, parking area, and toilets. Unfortunately, based on the observation and interview, there was no accommodation near the area. It means that the visitors were not able to stay overnight at the destination.

A major issue to discuss regarding this component was that there were facilities that did not exist any longer. Bamboo decks surrounding the paddy field were disassembled. So did several huts located at the Kemiri Resort and Rumah Jamur. Based on the interview, the Pokdarwis believed that the bamboo, as the main material used, was easily weathered.

“... our decision of using bamboo for the decks and huts seems to be inappropriate. As the time goes, they became weathered.” (Interview with the leader of the Pokdarwis)

The above issue brought considerably significant bad consequence to Kemiri Tourism Village. The bamboo decks and huts were disassembled due to safety reasons.
Unfortunately, this led to another consequence. At the time being, the unique characteristic of the tourism village did not exist any longer.

In addition to the previously explained issue, there were also critics regarding the facilities from the visitors. One review stated that the parking space, especially for cars, was not sufficient. This is in line with the result of the observation. The visitors needed to park their cars on a yard of the mosque near the location.

As clearly explained above, Kemiri Tourism Village was facing several issues regarding the third component, amenities. There is no doubt that the tourism village needed to make meaningful and fundamental improvement on the aspect to provide the visitors with convenience which would lead to satisfaction. The quality of amenities positively and significantly influence tourist satisfaction (Sugiama et al., 2022). In addition, it is also essential to understand the target visitors of the tourism village. Knowing the characteristics of the visitors will help improve the amenities more effectively. For instance, Siwek et al. (2022) suggest that accommodating specific characteristics of visitors regarding the services and amenities helps a host, including tourism village management, fulfill tourists expectation.

Ancillary

Ancillary is a tourism component which also plays an important role in the development of tourism destination. Because this component is related to the organization and people managing the destination (Bagaihing et al., 2021), it is essential to take this aspect into account in this study. Specifically, the analysis on this component was related to the Pokdarwis of Kemiri especially the problems they faced at the time being.

One of the issues faced regarding this component was related to how to provide excellent service to the visitors. There was a review saying that it took a quite long time for the host to serve food they order. In the interview, it was revealed that the management got difficulties to handle orders especially in a big amount. For sure, the limited experience was a reasonable cause of this.

Another interesting fact was related to occupations of the members of the Pokdarwis. Most of them had to deal with their jobs outside the tourism village. This made their focus slightly divided. On one hand, they were responsible to manage the tourism village. On the other hand, however, they also had to work outside the destination.

In addition to the explanation above, the leader of the Pokdarwis also stated that they needed more supports from the policy makers such as the local government as well as other parties in partnerships beneficial to the development of the tourism village. In addition, the roles of academics were also expected to help the tourism village revive especially in the difficult condition.

There is no doubt that in tourism industry requires continues development including the capacity of human recourses (Marija et al., 2008). Besides, it is also important that tourism village development is almost always related to community-based tourism strategy that leads to sustainable tourism development (Wijaya & Sudarmawan, 2019) in which larger society in the village can give contributions to support the development (Wardani et al., 2023).

**CONCLUSIONS**

As one of tourism destinations in Jember, Kemiri Tourism Village was highly expected to contribute to the development of tourism industry in Jember. Unfortunately,
such expectation had not been achieved yet due to the fact that the tourism village was struggling to survive. Therefore, it was essential to analyze the current condition of the tourism village in order to understand more the crucial issues regarding the problems. In this case, the 4 As tourism components were utilized as the basis of analysis.

Based on the results of the analysis, the management needed to consider several issues. Regarding the attraction, it was important for the tourism village to discover distinctive characteristic(s) as the main attraction to offer. Discovering unique attractiveness could potentially attract more visitors to come. The next important issue was regarding the amenities. The fact that most of charming constructions and facilities were missing made the tourism village need to rebuild. Only, careful planning and decision regarding the construction materials were surely crucial. Several improvements were also needed such as the availability of representative parking space. In addition to those components, it is also essential to consider developing human resource capacity to improve excellent services. Widening and strengthening partnership for better networking. Regarding the accessibility, the important thing to consider was to invite more visitors to come to the destination so that Kemiri Tourism Village would get the priority from policy makers dealing with accessibility improvement.

As an important part of the conclusions, further studies are surely needed to help Kemiri Tourism Village develop in the future. Detail analysis on potential features of the destination is important to provide comprehensive maps of the tourism village so that more focused improvement can be achieved by deciding development priorities. In addition, it is also essential to help Kemiri Tourism Village reform both physically and organizationally.

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