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Sustainability Communication Based on Local Wisdom in Ecotourism Development in Waturaka Village, Ende District

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability communication practices based on local wisdom in building awareness and increasing community involvement in ecotourism management in Waturaka village, Ende Regency, are essential for building ecotourism. Local wisdom is important to sustainability communication because the Waturaka community is still traditional and highly upholds cultural values. This research aims to identify a sustainable communication model for ecotourism development in Waturaka village and identify the role of local wisdom in sustainable ecotourism development. The research uses sustainability communication, ecotourism, and local wisdom concepts. This study utilizes a qualitative approach employing the case study method. Data collection used observations, in-depth interviews, and FGDs. The results showed that horizontal, persuasive, participatory sustainability communication is used to communicate issues: (1) cultural preservation, (2) environmental preservation, (3) tourism promotion, (4) village community-based ecotourism, and (5) education for tourists. Local wisdom in the form of the "Pire" tradition, the Gawi Dance, and the cultural ritual "Pati Ka Dua Bapu Ata Mata" contribute to sustainability communication. In ecotourism development, Interpersonal and group communication carried out by various elements of society can run harmoniously and inclusively. Sustainability communication has an impact on changes in the behaviour of all stakeholders.

Keywords: Ecotourism, harmonious, inclusiveness, local wisdom, sustainability communication

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia can potentially develop ecotourism because of its unique culture, nature, and biodiversity. However, ecotourism management must consider aspects of ecotourism and sustainability communication in the ESG framework.

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Tourism problems in Indonesia are (1) conflicting regulations and policies at tourist attractions, (2) the quality of human resources, (3) the packaging of tourist attractions, (4) limited product diversification, (5) lack of communication and publication, (6) lack of attention to environmental aspects, (7) inadequate Tourism Infrastructure (Nugroho, 2020).

The success of ecotourism depends on local community participation, effective communication, environmental education, cultural conservation, and economic improvement of local communities. Sustainability communication in ecotourism needs to be carried out by relevant stakeholders such as local government, tourism offices, village tourism awareness groups, village heads, and community members affected by ecotourism. The quality of communication plays an essential role in building a shared understanding of expectations and needs (Albu, 2015). The study shows that tourism companies must communicate sustainability work to stakeholders to create value (Bogren & Sörensson, 2021).

According to Genç (2017), communication about sustainability refers to exchanging and debating information, interpretations, and opinions about sustainability issues. Issues are transformed and framed in horizontal communication, which can occur at various levels, from face-to-face interpersonal interactions to mediated mass communication.

Waturaka Village, Ende Regency, has great tourism potential because it is supported by various cultural arts, flora, and fauna, as well as an abundance of natural wealth. If managed optimally, tourism will provide benefits both economically and socially. Sustainability communication practices based on local wisdom in building awareness and increasing community involvement in ecotourism management in Waturaka village are critical to sustainable ecotourism. Local wisdom is essential to sustainability communication because the Waturaka community is still traditional and highly upholds its cultural values.

This study examines sustainability communication by tourism awareness groups and village-related stakeholders in the context of nature conservation, cultural preservation, and organic farming. The research aims to identify how tourism awareness groups and ecotourism village administrators communicate sustainability issues related to nature conservation, tourism promotion and management, cultural preservation, and organic agriculture. It is essential to communicate with stakeholders to ensure sustainable ecotourism. Sustainability communication aims to make residents, tourists, tourism awareness groups, traditional leaders, religious leaders, and village administrators aware of the importance of maintaining the sustainability of tourist attractions, environmentally friendly agriculture, preserving local culture and wisdom, and the availability of organic products and the sustainability of their marketing. In addition, researchers will identify the involvement of village administrators to encourage interactive dialogue between various relevant stakeholders.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research on participatory communication in ecotourism development uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to examine cases causally by explaining the relationship between one thing and another. Data collection used observation, in-depth interviews, and FGDs. We conducted interviews with 10 participants on July 18–20, 2023. Participants in the research were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The criteria for participants are those involved in ecotourism development and communication (Initiator of Village Ecotourism, Head of Waturaka Village, Traditional Leaders, Agrotourism Coordinator, Homestay Manager, Guide Coordinator, Chairman of Pokdarwis). The location of Waturaka Village was chosen because it is a village that has developed diverse ecotourism activities such as Kelimutu nature conservation, organic agrotourism, cultural preservation, and community-based homestay development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sustainable Ecotourism Implementation in Waturaka Village

Waturaka Village is one of the villages that has developed village- and community-based sustainable ecotourism. This village is located about 54 KM from Ende City. Most of the people in this village adhere to the Catholic religion and are of the Lio tribe. They still firmly adhere to their ancestors' traditions, values, and beliefs.

Waturaka Village develops a community-based ecotourism village. Ecotourism is developed independently by involving various elements of society, starting from village heads, tourism awareness groups, Empowerment of Family Welfare (PKK) activists, traditional leaders, religious leaders, village unit business entities and village youth. The central tourism concept being developed is sustainable ecotourism through nature conservation; organic farming for agrotourism that sells the concept of agricultural activities such as rice farming activities, Kelimutu natural tourism; Liasembe hot springs, Kolorongo hot springs, Mutulo'o hot steam source, and Muru Keba waterfall; environmentally friendly homestay with nuances of local wisdom, preservation of cultural rituals and arts, development of cultural products (weaving) and preservation of traditional houses.

This research finds four sustainability dimensions: (1) Environment: natural conservation of Kelimutu Lake, organic farming, and organic catfish cultivation; (2) Culture: preservation of traditional rituals, arts (dances, musical instruments, myths, songs) and local products (weaving), traditional musical instruments "Sato". The Gawi dance has been preserved from generation to generation. It is practised in every cultural ritual, (3) Society: Community empowerment, residents become tourism actors, and (4) Ecolodges/ Homestays: Waturaka Village now has 17 Homestays prepared as lodging so that tourists linger in Waturaka Village.

Sustainability Communication Model Based on Local Wisdom for Ecotourism Development

The findings show that Waturaka Village's sustainability communication communicates matters related to (1) cultural preservation, such as dance, musical instruments, traditional rituals, and folk legends (folklore, myths); (2) environmental conservation including natural conservation of Lake Kelimutu, waterfalls, hot springs, organic farming and organic catfish cultivation; (3) Ecotourism Management related to integrated and holistic tourism promotion using websites; (4) development of village community-based ecotourism programs; and (5) information and education to foreign tourists about the importance of appreciating local culture, utilizing home stays and living experiences with local communities.

Issues are transformed and framed in village meetings through horizontal, interpersonal, and group communication. Interpersonal and group communication tends to be done because the residents of Waturaka village are still traditional and adhere to kinship culture. Group communication was carried out at the Waturaka Village office and attended by village heads, Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), traditional leaders, religious leaders, Empowerment of Family Welfare (PKK) activists, village youth, and Village Unit Business Entities.

Traditional media, for example: 1) the cultural ritual "Pati Ka Dua Bapu Ata Mata", is used for education and gratitude. This ritual is full of meaningful messages of respect for God, ancestors, and the universe, as well as educational facilities related to the importance of caring for nature; 2) the Pire ritual, used as a means for the Pire community to respect and protect nature so that it is not damaged. The "pire" tradition is carried out at the beginning of October. Residents cannot do any activities outside the home for one week. People are not allowed to go to the garden, burn or make a fire in the garden, and not allowed to dry clothes.

Sustainability communication carried out by ecotourism development stakeholders in Waturaka village is deliberative and transformative communication. In a deliberative context, group communication in ecotourism development makes choices regarding issues, problems, and solutions. They use dialogue and bottom-up communication. Decision-making is carried out through consensus deliberation from all participants involved. The relationship between humans and nature is an essential aspect of dialogue. It is even regulated through a traditional ritual called " Pire". Moral values such as justice from the economic aspect obtained from ecotourism profits must be shared somewhat with the community.

Newig et al. (2013) state that a consultative, horizontal, and many-to-many communication direction characterizes communication about sustainability. The function of communication is for consideration, intersubjective/joint production, and concepts/frames. The measure of effectiveness is discourse-oriented, as well as the quality of the discourse and the suitability of the concept for sustainability. It is in line with the concept of Netwig

et al. (2013) that sustainability communication practised by the ecotourism community is characterized by consultative, horizontal, and many-to-many communication direction and aims to provide consideration and orientation to sustainability discourse and is dialogical. This communication practice has provided knowledge, understanding, and awareness for the ecotourism community, including foreign and local tourists. The ecotourism community has practised sustainable ecotourism by involving community participation.

This definition of sustainability and sustainability communication aligns with SDGs, emphasizing the relevance of actions taken by all regions to meet the needs of all people. Sustainability is an issue in all dimensions of media communication: media production, media content, media reception, and media practices (Kannengießer, 2023). The concept and practice of sustainability communication in the context of ecotourism development in Waturaka village align with the SDGs. This practice manifests in traditional and modern communication media, content, discourse, and inclusive and egalitarian relationships between communication participants.

Sustainability communication carried out by ecotourism development stakeholders in Waturaka village is deliberative and transformative communication. They use dialogue and bottom-up communication. Decision-making is carried out through consensus deliberation from all participants involved. Sustainable communication practices play a vital role in achieving SDGs. Through communication practices related to ecotourism hunting, tourism awareness groups and village officials have built awareness and encouraged active participation of tourism communities, including residents, to achieve sustainable ecotourism goals. In addition, communication practices have facilitated collaboration between tourism communities. This collaboration is essential to achieve SDG 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and provides access to justice for all.

CSR is a foundation for organizations to practice actions that positively impact related stakeholders. The public must know and understand these actions through sustainability communication practices. In the context of this study, the development of ecotourism-based communities in Waturaka village is a responsible development practice carried out by the local government, village government and tourism awareness groups. The sustainable ecotourism program and its management have been communicated through transparent, inclusive, dialogical communication and attention to local wisdom. It provides social significance in community empowerment where the community is actively involved in developing tourist villages, cultural preservation and solidarity. The economic significance is in the form of developing local businesses such as homestays and souvenir shops.

CONCLUSION

Communication about sustainability related to nature conservation, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and eco-lodges or homestays is characterized by a consultative,

horizontal, and many-to-many communication direction. The function of communication is to consider intersubjective/joint production and framing of sustainability issues in the context of ecotourism. The local wisdom acknowledged by the Lio tribe in Waturaka village in the form of values, norms, beliefs, and customs contributes to message factors and changes in attitudes and behaviour. The local wisdom contributes to changes in the behaviour of residents, tourists (on trips), attitudes, behaviour throughout stakeholders, and behaviour among residents outside the Waturaka village area.

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