Towards a common goal for a sustainable tourism destination: Case study of Biak Numfor, Papua, Indonesia

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Abstract. This paper examines stakeholders’ perceptions of sustainability in Biak Numfor, Papua, Indonesia. The study reviews opinions of site-specific sustainability aspects and assesses their perceptions of sustainability against a common goal of the Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC). Meanwhile, a tourism destination is aware and takes full account of sustainability tourism for its current and future thinking towards economic, social and environmental impact, the industry, the environment and host community, and addressing visitor needs. However, few structures of the criteria towards a common goal for GSTC destination criteria are still undermined. Qualitative research is carried out by performing a stakeholders’ Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Biak Numfor, Papua. Systematic approaches and thematic analysis are conducted to reveal the four critical awareness of sustainability issues. In the long course, this awareness may lead to changes in tourism sustainable development preferences such as accessibility, infrastructures and destination management, and planning (destination promotion; inspirational leaders; and community awareness).

Keywords: sustainable tourism, destination management, Global Sustainability Tourism Council (GSTC)

1. Introduction

The GSTC criteria were created to provide a common understanding of sustainable tourism [1]. The GSTC destinations criteria (GSTC-D) are the minimum that any tourism destination should aspire to reach. These criteria apply to Indonesia’s variety of tourism destinations that are potential and full of meaning. As the national economy in a future would no longer rely on the oil and gas contribution, the strategic plan of Ministry of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia (BAPPENAS) for the year of 2014 emphasized that the tourism industry would have a strategic position in various development policies [2]. Therefore, the Indonesia tourism sector might become an important industry that could sustain the country’s economic development.

Indeed, a crucial aspect that must be considered to optimize tourism contribution to national development is the transformation and management of tourism destinations. There are problems in terms of governance such as the lack of synchronization and coordination between stakeholders, partial development thinking and action, various limited options and offering on tourism products, less
Information Communication and Technology (ICT) application, a limited skillful resource on human and general services, and lack of socialization for investment regulations at the regional level [3].

Biak Numfor Regency is one amongst the regencies that shown their commitment and signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia to attract more visitation. For example, in world war II, the district was used as a defense headquarters of the allied forces to defeat Japanese forces. Thus, the Mokmer airstrip now becomes the district’s international airport named Frans Kaisiepo. It remains the historical tourism heritages until today [4]. The airport is located in the northern part of Yapen Island in Cenderawasih Bay. Geographically, the location is quite center at $0^\circ\ 21'-1^\circ\ 31'\ LS$ and $134^\circ\ 47'-136^\circ\ 48'\ BT$. Moreover, Biak Numfor Regency covers $21,572$ km² consisting of the land area of $3,130$ km² and in the form of oceans for the remaining. In comparison, for the Supiori Regency in the north, the other borders of Biak Numfor regency are Yapen Strait in the south, West Papua province in the west, and the Pacific Ocean in the east sides.

Furthermore, Biak Numfor Regency would be the potential for a nature tourism destination, particularly on marine tourism products. For instance, fisheries to attract a tourist since the regency’s marine resources provide various kind of fish. Additionally, the astonishing natural landscape beautified by white sandy beaches with the panorama of clear seawater. While, the other potential tourist objects might be developed through a cluster of Padaido Islands, which offer an underwater beauty scenery along with its various types of fish and colorful coral reefs. Hence, a heritage tourism attraction would also be possible to suggest since the Cenderawasih Museum and Japanese cave brought a collective memory for World War II history [3].

Although the ongoing debate on the role of sustainable development has long existed, and the number of theoretical models have been developed to explain destination competitiveness [5, 6, 7, 8]. However, the call for a deeper empirical test and empirical evidence of sustainability’s role in explaining the competitiveness of a destination has partly overlooked. Thus, the biggest challenge to governance and implement successful sustainable tourism is the need for a paradigm shift from a tourism destination developer. The requirement paradigm is not limited to identify a success factor in the economic scope but includes environmental conservation, culture, and social welfare [5, 6]. Certainly, the paradigm shift of thinking is not enough. Still, it requires a strong commitment and a concrete guideline from the managers and stakeholder’s participation to accomplish a sustainable development target such as GSTC-D.

Therefore, this study aims to identify and understand factors affecting the development of sustainable tourism destinations in Biak Numfor Regency from the perspective of tourism stakeholders. It is to assess, accelerate, and implement the GSTC-D common goals since the site-specific sustainability aspects are hard to be put as a topic discussion.

2. Literature review
2.1 Tourism destination

Theoretically, Cook, Hsu, and Marqua [9] and Buhalis [10] argued that destination as a geographical region understood by visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning. Moreover, Cooper, Fletcher, and Gilbert [11] said destinations were a focus of facilities and services designed to meet tourists’ needs. Whereas, Hu and Ritchie [12] conceptually thought about destinations as a package of tourism facilities and services, consisting of some multidimensional attributes. Therefore, tourism destinations are understood as geographical areas seen as unique entities. It is with a political framework and regulations for tourism planning and marketing requiring good governance for an optimum result.

In this sense, the reality of tourism governance practices encourages various initiatives to improve the quality of management and develop the competitiveness of tourism destinations. Indicators of the low quality of management of tourism destinations can be seen from several governance practices that have not worked optimally. It is because the scale of tourism is still low. Tourism destinations are formed from the construction of space, social, cultural, environmental, and tourism resources that are
interrelated and complementary to create a tourist’s experience. Consequently, destination development would be more effective through various stakeholders’ involvement to upsurge the intensity of tourism activities. Reflection on good governance and changes of paradigm to tourism destinations approach is needed to create a quality control, growth in a tourism multiplier effect, awareness of the environment, and social risk management.

2.2 Sustainable tourism

On the economic benefits, tourism development might be prescribed for a panacea on social and economic problems since the sustainable tourism focuses and assesses on balancing its development strategy through community, habits and various environmental concerns [13]. Furthermore, sustainable tourism is also considered a form of tourism development that takes a full account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts, addressing visitors’ needs, the industry, the environment, and host communities [14].

Even though tourism scholars have been trying to describe sustainable tourism development (STD) [15, 16], there is no fixed definition and concept for so-called STD [17] since each of a tourism destination is unique [18]. It leads to the indiscriminate and unplanned growth of tourism infrastructure in many countries and promotes a negative effect in the form of social and environmental degradation. In contrast, this phenomenon encourages tourism developers to practice green and sustainable tourism for a better future, such as an approach and promoting green tourism in the urban city [19].

Contemporary, in respect of this study and terms of governance and guidance for a successful sustainable tourism destination, GSTC prepared two sets of criteria. First, GSTC industry criteria (for hotels and tour operators were related to the sustainable management of the private travel industry, focusing currently on hotels and tour operators. Second, GSTC-D criteria were related to the sustainable management of tourism destinations [20]. The GSTC criterion is the minimum effort that every tourism management organization needs to achieve an effort to gain a general understanding of STD practice. In particular, GSTC-D aims to meet an interdisciplinary, holistic, and integrative approach that includes four main objectives. First, it is to demonstrate sustainable destination management. Second, it is to maximize social and economic benefits for local communities and minimize negative impacts. Third, it is to maximize benefits for people, visitors, and cultural heritage and minimize impacts. Fourth, it is to maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts [21]. Additionally, the roles and functions of stakeholders involved in STD could minimize environmentally negative effects and preserve cultural heritage. At the same time, it provides learning opportunities, including positive benefits for the local economy and contributing to the enhancement of local governance structures [22, 23]. The STD stakeholders would be divided into two clusters, such as primary and secondary groups categorization [22]. There are nine primary STD stakeholders, such as local government organization, competitor, destination marketing organization, hotel, population, traveler, tourist attractions operator, convention center, transportation service provider, company, and a restaurant. Meanwhile, seven groups of secondary STD stakeholders are advisory board, residents and community groups, gas station, incentive planner, media, retail outlet, and university.

In concern of destination itself, the scope and concept of the GSTC-D are broad, and the criteria apply to a wide range of destinations. It reproduces STD certification standards and best practices from different cultural and geo-political contexts towards their relevancy on various types of objectives. In particular, the GSTC-D framework is designed to guide in measuring compliance with each of the four structured criteria, as displayed in Table 1.
Table 1. The GSTC-D Framework

| SECTION A: Sustainable management | SECTION C: Cultural sustainability |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A(a) Management structure and framework | C(a) Protecting cultural heritage |
| A(b) Stakeholder engagement | C(b) Visiting cultural sites |
| A(c) Managing pressure and change | |

| SECTION B: Socio-economic sustainability | SECTION D: Environmental sustainability |
|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| B(a) Delivering local economic benefits | D(a) Conservation of natural heritage |
| B(b) Social wellbeing and impacts | D(b) Resource management |
| | D(c) Management of waste and emissions |

(Source: [20])

Importantly, a successful STD practice is not only measured by increasing the competitiveness of related destinations, but also the extent of the governance and application of the GSTC-D framework.

3. Methodology
A qualitative research methodology was utilized to extract the secondary and primary data collection resulting in an understanding from the voice of Biak Numfor regency tourism stakeholders [22]. The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted, and both primary and secondary groups of STD stakeholders in the Biak Numfor Regency participated. The list of participants is listed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Stakeholders

| Groups' Stakeholders | Stakeholders Cluster | Number of Participants |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Primary              | Local Government Organization | 2                      |
|                      | Hotel                 | 1                      |
|                      | Transportation Service Provider Company | 1                    |
| Secondary            | University/ Academia  | 2                      |
|                      | Residents and Community Groups | 1                    |
|                      | Retail Outlet         | 1                      |
|                      | Total Stakeholders    | 8                      |

Total of eight individuals categorized as primary and secondary tourism stakeholders in the Biak Numfor Regency gave their perceptions from the supply side. Half of the respondents in the primary stakeholders represented local government organizations and hotel and transportation service provider company. Meanwhile, the other half of FGD participants categorized as secondary groups of Biak Numfor regency stakeholders came from university/ academia, residents and community groups, and retail outlet. They were all given a topic surrounding the critical awareness of tourism products on sustainability issues towards the GSTC-D framework.
The topics of discussion included:

- What was the role of tourism for the welfare of related destinations? What were the stakeholders’ assessments of the current tourism activities?
- Did existing tourism apply the principles of sustainable tourism? Give the reason.
- According to the FGD participants, who was responsible for managing tourism in the destination?
- What was the performance of tourism managers?
- What were the characteristics or capabilities that tourism managers had to have in the destination to realize sustainable tourism?
- Regarding the mental revolution in government, what was the kind of mental revolution that could be realized?
- What constraints could hamper the development of sustainable tourism in this destination?
- Were there any positive case studies of sustainable tourism in the related destination?
- Were there any negative case studies of sustainable tourism in the related destinations?

The result of the discussion was recorded and transferred into a word in a paper. The narrative was thematically analyzed according to the GSTC-D Framework.

4. Result and discussions

After reviewing and analyzing the result of the FGD, Biak Numfor regency’s tourism stakeholders saw tourism as something that could be beneficial for the economic growth in the regency. This response came for the following question regarding the role of tourism for the welfare of related destinations. The core of the answer was if tourism was well planned, the tourism sector could increase investment in the industry itself and grow the economic benefits for the related destinations. It was because of the opening opportunities for employment and public participation in this industry. This answer was in line with the view based on the economic benefits, tourism development prescribed as a panacea for many social and economic problems [19].

The participants were asked about their assessments of the current tourism activities. The response showed that the stakeholders understood Biak’s current tourism activities could have a positive impact. They agreed that weaknesses appeared towards Biak Numfor’s tourism conditions, mainly on the tourism policy and regulation, coordination, synergy, tourism products variety, infrastructures, and human resources. In short, there was homework for Biak Numfor’s tourism products that needed to be developed.

The next question was asking about the opinion on applying the principles of sustainable tourism. The response was very clear. The concept of sustainable tourism principles had started to be recognized by the stakeholders. However, it had not been implemented yet due to the quite stagnant tourism activities in Biak Numfor Regency. Thus, it was important for the destination to decide on an approach of sustainable concept that might work successfully. In this sense, the GSTC training module suggested the minimum effort for every tourism management organization considered, including Biak Numfor’s tourism developer [22]. It was to take an interdisciplinary, holistic, and integrative approach that included four main objectives. The objectives were to demonstrate sustainable destination management; maximize social and economic benefits for local communities and minimize negative impacts; maximize benefits for people, visitors, and cultural heritage and minimize impacts; and maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.

Furthermore, the FGD participants were also asked about who they thought was responsible for managing tourism in a destination. It was not very surprising that they mentioned that every stakeholder was responsible for STD. It matched with the governance of sustainable tourism destinations, in which the participation from tourism stakeholders was needed. They were asked to apply the STD indicators and criteria adopted from the GSTC to be certified since Tkaczynski et al. [22] mentioned the roles and functions of stakeholder’s involvement. However, they expected that the central government in Jakarta, the capital city of Indonesia, needed to have more attention. Thus, they also expressed that most of the tourism managers in the Biak Numfor Regency were not working towards the same goals and lack of
coordination and synergy between them. This condition had led to the unintegrated implementation of STD practice. The required condition was the optimum synergy of the tourism development program in the Biak Numfor Regency, which might highlight the potential contribution from each of the stakeholder’s expertise in the tourism sector industry.

In concern of the skill and characteristics needed for tourism managers, the FGD participants thought the following: leadership competency, learner, high determination, high motivation, and integrity, could gain respect from the community, walk the talk. These were the skills and characteristics to shift to a new paradigm and produce a mental revolution in managing the destination towards the GSTC-D framework. The change of paradigm in looking at tourism, the willingness to take risks, entrepreneurs, and always putting the community’s benefits on top of personal or group benefits were some ideas that come out from the FGD participants about the mental revolution in sustainable tourism management.

Accordingly, the FGD participants also realized that the constraints of applying GSTC-D framework and the successful STD practice in Biak Numfor Regency were lack of political commitment of the central government and transparency on regulation and policy, limited human resources, lack of knowledge about sustainable tourism and its benefits, minimum participation from a local community.

Nonetheless, despite the current condition of tourism development in the Biak Numfor Regency, the participants are still certain to see and look for a positive effort. Biak Numfor’s stakeholders take the initiative to commit to the implementation of sustainable tourism (signed the MOU with the Indonesia Ministry of Tourism). A group of people is concerned about tourism in Biak Numfor and willing to be part of the system and develop sustainable tourism in Biak. Unfortunately, the participants also show that the practice of sustainable tourism is hard to be implemented.

5. Conclusion, limitation of the study, and recommendations for future research
The results of the study show the FGD participants who are the stakeholders of Biak Numfor tourism destination. They see and understand that the current condition of coordination at the regional level has not gone well. The desired conditions should be better practice and coordination at the regional level.

The need for more stakeholder’s involvement and supporting the central government program should be done. It is also found that the current condition of understanding of destination governance in tourism development is still not optimal and integrated. This condition causes the overlapping of central and regional authorities. The desired conditions are the clear authority in destination governance and sufficient funding through national government funding or other funds. It is necessary to increase understanding of destination governance and coordination to harmonize tourism development perceptions in Biak Numfor Regency. In the private sector, the results are obtained that, currently, each stakeholder is still running alone. This condition has led to the unintegrated implementation of tourism development. The required condition is the synergy of the tourism development program in the Biak Numfor Regency, which can enhance the potential of each stakeholder in the private sector. To conclude, a very high and serious effort is needed to develop tourism in Biak Numfor.

The limitation of this study lies in the available time for collecting the data. Due to a limited number of FGD’s participants and the frequency of the discussion, the next research is suggested to get more participation from all primary and secondary tourism stakeholders.

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