

AMANWANA RESORT: INSPIRING NATURE CONSERVATION AND COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

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The triple bottom line of economy, ecology and socio-cultural benefits is the means to sustainable tourism, suggesting that the success of a tourism company is not only defined by the monetary gains but also by the impacts that the company's activities have on environment and society as a whole. Recognizing the sustainability of its operation rests on its ability to work harmoniously in its environmental and social settings, the Amanwana Resort management has particularly focus on direct and indirect contributions to natural environment conservation and community empowerment. As an ecotourism-based resort located in Moyo Island where the greater terrestrial part is a Hunting Park and the surrounding body of water is a Marine Recreational Park which formed the major tourism attractions, Amanwana's planning and development of the attractions were concentrated on the need to co-exist with the fragile natural environment. Amanwana's pro-environment commitment was demonstrated by minimum alteration of local surroundings, environmental-friendly structures, the Moyo Conservation Fund to preserve forest and coral reefs habitats, nature trail walks, and employment of local villagers to protect nature from illegal logging, illegal fishing and destruction. The company's pro-social commitment was indicated by the facilities and infrastructural development in the nearby village and local employment. As much as 85-95% of the total 120 Amanwana staffs were Indonesian, and of these 35% were locals. Residents also enjoyed the additional economic benefits of tourists staying at Amanwana Resort. Almost 20 years after its establishment, no natural disasters, ecological disturbance and social conflicts related to Amanwana Resort have been recorded.

sustainable tourism, Amanwana Resort, conservation, community empowerment, pro socio-environment

INTRODUCTION

The natural attractiveness of a particular tourism destination is an important attraction factor that is often used to target nature-aware tourists, as cited in various studies (Victor, 1989; Sunkar, Rachmawati, & Cereno, 2013; Težak, Šergo, & Poropat, 2012) many stressing the importance of 'nature' as a travel motive (Van der Merwe & Saayman, 2008; Jang & Wu, 2006; Swanson & Horridge, 2006). In addition, Chan and Baum (2007) add that local culture, life-style and eco-activities are other important pull factors in nature-based tourism. However, one should keep in mind that the attractiveness of a destination or site will attract more visitors and it is, paradoxically, more likely therefore that the ecological integrity of that destination could be under threat from growing anthropogenic pressure. On the other hand, tourists who are deeply attracted by the destination's environment should be more concerned with environmental issues and show a greater tendency to pro-environmental behavioural conduct (Berenguer, Corraliza, & Martin, 2005); Dolnicar & Leisch, 2008; Cheng, Wu, & Huang, 2012). The emotional and cognitive bonds that individuals form with a place foster a sense of stewardship or

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desire to protect and care for that place (Halpenny, 2006). Therefore, the challenge for a tourism destination/site is to use its 'attractiveness' to prevent deterioration of the natural environment, where in the process, the need to satisfy local welfare considerations is a prerequisite to achieving resource protection.

Areas with high bio-cultural diversity are in growing demand as nature-tourism sites and destinations, as shown by the increasing number of visits to protected areas (Sunkar, Rachmawati, & Cereno, 2013; Weaver & Lawton, 2001). Similarly, there are an increasing number of tourists who have greater concern for the environment and who appreciate participatory, experiential, educational and conservation-enhancing vacations (Bennett, 1992; Boo, 1993; Burr, 1991; Crawford, 1991 in Yusof & Jamaludin, 2013). These studies indicate that tourism is a key driver of social-ecological systems in iconic destinations, and can be further exploited to maximize the benefits of nature-based tourism for conservation, maintenance of ecological integrity of the area and local economic development.

The changing attitude of tourists towards sustainable tourism and the financial benefits it provides have given birth to a green hospitality industry (Erdem & Tetik, 2013)). The increase in nature-tourism activities has boosted the development of accommodation in biologically rich areas. Being green in today's hospitality marketplace, adds value to the image of the accommodation especially with hotels and resorts (Yusof & Jamaludin, 2013). Ayala (1996) argues that ecotourism resort management should have a particular focus on best-practice environmental management, educational and interpretive components, and direct and indirect contributions to nature conservation and local development. Integrating ecosystem considerations into siting and design decisions for hotel and resort developments is thus important not only for the continued viability and conservation of the ecosystems, but also for the long-term financial success of the hotels and resorts, as often the natural setting is the very thing that pull tourists to the destination (IUCN, 2012). In fact, according to Butler (2008) if an accommodation fails to adopt environment-friendly practices, it may lose potential customers to other green operators.

Previous studies noted that if tourists are attracted by special features embedded within a destination (Borst, Miedema, Vries, Grahama, & Dongena, 2008; Lee, Huang, & Yeh, 2010), their 'place attachment' would be enhanced (Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Lee, 2001) and they are therefore more likely to exhibit environmentally responsible behaviour (Cheng et al., 2012; Li, Liu, & Liu, 2012). This is supported by Clayton and Opatow's (2003) theory that pro-environmental action is facilitated when individuals perceive nature as a moral entity rather than just a resource and when social environments are designed to nurture a feeling of connectedness with nature and when social contexts support pro-environmental identities. An eco-resort has the potential to be an agent of change for pro-environmental behaviour by assisting visitors and local residents to become more 'environmenterate' (environmentally literate) through building on local experiences and connectedness to the local surroundings.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research was to assess the best practice initiatives of sustainability in the successful development and management of Amanwana Eco-Resort.

RESEARCH METHOD

Study site

Amanwana ("peaceful forest") is the only resort located on the Island of Moyo in the District of Sumbawa of Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Timor) Province, Indonesia. Moyo Island is one of the tourist destination site that is administratively located in Labuan Aji and Sebotok Villages. The majority of the Island of Moyo, including its surrounding

water body is legally protected as a Marine Nature Tourism Park and a Hunting Park. Amanwana Resort is located in the buffer area and adjacent to the Marine Tourism Park (Figure 1). Amanwana operates under the management of Aman Resort.



Figure 1 Natural setting of Amanwana Resort overlooking the Marine Nature Tourism Park

Data collection method and analysis

This research is descriptive in nature. Cross-method triangulation for social-related data and information was used, and consisted of interviews, observation and literature studies. Interviews were conducted on June 19th-23th of 2014, with the management staff of Amanwana Resort, two households of Brang Sedo Hamlet, the Head of Labuan Aji Village, the Head of the Village Representative Body (BPD) of Labuan Aji, a fisherman from Sebotok Village and staff of the SBKSDA (Sub Nature Conservation Agency), using structured in-depth interviews. Key informants in Brang Sedo Hamlet and in Sebotok village were selected based on a convenience sampling technique (accidental sampling), i.e. they were selected based on the ease of encounter. The interview with the Head of Sebotok Village was not feasible due to wave conditions (which made it difficult for the speed boat to dock). Observation of the natural setting of the resort and the condition of the people was done by direct observation techniques, while the concentration method was conducted at night to count the number of deer present in the resort. The information gained through these interviews was supplemented by literature research in the areas of conservation related to human behaviour, tourism and protected area management. Data and information collected were analyzed descriptively.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to the study with regard to gaining responses. It was not possible to conduct direct or indirect interviews with the guests of the Amanwana Resort because of the Company's privacy policy of respecting guests' privacy, to allow them to feel undisturbed. It was also difficult to get any response from the management, because of the confidentiality of the resort's operation activities.

Compliance of Amanwana Resort to Biodiversity Principles

Blessed with natural and cultural diversity, Indonesia is an excellent place to experience real nature-based tourism. Compared to other South-east Asian countries, Indonesia possesses the highest number of protected areas (Sunkar et al., 2013), as current and potential ecotourism destination. This is supported by the study of Russell et al (1995) (in Erdem & Tetik, 2013) who discover that many eco-lodges were developed in or adjacent to protected areas, with the surrounding natural beauty as the key to the success

of the operation. Furthermore, Bricker et al., (2004) (in Erdem and Tetik, 2013) who study the number of eco-lodges in 60 countries, reveal that Indonesia has the largest concentration of eco-lodges (14%). This highlighted the importance of maintaining bio-cultural attractiveness for development of Indonesian nature-based tourism.

The development of eco-accommodation is often associated with schemes that seek to reduce energy consumption, promote water and waste efficiency, and to conserve and enhance natural settings, as seen in some literature on best-practice eco-accommodation and principles of eco-lodge design (Nair, 2005; Erdem & Tetik, 2013; Kavanagh, 2002; Jamaludin & Yusof, 2013; and LNTA-ADB, 2005). This paper will only highlight key factors that are vital in the management of Amanwana Resort with respect to protected area management emphasizing biodiversity importance and local development. Water, energy and waste consumption efficiencies are beyond the discussion of this paper.

The Biodiversity Principles for Siting and Design of Hotels and Resorts (IUCN, 2012) are comprised of five principles that were established to ensure that biodiversity and associated social impact were addressed in hotel and resort development. This is very important especially with nature-based tourism, as the attractiveness of the destination rests on its ability to work harmoniously in its environmental and social settings.

Principle 1: Adopt an ecosystem-based approach in tourism development planning

Removal of vegetation to make way for accommodation can lead to environmental degradation such as flooding, increased erosion, landslides, loss of soil fertility, lowering of the water table and siltation of rivers, lakes and other water bodies. Furthermore, the loss of critical habitats as a result of land clearing can severely impact plant and animal species. Therefore successful land-use plans will mean that tourism development must be limited and shaped by environmental and social criteria. Land-use plans should specify where tourism can be developed and to what degree, ensuring that appropriate types of tourism development are sited in appropriate places. This will prompt developers to be site in appropriate areas and provide support for key conservation areas.

Amanwana Resort has legal rights as the concession holder of the Moyo Island Marine Tourism Park and Hunting Park management published by the Ministry of Forestry Decree No. 313 / Kpts-II / 92 dated March 4, 1992. In addition, no tenurial conflicts have been recorded, meaning that de facto, the presence of Amanwana Resort as the concession holder is known and recognized by the public and other interested parties and that it has a certainty in terms of territorial management, organization, adequacy of human resources, and infrastructure management. In line with the resort's belief in conserving nature, all development is controlled by the management.

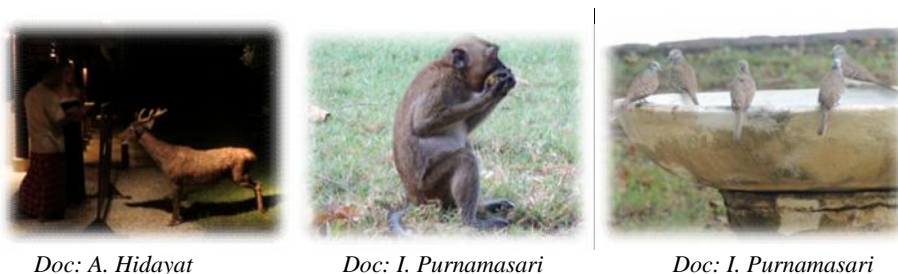
Amanwana Resort is located in the kind of natural environments that appeal the most to tourists including beaches, coastal zones, islands, primary forests and savannas, which are also some of the most environmentally significant and fragironmentsile en. Nevertheless, almost 20 years after Amanwana's establishment, no natural disasters, ecological disturbance and social conflicts have been recorded which suggests that the management of Amanwana has considered ecosystem-based approach in its tourism development planning.

Principle 2: Manage impacts on biodiversity from hotel development and attempt to achieve an overall positive contribution

Wildlife viewing

Moyo Island is inhabited by a unique mix of wild animals from deer and wild boars to macaques, not to mention the wide variety of birds, as well as the diversity of marine life. Amanwana guests are shown being entertained by the visits of some of these wildlife (Figure 2). At night time, deer could be observed congregating close to the restaurant

where guests can interact with them, and during morning to afternoon, the guests can laugh at the activities of macaques playing around. A quality focus is paramount and the provision of a range of experiences is critical.



Doc: A. Hidayat

Doc: I. Purnamasari

Doc: I. Purnamasari

Figure 2. Wildlife viewing in Amanwana Resort

Understanding the effects of human disturbance is critical for effective management and conservation of wildlife. Wildlife may become more attentive due to human disturbance, which could result in decreased forage intake and reduced reproductive success (Ciuti, Northrup, Muhly, Simi, Musiani, Pitt, & Boyce, 2012). The deer and macaques were observed to feed naturally around Amanwana Resort. Based on the information of Amanwana management, the number of deer that like to visit the guest involves 12 individuals. It is unlikely that the management staff conducted regular counts of the number of deer present in their area. Therefore, the fact that the total number stated by Amanwana management was an exact match to the number of deer found based on the concentration count method, indicated that the animals were not having problem in reproducing nor disturbed by the human presence. Although the numbers of macaques were not counted, it could be seen that they had no reproduction problem. A good indication was that on every macaques group, babies and juveniles were often observed easily. The Amanwana management has considered measures such as creating 'biological corridors' and avoiding impacting on areas that function as the macaques' home ranges. Since its development, there has been no human-wildlife conflicts sighted around Amanwana Resort.

Moyo Conservation Fund

The principle of tourism providing a return to the conservation is clearly evident in the Moyo Conservation Fund, which was founded in May, 2008, and which enabled guests to contribute to the conservation efforts and community work on the island. According to the Amanwana management, the Moyo Conservation Fund proactively protects the 12,000 hectares of the resort through conservation projects including: rescuing and monitoring turtle eggs; restoring damaged coral reefs; land and sea patrols, encouraging the subsequent breeding of deer in their sanctuary at the resort; educating the local people and visitors on conservation and community work; as well as building a school in the nearby village of Labuan Aji.

Educational Nature Activities

These were in line with the principle that implementation of nature conservation education has the potential to educate tourists and local communities to care about and support conservation efforts. This was also supported by studies by WWF-Indonesia (2009) and Biggs, Ban and Hall (2012) that suggested that tourism businesses that are actively involved in awareness-raising activities in the form of conservation education

can contribute to conservation by raising awareness and supports for the protection of nature which has high biological, ecological and historical values.

Amanwa Resort offered other nature activities which involve getting connected to the nature. All offered a variety of on-site experiences, which involved seeing and understanding the natural environment. Such activities allowed the fine views out to sea, and excellent opportunities for observing Moyo's wildlife and birds. Nature walks and water activities offered by the resort (Aman Resort, 2014) include:

1. *Amanwana bay beach* - A one-kilometre walk. Deer, monkeys and sea eagles are often spotted. As the tide rises, schools of small reef sharks herding fish into the shallows might be seen.
2. *Crocodile Head* - presents a panoramic view of the Flores Sea.
3. *Amanwana ridge* - fine views out to sea, and excellent opportunities for observing Moyo's wildlife and birds.
4. *Coastal cliff mountain bike trail* - spectacular views of the rugged coastline and the Flores Sea. Monkeys, birds and wild boar may be seen.
5. *Bat Cave* - Along with seven species of bat, monitor lizards and the occasional python may also be spotted.
6. *Waterfall* - magnificent series of waterfalls cascading into terraced, limestone pools ideal for swimming.
7. *Brang Sedo* - overview of the various vegetation such as teak, tamarind, fig, coral, banyan and other native trees.
8. *Fishing* -regular catches include Spanish mackerel, dog-tooth tuna, giant trevally, barracuda, sailfish and the occasional juvenile black marlin.
9. *Fish feeding* - every afternoon, Amanwana's beach boys feed the fish from the jetty. Guests can view up close the wide variety of tropical fish that inhabit the local reefs;
10. *Kayaking* - 'Turtle Street' and the surrounding reefs are easily reached from Amanwana
11. *Diving and snorkeling* - Amanwana has its own dive centre and offers PADI certified dive courses, so divers at all levels can experience the magnificent under water world.
12. *Cruises* - a number of boats for cruising, fishing and diving to explore nearby coral coves and beaches, ideal for shell collecting, beachcombing, snorkelling and sunbathing

Protection of land and sea from illegal logging, illegal fishing and destruction

Act No. 27/2007 on the Management of Coastal Areas and Small Islands states that coastal areas and small islands are natural resources that require maintenance for their preservation and utilization for the welfare of the people. Wahyudin (2004); Friliyantini (2009); Sproule (1996) cited in Zuhriana, Alikodra, Adiwibowo, & Hartrisari (2013), and Kusriani et. al. (2013) conclude that the marine tourism business will grow and develop optimally, and will promote the economic improvement of the local community in line with environmental conservation. There have been various cases of small island tourist successes which were able to produce economic benefits to local communities and have helped preserve the surrounding protected area (Sharia 2011; Panos 1995 in Sugiarti 2000). Basically, people would make more efforts to conserve when they believed their contribution made a difference in alleviating the crisis (Van Vugt, 2009).

Following the establishment of the resort, a reduction in the amount of logging on community land, and the banning of fish bombing in several reef areas were noticed, and the effects felt by the communities living in Labuan Aji and Sebotok Villages. Prior to the Amanwana Resort establishment, fish bombing was often encountered and was done by non-local fishermen. Based on the description of the Head of Labuan Aji BPD, the communities were assisted by the presence of the Amanwana sea patrols which helped

repelled fishermen that carried out fish-bombing. A reduction in the amount of illegal timber extraction was also observed following regular monitoring by Amanwana patrols. The presence of Amanwana built a strong commitment in the local communities to protect their natural surroundings. As stated by Hardy and Van Vugt (2006) and Milinski, Semmann, Krambeck & Marotzke (2006), when people identify themselves with a social group, they are more concerned about their in-group reputation and this can promote pro-environmental action.

Principle 3: Design with nature and adopt nature-based solutions

The concept of ecotourism should form the core of resort development (Makes & Rahmafritria, 2013) and should emphasize on the aspects of tourists' pleasure and experiences, local society involvement, conservation and also education about the environment. The provision of a natural setting was significant in all cases. The tents were established with good views and with an attractive outlook. Such siting works with the natural setting, not against it. Openness, fresh air, local materials, form and colour, ethnic influences in shape, fittings, artefacts and art all helped to create authenticity of the area.

Minimum alteration of local surroundings

Amanwana Resort is characterised by a small number of rooms (only 21 units). It is designed to create the impression that guests are staying in a private residence. The primary focus is on providing a quality experience in a natural setting. Vegetation surrounding each tent was left intact (Figure 3), suggesting a minimum alteration of the local surroundings.



Figure 3. Semi permanent tented camps at Amanwana Resort

Environment-friendly structures

The semi-permanent tents and minimalist architectural design complemented the resort's natural and cultural setting allowing it to blend into the landscape and become integrated into the ecosystem. The tents also ensure that pollution and land contamination is reduced/minimized.

Principle 4: Respect, involve and support local communities

There is a global agreement that solutions to environmental problems must involve the public (Stern, 2000; McKenzie-Mohr, 2000). Community participation in sustainable tourism is also considered a key to the success of conservation efforts, because many locations for ecotourism activities are sites with high biodiversity and cultural value. Pretty and Smith (2003) state that many studies show increased activities in respect of natural resources conservation by the local communities in and around protected areas, where such communities have established good relationship between one individual to

another, within a group or network, as well as when their knowledge was used and developed in the planning and implementation of conservation and development activities. Therefore, income from tourism should be used to increase the income of the community around a tourist attraction site as well as assisting conservation efforts and maintenance of natural resources.

Local employment and income generation

The nature tourism business should be able to improve the economic opportunities of the surrounding communities. The hiring and management of staff, the majority of whom should be locals, is an important part of best practice management. Economically, Amanwana recruited local workers for work at the resort. Out of the total 120 employees at the resort, only 2 people who were of foreign nationals. Approximately 85-95% were citizens of Indonesia and of these 35% of them originated from Labuan Aji and Sebotok villages (the majority were from Labuan Aji Village) and comprised the largest percentage of labourers compared to those from other origins. This is a very good policy of Amanwana for establishing and improving public confidence in the company. Even at times of peak season, Amanwana would hire more of its local workforce from these two villages, especially Labuan Aji Village since it is the closest village to the Amanwana Resort. The existence of Amanwana Resort was also used by the community to sell its natural products, such as honey, fish and cashews.

Facilities and infrastructural development in the nearby village

The local communities have established a good trust with Amanwana management. This was due to the various instances of assistances given to the community development through procurements of infrastructural and human resources such as schools, health, books, teachers, and transportation. The medical assistance provided could improve the productivity of individuals who are often very financially-dependent on the condition of their health. A society that has a high level of health, accompanied by knowledge, skill and high motivation would have high productivity, which is indispensable for development.

The community was also assisted with the development of road infrastructure, particularly the road that leads to attractions such as Mata Jitu waterfall located in Labuan Aji Village, so that people could earn more income through offering ojeg (motorcycle taxi) services that transported tourists to several attractions in this village. The Brangsedo hamlet of Labuan Aji Village, has been developed as one of the nature excursion sites for the Amanwana's guests who could also enjoyed the taste of local traditional cuisine. Some enjoyed taking lunch meal at one of the local people's home (Mamah Halimah's). The trail leading to this hamlet as well as an interpretation board was maintained by the Amanwana management.

Principle 5: Build collaboration among stakeholders

Collaboration activities between tourism business and conservation management becomes very important because based on research by Fauziah (2010) and Biggs et al. (2012), the top priority in addressing the preservation of protected areas is to build and improve social networking.

The element of trust within the community in the Amanwana management was very important to allow community members to be more sensitive to the existence of the company. Trust in a managing institution plays a crucial role in managing urgent and complex environmental challenges (Van Vugt, 2009). The high level of confidence in Amanwana management was evidenced by the absence of conflict with the company to date and according to the key informants, the company has always kept its promises.

Local community trust in Amanwana guests was also quite high as evidenced by the people being open and receptive. Residents believed that visitors would not disrupt their villages, as indicated by the absence of villager-visitor conflict. In fact, the presence of tourists has motivated the development of the villages, as indicated by the development of homestays in Labuan Aji Village, ojeg organization and the arrangement of tourist attractions. In addition, the rules applied by the village for the dress code for the tourists (especially foreign tourists who make up the majority of Amanwana's guests) were followed by the tourists.

The nature of the Amanwana staff who are caring, helpful, friendly, treated guests like family, and were able to learn guests' names quickly during their stay was indicative of a management team that respects and values their staff members. Respect could be gained from trust. The villagers generally trusted Amanwana as the concession holders of the nature reserve area. Apart from the local people, Amanwana has also established a good relationship with the SBKSDA staff as the national implementing conservation body of the Moyo Island Marine Tourism Park and Hunting Park.

The high number of returning visitors to Amanwana Resort suggested that these customers found satisfaction by staying at Amanwana Resort. According to Budiono (2004), there is a significant relationship between the quality of the services provided with guests satisfaction which resulted in the maintenance of natural attractiveness of the area and comforting environment. The success of a tourism activity is thus largely determined by the level of service quality provided to the guests.

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of the nature-based tourism development in Amanwana Resort proved to be sustainable making Amanwana Resort an eco-resort that promotes sustainable, nature based eco-tourism as a strong pull for eco-tourists. The sustainable design elements of the resort and the frequency of returning visitors have given the resort a strong place attachment. Amanwana Resort has complied with biodiversity principles as the buffer zone of a national nature reserve and has shown its commitment to nature conservation and local community empowerment. Pro-environment commitment was demonstrated by minimum alteration of local surroundings, environment-friendly structures, the Moyo Conservation Fund, nature trail walks, and protection of forest and sea areas from illegal logging, illegal fishing and destruction. The company's pro-social commitment was indicated by the facilities and infrastructural development in the nearby village and by the hiring of local employees. As much as 85-95% of the total 120 Amanwana staffs were Indonesian, and of these 35% were locals. Based on the analysis of social capital in Labuan Aji and Sebotok Villages, the people were seeing the many benefits derived from the presence of Amanwana Resort, especially in improving their well-beings, in respect of social welfare and health, education, and economic prosperity. Almost 20 years after its establishment, no natural disasters, ecological disturbance or social conflict related to Amanwana Resort have been recorded.

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