



DOMESTIC MARKET DEMAND IDENTIFICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE BAMBOO ECOTOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN SEMBALUN LAWANG

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ABSTRACT

Despite its applaudable economic benefits (Fleischer & Felsenstein 2000, Goodwin 2008), over-tourism could cause detrimental effects on environment and local cultures. Ecotourism as one of the fastest growing industries in the world (UNWTO, 2001; Self et al, 2010) that balances between economic opportunity as well as cultural and natural preservation should be pervasively applied in Indonesia with abundant natural and cultural competitiveness as the third largest biodiversity in the world after Brazil and Zaire (Janita, 2012). Previous studies revealed the needs to conduct research on responsible marketing and very limited studies investigate responsible product development for bamboo ecotourism concept. Hence, this quantitative study with 64 respondents (18-53 y-o) aims at examining Indonesian domestic market needs and trends as a basis to design responsible bamboo ecotourism products as a part of responsible marketing efforts in Sembalun Lawang, Lombok, Indonesia. This study was carried out through online questionnaire by attaching short-video and description about Sembalun Lawang bamboo forest attractions for ecotourism. The research result shows that 92% of respondents found the bamboo forest is attractive and suitable for ecotourism concept. Among 18 potential activities, the study shows top five desired bamboo ecotourism activities encompassing; picture taking at natural spots, nature walk, learning about local culture on bamboo usage, learning about types and benefits of bamboo plants, and enjoying surrounding fauna and flora. Since the study is confined to Indonesian domestic market research, further research should be carried out to examine international market research trend for responsible bamboo ecotourism development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is a refutable fact that tourism has contributed to increased employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings and tax revenues (Fleischer & Felsenstein 2000, Goodwin 2008). In order to benefit communities, economically, socially and environmentally, the concept of alternative tourism (Swarbrook, 1999) including ecotourism is developed to achieve sustainable tourism goals. Ecotourism is a sustainable tourism concept that is applicable in Indonesia with abundant natural and cultural advantages as the third largest biodiversity in the world after Brazil and Zaire (Janita, 2012).

Ecotourism is a promising tourism economic segment especially as it is in line with the increasing trend of tourists' behaviors and motivations to visit wild environments that makes ecotourism is one of the fastest growing segments of tourism industry (UNWTO, 2001; Self et al, 2010). However, the control over the consistency of ecotourism development needs to be maintained through responsible marketing principles. In fact, because of the increasing market trend, ecotourism is sometimes considered as a label for a greenwashing practice which also has a negative impact on the environment and social (Self et al, 2010). Hence, ecotourism development should return to its nature with the principles of education, conservation and benefits for local communities. Nevertheless, in responsible marketing, market-demand aspects are also taken into account, balancing between market needs (market-led) and resource protection (resource-based).



Previous studies found that many ecotourism developments have not fully implemented responsible marketing principles, even their marketing schemes were considered forms of greenwashing practices. In addition, there have been limited studies focusing on sustainable bamboo ecotourism product development particularly for bamboo forests. Thus, this study aims at examining Indonesian domestic market demands for bamboo ecotourism as a basis to design its sustainable bamboo ecotourism products as a part of responsible marketing efforts in Sembalun Lawang, Lombok, Indonesia. This research was conducted to understand the market demands especially related to the potential markets' motivations by analyzing their most desired and expected activities in bamboo ecotourism and expected facilities to compliment their experiences. This research finding would be used as a basis for sustainable activities as bamboo ecotourism products in Sembalun Lawang as our research location. This research would also bring about the contribution to knowledge by giving more insights into the concept of responsible marketing especially in product development stage which is relevant for the concept of sustainable bamboo ecotourism development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism and its Principles

Ecotourism is defined by UNWTO as a tourism activity or travelling to natural places for learning, admiring and enjoying the scenery, plants, wild animals, and cultural aspects (both past and present) found in the area (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1988). The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment that benefits local communities while ensuring visitor experiences (Constantineau, 2007; Kuchment, 2008). In regards to the definitions, there are three essential aspects regarded as basic principles of ecotourism, namely a place of learning and experience (education), responsible travel (conservation / preservation of nature and culture), beneficial for local communities from an economic perspective of society. The ecotourism concept is relevant to be applied in Indonesia especially it provides opportunities for tourists to experience the uniqueness of the products and services offered by ecotourism in both terms of nature contact or people contact (Junita, 2012). Thus, research on the development of sustainable ecotourism products to fulfill the customers' demands on desired experiences as promised by ecotourism concept should be taken into account based on those three principles. Therefore, as this research focuses on bamboo ecotourism, the finding is on domestic market demands on sustainable tourism products of bamboo ecotourism based on ecotourism principles above.

Ecotourism marketing issues have been studied by many scholars. One of them is about marketing strategies on ecotourism promotion in the Himalayan State, Sikkim, India (Biswas, 2018). The research focuses on promotion effectiveness study for Sikkim ecotourism products including biking, nature walks, bird watching, rural home-stays, organic farming. In addition to the information about the product, there are also information about supporting facilities in Sikkim ecotourism encompassing nature-friendly trekking trails, signage, accurate and informative trekking maps, high quality interpretation centers which also could be applied in Sembalun bamboo ecotourism. Although the study provides the information about Sikkim product, but the focus is on promotion not on ecotourism product planning especially the initial stage on market demand research focusing on desired activities of ecotourism. Nevertheless, the study could be a commendable reference and benchmarking for the potential samplers of bamboo ecotourism products in Sembalun.

Another ecotourism marketing research was conducted in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador which aims at finding out whether the implementation of ecotourism marketing principles is consistent or it is only as a greenwashing practice (Self et al, 2010). The study is also relevant especially ecotourism responsible marketing principles have to be taken into account in this study as a foundation in order to generate ideas about potential activities in line with the principles and to avoid greenwashing practices. Hence, in addition to pay attention to the type of potential sustainable ecotourism products which could be adopted from the first study, the products have to comply with basic principles of ecotourism for the consistency while paying attention to the quality of the visitor experiences based on market demand (market-led) and availability to local resources (resource-based).

Responsible Marketing and Product Development Strategy

Responsible marketing is defined as a marketing concept that carries the principle of integrating conventional marketing concepts in general with sustainable development through balancing the needs of tourists with the protection of local resources (resource-based) in both forms of natural (environmental) and socio-cultural resources (Junita, 2012). Hence, the marketing concept has a dual responsibility including maintaining the sustainability of resources and providing a quality experience for tourists. Another definition states that responsible marketing is an effort to market sustainable products that are environmentally, socially and economically feasible (Hudson & Miller, 2005).



In its application, responsible marketing strategies need to be applied both in market analysis, segmentation, targeting, positioning, and branding (Meidan, 1989). Thus, initial study is carried out to collect the primary data for the responsible marketing strategy by looking at the potential market demands on bamboo ecotourism activities and supporting facilities to complete the experience of potential visitors. By understanding the trend of market demands, the study results would enable the marketer to carry out the process of market segmentation and targeting. Market segmentation is defined as the process of classifying consumers into groups based on different needs, according to characteristics or behaviors that could be selected as target markets (Kotler and Keller, 2009). In this case, the market segmentation for bamboo ecotourism will be considered based on demographic (age and gender), geographic (domestic) and psychographic information (behaviors and lifestyles).

In the application of responsible tourism marketing, the strategies for tourism development product must be oriented to the principle of sustainability products based on local resources (resource-based) and the market (market-led). So, in addition to providing tourist satisfaction, it is also necessary to maintain (sustainability) or "authenticity" which means that tourism products should not be modified 'only' to please tourists but need to maintain the authenticity of resources by preserving the environment and socio-cultural values. However, it is still important to remember that the development of tourism products has to take into account the expectations and needs of tourists.

Therefore, by referring to ecotourism definitions and principles, product development processes as part of a responsible marketing strategy would be limited to the context of ecotourism marketing. Consequently, a framework model is developed for this study to be used as a formula for responsible marketing strategy of ecotourism study.



Figure 1. Responsible Marketing Model for Eco-tourism Product Development modified from various resources

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This is a quantitative research investigating information about market demands on bamboo ecotourism products. Online questionnaire was utilized as a research instrument to collect primary data sent via social media to reach numbers of respondents. The questionnaire was provided with the description about ecotourism potential of bamboo forest in Sembalun Lawang village and about ecotourism concept and principles. There were 9 questions to be answered by the respondents related to desired activities and needed facilities to potentially enhance their experiences when they visit bamboo ecotourism. 100 respondents with age ranging from 16 to 60 years old were targeted population for the study, but the study could only reach 64 respondents from age 18 to 53 years old. This method was considered to examine the appropriate market segment to target for ecotourism which was based on demographic factor of potential domestic market segmentation viewed from age and gender and from psychographic factors.

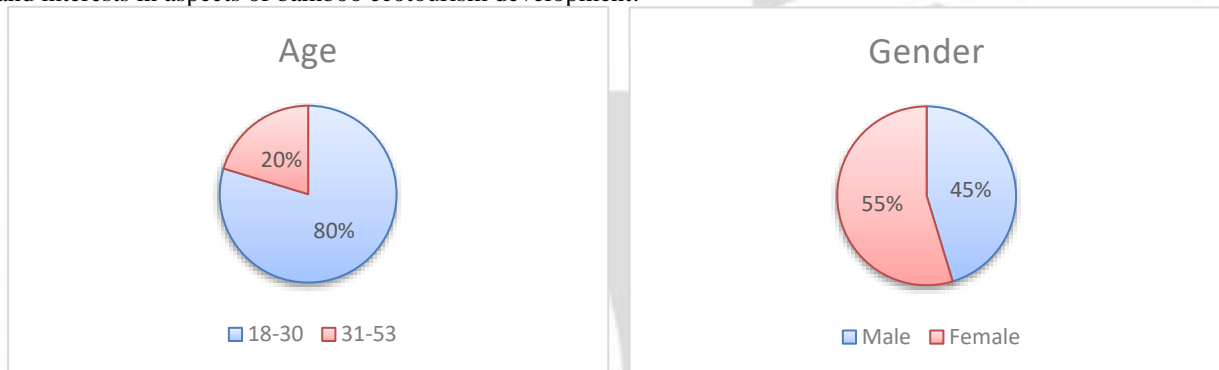
The data analysis was carried out through descriptive statistical approach by analyzing categorical data percentage of respondents and number of respondents answering the particular questions related to their desired activities and supporting services /facilities for bamboo ecotourism site at first place. The data were then utilized to examine the mode of the data variables including age, gender as well as the perceptions of respondents towards the feasibility of Sembalun Lawang bamboo forest as ecotourism site including its activities and facilities which could potentially enhance their experiences in the future visits. The data were firstly analyzed through google



form analytics by looking at the percentage of each data from the respondents and the data were then classified into two groups of data banks namely demographics and psychographic data to extrapolate the trends of each data by examining the modes of the data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The demographic data includes the respondents age and gender. Among 64 respondents, the majority's age ranges from 18 to 30 years old accounting for 80% of the total respondents while the rest 20% respondents are with the age of 31 to 53 years old. Hence, the majority of respondents could be categorized as young adult. Regarding gender information, the percentage of male and female respondents seems to have diminutive difference with 55% women and 45% men. This shows that both men and women have similarities in expectations and interests in aspects of bamboo ecotourism development.



The data received on the actual demand for bamboo ecotourism based on 64 respondents' answers seem high with 92% of respondents found bamboo forest in Sembalun Lawang is interesting place to visit and 86% of them found it as a decent and suitable place to be developed as an ecotourism site.

Regarding the potential activities, among 18 activities and services provided in the questionnaire, the top 5 consists of picture taking in natural spots, nature walk, activity enabling them to learn about local culture and local wisdom on bamboo use, activity to learn about bamboo types and benefits, activity to learn about fauna and flora around bamboo forest. The top 5 activities based on the respondents' answer show unexpected trend of domestic market demand in Indonesia for more natural, cultural and educational-based activities. The result could be a basis for marketers to design a more responsible products or tourism activities for bamboo ecotourism site that adhere the principles of ecotourism and sustainable development.

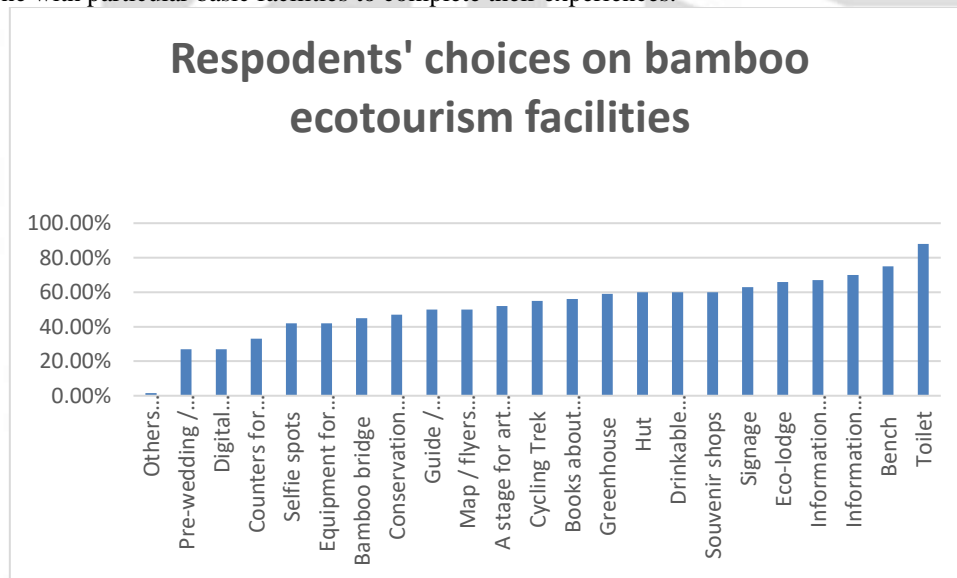
Table 1. Data Number of Potential Activities

Potential Activities	Number of Respondents	Percentage of respondents	Rank
Taking pictures in natural spots	55	86%	1
Taking pictures in a man-made selfie spot	16	25%	13
Walking around the forest to enjoy the fresh air (nature walk)	52	81%	2
Cycling	20	31%	11
Learning about types of bamboo and their benefits	37	58%	4
Learning about local culture / wisdom on the use of bamboo by locals	46	72%	3
Learning how to make souvenirs from bamboo	30	47%	7
Purchasing local products made from bamboo and other types of local products	26	41%	8
Camping	21	33%	9
Learning about fauna and flora around bamboo forest	36	56%	5
Learning and playing the bamboo games	30	47%	7
Traditional food testing	34	53%	6
Watching traditional shows	34	53%	6
Doing outbound activities	21	32%	10
Having pre-wedding or wedding ceremony	12	19%	14



Learning about how to plant and take care of bamboo plants	27	42%	8
Learning about how to preserve bamboo for building materials or other equipment	30	47%	7
Purchasing products at local market	19	30%	12

However, more responsible product designs of bamboo ecotourism may not be complete without supporting facilities and amenities to satisfy tourists' needs in order to reach visitors satisfaction for more memorable experiences. The research result shows the top 10 of supporting facilities desired to satisfy the customers' needs during their visit to ecotourism site encompassing toilet facilities, bench, information boards, information center, eco-lodge, signage, souvenir shops, drinkable water fountain, hut, and bamboo greenhouse. It could be extrapolated from the expected supporting facilities of bamboo ecotourism that domestic market segment seems to be a mid-centric type of tourists who desire to explore and have new experience in a more comfortable tourism zone with particular basic facilities to complete their experiences.



5. CONCLUSION

It is undeniable fact that uncontrolled mass tourism could bring about detrimental problems on environment and local cultures. Ecotourism as one of sustainable forms of tourism could be an alternative to balance economic, socio-cultural and natural facets of tourism development especially in Indonesia as the third largest biodiversity in the world after Brazil and Zaire (Janita, 2012). In ecotourism development, sustainable product should be designed based on market needs and trends (market-led) without neglecting the responsible consumption of local resources (resource-based). Responsible product development for bamboo ecotourism concept studied in this research reveals Indonesian domestic market demands for more natural, cultural and educational-based activities for bamboo ecotourism products. The result could be a basis for marketers to design a more responsible products or tourism activities for bamboo ecotourism site that adhere the principles of ecotourism and sustainable development while acknowledging the market needs. In addition to this, responsible product designs of bamboo ecotourism should be accompanied by supporting facilities and amenities to satisfy tourists' needs in order to reach visitors satisfaction for more memorable experiences. Based on the result, it could be concluded from expected supporting facilities choices, domestic tourists could be categorized as a mid-centric type of tourists who like to discover new experiences in a more comfortable tourism zone with particular basic facilities to complete their experiences. As the study is confined to Indonesian domestic market research, further researcher should consider examining international market research for responsible bamboo ecotourism product development.

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