

THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM IN SURAKARTA, INDONESIA: A CASE STUDY

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This article investigates the potential for developing ecologically sustainable rural tourism in Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia as an attempt to begin the process of building a knowledge base. A qualitative method, which included secondary and primary data, was utilized. Various tourism stakeholders including tour operators, tourism managers, tourist researchers and villagers were interviewed to determine the rural tourism potential of the region.

Results indicate that there is potential to develop rural tourism in the Surakarta area. Natural and cultural resources, abundant human resources and the existing facilities and infrastructure in the region will strengthen the development. However, there are potential problems that need to be addressed if the development of ecologically sustainable rural tourism in the region is to succeed. In order for the development to be successful, many key issues including professionalism, interpretation, appropriate management and local community involvement should be given priority attention. This study is an initial step towards a better understanding of rural tourism development in the area.

Sustainable tourism, rural tourism, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a changing pattern in tourism resulting from the high concentration of visitors in famous, conventional, crowded places. More tourists are beginning to visit the countryside and seek vacation in rural areas and these new destinations are receiving more attention (Lane, 1994; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).

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This phenomenon also stems from the desire of city inhabitants to escape from the busy, unfriendly and stressful life of cities; the increase in leisure time; the rising disposable income; better education; and rapidly improving transport and communication (Klejdzinski, 1991).

Rural areas with their distinctive characteristics, such as pristine environment, beautiful landscape, wide varieties of flora and fauna, village communities and their cultures, provide unique experiences for visitors (Lane, 1994). These special attributes will help extend the diversification of tourist product, thus reducing the degree of touristification and the sense of placelessness. Rural tourism, in other words, may become a counter to urbanization as well as an alternative to mass tourism as it is commonly undertaken by a relatively small number of tourists wishing to experience a closer, friendlier contact with nature and the rural community visited (Bramwell, 1994).

As a complex-multifaceted activity, rural tourism, which may include agritourism and other special interest nature-based tourism, such as ecotourism, adventure tourism and ethnic tourism, is growing and it is likely to increase even faster in the future (Lane, 1994).

Indonesia, as one of Southeast Asian countries, where more rural areas than urban milieu are generally found (Boyd & Butler, 1996), has an abundance of natural resources which may become good selling points in the tourism industry. Several studies related to the development of tourist potential in Surakarta have been conducted (PUSPARI, 1995; Sutirto, 1995). However, this potential has not been investigated yet as most of the study concentrated on cultural tourist products which are mostly in urban areas.

This study, therefore, will emphasize the potential for developing ecologically sustainable rural tourism in Surakarta, a region in Central Java, Indonesia. The study specifically will concentrate on examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of such development. Apart from being considered as a useful starting point in the evaluation of tourist product and factors which affect the future development of Indonesian tourism, SWOT analysis will also be used in the study to make recommendations for fostering further sound tourist development in the Surakarta area and Indonesia.

WHY SUPPORT ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM ?

Recently, there has been growing concern about environmental conservation from an array of perspectives. The term ecologically sustainable development has been widely used for a number of years, particularly since the launching of the Brundtland report entitled *Our Common Future* in 1987 on behalf of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (Aronson, 1994). The WCED defines sustainable tourism as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Wanhill, 1997). Several key issues in connection with ecologically sustainable tourism need to be taken into consideration. They include providing a high level of visitor experience and satisfaction; promote ecological conservation; enhance diversity preservation improving education and interpretation of the natural and cultural resources; and initiate

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local community involvement. (Bramwell, 1994; Harris & Leiper, 1995; Lane, 1994; Nitsch & Straaten, 1995).

Rural tourism has been seen as an alternative to mass tourism which generally takes place in urban areas. If it is developed on a small-scale basis, rural tourism has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of ecologically sustainable tourism development. Rural tourism is defined as “a visit by a person: to any place other than his or her usual work or home environment that is outside a standard metropolitan statistical area, when exercising an activity other than remunerated in the place visited. The purposes of such a visit may include pleasure, business, study, health or religion” (Greffé, 1994).

The idea of rural tourism first came from a demand by visitors to visit rural areas in developed countries (Bramwell, 1994). There are three main factors causing tourism in the countryside to increase in popularity. Firstly, people are more interested in participating in outdoor activities while also experiencing different types of tourism. There is a tendency to counter balance an exhausting and monotonous urban life with a more peaceful environment. Secondly, the decline in traditional rural industries has led to the growth of tourism, as an alternative source of income and employment for rural residents. Thirdly, there has been an increase in environmental awareness, especially viewing the countryside as an important tourism asset to conserve for future sustainability (Sharpley, 1996).

Although in some cases, rural tourism has remained an “amateur production”, recently it has been considered as a potential tool to strengthen the development of the rural community. Generating economic profit is one of the fundamental goals of tourism. In the case of rural tourism, the attempt to sustain the rural economy is vital. The involvement of local people in tourist businesses, ownership and decision-making is critical (Lane, 1994). To achieve success in development, therefore, rural residents as holiday providers need to comply with tourist needs and adopt the concept of ‘producing what the can sell’ instead of “selling what they can produce” (Gannon, 1994).

However, if sustainability is the primary concern, rural tourism development should take account in the following issues:

1. The existing resources should be carefully managed and used to achieve new economic growth, thus enhancing the rural economy;
2. Development should be on a small-scale basis, so that impacts on the environment are minimized;
3. Instead of being generated by outsiders, the economic benefits should remain within the local community;
4. The unique culture and character of the rural society should be sustained;
5. The viability of rural tourism means that the successful and satisfying holiday experiences which tourist want should be promoted.

(Adapted from TIC Staff, 1996; Lane, 1994).

Although there has been limited research into what attracts people to the countryside, the rural environment itself with its space, freshness and peace appears to be the primary attractions (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997). Activities in the rural areas may range

from visiting the seas, coasts or cliff tops (but not seaside resorts); shooting in the countryside; bird watching; fishing and “picking your own” (fruits, vegetables) (Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997).

As with other types of tourism, such as urban tourism, besides providing advantages, rural tourism has potential growth problems in economic, social or environmental terms. The benefits include providing a new source of income to the rural community; offering job opportunities, thus reducing out migration and urbanization; expanding agricultural activities; offering certain infrastructures to the visited community due to the influx of tourists; and promoting small business industry in rural regions (Gannon, 1994; Greffe, 1994; Oppermann, 1996). Considering that rural areas are generally far from being exposed by tourist activities, the development of rural tourism may cost the region where rural tourism is developed. Thus, the advantages such as degradation of the environment; occurrence of conflicts between visitors and hosts in terms of the use of natural resources; increase of crime and social jealousy; and increase of living cost in the region may occur and influence the peaceful life of rural residents (Greffe, 1994; Gannon, 1994).

Although rural areas are abundant, not all of them can be developed as tourist destinations. There are several factors which limit the development. Lane (1994) argues that not every rural area is potential for the development of rural tourism. Aspects such as “outstanding rural scenic beauty or a unique culture” play an important role in attracting visitors. Furthermore, the lack of marketing and cooperation between local residents, absence of local operators and entrepreneurship, lack of knowledge and experience, limited key infrastructure also contribute to the difficulty of promoting sustainable development of rural tourism (Hummelbrunner & Miglbauer, 1994).

TOURISM AND RURAL TOURISM IN INDONESIA

Due to its increasingly rapid growth within the last two decades, tourism in Indonesia was targeted to replace oil revenues as the main foreign exchange earner (Wall & Nuryanti, 1997). In fact, tourism has replaced other major sectors of foreign exchange earnings such as gas and timber (Wiwoho & Said, 1996) and continued to one of priorities in achieving higher revenues (Directorate General of Tourism, 1999).

However, realizing the possible decline in tourist product life cycles, the Government of Indonesia has started to consider other tourism development strategies by taking initiatives to designate specific villages or rural areas for tourism development (Wall & Nuryanti, 1997). Furthermore, these researchers mention that a poor village in Nusa Tenggara, for example, has been investigated for its potential to be developed as a destination for village-based tourism. A similar program has also been developed in Bali and Java. Among the various types of rural tourism developed are agritourism and ecotourism.

The development of ecotourism and agritourism in rural areas is crucial for intensifying and diversifying tourist product in order to avoid monotony, which could decrease tourist product appeal (Department of Tourism, Post and Telecommunication, 1995). In Indonesian context, rural tourism development is focused on ecotourism and agritourism (Tambunan, 1989). Indonesian ecotourism offers enormous variety of beautiful natural sites and wide range of diversity in its flora and fauna, which includes the Rhinoceros in Ujung Kulon, West Java, the Komodo Dragon in Nusa Tenggara and

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the threatened Sumatran tiger in parks and protected areas. Agritourism, which is considered as new alternative to Indonesian tourism needs to be developed to diversify the products. The development of agritourism can be based on a wide range of beautiful landscapes, the unique cultural and daily life on the village community, the traditional practice of various agricultural activities as well as the history of agriculture at the site visit (Rachman, 1989; Hareuman, 1989).

CASE STUDY AREA

In order to investigate stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes and experiences on rural tourism development in Indonesia, a study site was selected. The area was characterized by being diverse in geographical features and abundant of natural resources. Surakarta, which is also called Solo, is the second largest city in Central Java, Indonesia. It lies in the southern part of Central Java and it is comprised of lowland plain, 92 meters above sea level. The Surakarta region, which consists of six regencies including Sragen, Karanganyar, Boyolali, Wonogiri, Sukoharjo, and Klaten, is generously endowed with innumerable scenic spots. It is situated on a fertile plain amidst volcanic mountains, alongside the longest river in Java, Bengawan Solo. Those areas possess beautiful natural scenery with enchanting paddy fields. Additionally, the culture is very strong and represented in much of its residents' lifestyle.

METHODOLOGY

This paper stems from a larger survey, the overall research purpose of which was to provide an overview of the development of rural tourism in Indonesia (Sugiarti, 1998). This was pioneering and exploratory research focused on describing the potential rural tourism assets in Surakarta Region and analyzing the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the development of ecologically sustainable agritourism. This study mainly employs qualitative methods. This qualitative research was chosen because it is assumed that it will result in information of greater depth and details than quantitative (Hayes, 1997). This is particularly important when sampling people who have specialized knowledge (key informants). In addition, since the study is based on SWOT analysis, it will be mainly aimed at producing findings in qualitative data.

Data for the study were obtained from two different sources. The first was the primary data sources which include interviews with key persons and rural site inspections and observations to acquire a first hand view of the region. Primary data collection aims at obtaining a deeper understanding about the place, the people and the culture of the area. The second, secondary data collection, involved previous studies, government documents on tourism development in Surakarta, statistical reports, demographic data, and tourist promotional brochures.

A semi-structured interview was utilized to acquire the key informants' perceptions, attitudes and experiences on tourism development in the Surakarta region. The study involved tourist researchers, government tourism officials and villagers (n=24). The main interviews were conducted in February 1998 in *Bahasa* Indonesia. The interview transcripts were translated into English and combined with observation and field notes to provide reliable data for interpretation. Themes emerged during the interviews and observations were analyzed based on the key principles of ecologically sustainable tourism and related factors.

A non-probability purposive sampling was applied. This method is relevant since this research is not concerned with generalizing from sample to the population; thus, representativeness of the sample is less important (de Vaus, 1995). Key persons, who can provide useful information regarding the tourism in the area, are much more significant.

Based on both types of data collected, the potential attractions and other relevant tourism factors were identified and a SWOT analysis was performed to examine the potential resources of the region to be developed as a rural tourism destination. Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed in the study as it could help identify the themes of the attributions (Hayes, 1997) and assist the SWOT assessment. Much analysis of qualitative data begins with the identification of key themes and patterns (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The following are steps that were conducted which include establishing themes and sub-themes based on key issues in the ecologically sustainable rural tourism in the region; transcribing the interviews and translating the interviews into English; identifying all the attributions; extracting the attributional statements relevant to the themes. The analysis also consisted of sorting the attributions from the interviews, documentary data and site inspections notes to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or threats to development of ecologically sustainable rural tourism (Hayes, 1997).

ANALYSIS OF SURAKARTA TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

The Surakarta region is indeed rich in resources ranging from natural and cultural to man-made features. The existing tourism sites can be categorized into two groups: the urban tourist places such as the King's palaces, the Radya Pustaka museum, Klewer market and Triwindu antique market. The rural destinations in the vicinity of Surakarta include Sukuh and Cetho temples, Sangiran archaeological site, Bromo mountain forest tourism site, and Puncak Lawu forest tourism site. There are some potential agricultural attractions, which include land ploughing (the preparation process), planting process and harvesting process. Besides, the region is rich of cultural attractions such as Javanese puppet shows, Javanese gamelan and traditional dances of Surakarta.

Results of Primary Data

Some selected findings of the main data collection and SWOT analysis will be presented in the following section followed by discussions and recommendations for rural tourism in Indonesia. When asked about the potential attractions of the region, most respondents (n=23) said that "Urban cultural attractions" had the most potential. These attractions were mainly seen to consist of heritage buildings including palaces, and museums; traditional markets such as Triwindu antique market and Klewer market; and traditional arts and crafts including *Batik*, *Wayang* and *Gamelan*. Among those destinations, two palaces i.e. the Kasunanan Palace and the Mangkunegaran were considered to be the most outstanding attractions to the region.

Respondents also recognized many destinations in Surakarta's rural environments. "Rural attractions" were another potential enticement of Surakarta tourism. A diverse range of attractions was mentioned including "Heritage Building" such as temples; "archaeological site", such as Sangiran; "health tourism site" such as Bayanan Hot

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Springs and “village tourism destinations” such as Wirun and Bekonang. They were also in of opinion that the countryside environments of Surakarta offer unique cultural and natural interests such as the daily life of villagers and mountainous scenery with its cultural values.

However, several weaknesses of Surakarta tourist attractions were identified by respondents. Among others are lack of attractions, inappropriate management, inadequate coordination, shortage of funding and poor training of tourism management and employees. The ‘inadequate coordination theme’ mainly consisted of lack of coordination between tourism-related components and private sector involvement. Inappropriate management style, lack of professional management and inadequate maintenance were considered to contribute to inappropriate management of tourist attractions in the region.

Respondents firmly believed that the present situation of Surakarta tourist attractions might be improved by, for example, an encouragement of better coordination between tourism-related sectors, both public and the private. Those responses were exemplified in statements such as *“If there is a good co-operation between all related institutions, these attractions can be developed further.”* Delivering training to enhance the quality of human resources was also highlighted by some respondents and can be found in responses such as *“It is important that the people involved in the industry get appropriate education and sufficient training concerning tourism.”*

Respondents were also in of opinion that developing village-based accommodation and traditional rural life were acceptable. Some suggestions related to the developments were provided including standard level of hygiene; adequate training of the villagers to run the business, as they might not be ready; and the need to retain traditional-style of houses to establish the accommodation. According to them, Surakarta is potential for rural tourism developments in the future. However, several constraints such as limited practice of traditional agriculture and lack of concerns about traditional cultural performances could contribute to the slow development of rural tourism in the region.

Issues of local involvement as one of criteria in ecologically sustainable rural tourism were also identified. Three major themes emerged during the interviews included inadequate involvement of the locals, ways to implement local community involvement and the advantages. These were evident in responses such as *‘Well, in Surakarta, I think the local community has been involved but the involvement is not yet adequate.’* Respondents were also asked to express their opinions whether there had been any efforts to conserve Surakarta’s tourist attractions and whether society members already had adequate concerns for the environments. The most noticeable themes were ‘inadequate concerns for the environment and hygiene and lack of government’s commitment to conserve with each represented by 21 and 13 respondents respectively.

In regards to tourism impacts, most respondents believed tourism brings both positive economic impacts, such as provides job opportunities and additional income, as well as cultural impacts, such as preserving and revitalizing traditional culture. However, most respondents were unaware that negative impacts could impose on both socio-cultural and physical environments.

The development of rural tourism in Surakarta was also hindered by the fact that

guiding and interpretation mostly did not exist, although some respondents believed they did. Funding was one of factors contributing to insufficient interpretation and education as represented in the following “*Well, in relation to education and interpretation, I do not think they are already adequate. We still have to increase the quality*”. Another response that supported that the education and interpretation lacked was that “*We don’t have other forms of interpretation. The forms or techniques of interpretation are limited.*”

SWOT Analysis

This analysis aims to determine key issues which will help to make tourism development in the Surakarta area successful. It was mainly applied to the data presented in the results of primary data analysis as well as secondary data collected throughout the course of the research. Furthermore, the SWOT analysis provides a framework for the discussion which highlights key issues for the establishment of rural tourism in Surakarta. The strengths need to be recognized and maintained, weaknesses improved, opportunities taken and threats avoided or eliminated.

Obviously, Surakarta has the potential for rural tourism development as summarized in Table 1. Cultural as well as natural resources, which could become remarkable assets to the tourism industry, are abundant (Sofield, Samiati, Birtles, 1995). There are cultural enticements such as traditional ceremonies and the unique daily live of villagers which will have major appeal. As with the cultural interests, the unique of agricultural practices, particularly rice production with traditional land ploughing, planting and harvesting processes will be of special interest. These will provide enticing attractions and distinct experiences to overseas visitors. A wide variety of potential attractions provides a major strength for the development. Similarly, ample human resources perform other strengths for tourism development in the region.

Table 1
The Strengths for Rural Tourism Development in Surakarta

Strengths of Rural Tourism
Variety of attraction
Abundant human resources
The initiation of the ‘Tourism Awareness Program’
Hospitableness and friendliness of the local people
The existing market
Diverse mode of transports
Existing facilities and infrastructure such as various types of accommodation and better roads.
Lack of interpretation and education
Source: Sofield, Samiati, Birtles, 1995

Another strength for rural tourism development is the existing market for Surakarta tourism. In fact, Surakarta has achieved a comparatively strong international market including the Netherlands, Japan, Singapore and Germany. The area has enjoyed a

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substantial tourist market over the past few years. Facilities and infrastructure, which are available at present, such as various types of accommodation, a wide range of telecommunication media and better roads to rural destination, will contribute to the success of rural tourism development in the region.

Despite the strengths, some factors remain which retard the development such as inadequate coordination, lack of professional management of attraction, poor training of tourism management and workers and insufficient promotion and marketing. The most significant weakness is inadequate coordination between related sectors including the government departments and the private organizations. Actually, tourism coordination in Surakarta is still relatively poor. For example, coordination in training is limited. Similarly, marketing coordination within the region is insufficient. In fact, co-operative marketing and promotion between public and the private sectors have not yet occurred.

If numerous potential assets of the region are maintained, managed and developed appropriately, they will provide great opportunities to the development as. By developing rural tourism, first, traditional arts and crafts will be revitalized as these are invaluable assets which will be presented to tourists. Secondly, the local community will have the opportunity to generate economic profits from tourism and managers will have the opportunity to invent and expand new tourist product, which, in turn, will diversify tourist attractions.

However, despite the fact that Surakarta has the potential for rural tourism, a list of threats was identified from all types of data collected (See Table 2). The fact that tourism interpretation and education is inadequate could contribute to negative impacts of tourism. There are no diverse interpretation techniques and interpretation has been largely dependent upon guides. In fact, most quality of the guides is comparatively low. Therefore, this could jeopardize Surakarta tourism.

Table 2
The Threats for Rural Tourism Development in Surakarta

Threats to rural tourism development
Ignorance of tourism negative impacts
Inappropriate management of human resources
Limited local community involvement
Inadequate benefits to locals
Inappropriate management of attractions
Unsuitability
Managers' lack of concern for tourist product diversification
Community's lack of tourism awareness and hygiene

Furthermore, the local community has not been involved adequately which might result in insufficient profits they obtain from tourism. If tourism does not provide benefits to the local people, local support is likely to diminish. Of equal importance is an issue concerning the misuse of rural accommodation. Despite the fact that building village-based accommodation can provide economic benefits to rural communities, the potential cultural impact is evident. Village accommodation might be misused as a kind of brothel house which could give negative impressions to villagers about tourism.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the primary and secondary data and the site inspection undertaken, the major issues underlying the development of rural tourism in Surakarta were identified. This analysis is aimed at providing a better understanding about the possibility of developing ecologically sustainable rural tourism in the area. Some selected issues will be discussed in the following section.

The Management and Conservation of Surakarta's Rural Tourist Attractions: the Countryside as a Tourism Resource

It is apparent that in any tourism development, attraction is the key element. However, without sound management the attractions could be degraded. Therefore, management of tourist attraction becomes a crucial issue in promoting sustainability. Findings of the study indicate that management of tourist attraction emerged as the most significant topic to discuss as most respondents emphasized the subject.

Another problem is the fact that Surakarta tourism lacks sound development planning. In the Policy and Implementation of Tourism Development in Central Java (*Dinas Pariwisata Jawa Tengah*, 1995), which Surakarta is a part of, the development programs are inadequate. There are only eight issues underlined which include promotion and marketing, accessibility, product diversification, Indonesia tourism development, the improvement of human resources, the implementation of "tourism awareness" the improvement of tourist services and the improvement of private sectors. Most importantly, conservation of tourist attraction is not highlighted. Likewise, the management of tourism impacts is not addressed. Obviously, Surakarta tourism still lacks a clear management plan. This situation provides a potential threat to tourism development in the region.

If rural tourism is to be developed, planners and managers should realize what actually has attracted visitors to the countryside. Furthermore, understanding current trends that international travelers prefer rural environment will encourage product diversification. Therefore, Page & Getz (1997) state that in relation to rural tourism development, planners and managers have to maintain and adequately manage the interest including:

- Remoteness; peace and quiet; solitude;
- Authentic culture; heritage sites and buildings;
- Alternative lifestyles, including food and beverages;
- Undisturbed nature; aesthetically pleasing landscape;
- Hospitable residents; safety;
- Exclusive (not mass tourism); excitement.

In order to maintain and develop the attractions, an appropriate management style and professionalism in management of tourist interests are crucial factors. As each type of product has different characteristics, different management styles, appropriate to each attraction are required.

The Management of Tourism Impacts

A strong point highlighted by the interview results was an absent of awareness that

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there are negative impacts from tourism. Most respondents did not consider the negative impact tourism could impose on both socio-culture and physical environments. Despite the fact that positive and negative impacts of tourism have been widely reviewed in the literature (Doan, 2000; Lickorish & Jenkins, 1997; Page & Getz, 1997; Sharpley & Sharpley, 1997)

The fact that most respondents had not yet considered negative impacts is certainly jeopardizing the development of ecologically sustainable tourism in the area. This situation is worsening by the lack of sound tourism development planning. Whatever the extent of tourism development, negative impacts should be minimized. Actions to anticipate the negative impacts both on cultural and natural environments are fundamental. Especially for Surakarta rural tourism, the need to conserve the countryside of the area is vital since it is the countryside which constitute the basic resources. An appreciation of the natural environment and an awareness of ecological issues are certainly very crucial. Therefore, it is essential that people involved in the tourism industry work to minimize the likely negative impacts. From the very outset, managers have to be aware of the fact that precautions to minimize negative impacts should be undertaken. To minimize negative impacts, well-planned and well-controlled tourism development is essential.

In order for tourism and the attractions to be sustainable, careful planning and sound management are critical. If the emphasis of tourist development is on the maximization of economic profits per se, it is doubtful whether the sustainability of tourism in the area can be achieved. In the case of the potential of the region under study to develop agritourism, local government as well as local people, have not put much emphasis on sustainability of both physical and socio-cultural environments, which are the basic attractions they are going to sell. If lack of concern about sustainability continues to occur, the viability and sustainability of the whole tourism industry in the region will be in jeopardy. Finally, to foster sustainability in Surakarta tourism, impact management, especially in terms of the minimization of potential negative impacts, is the most crucial point to be given priority. Of equal importance in minimizing impacts is the effort to highlight tourism's potential role in helping to give greater value to these natural and cultural resources and hence make society more ecologically sustainable overall.

Interpretation and Education

As evident from the interviews, interpretation and education have received little attention in the region. It is surprising that in the draft of the tourism policy, interpretation is not considered. The policy makers and managers have ignored this fundamental element of tourism. It is apparent that interpretation is crucial to provide visitors with a high level of understanding and appreciation of the environment. The public's appetite for information on the natural environment seems insatiable, and it is the responsibility of the managers to provide this information when and where it will be valuable and through a medium that will easily and readily understood by the target audience (Bromley, 1994).

Moreover, in promoting sustainable rural tourism, interpretation and education are critical factors (Bromley, 1994). From all types of data collected, it can be inferred that the Surakarta has inadequate interpretation and education for tourism. Many people are not even familiar with interpretation. Recreational areas were mostly perceived as

places for fun. The importance of an educational element, especially in terms of providing adequate information about the attractions to educate tourists and to maximize their satisfaction, has not been considered. Their understanding of interpretation is mostly restricted to guiding.

Promotion and Marketing Coordination within the Region

In terms of promotion and marketing, there is already coordination between the Surakarta Tourism Office and other local tourism offices within the region. This is a strong point of the area's tourism marketing. Another strength is the existing market for Surakarta tourism as it had achieved relatively strong international markets such as the Netherlands and Japan. However, if this existing market is not sustained and if the potential market is not sought further, this situation becomes an obvious threat to the region. Therefore, these markets should be retained, and the need to seek for other potential markets is crucial. Much of the future opportunities of the region will lie in the appropriate maintenance and strengthening of its existing markets. In relation to this, tourist product diversification such as rural tourism is crucial.

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