

Green Tourism as a Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in Gunungkidul

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Abstract. Gunungkidul, an administrative region situated in the southeastern portion of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, is celebrated due to its abundant natural scenery and cultural legacy. However, the rapid advancement of tourism has caused difficulties in achieving ecological stability. This study aimed to explore the capacity of environmentally conscious tourism as a plan to harmonize the increase in tourism with the safeguarding of the environment in Gunungkidul. This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology and scrutinizes present-day tourism customs, local people's participation, and conservation endeavors. The results emphasize crucial strategies intended to promote environmentally sound tourism, such as eco-friendly amenities, refuse handling, and safeguarding habitats. The study also draws attention to the role of interested parties—the authorities, regional enterprises, and travelers—in nurturing environmentally conscious tourism. These findings suggest that incorporating the concepts of ecological tourism can contribute to protecting the innate allure of Gunungkidul while simultaneously bolstering the expansion of the local economy. A cooperative tactic is indispensable to guarantee the perpetuation of Gunungkidul's cultural and natural assets for successive inhabitants.

Keywords : Green tourism; sustainable tourism; Gunungkidul; eco-tourism.

1 Introduction

The development of tourism in Indonesia has increased rapidly, especially in areas rich in natural beauty, such as Gunungkidul. Known for its karst hills, caves, and pristine beaches, Gunungkidul is one of the most popular destinations in Yogyakarta. However, this rapid growth also presents serious challenges, including environmental damage, waste management problems, and threats to local ecosystems [1], [2]. The concept of sustainable tourism emerged as an alternative model to balance economic gains and environmental conservation. In this context, green tourism is seen as an important strategy that integrates ecological principles into tourism activities [3] [4]. This study investigates the implementation of green tourism in Gunungkidul to support sustainable tourism development while protecting the area's natural and cultural richness. This study reviews three problem formulations: (1) What are the challenges facing Gunungkidul tourism today? (2) How can eco-friendly tourism strategies be applied to tourism practices? (3) What is the role of stakeholders in ensuring sustainability?

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2 Literature Review

Green tourism is a branch of sustainable tourism that emphasizes environmentally responsible travel, preservation, and community engagement [5]. Academics emphasize its role in reducing negative environmental impacts, encouraging environmentally friendly infrastructure, and promoting cultural appreciation [6],[7]. Previous studies in Indonesia have investigated ecotourism practices in Bali, Lombok, and Central Java, suggesting that community-based tourism and environmental awareness are key to long-term sustainability [8]. However, research on Gunungkidul is still limited, although this area is known as a fast-growing destination with vulnerable ecosystems. This study contributes to filling this gap by providing insights into the application of green tourism principles in this district.

3 Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze tourism development in Gunungkidul. Data were collected through a literature review, document analysis, and field observations. Secondary data include government reports, tourism statistics, and academic studies related to sustainable tourism [9], [10]. This analysis focused on identifying current practices, assessing community participation, and evaluating conservation initiatives. By synthesizing information from various sources, this study proposes strategies that align with the principles of eco-friendly tourism to support sustainable development. The study took a month. The details are as follows: The first week of observation of the tourist destination of Gunung Kidul and collecting data visually. The second week began with interviews with the respondents. The respondents were the managers of the Drini Beach tourism destination and the manager of Drini Park tourism in Gunungkidul. We also randomly interviewed tourists who visited. The third week of collecting data from interviews and observations then began to be compiled in this study

4 Findings

4.1 Current Tourism Practices in Gunungkidul

Tourism development in Gunungkidul focuses more on the use of natural attractions, such as untouched beaches, karst hills, underground caves, and rural scenery. This attraction is an important factor for both local and foreign tourists alike. The existence of places such as Pindul Cave, Indrayanti Beach, and the Baron coastal area has had a significant impact on the local economy through revenue from entrance tickets, parking fees, and local business opportunities. However, this rapid influx of visitors has created significant environmental pressure.

For example, some beaches in Gunungkidul experience visitor overcrowding during peak holidays, resulting in garbage buildup, beach erosion, and disruption of local biodiversity. Facilities at many tourist attractions are still inadequate to accommodate the high number of visitors, which often leads to poorly managed waste, poor sanitation, and strain on local resources such as clean water. In addition, tourism infrastructure is concentrated in certain popular areas, while other potential locations remain undeveloped. This unevenness in development adds to environmental pressure in locations that are widely visited, while other areas remain economically unutilized.

Furthermore, the Gunungkidul tourism sector is mostly composed of smaller enterprises that struggle to implement eco-conscious methods. Lodging options, such as budget hotels