



The Role of Youth in the Marketing of Ponot Water Tourism for Regional Development in Asahan District

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Abstract. *The purpose of this study is to look at the role of youth in Asahan Regency in marketing Ponot Waterfall Tourism. This research focuses on the role that has been carried out by young people in Asahan Regency in marketing Ponot Waterfall Tourism to become a leading tourist in Asahan Regency. The development of the Ponot Waterfall Tourism Area is inseparable from the role of Asahan Regency youth who consistently and innovatively market the Ponot Waterfall Tourism area to become one of the leading tourist destinations in Asahan Regency. The method used in this research is descriptive method with a qualitative approach. This study took primary data through informants and secondary data from relevant agencies, namely the Asahan Regency Sports and Tourism Youth Service, Asahan KNPI, the Regency Statistics Agency. The results of the study indicate that the role of Asahan Regency youth in marketing Ponot Waterfall tourism for regional development is that youth play a role as social control, moral strength and agents of change.*

Keywords: *Asahan Regency, Natural Tourism, Ponot Waterfall, The Youth*

Abstrak. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat peran pemuda di Kabupaten Asahan dalam memasarkan Wisata Air Terjun Ponot. Penelitian ini berfokus pada peran yang telah dilakukan oleh generasi muda di Kabupaten Asahan dalam memasarkan Wisata Air Terjun Ponot menjadi wisata unggulan di Kabupaten Asahan. Perkembangan Kawasan Wisata Air Terjun Ponot tidak terlepas dari peran pemuda Kabupaten Asahan yang secara konsisten dan inovatif memasarkan kawasan Wisata Air Terjun Ponot menjadi salah satu destinasi wisata unggulan di Kabupaten Asahan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Penelitian ini mengambil data primer melalui informan dan data sekunder dari instansi terkait yaitu Dinas Pemuda Olahraga dan Pariwisata Kabupaten Asahan, KNPI Asahan, Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Asahan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peran pemuda Kabupaten Asahan dalam pemasaran wisata Air Terjun Ponot untuk pembangunan daerah adalah pemuda berperan sebagai kontrol sosial, kekuatan moral dan agen perubahan.

Kata Kunci: Air Terjun Ponot, Kabupaten Asahan, Pemuda, Wisata Alam

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1. Introduction

The tourism industry has the potential to generate enormous foreign exchange. According to some experts, currently the tourism industry has become the third largest business sector after oil and arms trade. There are some experts who claim that tourism is the biggest business sector after oil. The development of tourism also stimulates the growth of certain economic enterprises which mutually link and support each other, for example, if tourists buy crafts or souvenirs sold at tourist attractions, the craftsmen automatically need raw materials to make these handicraft items [1].

The progress of tourism cannot be separated from the interference of the younger generation. According to Anderson in Ref. [2] The tourism sector, which needs development, also needs young people who are struggling to develop this sector so that it can be used for the welfare of the community. Early development of the young generation or regeneration of youth in charge of advancing the tourism industry in their regions is very much needed. Until now, the efforts of the central, provincial and district / city governments to involve youth in advancing the tourism industry [1].

In Ref. [3] article 1 states that youth are Indonesian citizens who enter an important period of growth and development, aged 16 (sixteen) to 30 (thirty) years. Youth organizations are a forum for developing youth potential. Article 5 explains that youth services function to raise awareness, empower and develop the potential for leadership, entrepreneurship, and youth pioneering in all aspects of social, national and state life. Article 7 explains that youth services are directed at fostering patriotism, dynamics, a culture of achievement, and a spirit of professionalism, and increasing the participation and active role of youth in developing themselves, society, the nation and the state. In accordance with Article 16, it is stated that youth play an active role as a moral force, social control, and agents of change in all aspects of national development. Some of the active roles of youth as agents of change are manifested by developing concern for the environment and concern for society. The government and local governments are responsible for carrying out awareness, empowerment, and development of youth potential based on their authority and responsibility in accordance with the characteristics and potential of their respective regions.

Youth is an important component of this nation. National development planning is very dependent on the development cadres themselves. Therefore, the position of the young generation in a society is vital for that society. Especially in the era of the 21st century, which is an era full of competition, it is necessary to have young people who are trained and enthusiastic to continue the ideals of development.

Define of marketing strategy is a marketing logic in which business units hope to create value and benefit from their relationship with consumers [4]. In Ref. [5] defines that marketing strategy is the company's overall program in determining target markets and satisfying consumers by building a combination of elements from the marketing mix (product, distribution, promotion, and price) [6].

Regional development is a process to direct all the potential of the area concerned to be utilized in an integrated manner to realize people's welfare. The utilization process is usually a combination of mobilizing several factors that support one another so that certain results can be obtained, such as tourism [7]. Ponot Waterfall is one type of natural tourism which is located in Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency and is one of the main attractions in Asahan Regency. This area is a natural tourism area that has potential and attractiveness as well as a high selling value. However, in reality there are not many parties involved in building this tourist spot into a comfortable place to visit so that the location has not been too exposed. Several attempts have been tried by the management in cooperating in the marketing of the Ponot Waterfall tourism, cooperation with the private sector and cooperation with the government but these efforts have failed. The Asahan District Government sees that this is the full responsibility of the government in the management, development and marketing of the Ponot Waterfall Tourism so that the villagers who from the beginning as managers only function as executors of programs made by the Government. The population is no longer the decision maker in this matter. This is what has become a particular fear for the youth and local residents that they will have a minimal share of the Ponot Waterfall tourism so that all the foreign exchange sources generated by the Ponot Waterfall Tourism will be taken over by the local government. Inequality in vision and misunderstanding often triggers conflict so that cooperation is still not well established

Management has also been transferred to the Desa Tangga government as a program from BUMDES for 2 years. During that time, the local community and youth did not see a significant development from the Ponot waterfall tourism. So that the community again requested that management be transferred back to the local community. Likewise, the cooperation that has been carried out by the manager with the private sector has still not been successful. The private sector is still reluctant to collaborate with the Ponot Waterfall tourism manager. So far, the cause is not yet known.

For the situation of Asahan youth, very few are aware of the importance of tourism. Most Asahan youths come only to visit tourist spots in Asahan to take pictures and upload them to social media, but they don't specifically aim to market Asahan's tours. Especially for local youth who are around the Ponot Waterfall tourism, they still very few understand using social media and computer technology. Most of the youth only graduated from high school with less digital technology skills. In addition, the role of youth in the marketing of Ponot Waterfall Tourism is often hampered by

natural disasters that often occur in the tourist area of Ponot Falls such as flash floods and landslides. In addition, development partnerships are also an obstacle where youth and managers have not succeeded in finding investors for the development and marketing of Ponot Waterfall Tourism.

In addition to the things that hinder youth in marketing the Ponot Waterfall Tourism, there are many things that can become a mainstay of Ponot Waterfall Tourism such as the panorama and the cool atmosphere of the Ponot waterfall that can be used as a cooling off after being tired with a number of activities, there are friendly residents. receive tourists. The existing attractions really support the creation of family tourism.

Tourism management must be precise and professional because it is vulnerable to all socio-political changes that occur in society, both regionally, nationally and globally. Therefore, writing a scientific paper on the role of youth in marketing Ponot Waterfall Tourism is done to describe the potential, location, tourism optimization, the role of youth and the marketing of the Ponot Waterfall tourism object.

2. Method

This research was conducted on Asahan youth, namely Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency. Research time for the Role of Youth in Tourism Marketing of Ponot Falls for Regional Development in Asahan Regency was conducted in October 2019 to February 2020. This type of research is descriptive qualitative. The informants of this research include two kinds, namely:

1. Key Informants, namely: Asahan Regency Ponot Waterfall tourism manager.
2. Additional informants, namely: Government of Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan District, tourists, the community, Government of Asahan Regency, chairman of the Asahan KNPI

3. Results and Discussion

Asahan is one of the tourist destinations in North Sumatra Province, this is because many of the tourism objects that Asahan have are so beautiful. Asahan has a number of natural tourism objects that have their own charm, such as rafting and natural waterfall tourism which are still natural but have not been properly managed by the Regional Government.

Asahan Regency Ponot Waterfall Tourism

Ponot Waterfall is one of the tourist sites located in Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency and is one of Asahan Regency's mainstay attractions. This area is a natural tourism area that has potential and attractiveness as well as a high selling value. However, in reality not many parties are interested in building this tourist spot into a comfortable place to visit so that the location has not been too exposed.

To get to Ponot Waterfall, it can be reached through two routes, namely the first route from the Sumatran road entering from the intersection of Pulau Rakyat towards Porsea, taken for approximately one hour and there is a public transportation that passes, this is an alternative route for tourists from the Kisaran area, Tanjung Balai, Labuhan Batu and its surroundings. The second route from Siantar to Porsea and Sigura-gura takes approximately two hours and there is a public transportation that passes, making it an alternative for visitors from Medan, Tebing Tinggi, Siantar, Parapat, Porsea and its surroundings.

The condition of the paved road and the beautiful natural scenery of Toba from the direction of Siantar to Porsea through the PT. Inalum, with the level of road density that is still empty, tourists feel more comfortable than the road conditions from Pulau Rakyat to Porsea, even though the road is paved, but at some points there is damage to roads and connecting bridges due to landslides and still not repaired.

Ponot Waterfall, which has a height of approximately 45 meters, falls into two levels with an area of approximately 30 meters of waterfalls in diameter for bathing and swimming and natural conditions that are still beautiful and natural (untouched by modernization) with granite rocks here and there according to observations. The author has not maximally managed it and still requires serious attention and handling from the management (BPD and BUMDES) and the Regional Government.

The Role of Youth in the Marketing of Ponot Waterfall Tourism for Regional Development in Asahan Regency

The role of youth in the tourism industry is a time when youth, build and market the tourism sector based on awareness of their role towards themselves. Youth is the spearhead. In the current development era, the role and support of youth is highly expected in filling development. Therefore, their involvement is very important if it is hoped that a sustainable tourism development will be realized, in this case a focus on marketing. This becomes more relevant when it is linked to various efforts to accelerate tourism activities in order to support the development process in various regions in Indonesia, especially Asahan District. Opinions regarding the role of tourism in development and especially for developing countries have often been expressed in various literatures.

Apart from the active role of local youth, information about a tourist spot to the community is also something that needs to be considered in marketing a tourist destination. Given that the competition in the tourism industry is getting tighter, the marketing strategy of a tourist destination must also be more creative and different from other tourist attractions. One of the

marketing strategies that a tourist destination developer needs to pay attention to is the delivery of information widely and the delivery of information well.

Youth as a moral force has been applied by Asahan youth in tourism marketing in regional development, namely in the following ways:

- a. The chief manager of M. Imron always emphasizes the management and youth to always prioritize politeness to the tourists who come. For them, tourists are guests who must be served well.
- b. Local managers and youth always inform tourists that the water from the Ponot waterfall is efficacious in curing various diseases, even though they also say that healing only belongs to God through this water is an endeavor.

During the Ponot Waterfall tour, there has never been any loss or theft of tourist property. Because the head of management and youth always prioritize honesty and uphold the law. Because as long as tourist attractions are safe and free from thuggery, it is also better for tourists to choose to visit and this is what the surrounding community and youth are doing to really maintain the safety and comfort of visitors. The role of Asahan youth as social control has been applied in the tourism marketing of Ponot Waterfall for regional development in Asahan Regency by:

- a. Tangga's village youth is often delegated by the village government to attend seminars or training on tourism.
- b. Tangga's village youth has an awareness of maintaining cleanliness in the surrounding environment which is reflected in the fact that the environment always looks clean.
- c. Tangga's village youth will strictly reprimand and impose sanctions for tourists who litter, destroy forests, and fish with tools that damage rivers.

The role of Asahan youth as agents of change has been implemented in the tourism marketing of Ponot Falls for regional development in Asahan Regency. The application is carried out in the following ways:

- a. The youth of Tangga Village have started to work in small businesses around the Ponot Waterfall Tourism. In the village of Tangga, there have been several natural disasters, namely flash floods, and Asahan youths will come together to participate and help the victims.
- b. Youth and the surrounding community often hold art, cultural performances, sports competitions such as rafting.
- c. Youth and the local community always maintain cleanliness and urge visitors to keep clean. Does not destroy the forest, does not cut down trees, does not pollute the water.
- d. In terms of entrepreneurship itself, the youth of Tangga Village have started by opening businesses such as repair shops, selling handicrafts and trinkets for souvenirs, opening stalls around the tourism location.

The main attraction of the Ponot Waterfall tour is the phenomenon of a waterfall that flows through a rock formation that is 250 meters high with natural stones. Meanwhile, additional attractions are in the form of beautiful natural scenery, the cliffs around the Ponot Waterfall tour, the heavy discharge of Asahan River which is used as Rafting, and the building of a bridge that connects Tangga Village with Meranti Village. The attraction here is only natural, while the artificial attraction is absent.

Service facilities and infrastructure in tourism objects need serious attention. Service facilities that support the marketing of Ponot Waterfall tourism objects include food stalls, souvenir shopping centers, telecommunications facilities and so on. Likewise with infrastructure facilities, both road conditions and transportation facilities and terminal conditions leading to tourist sites.

Non-physical potential that supports the marketing of Ponot Waterfall Tourism is a factor of the population who is accepting of the arrival of visitors. Meanwhile, the non-physical potential that becomes an obstacle in the marketing of Ponot Waterfall Tourism is the lack of tourist attractions as supporting attractions and the lack of tourism facilities and infrastructure.

Different tourist attractions are different as well as services provided, not all services at tourist attractions are the same, there are tourist attractions that provide good service and there are also tourist attractions that provide regular services. Services at tourist attractions are not only from the attitude of the tourist manager but overall from the attitude of the inn manager, the attitude of the shopkeeper where tourists rest and the attitude of the local community. Good and friendly service is shown by the people of Aek Songsongan District, especially the village community of Tangga to visiting tourists, the head of the management, Mr. M. Imron Siagian, always emphasizes his members to provide the best service to tourists, in addition to Mr. M. Imron Siagian also always supervises his members. at work to avoid unwanted things. Mr. M. Imron always emphasizes to all members that any disturbances and incidents that occur at tourist attractions should be reported to him as soon as possible.

The good service that has always been emphasized by Mr. M. Imron Siagian to its members is still being applied by its members, there have never been tourists who have complained to the manager for the services provided by the Ponot waterfall tourism manager. On the big day, Mr. M. Imron collaborates with the government and security forces such as the Police and the TNI to secure the situation on big days, because on big days such as New Year, Chinese New Year, and Eid al-Fitr holidays, visitors can reach 2-3 thousand visitors. In addition to collaborating with various parties, all members of the Ponot waterfall management are also told to go down to the field and are given their respective assignments in accordance with the agreed field.

All members of the management of the Ponot waterfall are 80 people, although there are so many members and the government who participate in securing it, but on big days the managers are always overwhelmed by the number of tourists visiting on big days.

For the good service from the tour manager, starting from being inaugurated as a tourist spot, until now there have been no complaints from tourists who have lost their vehicles and valuables left in the vehicle. To guard the vehicle or parking lot, Mr. M. Imron does not allow members who are still in school to guard the parking lot, Mr. M. Imron always entrusts parking guards to people who have graduated from special school after high school, this is done because many school children are careless as long as they just take the money do not thoroughly inspect tourist vehicles.

The youth of Tangga village has limitations in developing its ideas in terms of tourism development planning and marketing. Actually, the youth are not passive, they just follow the implementation. The youth of Tangga village has also contributed several ideas in planning to support development that will support the marketing of the village tourism sector. However, limitations cause them not to have enough strength or authority to realize it independently. The idea of the youth in Desa Tangga is still considered a mere wish so that it has a low priority to be realized. The roles they can play still depend on the involvement of external authorities.

The youth of Tangga village is still marginalized due to the dominance held by the older group. Even in youth activities which are supposed to prioritize youth independence, the elderly have mixed interests. Even though the goal cannot be said to be bad, with this, whether consciously or not, the youth of Tangga Village lack the freedom to manage their household. This relationship that is too strong can indirectly kill the role of youth in actualizing their abilities in social life. If things like this take place in a sustainable manner, then it is not impossible to kill the creative thinking of youth who are actively in the phase of self-development to be able to actualize their potential positively.

The classic perspective on youth seems to be still applied by most of the people of Tangga Village. The inability of youth is judged unilaterally based on the perspective of the elderly community. Ladder village youths realize it or not, their role is increasingly marginalized. The elderly are more positioned as a party who is smarter, more experienced, more authoritative, more responsible and all other exaggerated aspects. Meanwhile, youth are at a disadvantage due to the perception of their limited abilities.

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