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Enhancing Resilience in Geological Heritage Tourism: A Post-COVID-19 Strategy for "Kayangan Api" and its Contribution to Environmental Development in Bojonegoro Regency, Indonesia

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic has devastated the tourism industry in various places worldwide. After the pandemic, many local governments that rely on tourism as their source of income have tried to recover from the crisis and improve their tourism management. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the resilience strategies of Kayangan Api tourism after COVID-19 and its contribution to environmental development in Bojonegoro Regency. This research is descriptive with a qualitative approach. This research was conducted from June to August 2023. This study focuses on the resilience strategies of Kayangan Api tourism after COVID-19. Data collection was carried out by interviewing the respective government officers responsible for managing the Kayangan Api tourist attraction and the business actors around the tourist attraction. The results of the study show that the Kayangan Api geoheritage tourism resilience strategies were carried out by improving the quality in the aspects of attractions, amenities, and accessibility. This research proposes recommendations for the need for innovation, multi-actor support, and resources to optimize the existing resilience strategies in tourism development, especially in restoring tourism conditions after COVID-19 and contributing to environmental development.

Keywords: resilience strategy, innovations, geological heritage tourism, the Kayangan Api

INTRODUCTION

One of the goals of sustainable development is to realize a sustainable environment (Megawati, Yusriadi, et al., 2022). Sustainable environmental development is one of the things that must be fulfilled (Megawati, Niswah et

al., 2022). It is a shared responsibility and concern for the stability of the ecosystem and environmental productivity, especially in the Tourism environment (Megawati, Setyowati et al., 2022). Managing and using resources efficiently is essential, especially in realizing sustainable

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tourism (Rahaju et al., 2022). However, the tourism sector is the industry most affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The impact of Covid-19 has hit the tourism industry from upstream to downstream (UNWTO, 2022). The closure of tourist destinations, restaurants, and hotels has forced many people to be sent home and even laid off, adding to the problem of poverty (Megawati et al., 2021). In addition, pressure from the government to limit people's movements and advice to stay at home has increasingly brought down the tourism industry. The hotel business, aviation services, and land and sea transportation experienced a sharp decline in various parts of the world. The world tourism industry's revenue in 2020 is projected to drop dramatically compared to the previous year (UNWTO, 2022).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) stated that international tourism is continuing its excellent recovery in January 2022 compared to 2021, which was very weak. After a significant decline in 2020 and 2021, international tourism is expected to resume a gradual recovery in 2022. This is also supported by dozens of countries that have completely or partially removed travel restrictions for international tourists (UNWTO, 2022).

The government is making several efforts and strategies to support the rise of the tourism industry after being hit by the Covid-19 storm. One is the government policy in the form of the National Economic Recovery Program (PEN). The National Economic Recovery Program is one of a series of activities to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. This program aims to protect, maintain, and improve the economic capacity of business actors in running their businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry must adapt and improve to welcome a new order of life or the new normal. Tourism trends will change in this new normal era. The opening of tourist destinations must comply with several rules and health protocols. Health, cleanliness, safety, and security will be the main factors for tourists who want to travel in the future. New standards, new habits, and culture in the tourism sector must be developed to offer appropriate and satisfying new products to tourists in the new normal era (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2022).

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic starting in early 2020, several annual tourism events in Bojonegoro Regency had to be abolished, and several tourist objects closed, causing three tourism objects managed by the Bojonegoro Regency Government, namely Pacal Reservoir, Kayangan Api, and Dander Water Park to be closed entirely for one year. This condition has caused

local revenue from the tourism sector in Bojonegoro Regency to decline drastically. Based on data from the Bojonegoro Regency Culture and Tourism Office (Disbudpar), the tourism sector's PAD target for 2020 has reached 75 per cent. Meanwhile, the PAD target in 2021 is only 1.86 per cent. At the beginning of March 2021, the Bojonegoro Regency Government opened two tourist objects, Kayangan Api and Pacal Reservoir (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2022). Therefore, this study aims to determine the resilience strategy of Kayangan Api tourism after COVID-19 in Bojonegoro Regency.

METHODS

The type of research used in this study is descriptive with a qualitative approach (Sugiyono, 2018). This research was conducted in Bojonegoro Regency in June-August 2023. This research focuses on the resilience strategy of post-COVID-19 Kayangan Api tourism. Data sources are primary data in the form of more detailed information from informants involved in the Kayangan Api tourism, local regulations and secondary data in the form of related journals, research reports, and both print and electronic. We conducted interviews with the government responsible for managing the Kayangan Api tourist attraction and the business community around the tourist attraction. We also conducted observation to the environment of Kayangan Api Tourism Object, tourism management policies and management, as well as facilities and infrastructure. This research is analytical during data collection, capturing the essence of the research objectives through the sources collected (Megawati, Setyowati, et al., 2022). The data analysis technique includes the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism Development Strategy is an activity of a company/ institution that aims to find compatibility between the company's internal strengths and the external forces (opportunities and threats) of a market. Strategy is the long-term goal of a company, and it is the utilization and allocation of all important resources to achieve that goal. A good understanding of strategy and other related concepts will determine the strategy's success (Lazonick & Teece, 2012).

The Kayangan Api tourist attraction, Bojonegoro Regency, East Java, is located in Sendangharjo Village, Ngasem District, Bojonegoro Regency. This village's natural wealth is quite a lot, especially natural gas.

According to research, this Bojonegoro heavenly fire is lit because there are natural gas minerals in the earth's bowels. Natural gas is exposed to flames because there are quite a lot of them, and they appear continuously to form a fire at the Kayangan Api Bojonegoro tourist, which can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Kayangan Api Tourism Object

Source: www.tempatwisataindonesia.com, 2022

Figure 1 shows that the fire at the Kayangan Api Bojonegoro tourist spot never goes out at all. This fire will get bigger in the afternoon and at night. Visitors do not need to worry when visiting the fire of heaven during the rainy season. Because this fire will continue to burn even if it rains, this phenomenon of eternal fire is the same as the phenomenon of the hell door or hell hole in Turkmenistan. It is just that the fire in Bojonegoro is small, while the Turkmen hell hole forms a large crater. Three important aspects form the basis of tourism development planning in Indonesia, abbreviated as 3A (attractions, amenities, accessibility). Aspect 3A is a minimum requirement for the development of a tourist destination. Each tourist destination has unique characteristics that make many people interested in visiting these tourist sites. On the other hand, amenity and accessibility factors will be key to the continuity of tourists enjoying the travel experience (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2022). These three factors have an important role in building a comfortable and enjoyable travel experience for tourists. The following is a post-covid-19 Kayangan Api tourism resilience strategy in Bojonegoro Regency:

1.1. Attractions

Tourist attractions include art, culture, historical heritage, traditions, natural wealth, and entertainment, which are tourist attractions in tourist destinations. Based on Law Number 10 of 2009, tourist attraction has a definition: everything with uniqueness, beauty, and value in the form of the diversity of natural, cultural, and artificial assets that

are the target or destination of tourist visits (Badan Pembinaan dan Pembinaan Bahasa KEMEDIKBUD, 2023).

Several factors can encourage tourists to be willing to go to tourist sites: (1) Something to see is generally the first reason for tourists to be willing to visit tourist sites; (2) Something to do, namely activities or facilities available at tourist sites that can make tourists feel comfortable doing various activities at tourist sites; (3) Something to buy, namely a tourist location, needs to have facilities for shopping for souvenirs or handicrafts as souvenirs; (4) Something to know, besides providing the three things mentioned above, it can also provide information and education for tourists. These factors are available in the Kayangan Api Tourism Object (Rahman et al., 2021).

The Kayangan Api attraction as an eternal source of fire is a geological phenomenon in the form of natural gas that comes out of the ground through fissures, igniting a fire that never goes out even though it rains. About 50 meters from the eternal flame, there is a well called Sumur Blekutuk. The well was filled with water that looked like it was constantly boiling. Not only the shape but also the sound is like boiling water. Even though the smell of sulfur is powerful from the well, it ensures that the well is safe for visitors, and the same as in the Kajang customary area in the Kayangan Api area, traditional ceremonies are also held based on the local wisdom of the community (Megawati & Mahdiannur, 2021).

Several traditional ceremonies and activities carried out at the Kayangan Api location include Jumenengan Ngarso Ndalem Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X Ceremony, Mass Ruwatan Event, Village Nyadran, Waranggono Graduation Ceremony, Selapanan Jum'at Pahing, Outbound and other activities that get permission from the manager.



Figure 2. Traditional Ceremonies in the Kayangan Api Area.

Source: JTVBojonegoro, 2022

One of them is the ritual procession for taking the eternal fire, welcoming the 344th anniversary of Bojonegoro, which can be seen in Figure 2. Figure 2 shows that the procession for taking the eternal fire is a sacred procession. Starting from the procession of taking the eternal flame accompanied by processions of various types of tumpeng, moving from the village gate to the fireplace that never goes out. However, more innovation should be developed to make the existing cultural resources develop to become new attractions and give more benefit to the local people.

1.2. Amenities

Amenities means facilities. The availability of amenities at tourist sites is not something that will attract tourists. In other words, it is not the main destination for tourists (Badan Pembinaan dan Pembinaan Bahasa KEMEDIKBUD, 2023). Amenities are a complement to the main tourist attractions. The absence or lack of good amenity conditions at tourist sites will reduce the interest of tourists, so the provision of amenities at tourist sites is critical to pay attention to. Amenities are not only limited to the availability of accommodation for overnight tourists but also the availability of restaurants for food needs, local transportation that makes it easier for tourists to travel, and so on. In addition, other supporting facilities, such as public toilets, places of worship, and parking areas, are important factors for the completeness of amenities that tour service providers must fulfil. It is not only in terms of quantity but also the quality of the availability of amenities that are important to note and adjust to needs. The quality of good amenities will be directly proportional to the comfort level of tourists in enjoying the tourist experience, enhancing the image of the tourist location. Not limited in physical form, amenities are also supported by non-physical factors such as hospitality and services.

There are small artificial temples around the location where the fire is lit. In this heavenly fire, there are also rides for children to play, such as rickshaws, mini toy trains, mini trains with lights, restaurants, adequate toilets, and places of worship. However, culinary stalls around tourist areas need to be improved to be more adequate for selling food and as a place for tourists to stop. Several UMKM stalls that exist today are very weathered and prone to collapse. In addition, there is no adequate sink/washing area, so it must still be done outside the shop.

1.3. Accessibility

Tourism accessibility in Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011 is all types of transportation facilities and infrastructure that support the movement of tourists from the tourist's origin area to tourism destinations as well as movement within the tourism destination area about the motivation of tourist visits (Peraturan Pemerintah (PP), 2011). Development of tourism accessibility may include (1). Provision and development of road, river, lake, crossing transportation facilities, sea, air, and rail transportation; (2). Provision and development of road, river, lake, and crossing transportation infrastructure, sea transportation, air transportation, and rail transportation; (3). Provision and development of road, river, lake, and crossing transportation systems, sea transportation, air transportation, and rail transportation (Pemerintah Kabupaten Bojonegoro, 2022).

Accessibility is also one of the factors that can support tourists' comfort level when travelling. Ideally, the accessibility of facilities and infrastructure should be located in a location that is not too far from amenities such as accommodation or places to eat. In addition, the ease of accessing facilities and infrastructure and the good quality of the conditions will also increase the comfort level of tourists. Accessibility is related to the ease of reaching tourist destinations using various types of transportation and adequate infrastructure. The mode of transportation should be used by the general public in a comfortable, economical, and safe manner.

The main need for access to Kayangan Api tourist attractions is to increase accessibility to Kayangan Api tourist sites. The current condition of Kayangan Api can only be accessed using private vehicles, and no special public transportation can take tourists. The best recommendation is to have a tour bus provided by the Tourism Office on days with the highest number of visitors, for example, on weekends with scheduled times so that visitors can find out the exact time to go home and go.

CONCLUSION

The strategy for post-Covid-19 geo-heritage Kayangan Api tourism resilience in Bojonegoro Regency through: (1). attractions, in the form of Geoheritage of eternal fire sources and Blekutuk wells as well as several traditional ceremonies and activities that can be carried out at Kayangan Api location; (2) amenities, namely small artificial temples, rides for children to play, such as rickshaws, mini toy trains, mini trains with lights, restaurants, adequate toilets, and places of worship.

However, several culinary stalls around the tourist area need to be repaired because they are weathered; (3) accessibility: This tourist attraction can only be accessed using private vehicles, and there is no special public transportation that can take tourists, so this is important for the Tourism Office to provide. Resilience, governance, and heritage tourism development will likely continue to be studied. The practical implication of this research is that by developing innovation and optimizing the implementation of the 3A strategy (attractions, amenities, and accessibility) in tourism development, it can restore post-COVID-19 tourism conditions and contribute to sustainable tourism development. This research cannot examine the tourism resilience strategy, focusing only on the Kayangan Api tourist attraction. This paper opens opportunities for continued discussion, such as the success of sustainable tourism nationally and internationally. In addition, it can also be developed by comparing success with relying on developing concepts.

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