

# Local Communities' Perception of and Behavior towards Tourism Development: A Case Study of Bunaken National Park

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## ABSTRACT

The number of tourist visits to Bunaken National Park has recently increased, and has subsequently become uncontrollable. This phenomenon has potential benefits and drawbacks according to environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects. This study aimed to explore the opinion and behavior of local communities regarding tourism growth in their area. To examine this phenomenon, the research study applied a mixed-method approach or combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Qualitative data was collected by observing the locals' behavior in Bunaken National Park, and the quantitative data was collected via questionnaires that looked at the perceptions towards tourism development. Doxey's Irritation Index was used as the primary measurement instrument when looking at the interactions among local communities and tourists. The study finds that the local community is likely to give a positive response to the tourism growth in their area and that according to Doxey's theory, they are in the "Euphoria" stage.

## Keywords

local communities, perceptions, tourism effect, Bunaken National Park

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## Introduction

In the last few decades, tourism has become a reliable sector for increasing international and national economies. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2017) stated that tourism has generated, on average, nine percent of the GDP across the globe. The tourism industry has created many job opportunities, with one in eleven jobs associated with tourism (Arcana & Wiweka, 2015a; Wiweka & Arcana, 2016). This sector has also generated exports worth more than one trillion US\$ (six percent of the world's total exports), and the tourism business is prospective to develop exponentially by 2030 to almost two billion global tourist activities. This worldwide phenomenon has also influenced individual nations, including Indonesia. Indonesia's government has recognized the increasing trend of international tourism, and it makes the government, currently, supports this sector as the fourth primary program.

The Ministry of Tourism has also convinced the government to set a target of 20 million international tourist visits and 275 million domestic tourist visits by 2019. The government has established several plans for achieving this goal, such as accelerating the development programs for 10 priority tourism destinations. These programs aim to develop these locations to the same level as the tourist destinations in Bali. One of these 10 regional tourism destinations is Wakatobi National Park (Southeast Sulawesi) (Kemenpar, 2016).

Nature-based tourism activities in Bunaken National Park already existed prior to its appointment as a marine sanctuary in 1986, and as a national park in 1991. Many stakeholders have been involved in Bunaken's nature-based tourism development, e.g. the government, private sectors, locals, etc. In 2011, the Ministry of Tourism developed a form of destination management called the Destination

Management Organization Bunaken (DMOB). The main incentive behind the formation of the DMOB is most likely the huge potential for tourist interest in areas such as the mangrove ecosystem, the sea grass field, and the coral reefs. During the last 10 years, however, several concerns have emerged regarding the impact of water tourism facilities, accommodation, and restaurants. The rapid development of Bunaken tourism may have influenced the cultural behaviors and mindsets of the locals regarding tourism development around Bunaken area. Therefore, this research directs to investigate the perceptions and behavior of the locals regarding tourism development in their area. Besides, this study categorizes their reactions and responses based on the Doxey Irritation Index. This research is influenced by several other types of research (Arcana & Wiweka, 2015b, 2016; Doxey, 1975; Monterrubio & Bello, 2011), who argue that locals' perceptions will change consistently with the interaction intensity between local communities and tourism activities. The advantage and the drawbacks received by the locals may influence this evolution.

## Literature Review

### Tourism Impact

Tourism defines as an integrated business as it is a form of interaction between tourists who bring their habits and cultures with them, and the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural elements of the locals.

a. Socio-cultural. The tourism industry is seen as a tool for conserving culture and art (Howe, 2006; Rini Ismalasari, 2014; Setyagung et al., 2013), as a form of art, culture, and religion accommodation and commercialization (Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007; Greenwood, 1989; Kontogeorgopoulos et al., 2015; Shepherd, 2002; Van der

Burg, 2013; Wiweka, 2014), and as a media of acculturation (Berry, 2005; Holden, 2004; Smith, 2009). The tourism industry has direct to the social communities marginalization (Azhar, 2013; Pandit, 2012), tourism brings the demonstration effect on local peoples, so that, they follow the tourist as a role model (Yasothornsrikul & Bowen, 2015), to an increase in prostitution, alcohol, and drugs (Monterrubio & Bello, 2011; Smith, 2009), and a rise in overcrowding (Wiersma & Robertson, 2004).

b. Economic. Some research tends to consider tourism as a profitable industry as it can increase infrastructure development and local income, and create new job opportunities (Arcana & Wiweka, 2015a; Wiweka & Arcana, 2016).

c. Environmental. Tourism may cause ecological and physical environment degradation (UNRISD, 1995), pollution (Scott, 2008; Tapper et al., 2011), changes in how land is used (Howe, 2006; Lewis & Lewis, 2009; Pringle, 2004), changes in local fauna (Pelletier, 2014), and climate changes on a global scale (Scott, 2008). In general, tourism is not considered to be an environmentally friendly industry.

### Local Communities' Perceptions of Tourism

(Mensah, 2012) investigated local communities' perceptions of tourism in Tafi Athome, Ghana, and found that locals' perceptions of tourism growth in their place tended to be positive, particularly when taking into account its impact on economic and social elements. These locals have also experienced the economic benefits of tourism with new job opportunities being created, although there has not been many investors yet. According to Doxey's Irritation Index (Irridex), these locals are still in a "euphoric" phase, as indicated by their openness towards tourists and investors, however they weren't involved in term of tourism planning and development.

### Doxey's Irridex

This theory focuses on the interaction between local people and tourists. Doxey (1976 as cited in (Harrison, 2011) stated that the impact of such interactions can be categorized into several phases. The Euphoria phase is when the host receives and is interested in the arrival of the tourists. As the total of tourist visits escalates and the interactions between local communities and tourists also increase. However, their relationship becomes more professional; this is classified as the Apathy phase. The next phase is Irritation or Annoyance, and can occur when the increase in tourist visits begins to have a negative impact, such as increasing crime rates, rising prices, and the destruction of socio-cultural values. This phase is then followed by the Antagonism or Hostility phase, where people begin to respond negatively to the development of tourism. Doxey's theory is used in this study to categorize the locals' behavior and responses to the tourism development in National Park of Bunaken.

## Materials And Methods

This study used Doxey's Irridex (1976 as cited in (Harrison, 2011) as the primary measurement approach for the perceptions of and responses to the tourism sector growth.

This approach also analyzes the relationships and interactions amongst local communities and tourists. This research highlights the fact that local's impressions against tourism activity possibly to grow continuously with the positive or negative impacts (either direct or indirect) that the community receives. To review this phenomenon, the study combined quantitative and qualitative methods, i.e. mixed-methods (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). The qualitative data was collected by observing locals' behavior in Bunaken National Park, and the quantitative data was collected via questionnaires administered to 65 randomly chosen respondents. The collected data was also studied using Doxey's Irridex theory as the main measurement instrument for the interactions between tourists and local communities.

## Results And Discussion

### Results

#### The Profile of the Local Communities and Villages around Bunaken National Park

Bunaken National Park (BNP) has an area of 89,000 hectares, and is managed by the Bunaken National Park Office. In this area, there are 21 villages geographically located across the Minahasa and Manado municipalities. These villages have approximately 30,000 inhabitants with diverse livelihoods, most of which are related to the sea, e.g. fishing, mangrove processing, seagrass, and farming. Others work as guides, in hospitality, or as boat captains. Tourism development in this area has been rapid, and there are now 19 diving companies, as well as hotels, restaurants, and an airport.

There are 13 living coral genera in Bunaken National Park waters, which are dominated by edge reefs and barrier reefs. In addition, there are 91 species of fish found in these waters, including goropa (*Pseudanthias hypselosoma*), oci putih (*Seriola rivoliana*), lolosi ekor kuning (*Lutjanus kasmira*), ila gasi (*Scolopsis bilineatus*), kuda gusumi (*Hippocampus kuda*), etc.

#### Residents' Responses to the Impact of Tourism

The responses gathered from 65 randomly selected local participants within the Bunaken National Park geographical area were divided into three parts: socio-cultural aspects, environment aspects, and economic aspects. Each parts were consist of several questions and each of it is provided five possible answers which can be chosen by respondents. The classification of possible answers are divided by Likert's scale such as very significant, significant, do not know, insignificant and very insignificant.

#### Residents' Perception of the Tourism Socio-Cultural Impact

The respondents were asked whether tourism development (tourism accommodation) has any impact on thirteen socio-cultural indicators. Extra space was provided with these questions so that the respondents could provide specific reasons for their opinions.

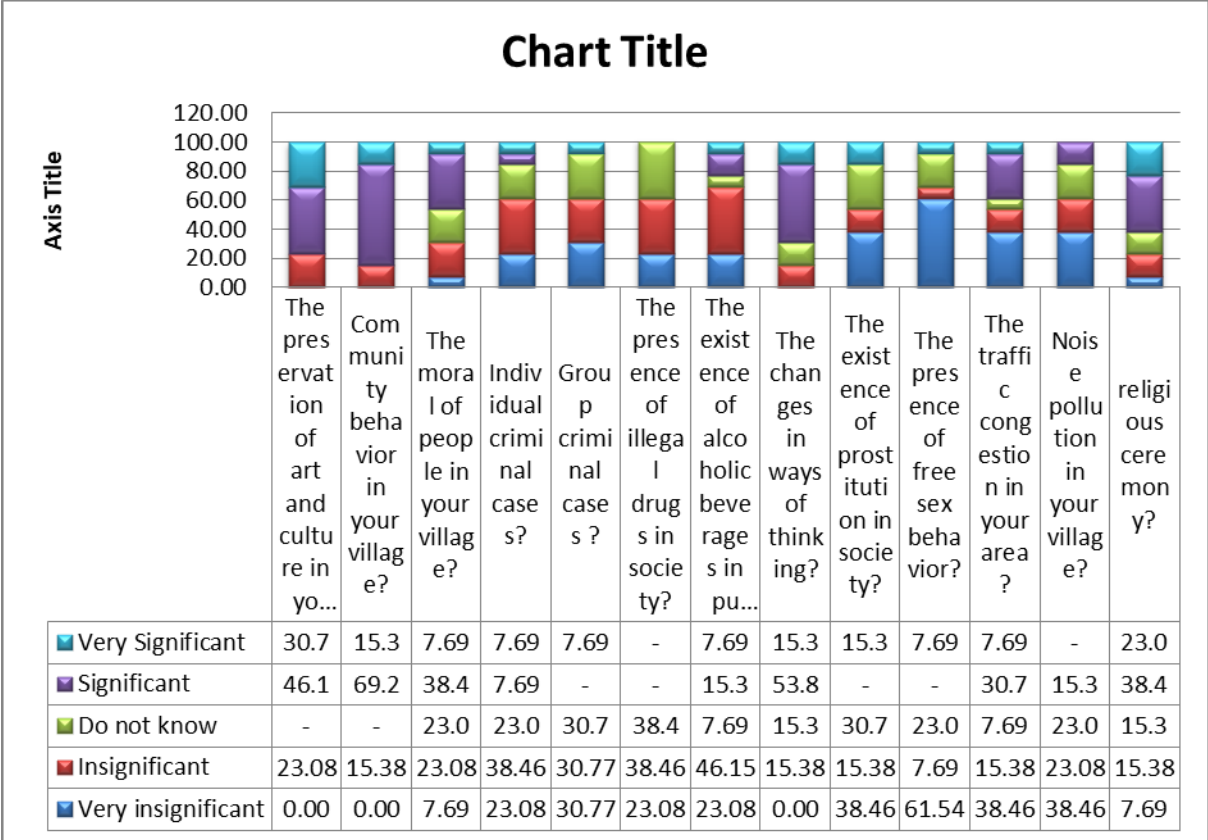


Figure 1. Residents’ responses to the socio-cultural impact of tourism.

In general, residents’ responses to tourism developments can be categorized as positive or not negatively impacted. This can be seen from the chart above, of which 13 question variables are mostly responded positively. The data shows that people do not feel the interference from the existence of tourism activities and the existence of tourists. According to the survey, figure 1 illustrates that most of the respondents (76.92%) believed that cultural commercialization through the tourism business has been bringing many benefits, such as arts and culture preservation. One example is the young generation begins to have the willingness to learn local culture and chosen as their future career. Furthermore, the majority of participants (84.66%) thought that tourism also influenced positively to the local people behaviors in Bunaken National Park areas, this is because the local people are beginning to realize how to serve tourists by adapting the way of speaking, punctuality, how to behave and to take the responsibility, especially for those who work with the tourism industry (guide, drivers, restaurant waiters, etc.). Tourism also seems

to bring a positive impact in terms of local community social aspects (public morals). However, the locals (46.15%) still concerned about the increase in alcoholic beverages consumption in public area. Tourism development was also thought to significantly affect how society thinks, this is because they feel gain new insights and information when interacting with tourists. In contrast, however, the majority of participants thought that tourism had not had a significant impact on prostitution or sexual behavior. With regards to the impact of tourism on religious ceremonies, 38.46% thought that it had a significant impact, and 23.08% thought it had a very significant impact.

**Residents’ Responses to the Environmental Impact of Tourism**

Respondents were asked whether tourism development has had any influence on 7 variables related to environmental aspects.

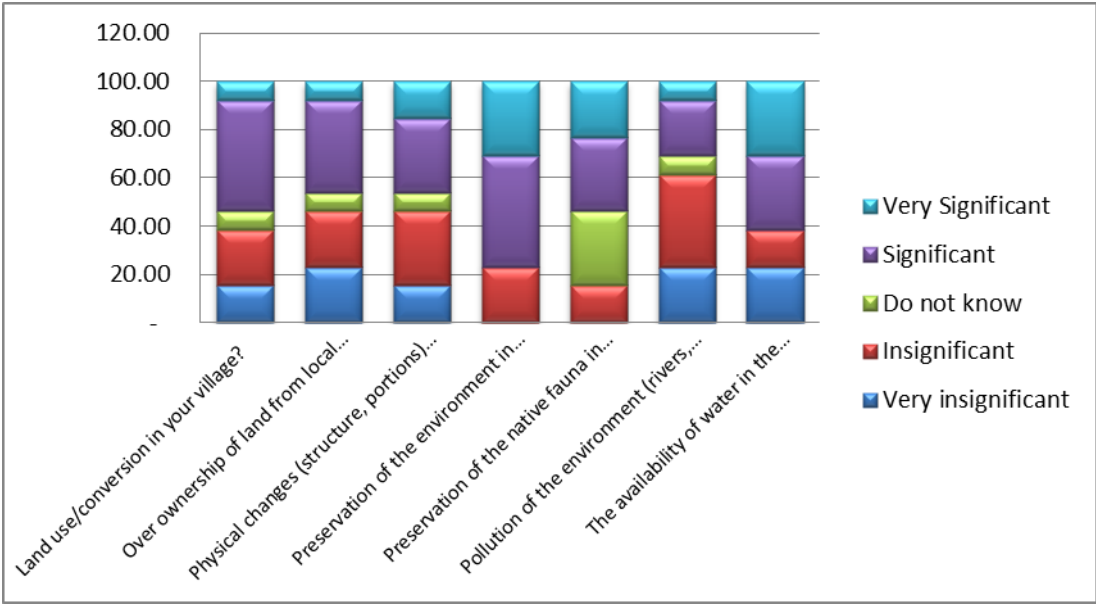


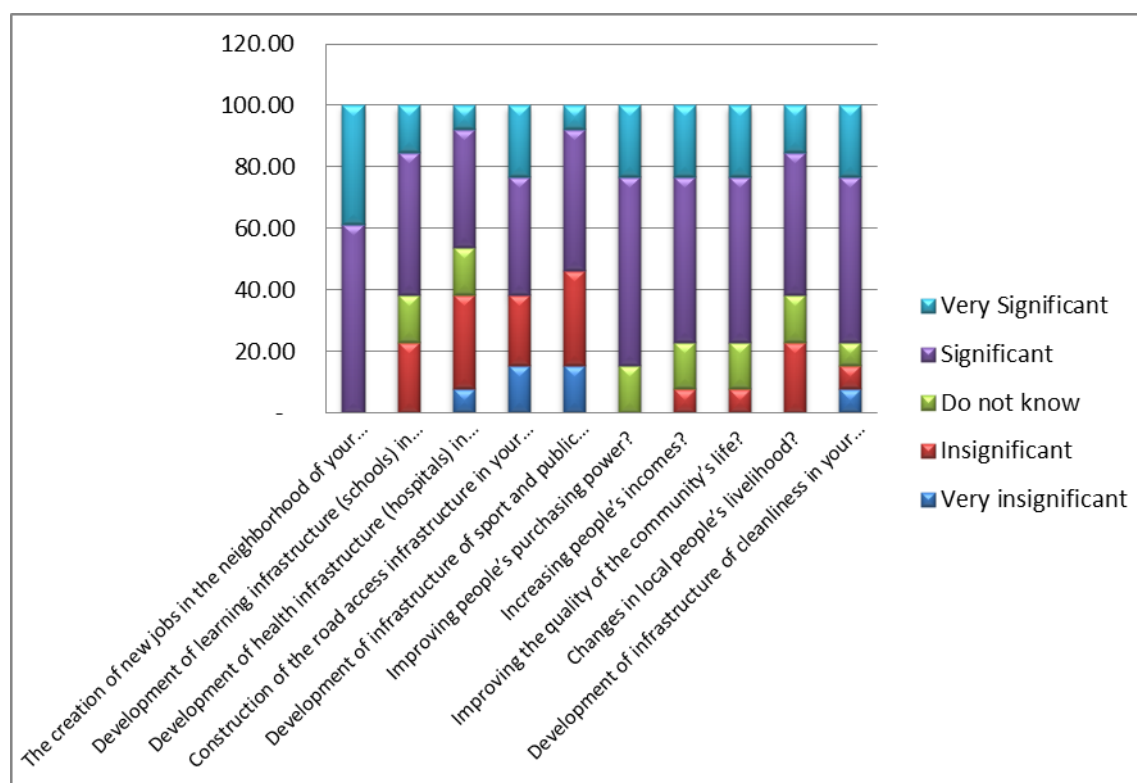
Figure 2. Residents’ responses to the influence of tourism in terms of environmental.

In most cases, the tourism business is considered to have a negative impact, especially related to land conversion and clean water availability. But on the other hand, tourism is also considered to bring benefits or positive effects for the preservation of art, culture, and the natural environment in Bunaken National Park areas. Figure 2 shows that 53.84% of respondents argued that tourism development in their area brings significantly influenced the over-used land. However, the issue of transfer of land ownership from the local community to investors seems to remain a debate between the community. According to the survey, more than 40 percent believe that tourism brings the influence of land ownership issues and vice versa. More than 45% of respondents argued that tourism activity brings significant physical changes in the structure of Bunaken National Park areas. However, on the other hand, the locals also believed that tourism development carried a substantial impact on environmental preservation (75% of respondents) and

protection of the native fauna (53.85% of respondents) in Bunaken National Park areas had been significantly affected by tourism. It is because tourism has been proved to plays an essential role in environmental preservation, which is the principal capital of tourist attraction, where on the contrary, the sustainability of the tourism industry is also very dependent on the viability of natural resources. In the case of environmental pollution, however, more than 60% of respondents considered the impact of tourism to be insignificant.

Residents’ Responses to the Economic Impact of Tourism

Respondents are asked whether tourism development has had any influence on 10 variables related to economic aspects.



**Figure 3.** Residents' perception of tourism impact of the economic sector.

In general, the tourism sector is still considered to have a positive impact on the commercial industry. It is because the impact of tourism from the industrial area can be felt directly by local communities, such as the availability of new jobs that can increase people's income and purchasing power. The phenomenon can indirectly improve the local communities' life quality, where they become more concerned with environmental hygiene. In addition, local people argue that tourism only affects the development of infrastructure facilities that directly support tourism activities, such as the development of road infrastructure, sports facilities and public entertainment. However, the development of tourism is not yet felt in the construction of schools and hospitals in Bunaken National Park. According to the survey, figure 3 illustrates that most of the respondents believed that tourism development has significantly influenced the increase of new job creation in Bunaken National Park areas. Similarly, the majority of the respondents (more than 60%) argued that tourism had caused changes in the local communities' livelihoods, and they also believed that tourism development has significantly influenced their education infrastructure (schools) development. On the other hand, tourism was not considered to have had a significant effect on sports and public entertainment infrastructure development. Furthermore, most of the respondents (over 70%) argued that people's incomes had increased due to tourism, and 76.93% believed that the quality of their lives had improved. Similarly, 53.85% thought that tourism development has significantly influence of infrastructure of cleanliness in the Bunaken National Park areas.

## Discussions

This study has found that local communities in Bunaken National Park areas still feel positive about the development tourism in their area. According to the analysis data, local people around of the Bunaken National Park give a favorable opinion to the tourism development in their area. This statement at least is supported by some responses to the research questions, including economic, socio-culture, and environmental issues. The local community believes that tourism development is one of the rational solutions to preserve their art, local culture, and religious ceremony. On the other hand, even though some cases begin to arise, however tourism activity was also considered to have not significantly affected the existence or development of free sex, prostitution, and drug issues. It was thought, however, to have impacted the moral behavior of local communities. Accordingly, the impact of demonstration effect seems doesn't give the influence to the local community behavior. In the other word, the interaction between locals and tourist can be categorized as positive mutual relationship. Concerning the environmental aspects, the local community argues that Bunaken National Park tourism development had a significant negative impact, such as changes to the availability of water and land ownership issues. This opinion is also supported by the management at Bunaken National Park, which argued that "In this region, the phenomenon of land conversion is quite prevalent in various regions. This case has affected the local people's livelihoods who were formerly as a farmer, but who now desire to market their land to be utilized for tourism accommodation. So many local communities have transferred their occupation into



tourism sectors, such as local guides." On the other hand, tourism accommodation development has also contributed to the increasing consciousness of the environmental preservation of Bunaken National Park areas.

In contrast to the adverse tourism effects on environmental issues, it was thought to be a benefit (positive) on the economic sector. It is certainly not surprising since many researchers found that tourism will bring financial benefits quickly, and in most cases, it will be received directly by local people (Arcana & Wiweka, 2015; Arcana & Wiweka, 2016). Around 80% of the economic variables were thought to have been positively influenced by tourism, e.g., the new job opportunities, an increase in purchasing power and income, and better life quality. Tourism development has also affected the construction of accessibility (either physical or non-physical access), hospitals, the sanitation infrastructure, and the education infrastructure (school). On the other hand, local people argue that the sports infrastructure and public entertainment has not been significantly affected.

### Conclusions

According to our data, the locals' responses to tourism development in Bunaken National Park are still positive. If studied according to Doxey's theory (1976 as cited in (Harrison, 2011), the locals appear to be in the Euphoria phase of their relationship with tourism as they still support tourism development and have become accustomed to living with tourists on a daily basis. Locals tend to receive various benefits from tourism activities, which increases their quality of living. According to Doxey's theory (1976 as cited in (Harrison, 2011), the Euphoria phase occurs when local economic conditions experience stagnation and tourism offers a solution to this problem. The locals' responses seemed to focus more on the economic benefits of tourism, and ignored the negative socio-cultural and environmental impact. Future research should further examine tourism development planning in Bunaken National Park so that local people's acceptance of the development of tourism continues.

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