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TOURIST PERCEPTION OF TOURIST ATTRACTION IN SOUTHWEST PAPUA

Persepsi Wisatawan Terhadap Daya Tarik Wisata di Papua Barat Daya

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and expectations of Southwest Papua's tourist attractions to provide recommendations for improving tourism quality. This study uses qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation through video and photos, to explore tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and expectations in Southwest Papua. The results of this study are: 1) In the three domains of tourists' perceptions, destination attractions, facilities and services, as well as safety and comfort. Some tourists generally expressed positive perceptions, appreciating the authenticity of the natural environment and the immersive cultural experiences. However, certain challenges, such as unpredictable weather, accommodations, homestays, and management issues, led to negative perceptions, particularly among tourists from Asia. 2) Emotional and social satisfaction are the highest-rated aspects experienced by nearly all 350 tourists, surpassing functional satisfaction. Their sense of happiness is attributed to effective tour organization, fluent communication by tour leaders, and well-established social interactions with local communities. 3) Tourists expect better facilities and more government involvement in infrastructure and local training to improve the tourism experience. Collaboration between the government and tourist villages will greatly contribute to enhancing the positive values for visiting tourists.

Keywords: Tourist Perception, Level of Satisfaction, Tourist Expectation.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis persepsi, kepuasan, dan ekspektasi wisatawan terhadap daya tarik wisata di Papua Barat Daya untuk memberikan rekomendasi guna meningkatkan kualitas pariwisata. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif, yang mencakup wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, serta dokumentasi melalui video dan foto, untuk menggali persepsi, kepuasan, dan ekspektasi wisatawan di Papua Barat Daya. Hasil penelitian ini adalah: 1) Wisatawan umumnya memiliki persepsi positif terhadap keaslian alam dan budaya, meskipun tantangan seperti cuaca, akomodasi, homestay, dan manajemen menimbulkan persepsi negatif, terutama bagi wisatawan Asia. 2) Kepuasan emosional dan sosial lebih tinggi dibandingkan kepuasan fungsional, didukung oleh pengelolaan tur yang baik, komunikasi efektif, dan interaksi sosial yang erat dengan masyarakat lokal. 3) Wisatawan mengharapkan fasilitas yang lebih baik dan keterlibatan pemerintah yang lebih besar dalam pengembangan infrastruktur serta pelatihan



untuk masyarakat lokal guna meningkatkan pengalaman pariwisata. Kerja sama antara pemerintah dan desa wisata akan sangat berkontribusi dalam meningkatkan nilai-nilai positif bagi wisatawan yang berkunjung.

Kata Kunci: Persepsi Wisatawan, Tingkat Kepuasan, Harapan Wisatawan.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is defined as a series of travel activities carried out by individuals or groups to a place outside their daily environment for the purpose of recreation, business, or other purposes. According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, tourism includes a variety of tourist activities supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, government, and local governments. Tourism encompasses a series of activities and the provision of services, including tourist attractions, transportation, accommodation, and other services designed to address the travel needs of individuals or groups (Sugima, 2011). Meanwhile, Corte et al. emphasize that tourist satisfaction is a key element in the development of sustainable tourism. (Corte, 2015). From the various definitions, it can be concluded that tourism is a series of travel activities involving interactions between tourists and supporting elements, with the aim of fulfilling recreational, educational, or business needs, while also contributing to the economic well-being and cultural preservation of the visited destinations.

Tourism encompasses various types, including ecotourism, ethnic tourism, historical tourism, and marine tourism. The following are expert views on each type of tourism. According to The International Ecotourism Society (2015), ecotourism



is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education," (Prihardani, 2022). This definition emphasizes the importance of environmental conservation and the empowerment of local communities in nature-based tourism activities. Ethnic tourism refers to travel aimed at interacting with unique local cultures and communities. Tourists are interested in learning about the traditions, customs, and lifestyles of specific communities. Historical tourism involves visits to historical sites to understand and appreciate the past. Tourists visit monuments, museums, and other historical places to gain insights into past events and cultures. Orams (1999) defines marine tourism as "recreational activities involving travel to coastal and marine environments, such as sailing, diving, and other activities focused on the sea."

Previous research has shown that tourists' perceptions of facilities and infrastructure significantly influence satisfaction and the intention to revisit. For example, a study at Pasir Putih Beach in Manokwari Regency indicated that the condition of economic infrastructure plays a crucial role in enhancing the destination's appeal., (Christian Lallo, 2016) . Additionally, a study at Ketapang Beach emphasizes the importance of adequate tourist attractions and points of interest in meeting visitors' expectations, (PRAYITNO, 2021). These findings emphasize that effective management of facilities and infrastructure is key to enhancing tourists' positive perceptions.



In addition to facilities and infrastructure, aspects such as attractions, amenities, and accessibility are also crucial factors in shaping tourists' perceptions. A study at Pasir Putih Beach, Manokwari Regency, indicates that these three aspects have a significant impact on visitor satisfaction (Winny Virginia Saway1, 2021). Unique attractions, adequate amenities, and good accessibility can enhance the overall tourist experience. Therefore, the development of tourist sites in Southwest Papua must consider these three factors to improve the competitiveness of the destination.

Tourists' perceptions are also influenced by the variety of attractions offered. A study at Glagah Beach, Kulonprogo, revealed that the diversification of tourist attractions can enhance visitors' interest and satisfaction, (Desita Anggraeni). By offering a variety of activities and experiences, a tourist destination can attract a broader market segment.

¹⁴ This study aims to analyze the perceptions, satisfaction levels, and expectations ³ of tourists who have visited tourist destinations in Southwest Papua. Tourist perceptions reflect how they assess the attractions, facilities, and services available at the tourism sites. Satisfaction levels are measured based on tourists' experiences regarding the quality of service, infrastructure, and comfort during their visit. Additionally, this research also explores tourists' expectations for ³ the development of tourism in the region, with the goal of providing recommendations to stakeholders for improving the quality of tourism destinations.

MATERIALS AND METHOD



³ This study employs a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews and participatory observation techniques to explore tourists' perceptions, satisfaction levels, and expectations. Interviews were conducted directly with tourists encountered during my activities as a local tour guide, allowing for a deeper understanding of their experiences. Additionally, participatory observation was carried out by actively engaging in tourism activities, providing richer context for tourists' behaviors and reactions. Data collection also involved video and photo recordings as documentation to support the analysis of tourists' perceptions and expectations of tourist destinations in the Southwest Papua region. Through this approach, the research produces more authentic and relevant data for understanding tourists' experiences.

DISCUSSION

The results of the research obtained through direct observation and dialogues with tourists reveal diverse findings regarding their perceptions, satisfaction levels, and expectations when visiting tourist destinations in Southwest Papua. The study reveals that most tourists had a positive perception of their travel experiences in Papua, particularly appreciating the authenticity of the natural environment and the opportunity to engage with local cultures. This is consistent with the findings of (Li Li, 2022) which suggest ⁵ that perceived authenticity positively influences tourists' perceptions of the destination image, both in terms of nature and cultural context. Furthermore, in this study, the authenticity referred to is how the natural environment remains well-preserved and distant from the development of more



advanced cities. Even the sound of birds chirping in the morning is something that tourists deeply appreciate.

Many tourists enjoyed exploring the landscapes and observing traditional activities, which enhanced their overall travel experience. However, some of tourists expressed negative perceptions, primarily due to challenges such as unpredictable weather and limited access to certain areas, particularly affecting activities like birdwatching. Additionally, cultural differences were noted, as tourists from Asia, especially Japan and China, were more likely to file complaints, while tourists from Europe, Australia, Africa, and America viewed these challenges as part of the destination's charm. This aligns with the findings of (Sara Dolnicar, 2008) which indicate that culture influences response styles and perceptions of travel experiences. In this context, Asian tourists may have higher standards or expectations, leading them to file complaints more frequently, while tourists from Western cultures or other regions may be more flexible, viewing such challenges as part of a more authentic experience.

The study found that emotional and social satisfaction are the highest-rated aspects experienced by nearly all 350 tourists, surpassing functional satisfaction. Primarily due to the tour leader's effective organization, detailed explanations, and fluent communication in English. The knowledge and skills of tour guides have a significant impact on tourist satisfaction, (Tumbel Brenda Brighita, 2018). However, perasaan bahagia dari para turis selama dan setelah tour juga sangat tinggi dan berpengaruh pada persepsi tourist. (Fatemeh Bagheri, 2024) This recent study



explores the connections between tourists' experiences, their satisfaction levels, and loyalty, focusing on the influence of happiness and authentic experiences. Some tourists were dissatisfied with aspects such as the local community's limited knowledge of tourism management, and issues related to infrastructure, such as the quality of homestays, electricity, water, and sanitation. These shortcomings, along with poor management and service in some homestays, led to disappointment for certain tourists. This is consistent with the study by (Tuyen Dai Quang, 2024), which found that tourists frequently complained about the lack of basic facilities such as electricity, clean water, and sanitation in homestay accommodations. These infrastructural limitations, combined with unprofessional management, contributed to tourists' dissatisfaction with their lodging experience. To improve the overall experience, the study suggests addressing infrastructure development, enhancing homestay services, and providing better training for local staff to meet the growing expectations of international visitors.

Tourists expect improvements in accommodations and facilities within tourist villages, including better homestays, reliable electricity, adequate sanitation, and internet access without disrupting the natural environment. In line with this, (Sofía G. Lovato-Torres, 2024) discusses the importance of tourism infrastructure in rural areas, including adequate accommodation, accessibility, and digital connectivity, in enhancing tourist satisfaction. This study emphasizes that well-developed infrastructure can improve the tourist experience while promoting economic growth and sustainability in rural regions. It is interesting to note that, despite tourists'



desire to improve accommodations, accessibility, and digital connectivity in tourist villages, the findings of this study reveal that tourists still wish to preserve the natural authenticity of these areas without making any alterations.

They also anticipate a more active role from the government in supporting the development of these villages through infrastructure enhancements and training programs for local communities, particularly in tourism management and communication with foreign visitors. This aligns with the article (Institute, 2023) which discusses the importance of community involvement in tourism development and how community-based initiatives can empower residents while promoting sustainable growth. The article also emphasizes the role of training and collaboration with various stakeholders in achieving these objectives. Additionally, several NGOs and tourist groups have collaborated with local communities to identify needs and provide training, contributing to the sustainability and overall enhancement of the tourism experience.

RESULTS

a) Tourist perceptions

1. Tourists' perception of the visited attraction

Tourists' perceptions, based on video interviews related to the region's natural beauty, culture, and history, are overwhelmingly positive. Nearly all of the 350 tourists surveyed expressed that the authenticity of the natural environment, cultural heritage, and historical sites in each destination is well preserved. This authenticity is a key factor attracting



many visitors to these locations. For instance, in Malagufuk Village, within the scope of ecotourism, tourists participating in birdwatching expeditions greatly appreciate the surrounding natural environment. The morning calls of birds and the historical significance embedded in every step they take through the forest create invaluable moments that they find unforgettable. Notably, a team from National Geographic Channel once visited the area, with the researcher leading their birdwatching trip. Additionally, the region offers other remarkable attractions, particularly the discovery of various species of the Bird-of-Paradise (Cendrawasih), which are native to Sorong.

2. Tourist perceptions of facilities and services

Tourists' perceptions regarding facilities and services, including accessibility, transportation, accommodation, and local hospitality, vary, encompassing both positive and negative feedback. Based on video interviews and guestbook records, most tourists from Asian countries, such as Japan and China, tend to have less favorable perceptions. Their experiences suggest a tendency to express dissatisfaction with the available accommodation and accessibility, which they perceive as inadequate. This issue is closely related to their initial expectations before arrival, as they often assume that the destinations are easily accessible and well-developed. In contrast, tourists from Europe, Australia, America, and Africa rarely complain about accessibility, transportation, or accommodation. These tourists are



generally more aware that they are traveling to remote locations and are willing to adapt, understanding the challenges as part of their adventure. However, in terms of perceptions of local hospitality, there is a universal consensus among tourists. All tourist groups visiting various destinations across different types of tourism guided by the researcher provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, as documented in videos and photographs. In locations such as Malagufuk Village during birdwatching expeditions, Piaynemo, and traditional Papuan ethnic houses, the interactions between tourists and local communities were notably enthusiastic and engaging. Additionally, several NGOs, both domestic and international, have initiated collaborative educational programs aimed at supporting tourism villages and enhancing local engagement.

3. Tourist perception of safety and comfort

Tourists' perceptions of safety and comfort encompass cleanliness and personal security throughout their travels. According to records from the guestbook maintained by the researcher and tour leader, a total of 350 tourists have participated in these tours, with zero accidents reported, an achievement attributed to the tour's strong emphasis on safety and comfort. All necessary equipment for activities such as birdwatching and diving is provided, ensuring that tourists have access to well-maintained gear. Additionally, continuous monitoring is conducted to guarantee their safety and enjoyment. Regarding comfort, video



interviews, photographic documentation, and guestbook records indicate that a significant number of tourists, particularly those traveling with their families, express profound happiness and tranquility during their visits to various tourism villages. They describe these experiences as moments of relaxation and rejuvenation memories they will cherish for a lifetime. Although resort management at some accommodations occasionally demonstrates inefficiencies in staff coordination and hospitality, tourists still feel safe and comfortable. This is largely due to the researcher's ability as a tour leader to effectively organize and communicate in English, enabling tourists to better understand and adapt to the local conditions.

Overall, tourist's perceptions of their experiences in Southwest Papua tend to be positive, particularly regarding the region's natural authenticity and rich cultural heritage, which they experience firsthand. Despite challenges such as limited accessibility, minimal tourism management, and unpredictable weather conditions, most tourists perceive these difficulties as part of the adventure. Variations in responses based on cultural backgrounds suggest that tourists' expectations significantly influence their level of satisfaction. With proper management, these challenges can be mitigated, enhancing the tourism experience in Southwest Papua and making it more memorable and appealing to a broader range of visitors.



b) Level of satisfaction

1. Functional satisfaction

Functional satisfaction is associated with objective and measurable aspects of the tourism experience, such as service quality, facilities, pricing, and accessibility. Tourists exhibit varying levels of satisfaction in this regard. Similar to perception, Asian tourists tend to express dissatisfaction more openly, often noting that the cost they pay does not align with the accessibility and quality of services provided, which lowers their overall satisfaction. In contrast, European tourists are generally more willing to pay a premium to visit each destination and consistently express satisfaction with the quality of services offered by both travel operators and local communities in tourism villages. However, there remains significant room for improvement in terms of facilities and accommodation quality.

2. Emotional Satisfaction

Emotional satisfaction is related to tourists' feelings during and after their journey. Guestbook entries from 300 tourists indicate that emotional satisfaction is the highest among all aspects of their experience. Tourists consistently express feelings of happiness, excitement, enthusiasm, and a sense of fulfillment, often highlighting the new knowledge and meaningful experiences gained throughout the trip. As a result, it is not uncommon for some tourists to participate in the tour more than once.



3. Social Satisfaction

Social satisfaction arises from tourists' interactions with local residents, fellow travelers, and tour guides. Based on video interviews and other documentation, social satisfaction is also reported to be relatively high among tourists. The interactions between tourists and local communities, facilitated by the researcher as the tour guide, are well-established. Documentation frequently captures tourists actively engaging with local residents, seeking to understand their way of life, and making efforts to communicate with them. This positive engagement has also encouraged various domestic and international NGOs to collaborate in supporting education in tourism villages, aiming to empower local communities and prepare them to become "local heroes" for their respective villages.

Tourist perception is closely linked to satisfaction levels, with almost 300 tourists expressing contentment due to effective tour organization, detailed explanations, and clear English communication by the tour leader. However, challenges remain, particularly regarding the local community's limited tourism management knowledge and inadequate infrastructure, including homestays, electricity, water, and sanitation. Many tourists noted poor homestay maintenance, cleanliness, and unprofessional service as key concerns. Addressing these issues through improved infrastructure, better homestay management, and enhanced local understanding of tourism is crucial. These improvements would not only



elevate the overall tourist experience but also help tour guides manage expectations and ensure a seamless journey, ultimately strengthening the region's appeal to international visitors.

c) Tourist expectations

Further, the expectations of tourists vary greatly, yet they generally revolve around improvements in accommodations and facilities within each tourist village. Tourists often express the need for better homestays, reliable electricity, proper sanitation, and clean water. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of accessible roads and adequate internet services, ensuring that modern conveniences do not interfere with the natural environment. These expectations reflect the desire for a balance between comfort and sustainability in rural tourism areas.

Moreover, tourists hope that the government ¹²will play a more active role in supporting the development of these tourist villages. They suggest that governmental assistance should focus on improving infrastructure and providing essential services to enhance the overall visitor experience. Tourists also expect the government to prioritize the training of local human resources, ensuring that residents of these villages are equipped with the skills to communicate effectively in English and explain their village's cultural and natural significance to foreign visitors.

The government could facilitate this by offering training programs and courses aimed at enhancing the local community's knowledge in



tourism management and administration. These initiatives would help locals manage tourist destinations more effectively, ensuring that the villages can accommodate growing tourist numbers while preserving their unique cultural and environmental heritage. Such capacity-building efforts could go a long way in enhancing the overall tourism experience.

Some foreign NGOs and individual tourist groups have already taken steps in this direction, collaborating with local entities to conduct surveys and observations of schools in tourist villages with promising potential. These collaborations aim to identify areas of improvement and offer tailored training to residents. By continuing these efforts, it is possible to create a more sustainable and mutually beneficial tourism environment that meets both the expectations of tourists and the needs of local communities.

CONCLUSION

The following are the conclusions of this study:

1. In the three domains of tourists' perceptions, destination attractions, facilities and services, as well as safety and comfort. Some tourists generally expressed positive perceptions, appreciating the authenticity of the natural environment and the immersive cultural experiences. However, certain challenges, such as unpredictable weather, accommodations, homestays, and management issues, led to negative perceptions, particularly among tourists from Asia.



2. Emotional and social satisfaction are the highest-rated aspects experienced by nearly all 350 tourists, surpassing functional satisfaction. Their sense of happiness is attributed to effective tour organization, fluent communication by tour leaders, and well-established social interactions with local communities.
3. Tourists expect better facilities, such as improved homestays, reliable electricity, clean water, and adequate internet, as well as greater government involvement in infrastructure development and training programs for local communities, to enhance the tourism experience.

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