Tourism, Communications, and Disasters: Political Communication Management in Government Institutions on the Development Policy of Tourism Industry in Disaster-prone Areas Case Study: Planning on Special Economic Zones in the Mentawai Islands

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Abstract: The archipelago of Indonesia hosts rich natural resources and beautiful tropical nature. Tourism is currently the leading sector and national as well as regional development priority in Indonesia. Besides having the famed natural beauty, Indonesia hides the potential threat of natural disasters. Therefore, disasters and tourism in development plans do not always go hand in hand. The perception of disaster for the tourism industry is often seen as a threat. Development policies do not yet seriously consider disaster risks as a part of the calculation of development investment in order that casualties and losses of every disaster event can be minimized, especially in areas of tourism destinations. In the last two years, losses from disasters reached 68.66 Trillion rupiahs. Of the new 50 Special Economic Zones planned by the central government of Indonesia, most of them are located at places with a high risk of natural disasters. The lack of consideration of potential threats of natural disasters can be perceived as the absence of political communication management. This research thus examines how political communication management is applicable in government institutions to make tourism development policies sustainable and safer for people in disaster-prone tourism destinations. The importance of this research is to contribute several indispensable ideas academically in political communication and practice in sustainable development policies in disaster-prone areas.

1 INTRODUCTION

Geographically, Indonesia is an archipelagic country with a coastline length of 99,093 kilometers. This archipelago consists of 13,466 islands, extending from Sabang to Merauke. Indonesia is a wealthy country with natural resources and world-famous natural beauty. According to the report Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), Indonesia succeeded in upgrading its 42nd place on tourism, rising 8 levels. In the eyes of the world, Indonesia is recognized for its achievements in utilizing its natural resources at a very affordable price. This has placed Indonesia in the 5th place. In building its assets, Indonesia is sadly pressing cultural resources in order to prioritize the Travel and Tourism sector as a driving factor of economic development (TTCI Report, 2017).

Besides the beauty and the availability of rich natural resources, Indonesia is facing a lot of problems regarding natural disasters. Geologically, the Indonesian Archipelago is formed of three active plates in the world, namely the Eurasian, Indian-Australian, and Pacific plates. These plates constantly move against and push each other. In the course of time, moves of earth plates often cause small and large scales of earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters such as volcano eruptions.

According to Disaster Management Law, number 24 / 2007, events or series of events of natural disasters are explained to have potential threats to people's lives and human livelihoods. The threats generated by natural factors and/or non-natural factors as well as human factors that have consequences to human casualties, environmental damage, property losses, and psychological impacts. Disasters caused by natural factors are unpredictable, and people are fragile on this matter as their knowledge and capacity in dealing with natural disasters are relatively limited.
According to a report by the National Disaster Management Agency (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana – BNPB), a number of 2,572 catastrophic events had caused the loss of 4,814 people’s life, and 10,239,522 others were displaced in 2018. Due to the earthquake occurred in Lombok in 2018, the ministry of tourism calculated that a number of 100,000 foreign tourists did not visit Lombok every month. By assuming that a foreign tourist would spend US$ 1,000 per visit, the economic loss was of US$ 100 million.

Earthquake and tsunami disasters in Sulawesi, according to BNPB report, the loss and damage in the region due to earthquake and tsunami reached up to 13.82 trillion rupiahs. The tsunami disaster in the Sunda Strait has an impact on the economic loss from the tourism sector up to 42.72 billion rupiahs.

According to the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency (Badan Meteorologi, Klimatologi dan Geofisika – BMKG) from 2013 to 2018 were 11,920 earthquake events in Indonesia. The potential risk of earthquakes to people’s livelihoods in Indonesia is relatively high as those natural disasters occurred in the areas where the population is densely inhabited.

According to Government Regulation, Number 50 / 2011 about the National Tourism Development Master Plan (Rencana Induk Pembangunan Kepariwisataan Nasional - RIPPARNAS) for 2010-2025, and the Tourism Industry Strategic Plan for 2015-2019 (PDIP Strategic Plan 2015-2019), the policy of the development of the national tourism industry is expected to be competitive, credible tourism industry, driving business partnerships, and being responsible for the environment and socioculture. These embodied in the development of the 5 pillars of the tourism industry, namely (1) strengthening the structure of the national tourism industry, (2) competitiveness of tourism products, (3) tourism business partnerships, (4) business credibility, and (5) responsibility for the environment, the environment what is meant here is the business environment, to standardize and certify businesses (Kementrian Pariwisata, 2015).

In preparing for the development of the mass tourism industry, the government has prepared a legal umbrella of tourism development policies, which are directly overseen by two main coordinating ministries, namely the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. Now the efforts to improve the national economy are through the tourism industry called “Special Economic Zones (SEZ)” (Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus - KEK). The central government has been focusing on this sector, much more focused on the second period of Joko Widodo's administration, as mentioned in the first point of the President 2019-2024 vision speech. Infrastructure development will continue, connecting large-scale infrastructure with small industrial estates, and with the Special Economic Zones.

According to Presidential Decree Number 3 / 1989, the Indonesian government has commenced campaigning the tourism program of the “Visit Indonesian Year” in 1991. The Indonesian government has been focusing on gaining national income by strengthening the tourism sector. In order to stimulate the growth of the regional economy, tourism destinations are mostly directed to densely populated areas in Indonesia. Another reality is that those destination areas have high potential risks for causing many casualties, damage, and losses as they mostly locate in disaster-prone zones. Development policies in disaster-prone areas are not well evaluated and considered.

The economic whirlpool should be interconnected with public and industrial facilities, as well as tourism destinations, by considering threats of natural disasters. From a row of national tourism destinations spread across 50 regions of Indonesia, most of them are located at a big risk of threat. The series of natural disaster events that have occurred in the last two years should be taken into consideration of the tourism development policy, not only responding to anticipating the impacts of natural disasters on tourism but also on the policy consolidated at the level of government institutions.

In order to understand the correlation between tourism industry policies and the threat of natural disasters, this study focuses on a case taken from one of the tourism destinations, which is the Mentawai Islands. The District Government of the Mentawai Islands has been at the position as a backward and underdeveloped region and considered to be less developed compared to other regions on a national scale since it is part of Indonesia. Poor economic matters, lack of human resources, insubstantial infrastructure, poor financial capacity, limited accessibility to the outside world, and traditional cultural characteristics have been perceived disadvantageous to Mentawai’s current circumstances. Nonetheless, this region is rich in natural resources like the timber of the rainforest. It also has great potential for marine tourism because the islands have beautiful nature. Therefore, the central and provincial governments, as well as the district government, intend to promote the tourism development in this region by planning to develop
particular areas in the concept of a special economic zone.

According to a masterplan of regional development, a particular area of Siberut Island of Mentawai district exactly located in Southeast subdistrict government of Siberut Island (kecamatan Siberut Barat Daya) will soon be undergoing massive construction for the tourism industry of the so-called Mentawai Bay Resort. Its initial plan is to use an area of 2,639 hectares. However, this plan never officially announced to the public. Local government does not open any discussion to share what the benefits or consequences of the tourism industry to the local people. It means that the plan of development of Mentawai Bay Resort is not communicated to the public openly.

The local people were encouraged to sale the land for the sake of development by individuals from the local government. It is obvious that land in the selected area that initially belongs to the local people has been bought with insignificant prices by individuals representing the company.

Furthermore, the study of potential disaster risks in the selected area on Siberut is not considered seriously, and the area was not studied properly. According to earth scientists, the District Government of Mentawai Islands is one of the regions which has a potential rapture of a large earthquake. According to Danny H. Natawidjaja, who intensively conducted seismic research in Mentawai in the last 30 years, Mentawai has been accumulating large energy that can generate a large earthquake with a magnitude (Mw) of 8.8 (Natawidjaja in Documentary Repdeman, 2018).

By seizing economic opportunities for central and local governments through tourism, this research has been intended to figure out the roles of political communication in government institutions in formulating policies, specifically the policy of developing tourism destinations in dealing with potential threats of natural disasters in the concept of sustainable development.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism is one of the main economic activities in many countries. WTO statistics show that tourism is the largest industry in the world because it is one of the main sources of state income. The tourism sector, if managed maximally, can make a major contribution to national and global development outcomes. Indonesia occupies the top 10 positions in the last few years competing in China, and India according to the global travel and tourism economy (WTTC, 2011, 2017).

In the latest report of the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness in 2017, written by the World Economic Forum (WEF), Indonesia was at the rank of 42 out of 136 world indexes by exploiting the natural resources for tourism industry at the rank of 14th out of 136 countries, but in managing environmental sustainability Indonesia is at the rank of 131 out of 136 (WEF, 2017). Looking at this ranking, Indonesia is considered successful in utilizing natural resources for the tourism industry, but bad in the management and improvement of a sustainable environment.

Challenges of the tourism industry are not only a matter of economic considerations but social, environmental matters, which are the domain that directs the development of tourism policies and promotion, especially in developing countries and countries with economies in transition (Shurland et al., 2008). The tourism destination business, especially in the coastal areas, is increasingly challenged by the potential danger of natural disasters. Such as the case of the 2004 tsunami disaster in Aceh caused 270,000 casualties and massive destruction of physical infrastructure. Beach resorts in India and Malaysia were the hardest hit resulting in a massive exodus of tourists and booking restrictions. In 2005 there was a decrease of 85% of international tourists, and around 500 tourism companies went bankrupt (Henderson, 2007).

According to data from the Ministry of National Development Planning (Kementrian PPN / Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional – BAPPENAS) in 2018, noted that the loss in the economic value of the disaster's economic activities in 2004-2016 was estimated to reach a total of 166.6 trillion rupiahs. This was caused by 21 major disaster events. It was coupled with the value of losses from the 2017-2019 disaster with an estimated reach of 85 trillion rupiah (BNPB, 2019). The increasing frequency of disasters becomes problematic for a country like Indonesia because of high recovery costs for rebuilding and reconstructing settlements of the post-disaster area.

At the global level, there have been many efforts and recommendations made to address disaster risks in the policy of the tourism industry. One of them is the organization of Asia Pacific Economic Coordination (APEC). There are 21 countries that join together to overcome disaster risks and protect the tourism economy. The implementation of disaster risk management in the tourism industry has been carried out by the Government of the kingdom of Thailand. For example, Phuket Island is the most
popular tourist center known as Andaman Pearls. During the peak season, the island received more than 2.5 million visitors in 2005. The Thai kingdom established a National Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Committee (NDPMMC) chaired by the Thai prime minister. Disaster risk management in the tourism industry in Phuket and Bahamas is part of the state disaster risk management. Disasters are still at the level of a paradigm of response rather than prevention. This is similar to the Indonesian context. To manage the tourism industry is more about to tackle crises in order to overcome the loss of tourism material due to disasters (Kurniasari, 2017).

The impact of population, economic, and social growth on the tourism industry is very influential. An obvious example is Bali. Since 1959 Bali relies on tourism as a means of foreign exchange earnings. The tourism industry has become the backbone of the economy in Bali. Most of Balinese people are attracted by tourism. Since 1971 tourism has contributed a significant income to Bali compared to other regions in Indonesia. Bali contributed 33.36% of Gross Regional Domestic Product from the tourism sector in 2000, and this increased up to 69.71% in 2002-2003 (Erawan, et al., 2002; 2003). The role of the central government, foreign investors, Indonesian Chinese, and military investors in the tourism industry is influential to the growth of the tourism industry in Indonesia (Suparwoko, 2012).

Governments at all levels expect economic benefits from tourism, especially from taxes on payment of tourists, hotels, and restaurants (Elliot, 1997). Therefore, Indonesia has made tourism a leading sector and has become a key factor in the development of welfare, export earnings, job creation, business development, and infrastructure development. Tourism has experienced continuous expansion and diversification and has become one of the largest and fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Even though the global crisis has occurred several times, the number of international tourists continue to support positive growth in this sector (UNWTO, 2015).

Some scholars proposed a framework for integrative analysis of tourism vulnerability to potential natural disasters in small island tourist destinations. The framework offered is to consider aspects of a vulnerability that have an impact on society, the economy, and the environment, with a series of actions called PPRR (Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery) (Becken et al., 2014). Risk or impact becomes a barrier to vulnerability. The proposed framework is divided into two external parts, namely ‘external environmental influence’ and ‘external human influence.’ As an external human influence, the human can prevent any significant changes in environmental conditions.

There is a strong political policy to bridge between economic possibilities of the tourism industry and the threat of natural disasters, which is political communication. Roles of political communication is to mediate stakeholders involved in tourism industries. The authors use the critical theory of communication in organizations from Stanley A. Deetz (1995; 1992). Realizing that in many studies, the use of this theory is more visible in corporate communication. This theory was coined by Stanley Deetz, who came from his thoughts on how a company can be used as a land for politics and economics at the same time (see also in Griffin, 2012).

Deetz explained how we realize that communication apprenticeship is very important for the delivery of information; these two things cannot be separated. Deetz (1992), as also discussed by Littlejohn (2009), states that critical theory is always best when it starts with deep attention, but does not end there, tracing historical social constructionism without forgetting another basis and making general statements without complacency, attracting attention or simple (see also in Littlejohn, 2009: 391).

Tribe (2008) also uses critical theory in his article titled Tourism: A Critical Business, saying that the gap between research and the application of tourism shows that tourism is not a critical business enough. Tribe offers the concept of critical tourism, where a critical approach can contribute to good tourism management and governance by providing a rational understanding that can be accepted by tourism techniques. The critical theory used as an approach criticizes complex tourism management practices involving institutions in planning, regulation, and control of tourism and the political environment in which the industry operates (Tribe, 2008).

Political Environment in tourism requires support in a stable and developing national environment. In critical situations, the political environment of tourism cannot easily recognize a crisis. This is because tourism relies on a strong ideology to achieve success. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) said that tourism is the world’s largest industry, significantly contributing to world marketing (Franklin, 2004).

In the context of interests, there is a sharp gap between science and politics. It may not be in line with, and the use of science in the realm of public policy. Policymaking is far from the scope of science,
where science can be neatly separated from politics, but both must be united (Rose et al., 1992). Meanwhile, the concept of politics is closely related to conflict and the need for cooperation.

In contemporary writings on politics by political scientists, it is more characterized as chaos, unpredictable, and an obstacle to policy in an unsupportive environment (Prewitt et al., 2012). The policy should be a field of rational analysis, objectivity, trust in science that has proven to be a proven political consideration in the planned public, and development policy options.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research method of this paper is qualitative. Creswell (2008) defines qualitative research methods as an approach or search to explore and understand central phenomena. Data were gathered through interviews to follow suggestions given by Bernard (1994) and Briggs (1986). To visit the selected areas for the planning of a special economic zone on Siberut Island was done several times in order to observe the real situation in the field for several weeks in 2017 and 2018.

To meet and discuss with local people has been done in order to get boarder perspectives on the planning of a special economic zone for this island. It is important to know what the local people know about the government plan in their village. Secondary data were gathered from regulatory policy documents, previous research, and news searches on the Internet. This research is still ongoing. It is a temporary search and findings. This research is still developing to gain its final result. Nevertheless, preliminary findings are necessary to present for gaining feedback from readers.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As we said earlier that this research is still preliminary, the new analysis is based on preliminary data searches and documents. In tracing the regulatory documents, there are 53 regulations for the legal umbrella of the tourism industry’s destination development policy that has been issued and have been established. They are overseen by two main coordinating ministries, namely the Coordinating Ministry for Maritime Affairs and the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs. The Ministry of Communication and Culture coordinates four ministries, namely the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Tourism. The Coordinating Ministry for the Economy coordinates 10 ministries, including leading economic assets, namely the Ministry of Finance, Labor, Industry, Trade, Public Works Public Housing, Agriculture, Environment and Forestry, Agriculture and Spatial Planning / National Land Agency, Indonesian state-owned enterprises (Badan Usaha Milik Negara), Cooperatives, Small and Middle Businesses.

Apart from the ministries, currently there are 28 business operators, who have obtained a Business Identification Number (BIN) to obtain facilities and incentives as an investment return. Facilities and incentive benefits include obtaining licensing, taxation, excise, goods traffic, immigration, employment, and land facilities.

The regulations do not mention disaster as important factors in the planning of tourism destination development. The disaster is perceived as a threat, that may shrink tourists’ interest to visit a place. Like the disaster happened at the end of 2018, when the tsunami hit tourist places around the Sunda Strait. According to the data of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (Perhimpunan Hotel dan Restoran Indonesia - PHRI) of Banten Province, the estimated value of the tsunami-affected loss was 180 billion rupiah, and the loss itself was calculated only in the Tanjung Lesung area. Pandeglang Regency has a Tanjung Lesung Special Economic Zone (SEZ), which has been operating since February 2015. Since its establishment until 2016, a number of 570,000 tourists visited the area and have been targeted to continue to increase up to 6.1 million tourists when it fully operates in 2020. But the 2018 tsunami has damaged some tourism facilities and decreased tourist interest.

The problem is that 50 tourism industry destinations spreading from Sabang to Merauke are concentrated in the coastal areas. Where the areas also have the potential threat of natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. For example, three locations are situated on the west coast off the Sumatran mainland in Simeulue, Nias and Mentawai Islands. These locations are selected and decided according to the government regulation number 50 / 2011 concerning the master plan for national tourism development in 2010-2025.

As a selected area for one of the special economic zones (Kawasan Ekonomi Khusus – KEK) in Indonesia with its focus on tourism destination, the district government of the Mentawai Islands is one of the areas included in the high-risk area of the
earthquake and tsunami. On 2,639 hectares of land, a KEK will be built with 31 world-class resort facilities. In the late 1980s, unique surfing spots were discovered in Mentawai after first cultural tourism activities commenced to be popular in the early 1980s. In the course of time, the Mentawai Islands become a center and main destination for local and international tourists in West Sumatra (Ponting at al., 2009; Bakker, 1999). The Surabaya-based development company PT. Putra Mahakarya Sentosa will develop and build the KEK Mentawai Bay Resort. In the masterplan document, surfing spots become the allure of marketing strategies. And in the Environmental Impact Assessments (Analisis Dampak Lingkungan - ANDAL) document, 7-storey resorts and hotels with five-star hotel facilities will be built (Sentosa Group, 2017).

At the same time, the Mentawai Islands are also predicted to be at high risk of the threat of a large earthquake and tsunami. The current coastal area is lush with mangroves, where this vegetation can reduce large waves of tsunamis. Also, in the development planning document, analysis of disaster risk was not considered though the islands are very famous for the “Megathrust” earthquake potential. Scientific publications on this matter have been widely discussed and published by earth scientists (McCloskey, at al., 2008; Sieh, 2005).

In the analysis of political communication management in government institutions, the realm of disaster lies with the National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB). BNPB is a Non-Ministerial Government Agency, the head of BNPB is under the President directly and is equal to the Minister assigned to assist the President in coordinating the planning and implementation of disaster and emergency response activities in an integrated manner. It also carries out disaster and emergency response starting from before, during, and after a disaster that includes prevention, preparedness, emergency response, and recovery.

In the realm of disaster risk, tourism planning seems to have no scientific consideration of disaster risk in tourism destination development policies. This can be seen that there is no discussion of disaster risk in tourism policy regulations, and there is no analysis of disaster risk calculations in the master plan for the development of the KEK Mentawai Bay Resort or the ANDAL document. According to Law number 24 / 2007, by representing government, BNPB has the mandate to report the implementation of disaster management to the President once a month under normal conditions, and at any time in a state of disaster emergency as the manifestation of political communication. Certainly, the disasters that have hit Indonesia in the last 10 years need to re-include scientific considerations of disaster risks in development planning.

While the problem of communication between institutions still looks sectoral. In the analysis of Deetz's Critical Communication theory, two approaches are the information model and the communication model (Deetz, 1992; 1995). The policy formulation process is made in strategy, approval, involvement, and participation. The function of communication management between institutions or across institutions is often an obstacle. The coordinating ministry with the Agency (in this case, BNPB) is often not considered equal, even though in the hierarchy, both are directly under the President's position.

Political communication in government institutions should be a communication system that synergizes and is directed at the national development mission. The tourism industry becomes a superior infrastructure. The realm of development is not only concerned with economic and political factors, but disaster risk considerations because being in a region with high risks are important in sustainable development investment. The fact has shown that every time a disaster occurs, there is not a small amount of loss and loss of life, not because of natural factors that cannot be controlled, but the management of the area and building structure makes the loss and casualty value continue to increase while the risk of disaster from the value of loss and damage and fatalities can be calculated to minimize the impact of disaster risk. Development policy must have implications for the value of benefits and sustainability.

Another fundamental problem is the paradigm of disaster management in Indonesia today, still an emergency response, not yet on mitigation measures. So, it becomes difficult to manage disaster mitigation, especially in the realm of policy. The integrity of government institutions in producing policies, especially development, must be sustainable. Principle values in the integrity of government institutions in disaster management in development policies must be able to design sustainable development so that every disaster event can minimize the impact of disasters.

5 CONCLUSIONS

Tourism has become a continuous expansion and diversification and has become one of the largest and
fastest-growing economic sectors in the world. Despite the global crisis, the number of international tourist trips has continued to show positive growth. On this basis, the government launched a national tourism industry and destination development program to target until 2025. It was a vacuum during the Indonesian President Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono’s administration, but since the issuance of government regulation number 50/2011 during the President of Joko Widodo’s administration the Special Economic Zones commenced to resume as development model for the income-generating sector through tourism activities, and now Joko Widodo’s administration is in the second period. The construction of tourism infrastructure has been intensified again. The main market is foreign tourists, especially in Asia. Indonesia in the tourism industry competes with Malaysia and Thailand.

From the target of 50 tourism destinations, 12 locations are in operation, and the rest are still in the process of being proposed and determined. The District Government of the Mentawai Islands has been in planning for implementation. However, it is still kept from local public attention in order to avoid social conflicts and protests against this development planning. To achieve development goals, it is necessary to approach optimizing the function of political communication in government institutions that are still sectoral, planning, and policy formulation must be considered strategically, including considering aspects of disaster risk, which are excluded from the dominance of economic and political interests.

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