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Coastal Tourism and Climate-Related Disasters in an Archipelago Country of Indonesia: Tourists' Perspective

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Abstract

The tourism sector, one of the largest economy contributors in urban and regional development, is depended much on climate, sunlight, sea water, and natural landscape. Climate condition may influence the tourism activity. However, there is less study on the relationship between tourism and climate change in Indonesia, where many coastal areas are located. They are obviously really sensitive and vulnerable to the direct and indirect impacts of climate-related disasters. The objective of this preliminary study is to identify the tourists' perception regarding their understanding on the issue of climate-related disaster risks and its influence on the coastal tourism activity. An online questionnaire survey with domestic tourists' respondents was conducted, including their socioeconomic characteristics, and perception of climate-related disasters to coastal tourism activity. The finding revealed that the majority of respondents are understood about the issue and impacts of climate change. They responded that some of the climate-related disasters have influenced to coastal tourism activity; the high level is affected by storm and flood. By understanding the tourists' perspective, it will give valuable inputs especially for local government, policy decision makers, and related tourism stakeholders to improve their approaches and strategies in order to achieve sustainable coastal tourism development.

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Keywords: Coastal tourism; climate change; Indonesia; tourists' perspective; disaster risks

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1. Introduction

Climate change has become a challenging issue which has emerged as one the most significant and controversial areas of academic research and policy development in recent years. There is a vast body of references on climate change that continues to grow rapidly every year. Given the economic, social and environmental significance of tourism, the coverage of tourism in the climate change literature, and in particular in some key governmental reports, could be described as patchy to weak at best. In many cases, coverage of tourism is virtually non-existent or is discussed so generally that the information provided is not helpful for the development of climate change strategies. Although there appears to be a consensus that tourism as a sector is particularly vulnerable to climate change, some tourism stakeholders and destinations could realize considerable opportunities. Furthermore, some of the discussion of tourism is based on studies where the assumption and limitations have not been made clear or are not informed by the substantial body of literature on tourism. There remain limited connections between the increasingly multidisciplinary literature on climate change and tourism, and broader fields of tourists' knowledge, particularly tourist behavior, marketing, and sustainable tourism [1].

Hall [2] had reviewed literature related to climate change and tourism. He found that there are several main issues related to recent studies and discussion on the issues. He indicated that some of the findings with respect to the potential impacts of climate change both direct and indirect on tourism are rigorously limiting capacity to have a better understanding of tourism and climate change risk. He mentioned that there is the lack of knowledge in many areas, including primary tourism processes and systems. Thus, understanding to which extent the people's knowledge on the issue of climate change related to tourism aspect is really essential in tourism development. In addition, Kajan & Saarinen [3] stated that there is a limited focus on community perception, including tourists and related tourism stakeholders, regarding the studies on climate adaptation and tourism, which in general, community perception has been an area of key interest in tourism research. They emphasized that focusing more on community-based research in relation to tourism and climate change will achieve a more sustainable way in the context of adaptation challenges.

Based on the above background, the study on the relationship between tourism sector and climate change phenomenon becomes a significant issue especially for Indonesia which has many natural based tourist destination objects and potential impacts that are resulted from climate change, such as flooding, drought, extreme weather, and the increase of sea water level. Tourism is known as one of the major sectors that can contribute to regional development. This sector has a high dependency to climate factors, such as sun, ocean, and nature [4]. Thus, it is very sensitive to the impacts imposed by climate change. There is a few study on the relation between natural tourist attraction object and climate-related disaster risk, in particular, developing countries like Indonesia. The objective of this study is to identify the tourists' perspective on climate change impacts and their relation to coastal tourism activity. Some of the factors are assessed including the socio-economic of respondents, their motivation, and perception of tourism activity, as well as their understanding of the climate change issue and the extent of influencing the impacts of the tourism activity.

2. Conceptual consideration

The relationship between tourism and climate change has been studied academically for more than two decades and widely recognized in the tourism industry. The most vulnerable area of the tourist destination is the natural landscape, such as the hilly, mountain and coastal areas. In particular, coastal areas are destinations that are negatively affected by climate change. For instance, March et al. [5] studied the negative impacts of climate change on various tourist destinations, particularly nature-based and coastal tourism, and the level of adaptation in each destination. Several studies on climate change and tourism relations have shown that climate variables such as temperature, rain, and humidity are very influential for travelers in determining travel decisions [6], [7], [8], indicating that climate change has a considerable impact on travel decisions and tourist travel flows. However, based on the study of international tourists' perceptions of climate change in Zanzibar, Tanzania [6], the findings revealed that the majority of travel decisions of tourists visiting the island are not due to climate conditions, but due to the motive of the trip to visit relatives and friends or to see other attractions. For the case of Zanzibar, there were a large number of foreign workers, such as development aid workers and international school staff, those who visited

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