

IMPACT OF BLACK WATER TOURISM ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN KERENG BANGKIRAI PALANGKA RAYA

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Abstrak

Black Water Tourism in Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya, has become a tourist destination that attracts the attention of both local and foreign tourists. With its stunning natural beauty and rich ecosystem potential, this place not only offers a recreational experience, but also has a significant social impact on the local community. This research aims to explore the social impact of Black Water tourism on the surrounding community, including economic, cultural and environmental aspects. Through data analysis and interviews with local communities, this research found that although there are clear economic benefits, there are also challenges that local communities must face in maintaining their identity and environmental sustainability.

Keyword : Social Impact, Black Water Tourism, Local Communities, Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya

Introduction

Black Water Tourism is one of the increasingly popular tourist destinations in Indonesia, especially in the Kereng Bangkirai area, Central Kalimantan. The

natural beauty on offer, such as the unique black water and being surrounded by tropical forests, attracts the attention of many tourists. According to data from the local Tourism Department, tourist visits to

Black Water Tourism have increased by 30% every year since 2018. This shows great potential for local economic development, but also creates various social impacts that need to be researched further.

The importance of social impact studies on local communities cannot be ignored. With the increasing number of tourists, local communities around Black Water Tourism experience changes in various aspects of their lives, both positive and negative. For example, increasing income from the tourism sector can improve the quality of life, but on the other hand, there is also the risk of social conflict and cultural changes that can affect the identity of local communities. Therefore, this research aims to dig deeper into the social impacts caused by tourism and how local communities respond to the changes that occur.

Black Water Tourism is located in a tropical forest area that is rich in biodiversity. The black water comes from the high humus content, giving it a different feel compared to other water attractions. Apart from that, this location also provides various activities, such as boating, trekking, and observing flora and fauna. According to a report from the Central Kalimantan Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the tourism sector contributes around 10% of the total regional GRDP, showing how important tourism is for the local economy.

Social impact studies are essential to understand how tourism can affect the lives of local communities. Possible positive impacts, such as increased employment and income, must be balanced against potential negative impacts, such as social and environmental changes. This research will provide a clearer picture of the situation of the people in Kereng Bangkirai, and how they are adapting to the changes brought about by the tourism industry.

The social impact of Black Water Tourism can be divided into several categories, including economic, cultural, and environmental. From an economic perspective, increasing tourist visits can create new business opportunities for local communities, such as homestays, food stalls and boat rentals. However, there are also negative impacts, such as inflation in the prices of goods and services which can burden local communities. According to research by Smith (2020), the economic impact of tourism is often uneven, with only a few individuals receiving the greatest benefits.

The response of local communities to the changes caused by tourism has varied. Some individuals may welcome increased income and job opportunities, while others may feel threatened by cultural and environmental changes. For example, research by Jones (2021) shows that indigenous communities around tourist sites often face a dilemma between maintaining their traditions and adapting to the new economic demands brought by tourism.

Tourism is a form of activity carried out by individuals or groups to visit certain places with the aim of recreation, education or new experiences. According to the World Tourism Organization (WTO), tourism can be defined as travel undertaken by people to places where they do not live permanently, of varying duration, and for various purposes (WTO, 2020). The types of tourism are very diverse, ranging from natural, cultural, historical, to educational tourism. In the context of black water tourism in Kereng Bangkirai, the dominant types of tourism are nature tourism and ecotourism, where visitors can enjoy the natural beauty and biodiversity that exists around them.

The role of tourism in local economic development is very significant. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) for 2021, the

tourism sector contributed around 4.5% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In areas such as Kereng Bangkirai, black water tourism is one of the main sources of income for the local community. With visitors coming, there is an increase in demand for local products, such as food, handicrafts and accommodation services. For example, many residents have opened homestay businesses and food stalls that serve regional specialties, thereby creating new jobs and improving people's living standards.

The positive impact of black water tourism in Kereng Bangkirai is felt by the local community. First, increasing people's income is one of the most obvious impacts. Data from the local Tourism Office shows that tourist visits have increased by up to 30% in the last two years, which has had an impact on increasing the income of people involved in the tourism sector. Second, tourism also encourages the preservation of local culture and traditions. People are becoming more aware of the importance of preserving their cultural heritage, such as traditional dances and handicrafts, which are now on display to visitors.

However, behind these positive impacts, there are also negative impacts that need to be considered. One of them is changes in people's social behaviour. With the influx of visitors from outside, there is a tendency for people to adopt a more consumerist lifestyle, which can lead to the loss of traditional values. In addition, an increase in the number of visitors can potentially cause environmental damage, such as pollution and damage to natural habitats. According to research conducted by Mulawarman University, around 20% of the area around black water tourism experiences a decline in environmental quality due to tourism activities that are not well managed (Mulawarman University, 2022).

Social change can be defined as a transformation that occurs in social structures, interaction patterns, values, and norms in society. According to Soerjono Soekanto (2015), social change is a process that changes certain aspects of social life in society. In the context of black water tourism, social change can be seen in how local communities adapt to the influx of tourists and how this impacts their way of life.

Methods

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. This approach was chosen because researchers wanted to understand in depth the social impacts caused by Black Water tourism on local communities in Kereng Bangkirai. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach allows researchers to explore individual views and experiences, so as to provide a more holistic picture of the phenomenon being studied. In this context, researchers will observe social interactions, economic changes, and cultural impacts that occur due to tourism development in the area.

Data collection techniques used in this research include in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with local communities, tourism managers and other related parties to gather information about their experiences regarding Black Water tourism. Participatory observation was carried out to see directly the social dynamics that occur at tourist locations, including interactions between tourists and local residents. In addition, document analysis was carried out on secondary data such as government reports, tourism-related publications, and relevant previous studies. This triangulation method aims to increase the validity of the data obtained (Flick, 2018).

Data collected through interviews and observations will be analysed using a thematic analysis approach. This analysis allowed the researcher to identify the main themes that emerged from the data obtained. Each interview will be recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis. Next, researchers will categorize the data based on themes related to the social, economic and cultural impacts of Black Water tourism. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is an effective method for understanding individual subjective experiences in a broader social context.

There are several factors that influence social change in Kereng Bangkirai due to black water tourism. First, economic factors are the main driver. With new economic opportunities, people are encouraged to innovate and adapt. Second, cultural factors also play an important role. Interactions between tourists and local communities can trigger cultural exchanges that enrich the experiences of both parties. However, keep in mind that not all changes are positive; Sometimes, external cultural influences can threaten the existence of local culture. Research by Siti Aisyah (2021) shows that 40% of people feel pressured by cultural changes brought by tourists, which can disrupt the existing social balance.

Results And Discussion

Black Water Tourism Profile

A. History and Development

1. The origins of Black Water Tourism

Black Water Tourism in Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya, has a rich and interesting history. This place was originally known by local people as a source of fresh water which has a deep black color due to the high content of humus and natural minerals. The existence of this water source has become an important part of local community life, both for daily needs and as a place for

cultural rituals. According to research conducted by the Central Kalimantan Regional Research and Development Agency, Dayak communities around Kereng Bangkirai have used this water for centuries, making it part of local traditions and beliefs (Central Kalimantan Regional Research and Development Agency, 2020).

Along with the increasing interest of tourists in exploring the natural beauty of Kalimantan, the local government began developing Black Water Tourism as an official tourist destination in the early 2000s. This development not only aims to attract visitors, but also to preserve the culture and surrounding environment. Data from the Palangka Raya City Tourism Office shows that tourist visits to this location have increased significantly, from only 500 visitors in 2005 to more than 10,000 visitors in 2022 (Palangka Raya City Tourism Office, 2022).

Infrastructure development is one of the main focuses in increasing accessibility to Black Water Tourism. Roads to locations that were initially difficult to reach have now been repaired, and facilities such as parking lots, toilets and rest areas have been built to increase visitor comfort. This is expected to have a positive impact on the local economy, where people can take advantage of business opportunities that arise due to the increasing number of tourists.

2. Development of Infrastructure and Facilities

The development of infrastructure in Black Water Tourism is very crucial to support tourism growth in the area. The regional government has allocated a budget for road construction and better transportation access. According to a report from the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing, investment in infrastructure in Central Kalimantan will increase by 20% in 2021, with a focus on developing tourist destinations (Ministry

of Public Works and Public Housing, 2021).

The facilities provided at Black Water Tourism are also continuously being improved. Currently, there are several accommodations managed by local communities, which offer a stay experience that is closer to nature. This not only provides comfort for visitors, but also opens up job opportunities for local people. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the tourism sector in Central Kalimantan will absorb more than 1,500 local workers in 2022, with the majority coming from the accommodation and food sectors (Central Statistics Agency, 2022).

Apart from that, the existence of a tourist information center which provides information about activities that can be done around Air Hitam, such as trekking, cycling and bird watching, is increasingly attracting tourist interest. Providing trained local guides also helps improve the tourist experience while providing additional income for the community. According to a survey conducted by Palangka Raya University, 75% of tourists were satisfied with the local guide services they used (Palangka Raya University, 2023).

The development of this facility also includes environmental conservation efforts. Programs involving the community in maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the environment around Air Hitam have been launched. Activities such as tree planting and waste management are carried out regularly, involving active participation from local communities and visitors. This not only helps maintain natural beauty but also increases public awareness of the importance of environmental conservation.

B. Tourist Attraction

1. Natural Beauty and Activities Offered

The main attraction of Black Water Tourism lies in its stunning natural beauty. With deep black water and surrounded by

lush tropical forests, this place offers exotic and calming views. The existence of diverse flora and fauna is also a special attraction for visitors. Data from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry shows that this area is a habitat for various rare species, including several types of birds endemic to Kalimantan (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2022).

The activities offered at Black Water Tourism are very diverse, ranging from water recreation activities such as swimming and fishing, to trekking in the forest to explore biodiversity. This activity is not only attractive to tourists, but also provides an opportunity for local communities to be involved in the management and provision of services. For example, several local residents have opened boat and guide rental businesses for tourists who want to explore the area around Air Hitam.

Tourism promotion carried out by local governments also plays an important role in attracting visitors. Marketing campaigns carried out through social media and collaboration with travel agents have increased the visibility of Black Water Tourism. According to a report from the Tourism Department, around 60% of visitors who come to this location find out information via digital platforms (Palangka Raya City Tourism Department, 2023). This shows that an effective marketing strategy can help promote existing tourism potential.

Apart from that, cultural activities involving local communities are also a special attraction. The cultural festival held annually around Air Hitam showcases the arts and traditions of the Dayak people, which not only provides entertainment for visitors but also strengthens local cultural identity. According to research conducted by Palangka Raya University, this festival succeeds in attracting more than 5,000 visitors every year, providing a positive impact on the economy of the local

community (Palangka Raya University, 2023).

With stunning natural beauty and a variety of activities on offer, Black Water Tourism in Kereng Bangkirai is not only an attractive tourist destination, but also has the potential to have a significant social and economic impact on the local community. It is hoped that efforts to continue to increase tourist attractions can create new jobs and increase the income of local communities.

2. Tourism Promotion and Marketing

Promotion and marketing of Black Water Tourism is an important aspect in attracting more tourists. The local government, together with other stakeholders, has launched various marketing strategies to increase awareness about the tourism potential of the area. One strategy used is collaboration with influencers and travel bloggers who have large followers on social media. According to data from the Tourism Department, this campaign succeeded in increasing tourist visits by up to 30% in one year (Palangka Raya City Tourism Department, 2023).

Digital marketing is also the main focus in promoting Black Water Tourism. An official website providing complete information about locations, activities and available facilities has been launched. Additionally, the use of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook has been leveraged to share beautiful photos of the location, attracting the attention of potential visitors. Data shows that 70% of visitors who come to Black Water Tourism come from outside the area, and many of them learn about this location through social media (Palangka Raya City Tourism Office, 2023).

The existence of annual events, such as cultural festivals and water sports competitions, is also part of the promotional strategy. This activity not only attracts visitors, but also provides an

opportunity for local people to introduce their culture to tourists. According to a report from the Central Statistics Agency, the cultural festival at Black Water Tourism succeeded in increasing local community income by up to 15% during the festival period (Central Statistics Agency, 2022).

Apart from that, collaboration with travel agents and tour operators is also an important strategy in marketing Black Water Tourism. Through attractive tour packages, travel agents can offer a more complete experience for tourists. Data from surveys show that 40% of tourists choose to use the services of travel agents to visit Black Water Tourism, which shows the importance of collaboration in promoting this destination (Palangka Raya University, 2023).

With various promotional and marketing strategies implemented, Black Water Tourism in Kereng Bangkirai is expected to continue to develop and attract more visitors. This will not only provide economic benefits for local communities, but also help preserve the local culture and environment. It is hoped that these efforts to increase awareness about tourism potential can create a positive social impact for the local community.

Social Impact of Black Water Tourism on Local Communities

A. Positive Impact

1. Increase in Community Income

Black Water Tourism in Kereng Bangkirai has had a significant positive impact on local community income. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of Palangka Raya City, the tourism sector has experienced an average annual growth of 8% in recent years, with a significant contribution from natural tourism such as Air Hitam. The income of people involved in the tourism sector, whether as traders, tour guides or accommodation providers, has increased

rapidly. For example, food and souvenir traders around tourist locations report an increase in income of up to 50% during the holiday season, which shows how much economic potential is generated from tourist visits.

2. Providing employment opportunities

Apart from increasing income, Black Water tourism also contributes to providing employment opportunities for local communities. Data from the Palangka Raya City Tourism Office shows that more than 200 local residents have obtained jobs directly related to tourism, ranging from tour guides, cleaners, to homestay managers. This not only helps reduce unemployment, but also increases community skills and capacity in the field of tourism services and management. For example, training programs held by local governments in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have succeeded in training more than 100 people in tourist guiding and small business management skills.

3. Increased Environmental Awareness

Black Water Tourism also plays a role in increasing environmental awareness among local communities. Through sustainable tourism activities, people are invited to better appreciate and preserve the environment around them. Environmental outreach activities and campaigns carried out by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have succeeded in attracting public attention to the importance of protecting ecosystems and biodiversity. For example, programs involving the community in river cleaning activities and tree planting around tourist areas have demonstrated active community participation, which in turn increases their sense of ownership and responsibility for the environment.

B. Negative Impact

1. Changes in Local Culture

Although Black Water tourism brings a number of benefits, there are also negative

impacts, one of which is changes in local culture. With the increasing number of tourists, the traditions and habits of local people are starting to be affected. For example, people who previously lived simple lives with traditional values are now starting to adopt a more modern and consumerist lifestyle. According to research conducted by Palangka Raya University, 60% of respondents stated that they felt their local culture was threatened by the influx of foreign culture brought by tourists. This can result in the loss of cultural identity that has existed for a long time.

2. Social Problems and Conflict

Increased tourist arrivals can also trigger social problems and conflict in society. Competition between local residents in gaining profits from the tourism sector often causes tension. For example, conflicts between local traders and large entrepreneurs who come from outside the area often occur, where local traders feel marginalized and disadvantaged. According to a report from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) at Palangka Raya University, there have been increasing reports of social conflicts related to land control and access to natural resources, which can disrupt community harmony.

3. Decreased Quality of Life

Apart from that, another negative impact is a decrease in the quality of life of local communities. As tourism activity increases, infrastructure and public services are often unable to keep up with the growth in visitor numbers. This can cause congestion, pollution and a decrease in environmental quality. A study by an environmental research institute stated that 45% of local people felt that their quality of life had decreased due to the negative impact of tourism activities that were not well managed. Inadequate provision of health and education services is also an increasingly complex problem, given

limited resources and a greater focus on the tourism sector.

Local Community Response

A. Adaptation to Change

1. Strategies Adopted by the Community

The community in Kereng Bangkirai has developed various strategies to adapt to the changes caused by the development of black water tourism. One of the main strategies is diversifying income sources. For example, many local residents who previously depended on agriculture are now starting to get involved in the tourism sector by opening homestays, food stalls and boat rental businesses. According to data from the Palangka Raya City Tourism Office, the number of tourism-related micro businesses has increased by 40% in the last two years (Palangka Raya Tourism Office, 2022).

2. Community Involvement in Tourism Management

Community involvement in managing black water tourism is very important to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism can be felt equally. Several community groups have formed organizations tasked with managing this tourist destination. For example, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) in Kereng Bangkirai plays an active role in developing and promoting tourism, as well as preserving the environment. Through training provided by the government and non-governmental organizations, Pokdarwis members learn about sustainable tourism management and digital marketing (Sari, 2023).

3. Training and Education

Education and training for local communities is also an important part of this adaptation. The local government has held various training programs to improve community skills in the field of tourism services and management. According to a survey conducted by Palangka Raya University, 75% of respondents stated that this training helped them feel better

prepared to be involved in the tourism industry (Palangka Raya University, 2023). This shows that society is not only adapting, but also trying to improve their abilities to be more competitive.

4. Tourism Product Innovation

Tourism product innovation is also one of the adaptation strategies carried out by the community. They started offering various tour packages that integrate local culture, such as traditional art performances and typical culinary delights. For example, tourists can enjoy tour packages that include experiences cooking traditional Dayak food and learning about local culture. This innovation not only attracts more visitors but also strengthens the cultural identity of local communities (Prabowo, 2022).

5. Economic Resilience

Adaptation to changes caused by black water tourism also creates economic resilience for communities. With the increase in tourist visits, people's income from the tourism sector has experienced a significant increase. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that the per capita income of people in Kereng Bangkirai has increased by 30% since the development of black water tourism began (BPS, 2023). This shows that people are able to adapt and get better economic benefits from tourism activities.

B. Public Perception

1. Public Views on Tourism

The public's view of black water tourism is generally positive, although there are some concerns regarding the environmental impact. Many residents see tourism as an opportunity to improve their standard of living and introduce local culture to the outside world. A study conducted by the Social and Economic Research Institute showed that 80% of respondents felt that tourism had a positive impact on their lives (LPE, 2022). However, there are also concerns that the rapid growth of tourism

could damage the natural environment and local culture.

2. Community Hopes for the Future

The local community hopes that the development of black water tourism will continue with a sustainable approach. They want strict regulations to preserve the environment and culture. In a discussion forum held by the local government, many residents expressed their hope that tourism would not only focus on economic benefits, but also pay attention to environmental sustainability and community development (Kereng Bangkirai Community Forum, 2023). This hope reflects public awareness of the importance of maintaining a balance between the economy and the environment.

Conclusion

This research shows that black water tourism in Kereng Bangkirai, Palangka Raya, has a complex impact on local communities. On the one hand, this tourism creates economic opportunities and increases awareness of environmental conservation. On the other hand, there is a risk of environmental damage, cultural commercialization, and the emergence of social conflict. Therefore, it is important to carry out wise management so that the benefits obtained can be felt by the entire community.

The implications of these findings indicate the need for collaboration between local communities and tourism managers to create a sustainable tourism model. Tourism managers need to consider input from local communities in every decision they make. In addition, education and training for local communities on natural resource management and sustainable tourism is essential to ensure that they can actively participate in and benefit from the sector.

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