

Friend or Foe? The complex relationship between indigenous people and policymakers regarding rural tourism in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism is considered an attraction within a destination that significantly stimulates economic growth, particularly for local communities. The aim of this study is to explore the interrelationship between indigenous people and policymakers in rural tourism development areas. This article emphasizes that the complexity of the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers often becomes a “rivalry” rather than a collaboration to work together as a team. The reliance and dependence of the indigenous people on local government also depend on how well the local government coordinates its governing bodies to work side-by-side with the indigenous community. The results indeed reveal that a complicated relationship exists between the indigenous people and policymakers; one of the reasons is due to the existence of local vendors.

1. Introduction

Rural tourism refers to the attraction of nature or rural places, such as villages, farms, and heritage, adventure and sports venues (Bramwell & Lane, 1994; Irvine & Anderson, 2004). The market for rural tourism is very much a niche in which a small group of tourists is specifically targeted, for example, tourists who are fond of quiet places (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). This targeting is quite different from common or mass tourism. It is also less popular than urban tourism and sustainable tourism (Bravi & Gasca, 2014; de Lange & Dodds, 2017; Farmaki, 2013; George, 2010). Nevertheless, rural tourism is an important and significant driver of local economic development. Rural tourism encourages the creativity of local entrepreneurs to increase trade, which helps in achieving income equality (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011).

Interest in rural tourism initially developed in the mid-2000s through research conducted in the United Kingdom (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Briedenhann & Butts, 2006), Finland, Austria (Pesonen, Komppula, Kronenberg, & Peters, 2011) and Portugal (Almeida, Correia, & Pimpão, 2014). Most of these rural tourism studies focused only on the various links between tourists and indigenous people (e.g., Jaafar, Kayat, Tangit, & Yacob, 2013; Pesonen et al., 2011) and overlooked the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers. Thus, the present study explores the relationship between these two important actors. We argue that the development of rural tourism does not only rely on tourists and indigenous people. It would not be optimal

without the involvement of policymakers in providing support and establishing regulations for the development of these rural tourism areas. Moreover, research in rural tourism in developing countries has been very scarce and has only recently commenced (Jaafar et al., 2013; Lekaota, 2015). To address this scarcity, we selected Indonesia as the context for this study.

Indonesia offers enormous potential for tourism development (Purwomarwanto & Ramachandran, 2015). Tourism is also expected to continuously contribute to the Indonesian economy in the future. In a recent government plan set forth by the Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia has prioritized its tourism development in ten destinations, collectively known as “the new Bali 10” (Subaidi, 2017). This program focuses on 10 destinations that have been considered to possess high potential to become iconic destinations similar to Bali. These locations include Lake Toba (North Sumatra), Borobudur (Central Java), Mandalika (Lombok), Bromo/Tengger/Semeru (East Java), Labuan Bajo (Flores), Wakatobi (Southeast Sulawesi), Pulau Seribu (DKI Jakarta), Morotai (North Molucca), Tanjung Lesung (Banten) and Tanjung Kelayang (Bangka Belitung).

For the present study, we selected Lake Toba among these 10 new destinations because it is recognized as one of the historic destinations in North Sumatra, Indonesia. To dig deeper into the program, we selected a village in Lake Toba, Samosir – Urat. Urat was chosen since it has received preminent priority from the government as one of the villages in Lake Toba to guide other villages in the development

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program. Moreover, Urat shares similar characteristics with other targeted villages among the 10 new destinations. These similar characteristics include limited infrastructure (e.g., public roads, public sanitation), similar social-demographic situations (e.g., social status, population), insufficient access to education (e.g., limited numbers of schools and teachers) and poor social welfare.

The relationship between indigenous people (i.e., the Batak ethnic group) and policymakers in Lake Toba, Samosir, is very complex. They rely heavily on each other, particularly when building desirable small businesses to achieve sustainable tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1994; Irvine & Anderson, 2004; Peng & Lin, 2016; Schendel & Hitt, 2007). Policymakers have the expertise and financial resources to accommodate the indigenous people by preparing them to open their own businesses and achieve their maximum economic potential (Peng & Lin, 2016; Schendel & Hitt, 2007). Both direct and indirect counseling is pivotal for the indigenous people because they do not have the knowledge regarding how to start businesses and are very dependent on resources provided by policymakers. Policymakers, however, frequently face limited resources; thus, they should prioritize when delivering training and counseling. Our results show that this complex relationship goes beyond the policymakers and indigenous people and to some extent even involves local vendors. In this study, local vendors refer to nonindigenous vendors: vendors who came from larger cities (e.g., Medan, Pematang Siantar and Padang) and are domiciled as permanent residents.

Using Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray's (2003) entrepreneurship alertness model, we sought to propose a model to develop small or medium-sized businesses within rural tourism areas. According to McLeod and Vaughan (2015), Ardichvili et al.'s (2003) model was frequently used by businesses to identify and recognize opportunities. The present study attempts to explore the antecedents of entrepreneurial opportunity in rural tourism areas by examining the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers.

2. Literature review

2.1. The entrepreneurial alertness model

Our research framework (see Fig. 1) is based on the model described by Ardichvili, Cardozo, and Ray (2003). The framework states that, to process an opportunity development plan, the business plan must recognize and identify “opportunity recognition”, namely sense or perceive market needs. Several researchers have argued that opportunity recognition is known to be a crucial step in the entrepreneurial process (Baron, 2006; Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016). Opportunity development must proceed through several processes that must include not only “recognition” but also “perception”, “discovery” and “creation” for its businesses (Wang, Ellinger, & Wu, 2013). Opportunity and recognition processes require an evaluation to ensure that the development of the start-up business undergoes the right assessment to be successful

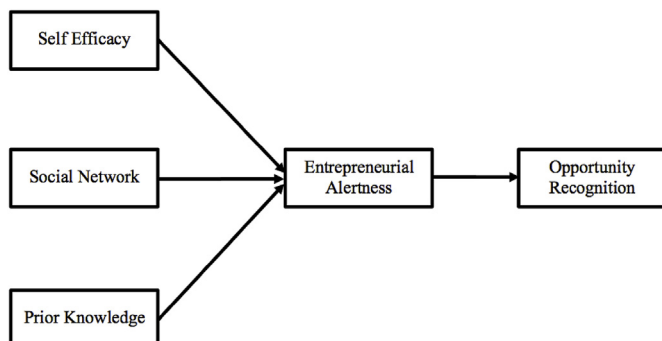


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

(Ardichvili et al., 2003). The factors that influence the way in which these opportunities are identified and developed by entrepreneurs include entrepreneurial alertness, prior knowledge, social networks, and personality traits, including creativity and self-efficacy (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016).

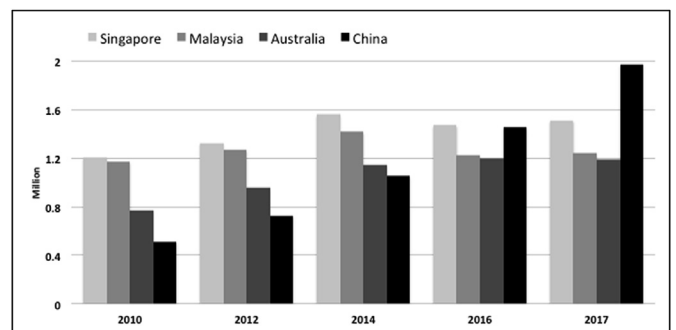
According to Nikraftar and Hosseini (2016), entrepreneurial alertness is the antecedent of entrepreneurial opportunity recognition. They argued that entrepreneurial alertness is driven by intuitive and psychological skill sets, which can address the opportunity identification process. Personality traits, social networks and prior knowledge are the antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Sakhdari and Jafarnejad (2012) emphasized that personality traits and access to information are critical in influencing people to be entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. Social networking is considered important since it can lead to positive business relationships (Liebowitz, 2007). Similarly, prior knowledge can be reflected as the know-how needed to start a business endeavor in specific areas, such as new markets, customer types and competitive products (Shane, 2012).

2.2. Tourism in Indonesia

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of the Indonesian economy, and it not only contributes to Indonesia's sources of foreign exchange and earnings but also is a tool to grow job opportunities and offer better income distribution to the local people (Sugiyarto, Blake, & Sinclair, 2003). These authors have also suggested that international tourism and globalization can help to increase the production of tourism products by increasing income from foreign spending and by helping to lower domestic price levels. Wrangham (1999) argued that the relationships between remote and local areas are important for developing the tourism industry. He also argued that local areas are not lacking in worthwhile attractions, i.e., crafts manufacturing, uniqueness of culture and historical relics, but they lack the experience to determine how to obtain the most from these areas of interest and production.

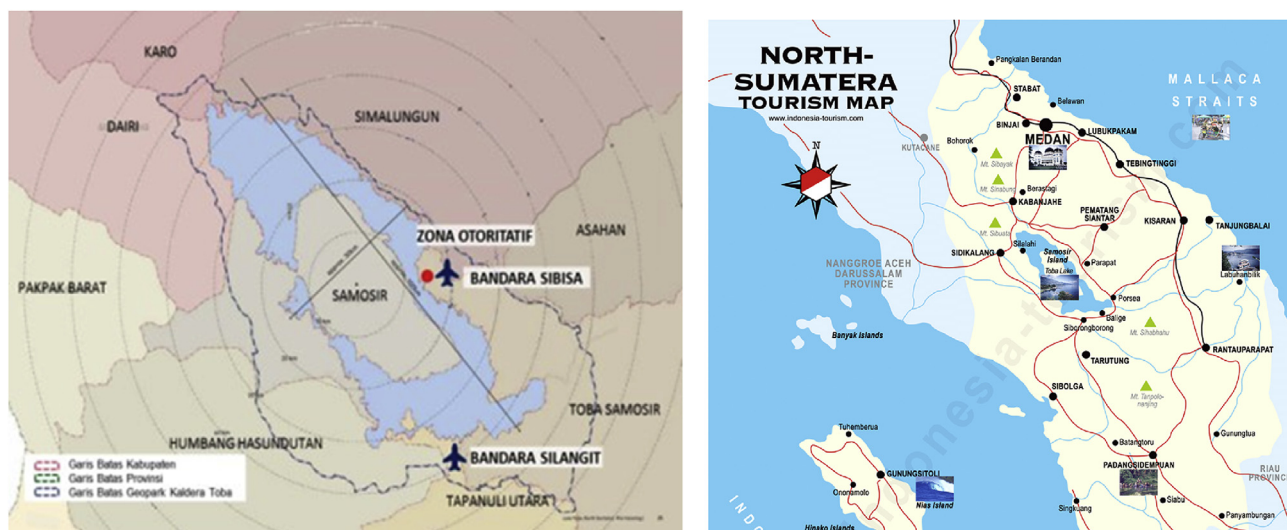
In 2017, the government launched a program (i.e., “the new Bali 10”) and accelerated the development of infrastructure and its amenities to increase the number of international tourists entering Indonesia by 2019 (Chan, 2017). The targets of this program are tourists from China, who have been considered to possess high discretionary spending. The program was deemed quite successful. The number of Chinese tourists, which ranked the lowest in 2010, exceeded the number of tourists from three other countries in 2017. Fig. 2 shows the number of international tourists that entered Indonesia from 2010 to 2017.

Despite the ambition to increase the number of international tourists visiting Indonesia, the government has recognized that the infrastructure of “the new Bali 10” requires substantial development. Public roads, highways, public amenities (e.g., toilets, accommodations and



Source: Salna (2017)

Fig. 2. Number of tourists in Indonesia by country of origin. Source: Salna (2017).



Source: Lake Toba (2018) and North Sumatera Map (2018)

Fig. 3. Location of lake Toba. Source: Lake Toba (2018) and North Sumatera Map (2018).

restaurants) and international airports are crucial for providing access to visitors to reach these destinations. According to Chan (2017), to fulfill the goal of 20 million international tourists by 2019, the Indonesian government must expedite the development of infrastructure within these destinations.

The focus of this study is on one of the 10 new destinations – Lake Toba. This destination is the largest volcanic lake in the world (Indonesia, 2017). The lake passes through several regencies: Samosir, Toba Samosir, North Tapanuli, Humbang Hasundutan, Dairi, Karo and Simalungun (see Fig. 3). The area is famous for its beautiful natural views. This phenomenon is considered one of the top destinations among the 10 new destinations since it has increasingly gained a domestic and international reputation. Although an international airport has been built in Silangit, which is less than an hour from Lake Toba, the lake continues to suffer from its lack of public access.

In the center of Lake Toba, there is an island called Samosir, which is 64,000 ha in size and one of the major cultural heritage markers for the people of North Sumatra. Samosir has a length of 100 km and is 30 km in width. The location provides visitors with the options of enjoying the view either from Lake Toba or from the highlands area on Sumatra Island. The population of Samosir is approximately 100,000 people, with the Batak (the indigenous people of Samosir) being the major ethnic group.

3. The Batak ethnic group

According to Statistics Indonesia (2012), the Batak is the third largest ethnic group in Indonesia, following the Javanese and Sundanese ethnic groups. There are approximately 8.5 million Batak, which compose approximately 3.6% of the total Indonesian population, while the Javanese number approximately 95.2 million (40.2% of the population) and the Sundanese approximately 36.7 million people (15.5% of the population). Although 80% of the Batak in Indonesia live in North Sumatra, only 42% of the North Sumatra population is Batak; the remaining 58% are from other distinct ethnic groups (e.g., Javanese, Nias, Minangkabau and others) (Suryadinata, Arifin, & Ananta, 2003). Compared to other ethnic groups in North Sumatra, the Batak are considered poorer and have less formal education (Suryadinata et al., 2003; Simorangkir, Nainggolan, Pasaribu, & Simanjuntak, 2015).

3.1. Rural tourism

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defines rural tourism as “tourism taking place in the countryside” (Development, 1994). It is often associated with rural areas, special features of the rural world, small-scale enterprises, open spaces and sustainability (Reichel, Lowengart, & Milman, 2000). In addition, rural tourism can be defined as a minimum one-night stay in a place located in a rural setting outside the cities and focused on participation in nonurban activities (Pesonen et al., 2011). Pesonen et al. (2011) argued that the clientele for rural tourism consists mostly of domestic tourists, although much effort has been undertaken to improve rural tourism globally. Hallak, Assaker, and Lee (2015) even claimed that the demand for rural tourism has been increasing over the years both domestically and internationally.

Some studies have indicated that there is a strong relationship between the desire to explore nature and the promotion of social entrepreneurship for rural tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1994; Irvine & Anderson, 2004; Peng & Lin, 2016; Schendel & Hitt, 2007). Other researchers have claimed that rural tourism is related to activities and the interest in nature or rural places (Bramwell & Lane, 1994; Irvine & Anderson, 2004). Urat could be competitive since it offers nature and indigenous culture as elements of its tourist attractions. Nevertheless, many farmers still live in the area and struggle to provide a sense of positive welfare for their families (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). Samosir Island has not been included in the Indonesian government's tourism development plan for quite some time (Subaidi, 2017) since the Indonesia government is now focusing more on several of the well-known tourism areas in Indonesia (e.g., Bali or Lombok).

Blapp and Mitas (2017) argued that rural tourism is a space for tourists who seek quiet, natural beauty, and uniqueness. Similarly, rural tourism has been afforded the opportunity to promote social entrepreneurship by creating combining its existing resources to develop new product(s) and to serve new customers and different markets (Peng & Lin, 2016; Schendel & Hitt, 2007). The opportunities to promote social entrepreneurship leave much to be desired; however, the growth of tourism in these areas has remained minimal. Subsequently, community-based tourism has the aim of involving indigenous people and having them contribute to entrepreneurial tourism development (Hall, 2009).

3.2. Tourism entrepreneurship

As mentioned by Bygrave (1993) and Zhao, Ritchie, and Echtner (2011), entrepreneurship provides the opportunity to create and operate businesses and organizations. Russell and Faulkner (1999) found that entrepreneurs can influence the evolution of tourist destinations. In Urat specifically, tourism is still far from being well developed because its indigenous people are lacking in tourism knowledge. The process of knowledge transfer from the Indonesian government to local governments is unevenly distributed (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). Usually, tourism development is introduced gradually to indigenous people, so they will recognize the importance of building start-up businesses in their area. Therefore, central government assistance in guiding local communities is very crucial, particularly for local governments. Evidently, all local authorities should be seen as enablers of rural tourism projects that can generate successful tourism entrepreneurial opportunities for local economies (Briedenhann, 2007).

Traditionally, most tourism-related businesses have been small enterprises (Bastakis, Buhalis, & Butler, 2004; Bosworth & Farrell, 2011; Morrison, 1998; Page, Forer, & Lawton, 1999), yet the government's involvement in developing these local businesses is still required. Bastakis et al. (2004) argued that local communities must use the opportunity afforded them by government to increase their awareness of the importance of successful entrepreneurship. Bastakis et al. (2004) also added that assistance from government might not be sufficient to support local communities if indigenous people do not have the capacity to absorb the skills and knowledge provided. Similarly, Page et al. (1999) posited that indigenous people must be more involved to ensure that the efforts already made with them by government can progress steadily into the future. According to Page et al. (1999), to initiate a start-up tourism business, government involvement should be substantial in terms of developing programs for local communities, planning training to develop skills, and providing insights to residents on how to continue and grow their desire to become entrepreneurs. Indeed, Rodriguez-Sanchez, Williams, and Brotons (2017) added that entrepreneurs establish their ideas based on familiarity stemming from shared work experiences, previous education and networking. Bosworth and Farrell (2011) also reported that the inception of tourism development must start with the involvement of the local communities, which can then stimulate and encourage many to become entrepreneurs as a way to make a living.

Some recent studies have also indicated that the development of rural tourism and tourism entrepreneurship has strong links to providing healthy development opportunities in a country or region that can then stimulate economic growth within the entire area (Ajayi & Alarape, 2016; Hallak et al., 2015; Rusu, Isac, & Cureteanu, 2015; Sergiu & Lucian, 2015; Solvoll, Alsos, & Bulanova, 2015). Sergiu and Lucian (2015) further noted the importance of tourism entrepreneurship being pivotal to a developing country because it can help to increase revenue, particularly in the tourism sector, as well as have an impact on the social life in the surrounding community (Rusu et al., 2015). Similarly, Ajayi and Alarape (2016) argued that tourism entrepreneurship is one of the tourist industries that can transform small businesses into large businesses and thus contribute to a country's overall economic development. They added that this opportunity can be limitless due to the range of activities that start from natural resources and move on to manmade attractions, categorized as accommodations, transportations, amenities, marketing, and technology. The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers with regard to their contributions to the tourism development in rural areas (i.e., Urat, North Sumatra).

4. Methodology

4.1. Population and participants

To reach the research area, one must take a 2.5-h flight from Soekarno-Hatta Cengkareng International Airport in Jakarta to Silangit Airport, Siborong-borong, North Tapanuli, in North Sumatra and then drive another 3 h to Urat. Selecting the right participants (in Samosir) with appropriate experience and knowledge of the topic was essential for efficient data collection (Gillham, 2005). Thus, we applied the “purposive sampling” method to select the participants, as this method would offer the best insights for the study (Suri, 2011). To gain complete information, we interviewed two different groups of people: indigenous people and policymakers.

These particular groups were chosen to provide insights into development in Urat. Indigenous people can share direct, sensitive, and constructive information on the general population living within the area (Creswell, 2013). Participants were intentionally chosen because they grew up in the village and still live in the same area with their families. Consequently, they are familiar with the history and development occurring in the village. Similarly, policymakers are expected to share their knowledge regarding how the government planned the development of Samosir as part of its general tourism expansion plan. We thus chose two policymakers who have worked in the government agency that supervised the development of Lake Toba. The traditional Batak language was used during the interviews to encourage trust and comfort from all of the participants when discussing potentially sensitive issues. Similarly, back-translation was conducted to translate the traditional Batak language into Indonesian, and these translations were translated back into the Batak language to determine that equivalence in words was attained prior being translated to English (Choi, Kushner, Mill, & Lai, 2012). The back-translation procedure was conducted by one of the authors, who is a native speaker of Batak and fluent in both Batak and Indonesian.

4.2. Data collection methods

In-depth interviews and a focus group discussion were administered to gain better access than by simply using quantitative techniques. We conducted semistructured interviews (approximately an hour and a half for each person) with three (3) policymakers (one of the policymakers is an indigenous person) and a focus group discussion lasting for 2 h with six (6) indigenous people. Semistructured interviews and a focus group discussion were chosen because the researchers could easily explore topics more deeply by asking the participants to explain their answers or elaborate on their responses (Silverman, 2013).

The data collection was conducted in August 2017. Originally, we planned to meet all of the participants (indigenous people and policymakers) in Urat. Unfortunately, due to conflicting schedules of the participants, we had to conduct the interviews in two different locations: Jakarta and Urat. In Urat, we interviewed the head of the village and conducted focus group discussion with six indigenous people. Of these six participants, two people were retirees, one person was a former elementary school teacher, one was a former a civil servant, and the other two were construction workers and part-time farmers. Most of the focus group participants had obtained a high school education, and at least one had obtained a higher education. None of the participants from the focus group were involved in tourism directly, but some participated in helping the local government to build roads and other public infrastructure, such as public toilets, rest areas, etc. The three policymakers had different educational backgrounds and held different job positions. One held a position in the local government as the head of the village; a second person was one of the directors of the Lake Toba Tourism Authority, and the third person was a full-time lecturer at a tourism higher education institution and was previously employed by the same tourism authority as the second participant. Two of the

policymakers held Master's degrees, and one held a high school diploma.

Two additional meetings with the policymakers were conducted in Jakarta at two different times. One was a face-to-face interview session, and the other was conducted via a Skype video call. All of the participants were men between 40 and 75 years old. The varieties of the participants' backgrounds were deliberately set to provide different insights and experiences regarding the development of Urat and its progress in the past. The questions were asked to both types of participants in the Indonesian language. The main questions discussed during the interviews were the following:

- (1) How do you evaluate community productivity within the area of Urat?
- (2) How much creative entrepreneurship can be developed in this area (tourism and general business)?
- (3) How does initiation from indigenous people (or policymakers) build a small tourism business?
- (4) How do policymakers work with indigenous people to pass along key information about tourism entrepreneurship?

In addition, we shared the transcripts with of the all participants. It was easier to share and communicate with policymakers than it was with the indigenous people due to language barriers. The researchers also encountered some challenges when reaching out to policymakers because of their tight schedules. By sharing the transcripts, the participants could easily offer additional comments that might further enrich our understanding and interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Tracy, 2010). For example, one comment that we received regarded an additional study on community-based tourism. The participant mentioned that the next research study should relate to how community-based tourism affects local vendors. Other than this instance, the participants provided mostly additional personal insights and interpretations, such as the latest developments on rural tourism in Samosir and the current government regulations for the tourism industry.

4.3. Data analysis

Data analysis started by listening to the recordings and then transcribing them in a reasonable time. The processing of the interview data began with transcribing and identifying emergent topics and themes in those transcriptions, which in turn were analyzed to create a system for effective data coding (Gibson & Brown, 2009). The results for both the in-depth interviews and the focus group were recorded digitally. Transcripts were made and distributed evenly to the researchers. To manage the data, the NVIVO computer program was used. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the insights gleaned from the participants following the processes reported by Ardichivili et al. (2003), i.e., by exploring their entrepreneurship model in actual research tourism, defined as a process that analyzes data according to the commonalities, connections, and distinctions that are found (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

5. Results

Using the qualitative method approach, new insights were gained regarding entrepreneurship alertness. These findings are shown below and have been compiled to illustrate what has been occurring in Urat, Samosir, relative to potential tourism growth since the acceleration of infrastructure development in the Lake Toba area.

5.1. Involvement of local vendors in complex relationships

Complex relationships were discovered later upon examining of the antecedents of entrepreneurship alertness while exploring the experiences of different actors, such as indigenous people and policymakers. We gathered insights from participants who believed that these

complex relationships are connected to multiple stakeholders. One detail that emerged from the exploration of the experiences gathered from the study was the involvement of local vendors. The participants offered a clear connection regarding how complex the relationships among indigenous people, local vendors, and policymakers actually are. The problem of developing rural tourism is not only about building the infrastructure, but it also involves more aspects than simple financial budgeting. Certainly, it is concerned with the interrelationship among these three actors working as friends, rather than competitors or even foes. Many of these indigenous people were disappointed in how local vendors (*pendatang*) from larger cities (such as Medan, Pematang Siantar, and Padang) could take income from the buyers (tourists) that was expected to go to indigenous people.

One of the indigenous people interviewed who had a start-up business selling T-shirts and scarfs complained about regulations that he believed needed to be examined further by policymakers:

“How can local vendors from different cities who have better products than ours be allowed to open a shop in the [our] public market?. certainly they have greater advantages than those of us who have just started” (Participant #1, indigenous person).

These associations with local vendors can offer both advantages and disadvantages to indigenous people. One advantage, for instance, is that they can bring better products and stimulate trade between local and foreign tourists. Nonetheless, they can also discourage the indigenous people from starting businesses in their own communities because they feel that there should be more protection granted from policymakers to regulate these local vendors and to prioritize only the indigenous people in their own areas.

Similarly, these types of scenarios were mentioned frequently by both participants on different sets of topics. The majority of the Urat people practice farming, and they still concentrate on agriculture for their basic needs (i.e., food) for their families. Few of the indigenous people have thought about being entrepreneurs or anticipated the possibility of increased numbers of tourists on Samosir Island. Their main concern, nonetheless, was how to obtain equity or funding to support their goals of become entrepreneurs. They specifically declared that:

“Our funds are limited ... since we still have to make ends meet ... They [local vendors] received their funds from their [other immediate] families who live and work in the big city, so they can afford to come with those ideas [opening a small business] ...” (Participant #2, indigenous person).

Their financial resources appeared to be limited and were pivotal for indigenous people. Similarly, the policymakers needed to prioritize their counseling for indigenous people by providing them with more training and knowledge about opening start-up businesses. According to the participants who were indigenous people, they felt that the counseling established by policymakers was not yet optimal. They heard about socialization or a workshop or training from policymakers, but they never obtained the details about them. This insight from one policymaker from the Ministry of Tourism mentioned the concern that existed about the selection of training among the indigenous people.

“One thing that concerns me is how equal the training or counseling for the indigenous people is? ...I am worried that local government [pemerintah daerah] only shared their knowledge and training with the ‘same’ or ‘repeated’ clients ... that is not good!!” (Participant #7, policymaker).

The above statement was not only specifically directed to the local government but also directly to the indigenous people who might not receive equal treatment for counseling and coaching. This particular policymaker wanted this type of guidance to be distributed equally to all indigenous people because not doing so communicates greater confusion to them regarding how policymakers treat their own

communities.

5.2. Social networks (partnerships) produce another complex relationship

Based on the Ardichvili et al. model (2003), the researchers found that social networks and prior knowledge were the two most important factors in an individual's entrepreneurial alertness about rural tourism. Similarly, these social networks and prior knowledge could establish another complex interrelationship among the different actors. The social networks in the inner rings (e.g., casual acquaintances including friends and family) played a major role for the indigenous people in being able to build small or medium-sized businesses in Urat. Not only partnerships between the indigenous people and local vendors but also the partnerships among the local government (*pemerintah daerah*), government districts (*kabupaten*) and the central government (*pemerintah pusat*/ministry of tourism) had not worked well as a good overall governing body. For example: in terms of the allocation of budget for tourism events in the Samosir districts, there were cases in which the government districts and local government still demanded financial support from the central government, while the districts and local government received their budgets from the Regional Development Budget (*APBD*). A special allocation budget (*dana alokasi khusus*) and budget concentration (*dana konsentrasi*) were provided to be allocated to any tourism event on Samosir Island. As a respondent from a policymaker perspective said:

“If they [local and districts government] did not request any specific allocation budget for tourism event ... well ... the central government [Ministry of Tourism] will not be able to grant it ...” (Participant #7, policymaker).

This type of case still occurs regularly, so the discrepancies between the local government and the central government can leave the development of Samosir far behind. Different perspectives gleaned from the indigenous people further mentioned the budget allocation for more counseling in the village.

“We have training and counseling from the local government quite often ... most training and counseling are conducted in agriculture, farms and plantations, but the challenges are the [indigenous] people themselves ... they are so ignorant ... or just because they are so busy at work ... they just decide not to participate ... so the programs do not run well” (Participant #6, indigenous person).

“Local government used to conduct a non-directive counseling about the provision of garbage a few years ago, and one of the forms of assistance from the government is supplying us with big garbage containers for the local community ... at the moment, most of them are already broken, and the local government has not replaced them ... so the people throw their garbage in the river or lake [Lake Toba] instead” (Participant #4, indigenous person).

“For example: regarding our public toilet procurement ... this has been encouraged for some time ... we even have budget allocation from the district government [*dana kabupaten*] ... Unfortunately, the budget is going to public roads instead ...” (Participant #3, indigenous person).

Similarly, social networks in the inner rings (between families in the village) needed to be better established. The following statement was positively associated with the local government interviews:

“It is very challenging for the local government [district] to unite all family clans to build SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprise) in tourism” (Participant #9, policymaker).

This finding is in accordance with Shane (2003) and Kelley, Bosma, and Amoros (2011), who argued that entrepreneurship can be encouraged if individuals feel secure about specific elements of rural tourism, such as the clarity of agreements or contracts between family

or individuals related to land use and property for accommodation, and these assets are essential for the formation of entrepreneurial activity. The extant research (Kelley et al., 2011; Shane, 2003) has also shown that prior knowledge is needed to enforce the development of SMEs. As expressed by one of the participants from the indigenous group:

“There is limited guidance given by the local government to enrich us regarding opening small or medium-sized businesses ...” (Participant #5, indigenous person)

In addition to providing physical and commercial infrastructure for the development of rural tourism, government institutions should provide for educational tourism and establish a regulatory environment in which businesses can operate effectively (Hall, 2009). The findings of this study also suggest that open communication between the local government and the central government must be increased to address the issues regarding the expectations of each party. As expressed by one of the respondents from the perspective of policymakers (the Ministry of Tourism and Local Government):

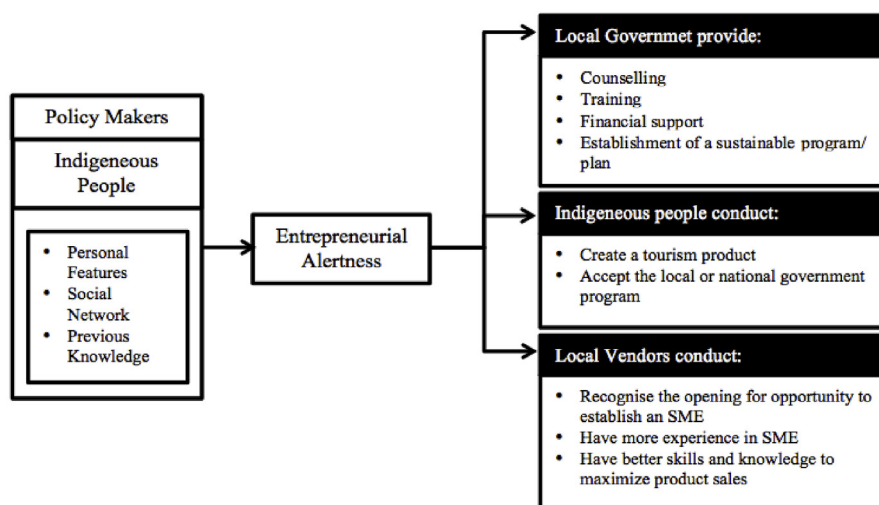
“After we decided Lake Toba was to be one of the ten prioritized tourism destinations, we experienced some obstacles regarding the expectation discrepancy between the Ministry of Tourism and the local government [district]” (Participant #8, policymaker).

The statement above confirms that there are many assumptions held by policymakers, who use “assumptions” to underscore any challenges or problems, indeed resulting in the occurrence of a more complex relationship between the central and local governments.

6. Discussion

This study aimed to explore the interrelationship between indigenous people and policymakers in rural tourism development areas. The complexity of the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers was highlighted regarding how these two actors are entangled when developing rural tourism area in Urat. We found that the personal features, social networks and previous knowledge of both policymakers and the indigenous peoples are pivotal for developing the entrepreneurship alertness necessary to initiate an SME in the village. This finding is in line with the studies by Ardichvili et al. (2003) and Nikraftar and Hosseini (2016), which discussed the importance of personal traits, social networks and previous knowledge among all entities when building any rural tourism area.

Reviewing Fig. 4 below, we can see again that, once entrepreneurship alertness emerges, the interrelationship between indigenous people and policymakers becomes even more complicated because of the involvement of local vendors. It is very clear that the local government must provide more support to indigenous people to include counseling, training, financial support, and an extensive sustainable plan suitable for these people (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011). Then, they can create a tourism product and organize the general government plan to sustain rural tourism development (Bosworth, 2015). Our main objective was to explore and investigate the past experience of the interrelationships between policymakers and indigenous people when building entrepreneurship in the rural area of Urat in Samosir. We found that there is an intervention from a third party, local vendors, to recognize the opportunity to establish an SME in Urat. These local vendors come from larger cities, and they might have built an established SME in these locations. Thus, they might have better skills, more experience and greater knowledge about running a business than the indigenous people. In addition, these differences in the maturity of running a business can have both positive and negative effects on the Urat. The positive side provides new encouragement to indigenous people to boost themselves to create other businesses, while the negative side discourages the indigenous people from moving forward because the latter feel vulnerable due to their limitations in skills, experience and knowledge.



Source: adapted from Ardichvili et al. (2003)

Fig. 4. The interrelationship between the local government, indigenous people, and local vendors. Source: adapted from Ardichvili et al. (2003).

However, policymakers might also react to this situation differently, seeing that the prospect of establishing a good tourism ecosystem can increase the number of local vendors since they have better skills and a stronger knowledge set than the indigenous people. However, the policymakers do understand that their support is needed more for the indigenous people than for local vendors, although the program must still be implemented more effectively to increase the confidence of the indigenous people (Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016).

Furthermore, the social networks and/or communication among policymakers, indigenous people, and local vendors remains very weak. The development of rural tourism requires the support from all of these actors, particularly when there are multiple backgrounds of livelihood, education, and experience (Blapp & Mitas, 2017; Peng & Lin, 2016). Policymakers are supposed to provide their support in advancing the skills and knowledge for both indigenous people and local vendors. However, due to limited resources (e.g., financial, human resources), policymakers must most likely prioritize one of the two to receive training and counseling. Although this scenario is not favorable, this way of disseminating the skills and knowledge has its benefits in that it can be aimed and tailored according to the specific needs of the target. Indigenous people are the original community of Urat, so it is no coincidence that they will demand more assistance from policymakers to increase the quality of their skills and knowledge (Kelley et al., 2011; Shane, 2003).

A sustainability plan from policymakers should be put in place to build better entrepreneurial rural tourism in Urat and to have it materialize successfully (Hall, 2009). The government program for the acceleration of tourism development in the Lake Toba area appears to be producing a problematic situation. On the one hand, the government plan is very demanding in terms of bringing more than 20 million foreign tourists with the acceleration of infrastructure development but still without paying attention to the full readiness of the indigenous people (Chan, 2017). On the other hand, the indigenous people have very limited knowledge of the government's plans for developing tourism, particularly in the Urat area. The central government (Ministry of Tourism) has pushed the district governments (districts in the Lake Toba area) to be ready to accommodate the central government plan, and it is expected to communicate this message to the local government (village leaders in Samosir) so that they are prepared to face the challenges.

Some of these delicate approaches appear to have been neglected, particularly those regarding the limitations of skills, knowledge, and experience among the indigenous people when building an SME.

Similarly, local vendors arrive in Urat and see the opportunity to become that of the “indigenous people”, who create entrepreneurial alertness in the village, yet it might turn out that the indigenous people become jealous upon seeing what occurs. The Indonesian government is planning to build railways (i.e., train tourism in Pematang Siantar), highway roads (i.e., Medan-Tebing Tinggi, Kuala Tanjung-Parapat), and new attractions (i.e., ecotourism in Simalungun, a national park in Lake Toba) in the Lake Toba area (Chan, 2017; Salna, 2017). These tourism developments are pivotal for the future and must be supported by indigenous people who have skills and knowledge about tourism education backgrounds. Therefore, any acceleration of infrastructure development might have to address simultaneously both the tangibles (e.g., airports, public roads) and the intangibles (e.g., education, training and counseling).

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that the complex relationship should not only include the relationship between indigenous people and policymakers but also include local vendors, who come from better circumstances and want to operate their businesses, whereas indigenous people are expected to operate theirs. When the entrepreneurship alertness model was explored with the participants, we found that the development of the rural tourism sector was in line with the studies by Ardichvili et al. (2003) and Nikraftar and Hosseini (2016), which found that individual traits are the most important factors when opening a business. These individual traits are social networks and prior knowledge, and both were discussed much by the participants in this current study. However, in Urat, Samosir, North Sumatra, this model of Ardichvili et al. (2003) should be extended very slightly to fit the context of this particular location and the situations of the indigenous people living there.

The ambition to attract more international tourists could drive the nation to recognize its own tourism potential. However, it is very challenging to establish a prominent destination if the instability of the development of the tourist destination is still evident. This study discovered that the government's programs (e.g., in bringing tourists to development areas) must be further evaluated. There are several factors that must be prioritized. First, the education in rural areas is insufficient; thus, a clear strategy to develop these areas' human resources and physical infrastructure is needed (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). The need for good human resources (e.g., qualified teachers, qualified policymakers) should also be supported by good physical infrastructure (e.g.,

good school buildings, structured vocational and academic educational programs, public roads, accommodations and restaurants) (Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016).

Second, communication from the policymakers (i.e., local government and central government) should be improved, particularly in crafting, informing about and delivering their programs (i.e., annual events, cultural events). These programs must involve indigenous people to be successful (Bosworth, 2015). Third, to enable indigenous people to create products that will attract international and domestic tourists, vigorous training and counseling on entrepreneurship and tourism are pivotal. To have effective guidance, policymakers must conduct “*blusukan*” (Javanese for “hands on operation”) reaching all types of residents, including indigenous people and local vendors, and ensure that the training and counseling are supervised (Wang et al., 2013), commencing from initial training, counseling, evaluation and retraining if needed (Bosworth & Farrell, 2011).

7.1. Theoretical implications

In summary, our study provides several contributions to the rural tourism and entrepreneurial literature. This study highlights the connections among indigenous people, local vendors and policy makers in developing rural tourism areas. First, most of the existing rural tourism studies have focused only on the different links between tourists and indigenous people, such as examining tourist motivations for visiting a destination(s) (Pesonen et al., 2011) and examining the enthusiasm of local residents to participate in tourism activities (Jaafar et al., 2013; Lekaota, 2015). Our study explores the relationships between indigenous people and policymakers as two important actors who depend on each other. Second, our study contributes to understanding the development of rural tourism in developing countries, research on which is still very limited (Jaafar et al., 2013; Lekaota, 2015). This study highlights several factors that contribute to the inadequacies of developing countries in cultivating their tourism potential. Third, our findings emphasize that the relationships between indigenous people and policymakers are complicated, particularly in ensuring the progress of tourism development in rural areas. We also found to some extent that local vendors’ involvement in the mix creates further complications.

Local vendors appear as a third party in the relationship between policymakers and indigenous people. Policymakers aim to develop and improve rural tourism areas by creating and building start-up businesses for indigenous people. However, the indigenous people face challenges from local vendors, who possess better knowledge about and have more experiences in business. Without any intervention from policymakers, the indigenous people will not be able to compete with local vendors. The substantial resources (i.e., financial, skills, etc.) owned by local vendors limit the opportunities for the indigenous people to establish themselves in opening businesses in their own areas. Furthermore, when more local vendors have come to the area, the indigenous people would feel more discouraged in moving forward because they feel vulnerable due to their limitations in skills, experiences and knowledge.

The findings of this study also contribute to the entrepreneurial literature. In particular, this study extends the entrepreneurial alertness model by emphasizing the involvements of policymakers and local vendors. First, this study discovers that policymakers influence the antecedents of entrepreneurial alertness (e.g., self-efficacy, social networks and previous knowledge) of the indigenous people to become tourism entrepreneurs (Ardichvili et al., 2003; Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016). This study extends these previous studies by showing that the engagements of policymakers not only support the antecedents of entrepreneurship alertness but also set the rules and regulations for indigenous people and local vendors in developing and running businesses in rural tourism areas.

Second, this study extends the entrepreneurial alertness model (Ardichvili et al., 2003) by introducing the role of local vendors. The

comprehensiveness of the entrepreneurship alertness model increases when there is involvement from local vendors in creating opportunities by building start-up businesses related to tourism activities (i.e., creating products, opening restaurants or accommodations, etc.). Although local vendors act as opportunists who recognize the situation (e.g., the opportunity to initiate a start-up business), their role in developing rural tourism areas is indispensable. The involvement of local vendors is essential and inevitable in sustaining the development of rural tourism areas since they possess better skills and knowledge about business. Without the involvement of local vendors, entrepreneurial alertness might not be established among the indigenous people.

These findings suggest that the involvement of local government and local vendors is very important in sustaining the development of rural areas. Although social networks and prior knowledge are the two most important factors in establishing start-up businesses (Nikraftar & Hosseini, 2016), in this context, the involvement of local government and local vendors is necessary for creating, developing and sustaining a tourism business in rural areas.

7.2. Practical implications

This article also provides several practical implications with regard to the role of policymakers (e.g., central and local governments) and indigenous people in sustaining the development of rural tourism areas. First, the connections between policymakers, such as the local government, the district government and the Ministry of Tourism, are problematic in ensuring that regulations and policies are passed down to indigenous people and local vendors (Blapp & Mitas, 2017). For instance, there are a few inconsistencies occurring in practice, such as public expenditure allocation (e.g., improving adequate public toilets and building public roads and expanding the width of public roads, but the development goes to building a historical monument site instead) and human development (e.g., incomplete delivery of training and counseling from the initial socialization to supervision). This result can cause indigenous people not to recognize the possibility of creating a small or medium-sized business in any category (not only tourism but also other business products). Certainly, this issue should be regulated and addressed better.

Second, the reliance and dependence of the indigenous people on local government also depend on how well the local government, divided into a district government and central government, can coordinate their governing bodies when working side-by-side. The central government must ensure that government districts and the head of Urat (a village) can remain proactive when providing directive counseling for the indigenous people, so informal education entrepreneurial knowledge is evenly distributed (Briedenhann, 2007). Sustainable development in rural tourism can then create better tourism destinations and better jobs for indigenous people (Jaafar et al., 2013).

Third, by supporting entrepreneurship, it is hoped that more job opportunities for indigenous people will be created (Cohen & Higham, 2011). One of the challenges of becoming an entrepreneur is having the knowledge and desire to open a small business, along with a good basic understanding of producing products that can support tourism within the community. The possibility of having an equity program or funding from the central government will indeed help the indigenous people and foster their creativity and success in entrepreneurship.

The focus is very straightforward, namely to develop a master plan for Lake Toba. Despite this ambitious aim of the government, it does recognize that the infrastructure in Indonesia must be evaluated more, including for Samosir, Lake Toba. The construction of public amenities (i.e., public roads, highways, and an international airport) will offer opportunities for the area to grow. Similarly, this infrastructure will provide better access for people who want to conduct business or engage in leisure. However, one aspect that the government should not miss is how to develop the human capital surrounding Samosir, where there are still many indigenous people who lack sufficient education,

both formally and informally. The plan to enrich the education within the regency has developed accordingly; however, to execute and evenly distribute this education will involve much homework and planning work. There is interest from investors who want to contribute their funds to build a world-class destination in the Lake Toba area, particularly on Sibisa land, where a new “Nusa Dua Bali” tourism destination can be developed in the area. The main idea is to have a world-class destination at Lake Toba and to have this destination sustained by having excellent human capital from the indigenous people contributing within the area. To produce this excellent human capital, the Indonesian government has a huge gap to fill. Last but not least, it is crucial to improve the communication and coordination between any and all of the stakeholders who might be involved now or in the future in the development of the Lake Toba as a tourist destination.

7.3. Limitations and future research

In terms of the limitations of our research, first, we gathered our data collection from a relatively small number of participants. Despite the varieties of the participants and their livelihoods, the importance of having a tourism background (e.g., not all participants have a tourism background) is necessary for the best insights on this particular subject. Second, participants from this study were drawn from Urat, Samosir. This choice limits any generalizations for the other villages in Indonesia (i.e., other villages could have different norms and cultures due to multiple ethnic groups and varieties of conditions of human resources and physical infrastructure). Third, due to a lack of direct access to local vendors, this study was not able to include the firsthand views of this stakeholder group. A few attempts were made to interview local vendors; however, none of those endeavors were fruitful. Further studies could also explore the involvement of local vendors, particularly examining their motivations (Almeida et al., 2014), experiences (Blapp & Mitas, 2017) and decisions (Cohen & Higham, 2011) to travel and start businesses in rural areas.

Despite these limitations, future research could be applied to other developing countries in Asia, such as Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal or Timor Leste, which are still striving to provide equal opportunities in their tourism industries, using different variables (i.e., single/multiple tourist markets, regulations, government hierarchies).

Substantially more research is needed in this area to understand of multiple dimensions from different actors involved in the development of rural tourism areas (e.g., tourism investors, business owners, and heads of local regencies (*bupati*) (Giaccio, Giannelli, & Mastronardi, 2018). Although there are some limitations to this study, we believe that this research could contribute greatly to policymakers in developing countries building sustainable rural tourism without excluding either indigenous people or local vendors. In addition, this research could enrich the science and literature for academics in the fields of tourism and entrepreneurship.

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