

Human Resource Management Strategy in Community-Based Tourism Business in Lake Toba Area

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Abstract- *This study aims to explore human resource management (HRM) strategies implemented in community-based tourism enterprises in the Lake Toba region. Using a qualitative descriptive-exploratory approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis involving local tourism actors in three tourism villages: Tipang, Lumban Bulbul, and Sigapiton. The results reveal that HRM strategies are still informal and vary depending on local institutional capacity and external support. Effective HRM practices are characterized by structured community organizations, continuous training, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The study concludes that community-oriented HRM, adapted to local values and conditions, plays a key role in enhancing service quality, institutional sustainability, and local economic empowerment.*

Keywords: *community-based tourism; human resource management; institutional capacity; local economy; tourism sustainability.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Community- Based Tourism (CBT) has become a strategic approach in developing sustainable tourism destinations, by placing local communities as the main actors in the planning, management, and utilization of tourism resources. This approach not only aims to improve the welfare of local communities, but also to preserve local culture and environment [1] .

The Lake Toba area, which has been designated as one of the five Super Priority Tourism Destinations (DPSP) by the Indonesian government, has great potential in implementing the CBT model. The stunning natural beauty, the richness of Batak culture, and the existence of local communities that still maintain traditions are the main capital in developing community-based tourism in this region [2] .

However, despite its great potential, the development of CBT in the Lake Toba area faces various challenges, especially in the aspect of human resource (HR) management [3] . Limited capacity and competence of local HR, lack of ongoing training, and minimal integration between training institutions and local needs are the main obstacles in the development of sustainable tourism.

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that the number of foreign tourists visiting North Sumatra through four entry points in January 2024 reached 14,851 visits, an increase of 4.98% compared to the same period the previous year [4] .

This increase shows a positive trend in the tourism sector, but also demands the readiness of local human resources in providing quality services.



Source: [5]

Figure 1. Number of Foreign Tourist Visits to North Sumatra, 2024.

The increase in the number of tourist visits requires an effective and adaptive HR management strategy, especially in the context of CBT. This strategy must be able to increase the capacity and competence of local HR, as well as ensure active community participation in managing tourist destinations [6] .

Based on this background, this research is aimed at understanding in depth (1) how human resource management strategies are implemented by community-based tourism business actors in the Lake Toba area. This research is important considering that human resource management is a key component in the success of a community-based tourism model that emphasizes the active participation of local



communities. In addition, this study also attempts to (2) identify and analyze the implications of the HR management strategy on the sustainability of local tourism businesses, both in terms of increasing institutional capacity, quality of tourism services, and strengthening the community economy [7]. By understanding these two aspects, it is hoped that a comprehensive picture will be obtained regarding effective and sustainable HR management practices in the context of community-based tourism in Lake Toba.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Human resource management (HR) in community - based tourism (CBT) plays an important role in ensuring the success and sustainability of a destination. This concept emphasizes the active role of the community in planning and managing tourism businesses, so a contextual and strategic HR management approach is needed. [8] Through the Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) model, it emphasizes the importance of alignment between organizational strategy and HR development in order to achieve competitive advantage.

Several studies show that relevant and sustainable training is key to improving community competency. Local needs-based training has been shown to increase participation and quality of tourism services. However, in many areas including Lake Toba, the training provided is still less contextual and rarely actively involves local actors.

In addition, the success of HR management in CBT is also determined by collaboration between stakeholders. Research by [9] confirms that synergy between communities, government, and the private sector strengthens institutional structures and expands access to training and development resources. Therefore, this study refers to the importance of an integrated SHRM approach with local values and collaborative patterns as the basis for HR development in the community-based tourism sector.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory descriptive design that aims to explore in depth the human resource (HR) management strategy in community-based tourism businesses in the Lake Toba area. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is appropriate for understanding complex

and contextual social phenomena, as well as describing the dynamics of relationships, values, and strategies used by communities in managing tourism businesses [10]. An exploratory design is used to explore issues that have not been widely studied empirically, especially HR management practices in the context of unique and diverse local communities.

The types of data used in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews with community tourism business actors, traditional leaders, tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) administrators, and village officials directly involved in tourism management. The interview technique was conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing flexible data collection while remaining focused on the central theme of the research, namely HR management strategy. In addition to interviews, data was also collected through direct observation of community tourism business activities and documentation of training activities, community meetings, and tourism management reporting.

Secondary data sources include regional tourism policy documents, annual reports of tourist villages, HR training materials, and relevant scientific articles and journals. The selection of data sources was carried out purposively based on the criteria of active involvement in community-based tourism activities and representation of three tourist village locations, namely Lumban Bulbul, Tipang, and Sigapiton, which have been designated as strategic areas for tourism development by the central government.

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, developed by [11]. This analysis involves a systematic process starting from data transcription, coding, identifying themes, to compiling interpretive narratives. This approach allows researchers to reveal thematic patterns that emerge from participants' experiences authentically and in depth.

In maintaining data validity, triangulation techniques of methods and sources were used, as well as validation through member checking with informants. In addition, the principles of trustworthiness in qualitative research as formulated by [12] include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability used to ensure the quality and integrity of the findings of this study. Credibility is obtained through intensive researcher involvement in the field and rechecking interview results, while dependability and confirmability are



achieved through audit trails and peerde briefing between fellow researchers.

The variables in this study are not explained numerically as in the quantitative approach, but rather in the form of concepts that are explored such as forms of recruitment strategies, training, conflict management, incentive systems, and participation in decision making related to HR management. These variables are derived inductively from participant narratives and interpreted within the socio-cultural context of the Lake Toba community.

Through this method, it is hoped that the research will be able to produce findings that not only explain how HR strategies are implemented, but also reflect local values, structural barriers, and the potential for HR management transformation in the community-based tourism sector.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the human resource management (HR) strategy in community-based tourism businesses in the Lake Toba area is still running informally and is not fully structured. From the three tourist villages that were the research locations of Lumban Bulbul, Tipang, and Sigapiton, significant variations were found in HR managerial practices, which were greatly influenced by the internal capacity of the community, government support, and partnerships with external institutions.

One of the main findings is that the recruitment process of tourism workers is more based on social relations and family closeness, rather than on professional competence or expertise. This has an impact on the low standard of tourism services, especially in terms of hospitality and cross-cultural communication. This context strengthens the findings of Baum (2018), who stated that the tourism sector tends to experience dualism between the need for professional workers and the reality of informality inherent in community-based tourism businesses.

Table 1. Human Resource Management Strategy

Strategy Components	Bulbul's Nest	Tip	Sigapiton
Recruitment of Manpower	Family and locality	Selective through Pokdarwis	Family and social relations
HR Training	Periodic (by the Tourism Office)	Programmed (NGO partners)	Not available
Incentive	Non-	There is a	There is no

System	standard	rotation and profit sharing system	clear system
Evaluation Mechanism	Informal	Structured through weekly meetings	Are not done

Source: Field Research Results, 2024.

Training is another significant challenge. Despite interventions from relevant agencies , most training is general, unsustainable, and poorly tailored to the specific needs of each community. This indicates a gap between macro policies and micro implementation, in line with Ribeiro et al.'s (2020) analysis which states that top-down training often fails to create significant change if it is not based on accurate mapping of local needs.

Furthermore, in terms of management and division of work roles, only Tipang Village has an institutional management structure based on tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) that is running well. The existence of a formal structure allows the community to organize work systems, create tour service picket schedules, and design incentives for members. This is in line with the findings [13] , that community-based institutional structures can increase the efficiency of HR governance and strengthen social accountability.

The discussion also revealed that the presence of external actors such as NGOs or universities that provide regular assistance makes a positive contribution to strengthening the managerial capacity of the community. On the other hand, villages that do not receive external support tend to stagnate and have difficulty in designing and implementing effective HR strategies. This finding strengthens the argument [14] which states that multi-stakeholder collaboration can act as a catalyst in forming a professional and sustainable HR ecosystem in the tourism sector.

Field findings also show the potential for conflict between community members, especially regarding the inequality in the division of work and business results. The lack of evaluation mechanisms and transparency in the distribution of business results is a trigger factor for low motivation and trust among members. This strengthens the urgency of implementing the principles of strategic human resource management (SHRM) as stated by [15] ,



where HR strategies should be able to build clear structures, fair incentive systems, and equal participation.

Overall, these findings suggest that the success of HR management strategies in community-based tourism businesses is largely determined by three main factors: first, the existence of a functional community institutional structure; second, the relevance and sustainability of training programs; and third, active collaboration with external actors that support capacity development. These three factors, if managed in an integrated manner, will support the creation of tourism destinations that are not only economically attractive, but also socially and culturally sustainable.

Interestingly, despite limitations in terms of structure and training, some communities independently developed kinship-based collaborative learning mechanisms, such as the formation of small groups of homestay managers, exchange of experiences between actors, and informal practice-based learning. This indicates the existence of strong social capital at the community level, which if accommodated in HR management strategies can strengthen sustainability from within. This strengthens the argument [16] about the importance of trust and social networks as drivers of collective innovation in local development.

The implication that can be drawn from these overall results is that HR management strategies cannot be adopted uniformly across villages, but must be adapted to socio-cultural conditions, local institutional capacity, and potential synergy between actors. The “one-size-fits-all” model cannot be used in the context of community-based tourism which has unique characteristics. Instead, a context-sensitive approach is needed that integrates strategic human resource management (SHRM) principles with local social dynamics.

Therefore, one of the novelties of this research is the initiation of an adaptive model of community-based tourism HR management that integrates elements of contextual training, institutional strengthening, and cross-sector collaboration as a foundation for sustainability. This model offers important contributions both practically for policy makers and community facilitators, as well as theoretically in developing discourse on HR

management in the informal and locally-based sectors.

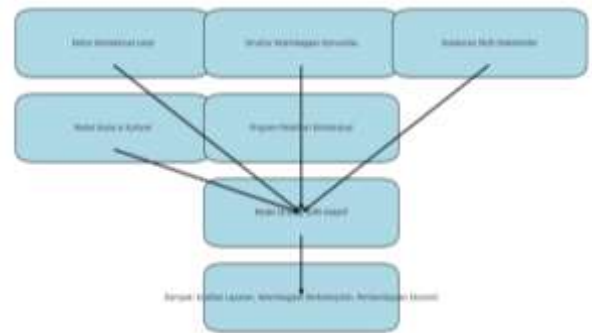


Figure 2. Adaptive Conceptual Model of Community-based Tourism Human Resource Management

This model shows that the Adaptive HR Strategy Model is formed through the integration of various components: local contextual factors, social & cultural capital, community institutional structures, contextual training programs, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The entire process has an impact on improving the quality of tourism services, institutional sustainability, and empowerment community economy.

This model is designed to describe how human resource management (HR) strategies in community-based tourism businesses can be formed adaptively, in accordance with the local context and community dynamics that are typical of the Lake Toba area. This model is based on research results which show that the success of HR management does not only depend on formal training, but also on the strength of the social structure and supporting institutional capacity.

1. Local Contextual Factors

This element refers to the unique geographical, cultural, historical and social structure characteristics of each tourist village. Each community has a different background in managing tourism, so that HR strategies must consider these specific conditions so as not to be generic (one-size-fits-all) [17]. For example, a village with a history of migration or land conflict will require a different managerial approach than a village with high social cohesion.

2. Social & Cultural Capital

Social capital such as trust, norms, and social networks between residents are important forces in forming community collaboration. Cultural capital in the form of customary values, mutual cooperation practices, and Batak cultural identity also help shape work ethic and motivation to participate in tourism activities. This power is often a source of innovation



in the management of tourism services in an informal and participatory manner.

3. Community Institutional Structure

The presence of local institutions such as Pokdarwis, tourism cooperatives, or homestay management groups is the main foundation in designing a sustainable HR system [15]. This structure allows for role regulation, work evaluation, incentive systems, and joint decision making. Without institutional support, HR strategies tend to lack sustainability.

4. Contextual Training Program

Training is effective when it is based on real needs and tailored to the capabilities and aspirations of the community. Top-down or overly technical training programs without follow-up support often fail. Therefore, training needs to be practical, contextual, and carried out continuously so that there is a real increase in competence.

5. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

Active participation from external actors such as government, NGOs, universities, and the private sector is essential. This collaboration strengthens the technical and managerial capacities of communities and opens access to training, promotion and innovation resources. In this model, cross-actor synergy becomes the main catalyst in accelerating the strengthening of local human resources.

6. Adaptive HR Strategy Model

The combination of all the elements above forms an adaptive HR management strategy, meaning it can be adjusted to local challenges, is participatory, and integrated with the community institutional ecosystem. This model does not only rely on individual training, but emphasizes systemic and collaborative transformation in building human and institutional capacity simultaneously.

7. Impact

If implemented in an integrated manner, this strategy will produce concrete impacts: improving the quality of tourism services, strengthening institutional sustainability, and empowering the community economy. All three are the main indicators of the success of human resource management in the context of sustainable and equitable community-based tourism [18]. This model not only reflects empirical findings, but also offers a conceptual framework that can be used for designing policy intervention programs, community training, and further research in inclusive tourism development.

V. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that the human resource management (HR) strategy applied in community-based tourism businesses in the Lake Toba area is still very dependent on the internal dynamics of the community and the existence of external support from the government and partner institutions. In general, HR management strategies in tourist villages such as Lumban Bulbul, Tipang, and Sigapiton are not yet systematically structured and tend to be informal. However, there are collective efforts in developing individual and institutional capacity through training, the formation of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and partnerships with external institutions.

The main findings of this study indicate that the success of HR management is largely determined by three main factors: local institutional capacity, sustainability of needs-based training programs, and active involvement of external actors. These three factors interact to form an adaptive and participatory HR management ecosystem, which ultimately contributes positively to the sustainability of local tourism businesses. These results emphasize the importance of implementing a strategic human resource management (SHRM) model that is contextualized with local values and community social dynamics.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the expansion of the SHRM concept in the context of community-based tourism. If in the corporate context SHRM focuses on achieving organizational performance through efficient HR management, in the context of a community such as Lake Toba, SHRM needs to be interpreted as a collective process that emphasizes empowerment, fair distribution of benefits, and preservation of local culture. Thus, this study sparked a community-oriented SHRM approach as an adaptation of a more relevant HR management model for the community-based tourism sector.

In practice, these findings provide important implications for stakeholders. Local governments and tourism offices need to design more participatory and contextual HR training and development policies, taking into account local values, real community needs, and institutional capacity limitations. NGOs, universities, and other development partners are encouraged to actively engage in the process of mentoring and empowering communities through a long-term collaborative approach. On the other hand, local communities need to strengthen collective initiatives in building adaptive and accountable



institutional structures to support sustainable HR governance.

Suggestions for further research include the need for further exploration of multi-stakeholder partnership models in building tourism human resource capacity, as well as comparative studies between community-based tourism areas to identify patterns of success and failure in human resource management. In addition, the development of community-based qualitative indicators to measure the effectiveness of HR management strategies is also an important agenda in strengthening inclusive and sustainable tourism governance.

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