

Tourism on the Island of Buton in Eastern Indonesia

Summary

This case study explores issues related to addressing the historical sites on the island of Buton in Eastern Indonesia and securing the potential government support and tourism development. What are best practices regarding heritage site tourism planning and what role does the local government play in this process? Regency and City governments in Eastern Indonesian are often seeking to discover significant historical sites within their areas that can be promoted as tourism destinations. These plans and government support often help local tourism companies with marketing and tour options they can offer to clients. Three situations involving the city of Baubau, the regency of South Buton, and the regency of Central Buton in Indonesia is described that includes the discovery of ancient pottery in a flooded cave, the study of small, deteriorating fortresses on the island, and the exploration of a blue hole. Background information is provided, along with a review of literature on heritage tourism, geotourism, and planning and policies development. The stakeholders' perceptions with regards to challenges and opportunities and implications involved are presented.

Teaching and learning objectives

Below are the teaching and learning objectives for this case.

1. Teaching Objective: Provide students with the opportunity to learn about heritage tourism planning and development and its contribution in the development of an area.

Learning Objective: Students will understand, clarify, and assess issues related to heritage tourism, specifically in eastern Indonesia.

The case achieves this objective by:

- Providing a definition of heritage tourism along with a related example.
- Providing a definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage along with a related practical example.
- Providing a definition of UNESCO World Heritage sites along with a related example.

2. Teaching Objective: Provide students with the opportunity to learn about geotourism planning and development and its contribution in the development of an area.

Learning Objective: Students will understand, clarify, and assess issues related to geotourism, specifically in eastern Indonesia.

The case achieves this objective by:

- Providing a definition of geotourism along with a related example.
- Providing examples of how geotourism has been combined with other forms of tourism in Indonesia and

throughout the world.

3. Teaching Objective: Provide students with the opportunity to think through the relationship of written publications and government planning in Indonesia.

Learning Objective: Students will be able to analyze and evaluate some of the potential ways that written publications aid the development of remote areas in Indonesia.

The case achieves this objective by:

- Providing background information about government project funding practices in eastern Indonesia.
- Providing practical information about how written publications have helped with planning in eastern Indonesia.

Suitability for use

This case is suitable for use by instructors and students in undergraduate and graduate courses related to sustainable tourism development and socio-cultural concern for a community, in settings where the instructors want to provide students with opportunities to expand their knowledge of tourism in another culture and some of the issues that can arise.

Sources and methods of collecting information for the case:

Information for this case was collected via observations and reading website materials, books, and articles related to the topics presented in the case study.

Teaching approach and suggested sequence of timeframe:

Instructors may use this case in various ways. These involve using the case as:

- an individual assignment
- a group assignment
- a combination of individual and group activity
- a class discussion

As an individual assignment, the case study can be read and the discussion questions answered. During class, students could discuss and compare their answers. For a group assignment, students can read the case study and answer the discussion questions. Groups could be asked to find another example of heritage tourism and geotourism and write their own case study. A class discussion can be facilitated through assigning the students to read the case study and answer the discussion questions. Then over one or more class sessions (of one hour or so), students could discuss and dissect the case. This could also be completed in a class scenario where the case study is one of two or three examples of heritage tourism or geotourism, read by the class

and then discussed. The following questions might be asked to generate interest in the general topics related to the case.

Topics and questions for discussion

General questions about topics raised in the case include the following:

1. *What are some possible advantages of becoming a UNESCO heritage site? Please explain.*

Answers will vary. There will most likely be funding possibilities from the UN related to the maintenance and development of the site. This is not only true for the local government that manages the site, but there could also be benefits for the country as a whole. This status will generate more exposure for the identified site, which will probably increase traffic to the site or in relation to the ICH.

2. *What are some factors that would determine whether a location was particularly suited for geotourism and/or heritage tourism?*

Answers will vary. The sites would need to be very significant to the local history of the area, and it would be even more convincing if it was important to the country of Indonesia as a whole. For geotourism and heritage tourism to be combined, the site would need to be related to the landscape of Buton in some way, as well as be an important part of its heritage. Cave paintings and other remnants of time past in Buton could be combined with cave exploration. The discovery of useful plant, animal, or human specimens that have been well preserved in the blue hole would be important finds for the history of the island. It is also possible that rock climbing could be developed in conjunction with fortresses.

3. *In general, what are some characteristics of heritage sites that may be interesting enough to visit for both domestic and international tourists in Indonesia?*

Answers will vary. Most of the geoparks that have already been created in Indonesia are associated with a large mountain that have been hiked by tourists for many years and have unique geological attributes. But there are also a variety of new geoparks being established whose geological features do not require large mountains. The mountains on Buton are not particularly tall, but at least two of them, Mt. Siontapina and Mt. Lambelu, are well known for their interesting rock formations at their summits. The presence of natural asphalt is also something rarely seen at other places in the world. The naming of some scuba diving sites at the geopark in Gorontalo also opens the door to the many beautiful dive sites on Buton and the surrounding islands.

Questions specific to the situation in the case include the following:

4. *What are some possible criteria for a heritage site that would make it appropriate for inclusion into local government tourism planning on Buton?*

Answers will vary. The Sultanate of Buton is the central unifying theme of the history of these islands and would be the natural core to any heritage tourism plan. On the island of Sulawesi and the islands immediately surrounding it Buton was the first to accept Islam and incorporate it into the government. It preceded the staunchly Islamic governments of the kingdoms associated with the more populated and well-known South Sulawesi by 100 years. The stories of some of the rulers of Buton and their relationships with villages and areas on other parts of the island could also tie together several villages into the central story about the sultanate.

5. *Was it a good idea for Chase and Arnold to share information about the cave pottery to government officials, or would it have been better to keep it to themselves?*

Answers may vary. There wasn't any clear gain to having the information about the cave pottery other than being able to build up a large personal collection. Since there wasn't a proven and safe means for exposing this site in a way that it would be protected, sharing it with the government was probably the best move. It did result in the contents of the cave been explored more than they probably would have, but hopefully if there is ever the opening of a museum in the future those that have examples of the pottery will contribute it to the museum. This is all part of the way that private individuals and businesses need to work together with the local government to do all that they can to preserve and promote the heritage of sites that are important to the history of the area and the country.

6. *What are some other ways to publish information about interesting historical, cultural, and natural finds in an unexplored area in addition to television news and writing books?*

Answers may vary. With the prevalent use of social media today, posting information about heritage sites on Buton as they are highlighted and developed would be a natural way to spread the news. If communities are involved in the preservation of their sites this can also generate local energy and buy-in, which could increase visits through word of mouth. There are frequently competitions between villages in Indonesia for the cleanest and most coordinated in their painting and signage. It would be possible to hold a similar contest for which villages had the best preserved and creatively promoted heritage and geotourist site in their locale. This would gain a great deal of attention and build awareness.

7. *What are some possible risks associated with cave diving and cave exploring and how could the government mitigate them in this remote location?*

Answers may vary. Cave diving is very dangerous because if there is a problem with the diver's air supply it is not possible to rise directly to the surface. This is why cave divers must meet specific technical requirements regarding their equipment and training, like always having a redundant source of air and a spool of string to mark the route in the cave so divers are not lost inside. There are many divers that die every year exploring caves because they venture into them without the proper training. It is also possible to get lost in dry caves and be trapped by flooding after large rains, like the incident with the youth soccer team in Thailand in June 2018.

8. *How could possible discoveries about ancient history on an island be integrated with more recent cultural and political history?*

Answers may vary. It is difficult to know the possible connection between these two things prior to exploration, because there is no telling what is in the blue hole and maybe in other caves throughout the islands that have not been fully explored. Part of the fun of exploring caves is the potential to find something that hasn't been found before. Because of the unique ecological finds and characteristics of Buton it could also be geological finds in caves could lead to further research and projects by the scientific community. We will never know until they have all been explored!

9. *What are some ways the restoration of a fortress in a village could benefit the local residents?*

Answers may vary. If a geopark or heritage tourism trail that included a fortress was developed and promoted it could bring more investment and visits to a village. In most of the remote villages of Buton the residents would be excited to have more people come to visit them, which would not only build more excitement in the village, but also provide more income from the expenditures of guests. If there were especially well developed and preserved sites that caught the attention of people throughout Indonesia and even internationally, then it might be possible to charge some form of entrance fee as well. Depending on who managed the site, whether it was a private organization in the village, or the local government, there could be some form of financial benefit for the residents because of the entrance fees.

10. *What are some pros and cons of incorporating several sites into a heritage trail vice marketing them individually?*

Answers will vary. One of the difficulties with drawing guests to Buton is that it is remote and the marketing for the destination is not very unified. Without some type of package deal being

offered to tourists it would be hard for them to know what sites were worthy of a visit and where the sites were located. In more mature destinations there is enough information available, and the hotels are experienced and integrated enough with local sites, that a tourist can just show up in an area and have plenty to do. They can also read reviews online prior to their visit and know what they want to do. When places like Buton are still relatively unknown, marketing individual sites is very difficult. It is best to integrate them together so that tourists can see how a visit to the area would be worth several days. One of the main reasons this case study was written was to explore ways that different forms of alternative tourism could be combined to have a more powerful impact in aiding the development and promotion of Buton. The development of a heritage trail and geopark throughout the island is a possible solution to that problem.

Suggested class activities and projects

To use the case in a class, first, the general questions might be addressed to develop interest in the topics and then the students could read the case and discuss the questions specific to the case. As a suggestion, it might be wise to have the students read and answer the questions about the case in writing individually and then when they return to class they can discuss the case. Once the case has been discussed, students could complete individual or group projects that focus on one or more of the following:

- Find another example of the development of a heritage or geotourism site in the news or in the literature and write up a summary and analysis of the strengths of the site and present their findings to the class.
- Create a training program for tour guides and/or other hospitality professionals to help them to engage in effective heritage and geotourism tours.
- Expand on the case to develop a heritage tourism plan for another part of the world and consider environmental, socio-cultural, and economic sustainability principles.
- Create and write a case study of one's own (suggested for graduate students).

Suggestions for additional reading material

Clifton, J., & Benson, A. (2006). Planning for Sustainable Ecotourism: The Case for Research Ecotourism in Developing Country Destinations. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 14(3), 238-254.

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- Ruban, D. A. (2015). Geotourism – A geographical review of the literature. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 15, 1-15.