The Study of Tourists Perceptions about the Images of Samosir Regency as Tourism Object

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Abstract: *This research aims to get the informations about the images of the tourism objects in Kabupaten Samosir concerning to the cleanliness, facilities, services, comforts and tde cultures. The numbers of the respondents of this research are 260 respondents consist of both international and domestic tourists for any purposes. Generally the images of Kabupaten Samosir as tourism objects are well perceived by the tourists. The diversifications of tourism attractions in the area make Kabupaten Samosir becomes one of the interesting places to visit. The research shows that variables of services, comforts, and cultures get positive perceptions. They are well perceived by the respondents. Some of the cleanliness variables such as the cleanliness of the cafetarias and residential environments are bad perceived by the respondents, whilst the cleanliness of the lodgings get positive image. The respondents also find that the parking facilities in the tourism objects are very limited both the numbers and the size. It makes the tourists get difficulties to park their car during their visiting the places.*

Keywords: perception, cleanliness, comfort, culture, facilities

1. Introdusction

As a largest country in South East Asia, Indonesia is rich for several natural and human resources spread over in the whole of Indonesia country. It can be seen from the beauty of natural sceneries, cultures and the histories of the nation, traditional festivals and unique ceremonies, some painting arts and handicrafts, and many interesting places for tourists all the years.

As a tourist destination in Province Of North Sumatera, Samosir Island that located in the middle of Lake Toba has varieties of interesting cultures and beautiful natural sceneries make this area more attractive for both foreign and domestic tourists to visit. Based on the data of Mantis Statistics Of Tourism and Culture Board Of Samosir Regency, said that the number of tourists visit Samosir Island increase every year.

The local government of Samosir Regency make 19 main tourist destinations and become the new sources of govenment incomes through local taxes and restribution to increase local original incomes as Local Government Regulation (Peraturan Daerah) No. 7 Year 2009 (Waspada Online, November 2010). To support increasing the number of tourists visit Samosir Regency, the local government makes some programmes regarding the tourism activities, such as the festival of culture art tourism base like "mangase taon", "mandudu", "mangalahat horbo", and "napak tilas habatahon", and "The Festival Of Horas Samosir Fiesta" (Waspada Online, November 2010).

The promotion of Samosir Regency as tourism regency is a commitment of The Government of Samosir Regency to develop tourism sector specially tourism sector environment base. Therefore the local government of Samosir Regency works hard to introduce and promote tourism industries in this area to the foreign and local tourits. The local government also founds a development cooperation forum of Lake Toba, that's "Lake Toba Regional Management (LTRM)" that focusses to the synergies of sustainable tourism development.

It is important for the local government to create the balancing of all cultures and the environment that can increase the lives quality of the local people and can preserve the local cultures and values. Therefore, all the concepts must be supported the policies of local government of Samosir Regency by designing long term programmes. It means that the sustain-abilities of natural resource, cultures, tourism development activities should be properly managed so it is expected to give benefits for all social levels and can increase the quality of lives of whole people in Samosir Regency. The development of tourism sector also done by promoting the varieties of beauties of natural sceneries and national potencies as an area of marine tourism wisely and sustainably, and to support economies activities regarding national cultural preservation.

2. Theoritical Framework

2.1 Tourism and Tourist

Pendit (2002 ; 34) says that tourism is "a combination of phenomenon and the relationships that occur among the interractions of tourists, businessman, local government and the local people in processing and serving the tourists and other visitors". Based on the statement, we can see clearly that the pattern of system relationship occur among tourists, local people, the bussinessman, and local government.

According to The Act of Tourism of Republic of Indonesia Number 9 Year 1990, it is clearly stated some defenitions of tourism, such as :
a) Tourism is a travelling activity or some of activities freely and temporeraly done to enjoy tourism attractions. The most important thing of this activity that the visitors do not earn money.
b) Tourism is everything related to tourism activities, including the management of tourism attractions and the business related.

c) Tourism is everything regarding to tourism activities. Tourism business is an activity provides services or manages tourism attractions, tourism business, and other business in the sector.

d) Tourism attraction is everything enjoyed, visited by tourists.

Some scopes including tourism activities, such as :

1) The activities related to transportations from place of tourists' origin to the destinations, during in the destination, and back to the place of origin.

2) The activities related to the management and development of attractions, and the infrastructure of tourism, and the provisions of everything tourists need.

World Tourism Organization (WTO) determines tourist as: 'A visitor who stays at least one night in the country visited, in either private or commercial accommodation. It can be differed from sameday visitors, that is a visitor who does not spend the night in the country visited. This includes cruiseship passengers, eventhough the ship may pass one or more nights in the harbour. Based on the both termino-logies, it is clear that a tourist is everyone visits a country for temporary and for having a job and spending the money in the place he visits.

The reason of the tourist visits the tourism destination that he wants and is interested in the tourism attractions.

Based on The Act of Tourism of Republic of Indonesia Number 9 Year 1990, says that the defenition of tourism attraction is everything that becomes tourism destinations. Tourism attractions consist of :

a) Tourism attractions created by God, such as mountains, seas, sun shine, eclipse, natural sceneries, etc.

b) All human creations used to satisfy the tourists, like dams, high buildings, cultures, monuments, museums, etc.

c) All activities directed to fulfill tourists' needs such as the development of tourism zone, the maintenance and tourism management, tourism marketing, the management and the control of tourism infrastructures.

The availability and positive informations from friends, relatives and family will give strong impacts for tourists to visit the tourism destinations. All interesting experiences got during they visited the destinations will be positive promotions for the destinations. In the other hands it will be bad news if they get disappointed experiences during visiting the destination and it will be a nightmare for the destination itself. It shows that words of mouth promotion is very important to influence tourists in selecting process the destinations visited.

A tourism product of course can give attractions for the tourists. The image of the tourism products will give impacts for the products themselves as the results of the perceptions of the tourists. An image can be formed as a combination of some factors in the destination itself. Some factors that can influence the images of the tourists are climate, natural sceneries, security, health, sanitations, friendliness, etc. The positions of an image takes important roles in tourism industry, as Buck and Laws in Pitana (2005 ; 83) says that

'Tourism is an industry based on image; its overriding concern is to construct, thought multiple representations of paradise, an imagery (of the destination) that entices the outsider to pace himself or herself into the symbol of define space.'

Culture as national's asset is one of heritages that can be performed as a tourist attraction. As human creation, a culture can describe the tradition and way of life of the people that can not be found in other places. The culture of Batak and the heritages in Samosir Regency are the strengths as the assets of the destination that attract tourists to visit this place.

The development of tourism sector so far, give impacts for the development of the cultures of Bataknese either positive or negative impacts. The positive impacts of culture tourism activities that the Batak communities in Samosir Regency are challenged to be able to revitalize of the cultures of Bataknese themselves by doing preservation and introducing the cultures to the young generations since they are in . elementary school until adults. The communities and the local government should have regular programmes through some culture festivals to perform the traditions and the cultufres of Bataknese.

Geriya (1996 ; 46) describes some positive impacts of tourism toward the cultures, they are :

1) The creativities of the communities in learning and introducing the local cultures will be better.

2) The efforts of the communities to diversivy of the local cultures will be better.

3) The communities will have more awareness about the existencies of the local cultures.

4) The communities will have more awareness about the identities of the local cultures.

2.3. Tourism Products

Doswell (1993 ; 48) says that tourism product is the existed resource and can not be duplicated and the components of the products can be created. Tourism products consist of attractions, facilities and services used during their visiting.

In the other hand Kotler (2004 ; 90) says that touristm product is anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use or consumption that might satisfy a want or need including physic objects, services, places, organizations and ideas.

S. Medlik & Middelton in Yoeti (2002 ; 212) says that the components of tourism products are :

a) Tourism Attraction in the destination that can attract other people to visit the destination. The attractions can be site attraction, built attraction, and special event.

b) Tourist Facilities, as the component in tourism product, the facility takes role as supporting component of tourism activity. Eventhough it doesn't take the most important role in attracting tourists visit the destination, but the tourist will need this component during they are staying in the destination such as accommodation, restaurant, etc.

c) Transportation that connects tourist generating countries and local transport-ation to the tourism attraction.

2.4. The Image of Tourism Attraction

The image of tourism attraction is very much influenced by some believes, way of life and perception through a bundle of informations shared or formed by the image of the products of the destination itself. The tourism destination will give special or different experiences for the tourist anytime he leaves the destination. The attractions in the destination are much influenced by the images performed, images appeared by the experiences directly or from the informations got from other source.

An image also can give impression that a destination will give different other attractions, that actually the destination doesn't offer the very much different the others, so it will make the tourists want to visit the destination. The image of a destinat-ion is the way in which it projects itself, and the way in which it is viewed by its markets. Image is an overall idea; the association which a place has; its identity; what people think about it (Doswell 1997 : 51).

Every product and service has its own image and position in the mind of customers and of course they will influence the customers' buying decisions. It is important to put a value position for products or services in the minds of target markets, where the position must be able to differentiate from an or some attributes. The important thing for customers that all attributes must be the critical factors for buying decision.

This research is done in Simanindo District, Samosir Regency. Simanindo District is the centre of tourism activities in Samosir Regency. We can find some tourism attractions in this regency, such as Tomok Village, Tuktuk Siadong Village, stone chair of Siallagan, The Museum of Hutabolon Simanindo. Tourists also can see Sigalegale Statue.

3. Method

The data collected for this research through two data types, they are primary and secondary datas. The primary data directly collected from then samples by using certain data collection technique. While the secondary datas are collected through other parts or the result of otherv researchers.

This research use descriptive dan verificative methods to get the descriptions of research variable characteristiscs (the image of tourism destination) obtained by collecting the datas in the field, therefore the research methods used for this research are descriptive survey and explanatory survey methods.

The units of observation for this research are national and international tourists who are visiting and having holidays in tourism destination of Samosir Regency. They also usualy visit some tourism areas such as beach, natural tourism, museum, and others.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 The Characteristics of the Tourists

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the respondents in some places in Simanindo District, Samosir Rergency, such as accommodations, restau-rants, and souvenir shops. The respondents in this research are 260 persons either domestic tourists or foreign tourists. The selection of respondents done using.method. The charactersitics of respondents consist of some informations of status, gender, profession, age, the place of origin (country), the purpose of visits, and length of stay.

4.2 Based on the Tourists' Place of Origin

From 260 selected respondents *(simple random sampling)*, 102 respondents are tourists from Malaysia, Singapore, Malaysia, China, Australia, Germany, and England. While national tourists are from some ares in North Sumatera, Aceh, Jakarta, Riau, and Kalimantan.

4.3 The Marital Status and the Gender of the Tourists

Based on the questionnaires distributed, that 155 of 260 respondents are men and the rest, 105 respondents are women. While the married men are 153 and the married women are 107 respondents.

4.4 The Age of Tourists

The ages of the tourists are categorized into five age groups, they are less than 17 years old, 18-30 years old, 31-45 years old, 46-55 years old, and more than 55 years old. Based on the questionnaires distributed are known that the majority of respondents, 131 respondents are 18-30 years old and then 32 rspondents are 31-45 years old 32 orang, 49 respondents areless than 17 years old, 29 respondents are 46-55 years old, and 19 respondents are more than 55 years old.

4.5 Based on the Purpose of Visiting Samosir Regency

Based on the purposes of visiting of the tourists to Samosir Regency known that 212 respondents visit Samosir Regency for recreation/holiday, 13 respondents are for business, 11 respondents are for visiting their friends and relatives and 24 respondents visit Samosir Regency for visiting their friends and relatives.

4.6 Based on Length of Stay of the Tourists

The researcher categorizes the the length of stay of the tourists in five groups such as 1-3 days, 4-6 days, more than 7 days. Based on the informations about the length of stay of the tourists in Samosir Regency, are known that 125 respondents stay for 1-3 days that consist of 86 are domestic tourists and 39 are foreign tourists, 106 respondents stay for 4-6 days that consist of 63 are domestic tourists and 43 are foreign tourists, and 29 respondents stay for more then 7 days that consist of 11 are domestic tourists and 18 are foreign tourists.

4.7 Based on the Professions of the Tourists

Some status of professiosn of the respondents are described from the answers of the questionnaires collected from 260 tourists visit Samosir Regency. The status of professions of the tourists are categorized in 4 groups, such as still work, not work, is studying, and retired. The researcher finds that 168 tourists are working, 64 tourists are studying, 13 tourists are not working, and 15 tourists are retired.

4.8 The Perceptions of the Tourists toward Tourism Attractions in Samosir Regency

Some aspects are analyzed to see the perceptions of the tourists about the images of Samosir Regency, they consisits of some aspects, they are *cleanliness, facilities,* local *people, services, comfort,* and local *culture*. Each aspect is breakdown into some sub aspects that consist of five options to answer with the scale of value is 1 to 5.

4.9 The Perceptions of Tourists toward the Cleanliness of the Tourism Attractions in Samosir Regency

The responds of 260 respondents about the cleanliness of the tourism attractions in Simanindo District, found that the avarage score for the cleanliness of the accommodations is 3,32. It means that percepsions of the respondents about the cleanliness of the accommodations in Simanindo Distric tends good enough. While the cleanliness of the restaurants get the average lowest score, that's 1,88. This result shows that the cleanliness condition of the restaurants in the tourism area is bad. The awareness of the people in the areas to keep the cleanliness of the environment in bad categorized that make bad impressions for the tourists when the tourists are in the areas. In general, it is found that the average score about the environment cleanliness of the tourism attractions get bad perception by the tourists.

4.10 The Perceptions of the Tourists toward the Facilities in the Tourism Attractions

The average score for the facilities in the tourism attractions given by the respondents is 2,40. It means that facilities provided in the tourism attractions is not good enough or still very limited such as toilets, health centre, praying room etc. Money changers get the highest average score, that is 2,50. While the availibility of parking areas get the lowest average score, that is 2,18 that shows that the facilities of parking area in the tourism attractions are very limited. Parking area is one of supporting facilities for tourism activities where the availiability shiuld get better attentions either for local government or the business man.

4.11 The Perception of Tourists toward the Quality of Services in the Tourism Areas in Samosir Regency

Generaly the tourists say that they get good service during they are in the tourism areas. The avarage score for this aspect is 3,17. It means that the tourists have good perception to the services given. It can be seen from the culture of the local people where most of them are friendly and helpful specially to visitors. This might make the tourists get good impressions during they are in the tourism area.

Next, we can ssee the responds of the tourists about the comfort of the tourism areas in Samosiur Regency, based on their experiences during in the areas.

4.12 The Perceptions of the Tourists toward the Local Culture in Samosir Regency

The average score for the variable of local culture in Samosir Regency is 2,84, where it means that the local culture of the tourism area is fair categorized by the tourists. The diversity of local cultures in a tourism area of course will give special impression for the tourists. Some of the local cultures become the parts of the lives of the local people. These will be the assets that make the variety cultures and become unique attractions that can not be found in other places.

4.13 The Perception of the Tourists toward the Comfort of the Tourism areas

The average score gained by the tourists regarding of diappearances of beggars during they are in tourism attractions in Samosir Regency is 4,11 (very good) and then it is followed by the perception about disturbance of local people which the average score is 4,03, then free of intimidations or pressures from other people, where the average score is 3,73, and finally the average score for free of retailer disturbances is 3,54.

The average general score for comfort indicator of the tourists during they are in the tourism areas in Samosir Regency is 3,85.

The variabel of comfort has the highest score. It means that generally the value or the perception of the foreign tourists toward the comfort of the tourists in the tourism areas tends better than their expectations.

Based on the average scores gained from the tourists' evaluations, indicates that the tourists feel very comfortable during they are in the tourists areas. This comfort of course give positive values for the tourists, hopefully this will be good promotions for tourism in Samosir Regency.

4.14 The Development of Marketing Mix Strategy

The average score of the perceptions of 260 respondents visit Samosir Regency is 3,51 that indicates that the perceptions of the respondents toward sub variable of product mix tends very good.

a. Product
As a tourist destination, Samosir Regency has interesting and diversified local culture products and become the strengths of the destinations where they have selling values to offer to the tourists. The availiabilities of the local culture products become the strong position for tourism products of Samosir Regency because they can not be foúnd in other places or even can not be found anywhere. If these strengths can be well maintained through sustainable concept, it will

ease then local government to realize Samosir Regency as Tourism Regency in North Sumatera Province.

b. Price

Sub variabel of price mix has average score 3,76. It means that the price policy that is offered by even the local government or the bussinessman is suitable to products or services expected by the tourists.

The average score for the entrance ticket to the tourism attractions is 3,39, the average score for local special souvenier is 3,12, while the average score to compare the avlue of the money spent to the benefit gained by the tourists is 3,32.

Based on the indicator average score for the sub varibale of price shows that the perceptions of the tourists toward product price is good.

c. Location

The average score for the availability of infrastructure in the tourism attractions is 2,87. The score shows that the perception of the tourists toward the infrastructures provided are nearly their expectations. The average score for access-ibilities to the tourism attractions is 2,03. The average score for parking area provided is 1,98. It means that this facility is still very poor either numbers or the secures of the locations. In general, this   condition shows that the accessibility provided are very bad. In this case the roles of local government in providing services to the tourists is not maximum.

d. Promotion

The average scor for indicator getting entry informations before travelling is 4,30, while the average score for getting informations through brochures, leaflet, and from other sources is 3,02, and the average score for the availabilities of some informations about tourism attractions in is 2,79. In general the average score for promotion variable for the destination of samosir Regency is 3,37. This score shows that promotion variables are positively perceived by the tourists during they are in the destination.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations.

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the analysis before, we find some conclusions as follows:

a) Generally the tourism attractions in Samosir Regency can perform good image for tourists. The perceptions of tourists regarding the services of the staffs in tourism attractions, the comforts in tourism attractions are also very good. The tourists feel comfort during they are in the destination because they don't find any violences such as intimmidations actions there. The tourist also get good impressions for the culture diversi-fications in social lives. All variables are positively perceived by the tourists and if they all can be well maintained by the local government, they will be one of the strongest factors for tourism sector in Samosir Regency both in the present time and in the future.

b) The marketing mix indicators that consists of subvariables for product, price, place and promotion are well perceived by the tourists where they are supported by the local cultures, the prices offered for the products and services are reasonable and the tourists think that they get more values for the money spent. The subvariable for place get bad perceived by the tourists since the destination are not fully supported by good infra structures and acessibilities.

5.2 Recommendations

a) As a famous tourists destination in North Sumatera either for domestic or international tourists, it is hopefully that the local government should take its roles maximally to increase the quality standard the destination facilities to make the more tourists will be interested in visiting this destination.

b) It is important for the local government to give more attentions to give more priority to improve the accibilites to ease the tourists to reach the destination and also increase the capacity of parking area in the destination.

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