

Assessing Tourist-Host Social Contact in Small Island Destinations: The Case of Gangga Island, North Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

Many tourist-host social contact studies have existed in the literature of tourist behavior that exploring the host-contact activities in a tourism destination. Although positive impacts and beneficial interactions emerge and always be expected during the tourists stay in the destination, however not all happened without conflicts and negative perception. This research highlights the tourist-host interaction on Gangga Island and the result shows that most respondents (both tourists and island residents) admit that there is no interaction during the tourist stay due to firstly, most of tourist coming to Gangga Island for honeymoon and secondly, there is an agreement between the Gangga Island Resort (GIR) where the tourist stay and the local authorities about the restriction for the local residents to come around and have accessed to the resort. Although most tourist visiting the island have no interaction with the host, however the result also implies that the tourists have been in the village of the island for long time where they can interact with the residents. In such a case the hosts prove that they are already aware about travel and how to greet guests/tourists visiting their area. This explains that the tourist-host social contact in Gangga Island is positively related to social motivators and the desire to interact with people of the host community such as playing, meeting and taking photographs. This research is a case study using survey-based questionnaire and field observation techniques. It was conducted on Gangga Island with the assessment used to provide evidences of the tourist-host social contact in Gangga Island, North Minahasa. Observation techniques are applied as yield rich rigour if used in combination with other techniques.

Keywords: Social contact, host, tourist, island destination, tourism development

Introduction

Marine tourism in small island destination in North Sulawesi has been growing rapidly for the last few years and it has had economic benefits. However, it is evident that if the tourism activity destroys the attraction upon which it is based, then the investment in tourism infrastructure and businesses is ultimately lost. Therefore, sustainability is critical for the long-term economic success of any marine-based tourism venture. Human impacts on marine resources and protected areas have brought serious problems. Higher rates of human use would lead to a greater incidence of coral damage. There is need for conservation efforts to protect the marine resources so that sustainable resources development can be attained (Ross and Wall, 1997; Wood, 2002; Tighe *et al.*, 2005). As a centre of world biodiversity, North Sulawesi is very rich in natural resources; however, there has been lack of human resources to develop and manage the available resources. Involvement of various stakeholders, including education institutions, is required to enhance capacity building for tourism. According to Shrestha and Rayamajhi (2007: 228), the sustainability of tourism depends largely upon effective institutional factors at the local and national levels. Among the various institutions involved in the tourism industry, universities and educational centres should play a vital role as they have

professional responsibility to train the human resources needed for tourism. The distribution of marine tourism attractions in North Sulawesi can be seen in Figure 1.

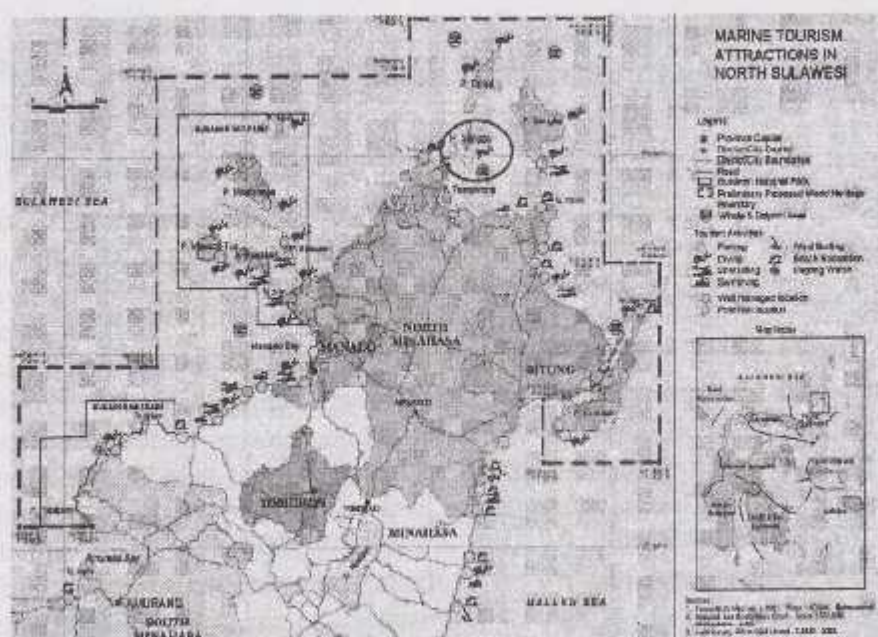


Figure 1: Marine tourist attractions in Gangga Island within North Sulawesi (Mitra Pesisir, 2004)

In recognition of the large area and high diversity of marine organisms, North Sulawesi has been nominated to be a World Heritage Protected Area. The area would cover Bunaken National Park and the coastal areas of Likupang and Lembeh Strait in Bitung (Figure 2). Bunaken National Park (BNP) specifically could become a model for collaborative management in the Asia-Pacific. Entry fees are shared with 20% for the government and 80% is managed by Bunaken National Park Management Advisory Board. Almost all (95%) of the income from the entry fee generated within North Sulawesi province is used for conservation efforts. In addition, the local community has a direct interest in this portion of the fee through a village conservation fund.

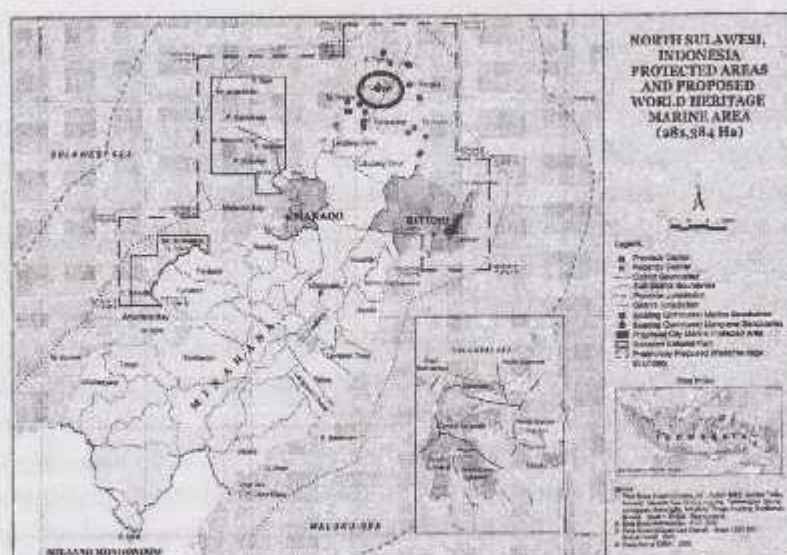


Figure 2: Protected areas and proposed world heritage marine sites within North Sulawesi (Mitra Pesisir, 2004)

This research was conducted to assess tourist-host contacts in Gangga Island as a tourist destination in North Sulawesi. When properly managed, small island destination may serve as a means of building awareness between tourist and host to enhance a high value of conservation. This research is aimed to provide information on the tourist-host social contact in order to assess to what extent the tourist visitation contribute to host community in terms of socio-economic benefits. Further, the research also highlights the capacity of host communities to serve visitor with different cultural background in small island destinations within North Sulawesi. This research also will be a case study to examine the strategic issues on tourist-host social contacts which in turn strengthen ecotourism development in small islands in the future. The result of this study will be useful for the tourism planner, government and tourism professionals in the form of a scholarly manuscript, guidelines for best practice tourist-host interaction, ecotourism development and management in island destinations. This could be published as scientific research on academic journal for the public that may serve as a basis for the community forums to assess the contribution of tourist visitation to the island as desired by the community. In addition, all related stakeholders are expected to use this information in developing their strategy and for policy making and tourism management of coastal areas including island destinations.

Theoretical reviews

Social contact in Tourism

Social contact is defined as the everyday encounter with other people. Social contact may refer to a multitude of different experiences. The term contact has referred to a very brief trip as well as long-term friendships. Social contact can take place in a multitude of different situations. Further, previous studies show that social contact takes place within the work situation, the residential neighborhood and between children, adults, college students, and so forth. Each social contact is personal, always occurs between a minimum of two people, and is often referred to as an interpersonal encounter. Each social contact has the potential to be positive, negative or superficial (Bochner, 1982; Cook and Sellitz, 1955).

Table 1: Major components that influence social interaction

Analysis of social situations theory
1. Goals, which are the purposes that direct and motivate social interaction
2. Kulos, which are shared beliefs that regulate social interaction and generate actions so that the goals can be achieved
3. Roles, which include the duties, obligations or rights of the social position of the contact participants
4. Repertoire of elements, which is the sum of verbal and non-verbal behavior appropriate to the situation
5. Sequences of behaviour, which is the specific order of actions needed to behave effectively
6. Concepts, which are elements that individuals need to possess to behave effectively in the social situations and attain situational goals
7. Environmental setting, which is the setting in which the encounter occurs and consists of spaces, modifiers, boundaries
8. Language and speech that make individuals understand how to behave in the interaction, e.g., vocabulary, grammar, codes, voice tone and situation specific variations in language
9. Difficulties and skills, which are social situations that require perceptual, motor, memory or linguistic skills in order to be successfully understood

Source: Argyle *et al*, 1981

Two levels of social contact have been identified namely co-presence and focused interaction. Co-presence contact refers to the minimum level of social interaction which occurs when two or more individuals signal (through their bodily and facial movements and the use of space) their awareness of one another's presence and their accessibility to one another. Focused-interaction occurs when people gather together and cooperate to sustain a single focus of attention as in conversation, games and transaction in shops. An important framework, which helps to analyze social contact, is analysis of social situations (Argyle *et al.*, 1981) theory. This theory identifies nine core components that influence any social interaction as can be seen in Table 1.

Tourist-Host Social Contact

The concept of social contact can be applied in a tourism context such as: 1) Tourist-host; 2) Tourist-tourist; 3 Tourist-potential tourist; and 4) Tourist-provider contact. Table 2 summarizes the nature of tourist-host contact studies (Reisinger and Turner, 2003)

Table 2: Tourist-host contact study

No	Areas of study	Author
1.	The effects of host attitudes toward tourists	Doxey (1975)
2.	The nature of contact with tourists and its influence on attitudes, behaviour and values toward tourism	DeKadt (1979)
3.	Tourist-host contact in terms of the social and cultural impacts of tourism development.	Mathieson and Wall (1982)
4.	The effects of social contact between tourists and hosts and the way in which tourists and hosts view one another.	Pearce (1982b)
5.	The effects of intercultural tourist-host contact on tourists and the visited people.	Pearce and Bochner (1982)
6.	Tourist-host contact as a potential source of crime	Pizam (1982)
7.	Tourist-guide interaction, as well as interactions between the host and guest populations in the New Zealand farm context.	Pearce (1984)
8.	Tourist- host contact in terms of understanding and communication	Krippendorf (1987)
9.	Tourist-host encounter between working tourists and their hosts.	Mittelberg (1988).
10.	The social processes at work in tourist- host encounters	Pi-Sunyer and Smith (1989)
11.	The disappearance of the local language and dialect as an outcome of tourists-host contact	Ryan (1991)
12.	The unequal nature of tourist-host relations by discussing its most extreme form of child prostitution.	Srisang (1991)
13.	The tourist-host contact as a potential source of conflict because of the differences in tourists' and hosts' demand.	McKercher (1993)
14.	The host adoption of foreign languages and development of stereotypical attitudes towards hosts.	Sharpley (1994)
15.	Hosts' coping behaviour and efforts to avoid contact	Burns and Holden (1995)
16.	Host resentment towards tourists as the outcome of the economic gaps between tourists and hosts.	McIntosh et al. (1995)
17.	The perceptions of British, Israeli, Korean and Dutch tour guides of tourists of different nationalities	Pizam and Sussmann, (1995)
18.	The communicative messages behind the tourist-host encounter and examined whether host perceptions of their guests and of themselves change over time	Black et al. (1996)
19.	The issue of cultural conflict in the tourist- host encounter.	Boniface (1999)

Source: Reisinger and Turner, 2003

These previous studies have implied that cultural factors affect tourist-host contact. Thus there is a need to examine the cultural background of tourists and hosts and determine how the cultural differences in their backgrounds affect their social interaction.

Definition of a tourist and a host

The tourist is a culturally different temporary overseas visitor, arriving at a holiday destination for a minimum of 24 hours and maximum 12 months for the purpose of holiday, business, study, family, sport, or conference. The host is a national of the visited, country who is employed in the tourism industry and provides a service to tourists such as hotelier, front office employee, waiter, shop assistant, custom official, tour guide, tour manager, taxi and bus driver. The physical setting of a tourist-host contact occurs in a wide variety of settings, for example as the tourist travels in planes and buses, stays in hotels, dines in restaurants, visits tourist attractions, goes shopping or to nightclubs, talks to tour guides, watches local street life or observes local dances. Tourist-host contact may take different forms. It may consist either of business transactions at shops, enquiries in the tourist information centres or at the front office, or just friendly greetings on a street. Reisinger and Turner (2003) categorized three major contact situations between tourists and hosts are: 1) when tourists purchase goods and services from residents; 2) when tourists and residents find themselves side by side at an attraction; and 3) when the two parties come face to face during the process of information exchange. Further, Reisinger and Turner (2003) specifies the tourist-host contact in less developed countries where cultural differences between tourists and hosts are greater than in more developed countries, the negative effect of direct tourist-host contact is increased. Rich tourists who visit Third World countries have little respect for local values. Tourists are often perceived as aggressive and insensitive. The tourist-host contact often generates exploitation, assault, victimization (Pearce, 1982b, 1988) and numerous social problems. Pearce (1982b) suggested that while all of these processes need not be present at once, they occur due to large cultural differences that are important elements shaping tourists' and hosts' perceptions of each other. The lack of agreement as to the outcomes of the contact between tourists and hosts raises the possibility of different factors that determine the results of the tourist-host contact.

Small Island Destination

Tourism destination usually involves a series of separate elements such as landscapes, wildlife and specific activities (Wearing, 2004). Within ecotourism industry particular destinations must be presented as being markedly aware with respect to environmental considerations (Pearce, 2005). Islands are of significance in tourism term because of the inherent attraction that they have for visitors which is of a scale beyond that of either the economic or geographical importance of most islands (Baum, 2002, p.117). Islands as tourist destinations have special characteristics that make them different from other setting. Small island ecotourism destinations have some in common such as : (1) depend on coastal and marine resources, (2) limited resources, (3) limited space, (4) the balance of resource is much more critical than in mainland coastal environment but has a high degree of endemism due to isolation, (5) the main attraction is species endemism or uniqueness includes animals and plants, (6) spatial limitation on island encourages the development of ecotourism in small scale (Halpenny, 2004).

Methods

Case Study

Figure 3 present the study sites of the research with a case study of Gangga Island. It is located about 60 Km from the city of Manado in the district of West Likupang, North Minahasa regency. There are two villages on this island: Gangga Satu and Gangga Dua. In terms of religion, the whole villagers of Gangga Satu are Christian, comprising seven church's denomination. While the majority of Gangga Dua are moslem. Since the majority of both villages came from the origin of Sangir ethnic they often carry out cultural activities together. It supports the Gangga island to become a safe and comfortable island destination. The panoramic views from this island are very enchanting in the north side we can see the beauty of Tindila and Talise Island, in the east side we can enjoy the shore view and Bangka Island, in the south side we can see the Likupang district, while in the West we can see the exotic Lihaga island with its magnificent white sandy beach. In addition, there are many unique things that can be found on the island, for example the culture among the local residents whose the yard of their home as a place to bury their loved ones (although nowadays, it has been greatly reduced since the local government has been providing public cemeteries), and the *Tulude* ceremony which held regularly every January 31st, as a form of thanksgiving, prayer for blessings and preventing disasters. The ceremony has been carried by involving local residents and invited guests as well as the visiting tourists.

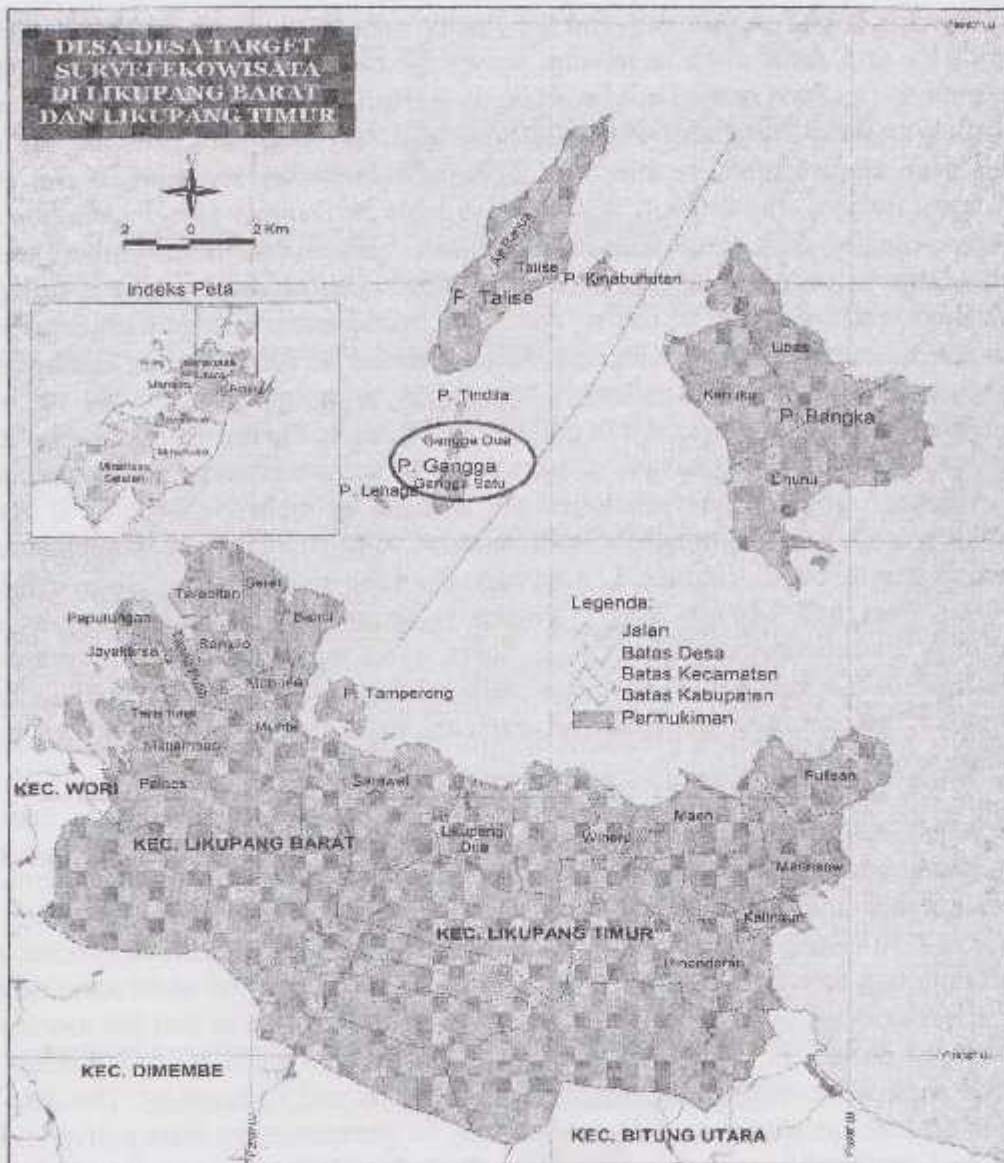


Figure 3: The study site (Gangga Island) position within North Minahasa Regency (Mitra Pesisir, 2010)

The nature in the island is still very well preserved where exotic animals such as rare birds, reptiles and mammals, and other sea animals exist. Besides, tourism facilities are available in Gangga island ranging from resort with full facilities for accommodation to the creation facilities provided for visitors. Unfortunately, there is still lack of natural resources management as well as tourism concerns. Since the majority of the both village came from the origin of Sangir ethnic they often carry out cultural activities together. It supports the Gangga island to become a safe and comfortable tourist destination. The panoramic views from this island are very enchanting, in the north side we can see the beauty of Tindila and Talise Island, in the east side we can enjoy the shore view and Bangka Island, in the south side we can see the Likupang district, while in the West we can see the exotic Lihaga island with its magnificent white sand clearly. In addition, there are many unique things that can be found on the island, for example the culture among the local residents whose the yard of their home as a place to bury their loved ones (although nowadays, it has been greatly reduced since the local government has

been providing public cemeteries), and the Tulude ceremony which held regularly every January 31st, as a form of thanksgiving, prayer for blessings, and to prevent disasters. The ceremony has been carried out involving local residents and invited guests as well as the visiting tourists. The nature in the island is still very well preserved, so that exotic animals such as rare birds, reptiles and mammals, and other sea animals can still be found here. Besides, the tourism facilities available in Gangga island have been very supportive, ranging from resort with full facilities for accommodation and there creation, as well as simple lodgments in the homes of residents. Unfortunately, there is still lack of organization which engaged in natural resources management and tourism concerns, so that its management is still very limited. This research was conducted on Gangga Island with the assessment by visiting Gangga Island. The assessment is included survey and on-site observations that were used to provide evidences of the tourist-host social contact in Gangga Island, North Minahasa. Observations to the island have been conducted to have evidence. Observation techniques are applied as yield rich rigour if used in combination with other techniques (Hollinshead, 2004). The method is applied to this research to gain in depth, first hand knowledge from the subjects (Thomlison and Getz , 1996; Backman and Morais, 2003). Personal communication with respondents by transcribing the conversation is also used. There was a research process notes that used to keep track of the research. The process included day to day activities, methodological notes relating to intentions and reactions, personal notes about motivations, experiences with informants.

Survey-based questionnaire and field observation

For the study purposes, the questionnaires are randomly delivered to respondents. The samples for this study consisted of 50 tourists who had a long stay on the island (± 3 months) and 50 island residents. They were selected during the research process using random sampling who were perceived as had a good knowledge and understanding of the tourism development in the area. The assumption of the study was that the tourists-host social contact during the process of tourism development in the island was perceived as has made socio economic advantages to local economy and community. The data were collected through questionnaire delivered on site. 50 questionnaires were delivered to the tourists and another 50 questionnaire were delivered to the residents. All were returned with sufficient information required for the study. The term 'tourist' in this survey refers to visitors who come and stay in Gangga Island, North Minahasa for a certain period. Field observation was also conducted through the visits to Gangga Island to determine community's perception and to identify tourist-host social contact. The researcher carried out the assessment through group discussions and individual interviews with local respondents as well as tourists in the area.

Results and Discussion

Tourists' perception on island residence

Figure 4 shows tourists perception toward island residence where most of the respondents (15 respondents) feel annoying with the residence, do not response to visitors (11 respondents) and asking a lot of questions (9 respondents). In such a case tourists might mistrust the host of Gangga Island because tourists and hosts do not have a good interaction and as the consequences, behavior such as dishonesty, hostility and cheating during the contact may arise.

Tourists' perception on island residence

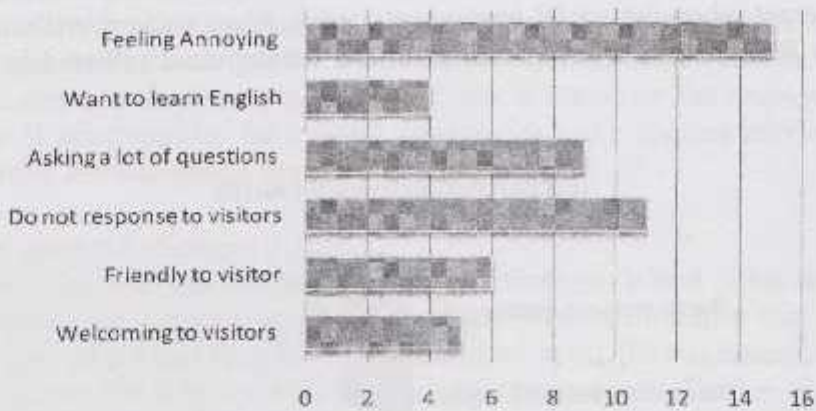


Figure 4: Tourists' perception on island residence

Purposes of visiting Gangga Island

Figure 5 shows tourists motivation in visiting Gangga island. Most of the tourist come to Gangga Island is for honeymoon (14 respondents). The second motivational aspect of visitation is to experience the uniqueness of the marine park (10 respondents). This proves that the information obtained by tourists which are related to Gangga island is not only the beauty of the resort, island or beach, but also the uniqueness of Gangga marine park that can give impression that never enjoyed before. This is followed by the next motivation such as experience a new tourist attraction (9 respondents).

Purpose of visit Gangga Island

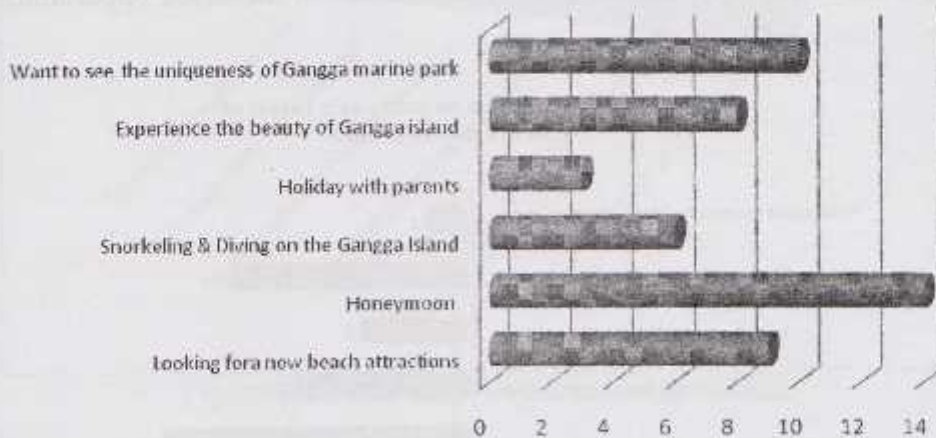


Figure 5: Purpose of visit

This contact explains that the tourists are demanding new experiences that may be positive when hosts are professional in offering product, capable to meet tourist needs and demands, adequate product knowledge and niche choices available.

Host perception toward tourist

Figure 6 represents the host perception toward tourists visiting Gangga Island. 29 respondents are very enthusiastic with the presence of tourist on the island. However a significant number of the respondents (11 respondents) feel annoying with the way the tourist dress on the island. This implies two sides of impressions that tourists-host contact involving an element of dreams and admiration that their island was visited by

international tourists while at the same time rejected the tourist behaviour or attitude (the way tourist dressed). Thus, many tourists and hosts may encounter each other with no desire to interact when the social barriers appeared. Also, some tourists may prefer to interact with fellow tourists of the same national background rather than with foreign hosts.

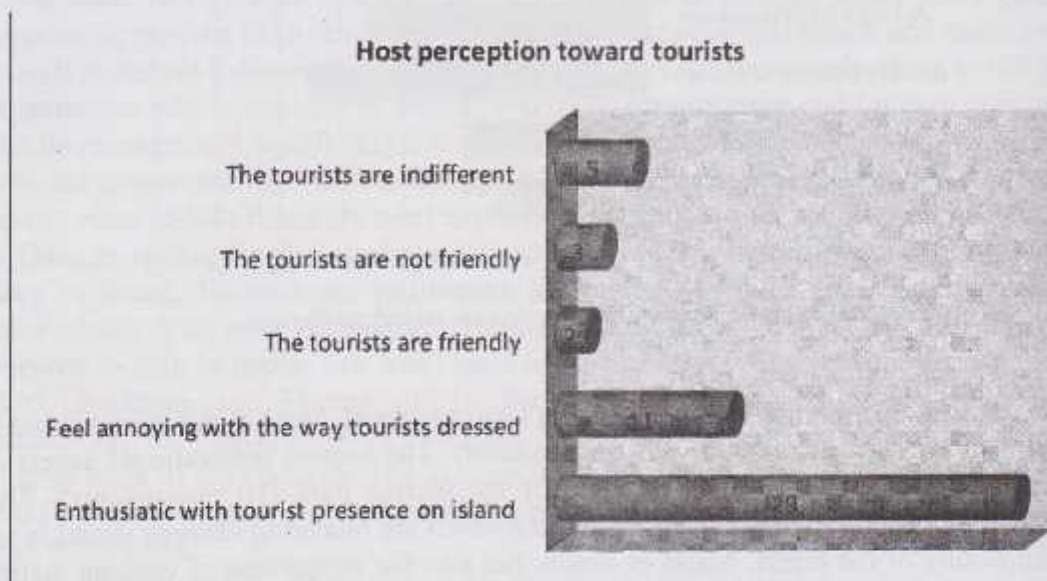


Figure 6: Host perception toward tourists in Gangga Island

Host perception on the benefits as a result of tourism development

The benefit of tourism development in Gangga Island was also recorded. Figure 7 shows that 18 respondents admit that tourism offer experience an increased opportunity to get education.

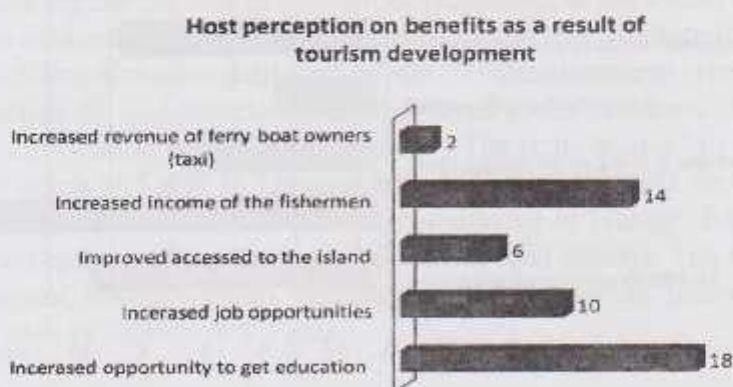


Figure 7: Host perception on benefit of tourism development

The island residents sent their children to school for education. This is related to an increased income of the fishermen in the island (14 respondents). Good education and adequate income are automatically increased job opportunities (10 respondents). It is important to note that Gangga Island Resort (GIR) has been helping people of Gangga Island by providing jobs because 80% of GIR employees are the residents of citizens of the Gangga Island. GIR also provide assistance in education development by building schools for kindergarten. The GIR is not only providing supports such as the teaching aids for the school programs but also the teachers are given a monthly honorarium by the GIR management. Although most tourists admitted have no interaction with host

community, however different opportunities for contact occurred. Thus, there is a favourable social climate that promotes interaction. The benefits provision or the positive impacts of tourism development on the island allows the visitors and the host to get to know and understand one to another. This is to say that social contact is positively related to the opportunity to interact with the host is based on the employee-employer relationships. If opportunities for contact are provided, the contact may even develop positive attitudes and encourage future contact.

Tourist-Host contact in Gangga Island

Figure 8 recorded the tourists-host contact in Gangga Island. This question was specifically addressed to both tourists and hosts. The result shows that most of the respondents (29) admit that they have no interaction at all. This is because most of the tourists are coming for holiday while having their honeymoon. Further, there is also a regulation or an agreement between the GIR management and the local government that the Island residents are restricted to come around and have accessed to the resort where the tourist stay.

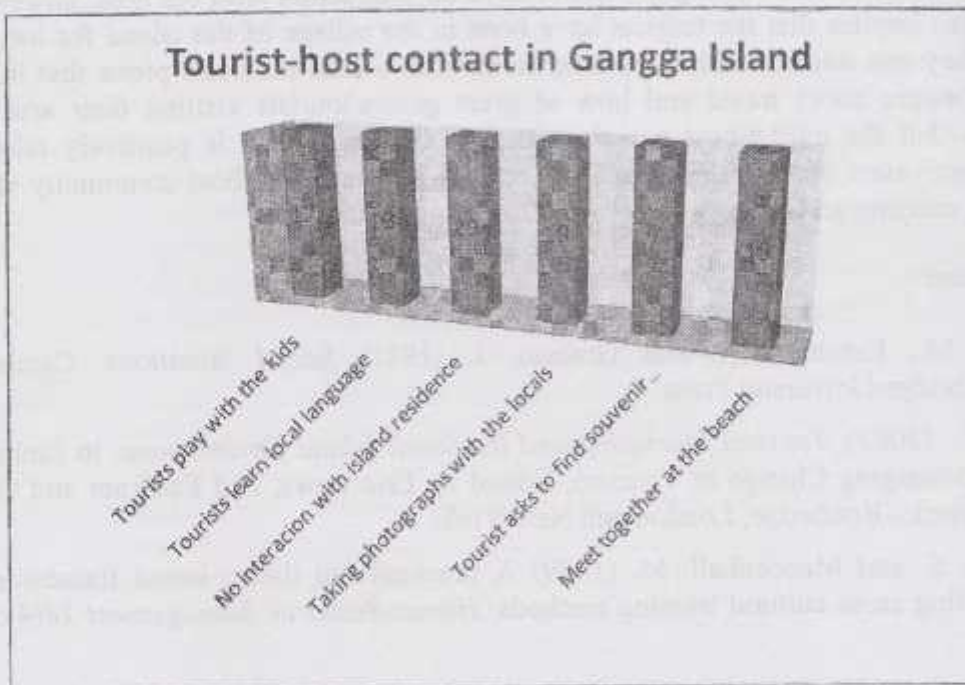


Figure 8: Tourist-host contact in Gangga Island

The next highest number on the tourist-host social contact is for taking photographs (19 respondents), playing with kids on the island (17 respondents) and meeting together at the beach (15 respondents). Although most tourists visiting the island have no interaction with the host, however the result implies that the tourists have been in the village of the island where they can interact with the residents. In such a case the hosts prove that they are already aware about travel and how to greet guests/tourists visiting their area. This represents the tourist-host social contact in Gangga Island is positively related to social motivators such as the desire to interact with people of the host community (playing, meeting and taking photographs).

Conclusion

Tourism potential on Gangga Island is supported by natural resources, such as white sandy beaches, preserved coral reefs with beautiful fishes, traditional cultures, sufficient supply of clean water, natural cavern, scenic landscape of Gangga hill peak, indigenous fauna (deer, *maleo* bird), mangrove forest and dive spots. The island is also a potential area for community-based tourism development. These potential are supported by community activities in souvenir sale, boat rent, and inns. Unfortunately, these potential have yet been properly managed. Adequate power supply at night, communication facilities, as well as trainings to improve the community's knowledge and skills in tourism management all need immediate actions. Besides, sufficient power supply, communication facility and trainings to improve community's knowledge and skills in tourism management all require actions. The main finding of the research is that most respondents (both tourists and island residents) admit that there is no interaction during the tourist stay due to firstly, most of tourist coming to Gangga Island for honeymoon and are not expected to be with the locals and secondly, there is an agreement between the Gangga Island Resort (GIR) where the tourist stay and the local authorities about the restriction for the local residents to come around and have accessed to the resort. Although most tourist visiting the island have no interaction with the host, however the result also implies that the tourists have been in the village of the island for long time where they can interact with the residents. In such a case the hosts prove that they are already aware about travel and how to greet guests/tourists visiting their area. This explains that the tourist-host social contact in Gangga Island is positively related to social motivators and the desire to interact with people of the host community such as playing, meeting and taking photographs.

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