

Tour Consumer Well-Being in Tourism Destination: A Case of the Lake Toba

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Abstract

This study focuses on identifying the underlying well-being dimensionalities that exist in a tourism destination. Researchers conduct qualitative content analysis of digital platform of Lake Toba as a tourism destination. The methodology uses content analysis of secondary sources. The stages consist of condensation, coding, categorizing, and patterning the theme. By utilizing content analysis methodology, the study was able to identify seven dimensions of tour consumer well-being: 1) Biopsychological; 2) Cultural Identity; 3) Social Connectedness; 4) Spiritual Attunement; 5) Social Enterprising; 6) Inspirational Mindfulness; and 7) Environmental Altruism well-being. This research finds that Lake Toba as tourist destination activates reciprocal tour consumers in related to 7 well-being dimensions. Lake Toba as tourist destination embraces consumer tour to appraise the indigenous home and their collective enterprises.

Keywords

tourism; consumer; branding;
well-being; lake toba



I. Introduction

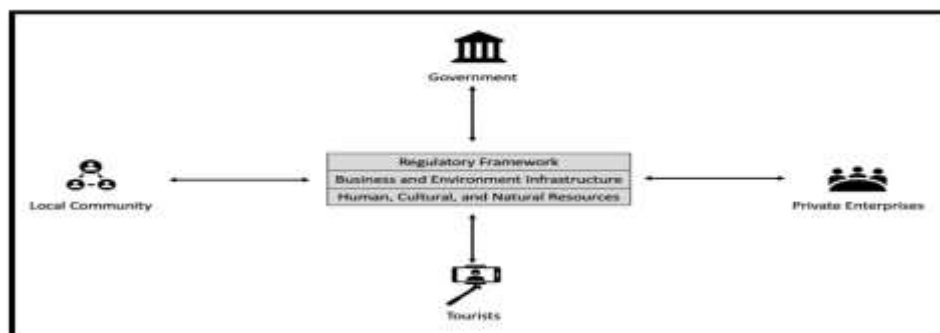
The world has mostly relied on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as its main measure of economic performance. GDP is the total output of a country's goods and services (Mankiw, 2019). The measurement reflects monetary earnings from the production and indicates a country's capacity to spend, consume, or invest in capital for the future. However, the most advanced economies in the world are now being challenged with highly stressful living conditions. While they enjoy better economic standard of living, but many of them suffered from reversed working environment (Graham, 2016). With such economic paradox, some economists (Sen, 2004; Graham, 2016) have been questioning whether GDP is a representative indicator of the well-being performance in a particular society. This discourse led various international organizations to adopt diverse well-being indicators. For instance, the United Nation, influenced by Sen's (1999) emphasis on the importance of choices and opportunities for individuals, uses a dual-measurement approach: good outcomes through Human Development Index (HDI) and the absence of bad outcomes through Human Poverty Index (HPI), instead of conventional measures or assessments of the underlying enabling environments (economic, social, and political) of countries. HDI and HPI collectively measures the opportunities for individuals to choose to live as each sees fit (Kula et al., 2008).

The pressing need of a more inclusive and all-encompassing well-being achievements also extended to the tourism sector (Henderson & Knight, 2012; Kelley et al., 2015; Sheng et al., 2016). The tourism industry is major source of employment generation in many countries. In measuring their destination competitiveness, nations are still using the recommended Tourism Indicators Guidance from OECD. These

measurements consist of mostly economic-based indicators such as: Tourism Direct Gross Domestic Product (TDGDP), Inbound Tourism Revenues per Visitors by Source Market, Visitor Satisfaction, Overnights/ Occupancy, Exports of Tourism Services, Purchasing Power Parities, and others (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Specifically, the effect of service attributes in shaping consumer well-being in the context of tourism destination (Sheng et al., 2016).

Reflecting from the contemporary tourism discussion, we aim to investigate the way Toba Lake tourist destination can have eudaimonia and hedonic meanings. Lake Toba, located in Sumatra Island Indonesia, is one of the most popular and renowned ecotourism destinations in the world. Blessed with its natural wonder, the enormous crater-lake consists of an island (i.e., Samosir Island) almost the size of Singapore. The Indonesian Government, through its Ministry of Tourism had selected Lake Toba as one of its four priority tourism areas along with Borobudur in Central Java, Mandalika in West Nusa Tenggara, and Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara. An estimate of 4.4 trillion Rupiahs have been dedicated by the central government to develop Lake Toba into the preeminence destination in Indonesia and ultimately the world (Pemerintahan Kabupaten Samosir, 2019). The current tourism development plan for Lake Toba includes several infrastructural expansions such as a runway expansion and other revitalization projects at Silangit International Airport, improvements to road access from Medan, the capital city of North Sumatra to Lake Toba, and additional ferries to transport passengers from the shores of Parapat to Samosir Island (Indonesia Ministry of Tourism, 2019).

According to UNWTO, sustainable tourism as “tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities” (UNWTO, 2019). Sustainable tourism holds three mandates for tourism development; 1) make optimal use and conserve natural heritage and biodiversity in a destination; 2) respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities; 3) ensure a fair and long-term economic operation in tourism that benefits the residents within the destination. In light of these three principles, World Economic Forum annually published and measured countries Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) into three areas of standards or pillars: 1) regulatory framework; (2) business environment and infrastructure; 3) human, cultural, and natural resources (World Economic Forum, 2019). A country’s capacity and capability in meeting these three pillars ensure long-term viability and competitiveness for the tourism sector. Given this framework, the study identifies four main stakeholders, which must interact for effective policy-making and decisions to be made in the destination. These stakeholders are: 1) local residents; 2) tourists; 3) private enterprises; and 4) government – See Figure 1.



Source: Authors academic Synthesis

Figure 1. Key Stakeholders Mapping for Lake Toba Tourism Competitiveness

To investigate those meanings, this study uses multidimensional well-being constructs, such as: 1) Biopsychological; 2) Cultural Identity; 3) Social Connectedness; 4) Spiritual Attunement; 5) Social Enterprising; 6) Inspirational Mindfulness; and 7) Environmental Altruism well-being. The research question is: how do those 7 multidimensional well-being constructs describe eudaimonia and hedonic Toba Lake tourist destination?

III. Review of Literature

2.1 Well-Being Tourism

According to Seligman (2002), people seek well-being to ‘repair’ their pathologies. Moreover, Forgeard et al. (2011), stated that, “well-being is a multidimensional construct that can be measured by wide array of subjective and objective dimensions”. Objective Well-Being (OWB) related to how universal requirements could satisfy the people to lead a good life. Those requirements do not vary among societies (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). In other word, OWB is an external factor of well-being. In contrast, Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is a measure of the internal factor of goodness of life (Anand, 2016).

2.2 Seven Well-being Dimensions

Thomas (2009) stated that well-being is “intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure” (p. 11). It highlights the problem that researchers have focused on dimensions or descriptions of well-being rather than on definitions (Christopher, 1999). Therefore, many studies develop well-being in a multi-dimensional construct (e.g., Diener, 2009; Michaelson et al., 2009). Huppert and So (2013), proposed a conceptual framework that connects well-being with positive mental health. Their approach combines measures of feeling and functioning and highlights the importance of developing a multidimensional measure.

III. Research Method

Authors conduct qualitative content analysis of digital platform of Lake Toba as a tourism destination (Kim & Kuljis, 2010). Content analysis enables the analysis of data to be structured and may be used in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Neuendorf, 2002). Authors follow Erlingsson and Brysiewicz’s (2017) work that they argue that qualitative content analysis consist of the following stages: 1) condensation: is a process of shortening the text or picture while still preserving the core meaning; 2) coding: a code can be thought of as a label; a name that most exactly describes what this condensed meaning unit is about. Usually one or two words long; 3) categorizing: a category is formed by grouping together those codes that are related to each other through their content or context. In other words, codes are organized into a category when they are describing different aspects, similarities, or differences, of the text’s content that belong together. It can be analyzed by categorizing smaller groups of closely related codes in sub-categories.

IV. Result and Discussion

The result will explain the content analysis findings of 7 dimensions of tour consumer well-being as the following stories.

4.1 Biopsychological Well-Being

The obvious biopsychological well-being in Toba Lake is their water. In Toba biophysical customs, water is inside the leave of their original tree-shaped plant (Tobatabo, 2017). the condensation from the English translation of Tobatabo (2017) is as follow:

“Bosi-bosi, which is a tree-shaped plant, the leaves can withstand thirst when chewed. The water soaked in the leaves is used by the community as a kidney cleanser and freshener”

When coding that statement, the words “community” represents the indigenous people that firstly used it. While categorization refers to function of water beneath the leaves like “.....as a kidney cleanser and freshener”.

Clearly, the text refers to the water function to physical healing. There is nearly association between the longitudinal soundwave and water. In relation to 528 hertz, the voice has reciprocal benefits to transmit positive sound to heal the human body, which mostly contain water. For instance, in medical study, 528 hertz can heal endocrine system in human body. This 528 hertz music neutralizes the potential contents that cause physical disease while at the same time heal the mind and spirit through transmitting the sound into the human body to contain water (Akimoto et al, 2018).

4.2 Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of Batak’s well-being heightens the surviving indigenous identity, as we make English translated condensation from *Perkembangan Kebudayaan Batak* (2017) (English translated) as follow:

“The Batak cultural identity, one of the most famous and still surviving today is the culture of "Dalihan Na Tolu" (it means three-legged fire stove). The philosophy of life of Dalihan Na Tolu in the Batak Tribe is known by the existence of the clan system (Marga), namely the identity of people who have the same lineage according to the father or patrilineal. An example is if a father has the Tarigan clan, then his sons and daughters will have the Tarigan clan. This clan system has existed since ancient times until now is still maintained from generation to generation, amidst progressive globalization, information, technology.”

The surviving Batak’s cultural identity is also reinforced through another original secondary source of Tumanggor (2018), as below:

“German nationals, Timo, has now officially become a Batak with the Silalahi clan. The inauguration was carried out during the Batak traditional procession at the Balige Center Dojo Building, Toba Samosir Regency, Saturday (06/23/2018). The procession of Batak traditional events to make a clan for someone has to go through various stages, especially the notification to the family designated as parents has been passed, finally after delivering the offerings of prostration to the *bones* (uncles), *dongan tubu* (fellow clans), *boru* (among women), *hula-hula* (brothers and sisters), *dongan sahuta* (neighborhood neighbors) are also relatives and invitees, then the German foreigner named Timo is now Timo Silalahi”.

In those secondary sources, we code unique Batak indigenous clan system of Marga from both resources:

“The Batak cultural identity... is known by the existence of the clan system (Marga), namely the identity of people who have the same lineage according to the father or patrilineal”. (Perkembangan Kebudayaan Batak, 2017)

“German nationals, Timo, has now officially become a Batak with the Silalahi clan...” (Tumanggor, 2018)

In more specific categorization, it is found clan system identity of “Silalahi” and “Timo” as assimilative process. From that, the process of self-clarity is internalized through the indigenous clan system. In addition to personal self-clarity, according to Osborne and Taylor (2010), Individuals must have clarity on both cultural identity and self-concept, before engaging the processes necessary to construct a clear and coherent personal identity, by extension, to achieve self-esteem and well-being. Like the findings found by Sowislo and Orth (2013), Taylor (1997, 2002) argues that the lack of available and clear cultural reference group will prevent individual to construct a coherent sense of personal identity. Thus, it will lead to low self-esteem and other negative psychological outcomes. The cultural identity of consumers is a relevant and emerging topic in transformative consumer research that merits additional exploration into how it impacts consumer well-being (Pancer & Handelman, 2012).

4.3 Social Connectedness

In our condensation, the social identity is compacted in the social kinship system of the Batak, as cited from Sinaga (2018) below:

“The kinship system of the Batak is patrilineal. It is true that a Batak calls members of his marga his “dongan-sabutha”, those who have sprung from the same womb, but matrilineal descent is not known at present, from known history or from legend. A man's lineage is continued by the men born into it and becomes extinct if no sons are born to them. This patrilineal kinship is the backbone of Batak Society which is built up of lineages, marga and tribal groups all connected with each other in the male line. Men form the kinship groups: the women create the affinal relationships because they have to marry into other patrilineal groups”

Our coding indicates the importance of patrilineal system as “the kinship system of the Batak is patrilineal” (Sinaga, 2018). Afterwards, categorization shows the association of male and female in the Batak. In that social kinship, we articulate that Batakese Women must marry other men in other *marga* (Kinship) to establish inter-family connection. Marriages and its respective rituals between their lineages create social innovation for Batakese to be more social acceptance and collective actualization with other families from the same ethnic clan.

Besides, previous studies have found and noted that individual’s state of well-being can be heavily influenced by the presence or well-being of their social peers (Cheng et al., 2011; Ares et al., 2015; Han et al., 2019; Forjaz et al., 2011; Wiseman & Brasher, 2008). Study by Han et al. (2019), has also found social engagement among community members build collective efficacy, which in turn build community loyalty.

4.4 Spiritual Attunement

An applied form of spiritual attunement in Lake Toba’s Batak Culture is the participation of visitors and residents alike in the Tor-Tor Sigale-Gale dance. Excerpt from

Indonesian secondary text, the condensation of the dance is found and cited in Chandra (2015), as below.

“One of the cultural products of the Toba Batak people who are also a popular tourist attraction is the Tor-Tor Sigale Gale dance. Apparently, there is a mystical and sad story behind the Sigale Gale dance. Sigale Gale is the son of a king. The only son of King Rahat who has a handsome face and is the only successor to the offspring. However, the king's son, Manggale, died on the battlefield, causing King Rahat to experience psychiatric disorders due to enduring sadness and longing for his son”

When observing all condensation, we code the unique sentence of mystical meaning of the dance in the above citation as: “The *opungs* [grandfathers/mothers] were used to doing it [routinely].” Besides, the categorization specifies as: “the *opungs* were used to doing it [routinely]. The *opungs* [grandfathers/mothers] were used to doing it [routinely] He likes the *Tortor* dancing...to appreciate identity... Batak.”

The underlying meaning of that dance is about the ritual dance commemorating the loss of King Rahat's son, Manggale, and the father's longing for him until his death is one of the many cultural locus of Batak culture and an enduring generational wisdom passed down through lineage. The timeless moral lesson of *Tor-Tor Sigale Gale* can be exercised outside the ritual ceremony and into the everyday lives of the participants. Doing so can be considered a civic participant of the batak's familial collective and by far extension, the sustaining spiritual connection between the tourist and the destination.

4.5 Social Enterprising

The social enterprises of Toba can be found on the social enterprise. The condensation process echoes the unique of the Batak social enterprise (YPDT, 2015) like the membership:

“Requirements for External membership YPDT: 1) Supporting every effort to preserve Lake Toba and its regions...;2) Refusing businesses, investments or activities that damage the environment of the Lake Toba Region and the environment in general; 3) Willing to spend time, energy and thought for the benefit of the preservation of the Lake Toba Area; 4) Filling out the membership registration form; 5) Join social media managed by YPDT and / or Friends of Lake Toba...”

In coding that paragraph, the special case refers to the external society to join that organization as “...requirements for External membership YPDT...Filling out the membership registration form”. Further, the categorizing refers the social media platform of the external access to the social enterprise “...join social media managed by YPDT and / or Friends of Lake Toba.” Qualitative analysis showed that community volunteers (mostly consisted of retired or unemployed men) saw Green Shed as a space of wellbeing integration – where social connectedness or camaraderie was formed, inclusiveness experienced, and the individual felt ‘valued’ and ‘useful’. Individual can use social enterprise to channel their vocational skills or knowledge to contribute to a balanced state of mutual well-being for their own and the general community (Farmer et al., 2016). The use of social enterprise as a social environment to improve one's well-being through social connectedness, therapeutic assemblage, and collective production.

4.6 Inspirational Mindfulness

Inspirational mindfulness embraces the importance of education to associate the history of the Batak heroic actions of their hero through the education to the young generation. In Bakkara (2018), we condense:

“Not many Indonesian young generation, especially Batak young generation, know that Sisingamangaraja XII (SSM XII) as their patriotic role model. This became the topic of Thursday's Discussion at the Secretariat of the Lake Toba Lovers Foundation (YPDT), East Jakarta, on Thursday (11/08/2018). From Thursday's discussion, there was a proposal to build a digital campus of Sisingamangaraja XII's Pustakalogi so that it becomes a reference standard for historical truth and heroic values from various aspects that can be used as references for our young generation YPDT, as a social representative of Bataks, propose to build a digital campus of Sisingamangaraja...., after discussion with the non-bataknese expert who build digital library.”

Public education is virtue with a digital campus, as we found in our coding: “...build a digital campus of Sisingamangaraja XII's Pustakalogi so that it becomes a reference standard for historical truth and heroic values...”. In our categorization, the digital campus is specified for maintaining historical truth and heroic value of the past Batak hero, as “there was a proposal to build a digital campus of Sisingamangaraja XII's Pustakalogi so that it becomes a reference standard for historical truth and heroic values...”.

In those constructive meanings, education is related to subjective well-being, both directly and indirectly, although there is less research on this relation. In the economics-related literature, theorizing suggests that because education encourages capabilities, it should lead to more favourable studies of well-being

4.7 Environmental Altruism

In Toba Lake, environmental altruism can be found on local wisdom to preserve environment. Condensing from Nugroho (2018), the environmental altruism can be found on the practice of the local wisdoms, as follow:

*“In Danau Toba, enduring local wisdoms have been maintained to sustain fish species among the local communities. This local inheritance was able to be distributed to younger generation, as in Sisingamangaraja's culture, every past history shall be written in their local language (in written of *Pesan Opung Doli*) and being told to their younger generation (equivalent to word of mouth), so their younger generation will not forget what had been done by their past generation. In that local folklore, the altruisms of sustaining fish species have been based on the local beliefs that the fish was actually wife of Toba, a man that was changed to be vast water because her anger cannot be restrained and broke his promises to his wife. So, for Toba's people, damaging and exploiting the fish were equivalent to destroying their elders. With the remembrance of past histories, they enforce any internal and external groups that attempted to use any electronic devices to exploit fish there. Local indigenous declared the forbiddance to external and internal people to exploit fish during the informal meeting in their house, usually post- lunch time”*

The coding specifies the association of local wisdom to preserve fish species as voiced “in Danau Toba, enduring local wisdoms have been maintained to sustain fish species among the local communities”. The categorization indicates the wisdom of social

sanction of fish overexploitation as “with the remembrance of past histories, they enforce any internal and external groups that attempted to use any electronic devices to exploit fish there....”

With such postmodernism interpretation, environmental altruism can be actualized within the exercise of environmental social actions. These socio-environmental events portrayed the well-being achievement of the community to preserve the balance and harmony of the natural environment.

V. Conclusion

The need for an alternative to traditional economic indicators of tourism is part of the global holistic effort of nation governments, international bodies, and advocacy groups in addressing the well-being gap in the society. Tourism sector, which is a critical economic contributor of GDP to many countries, especially Indonesia is also impacted by the lack of societal well-being measures. The ultimate goal of a sustainable tourism development is to ensure that all key stakeholders in a destination or country (people, tourists, government, and private sector) can sustain net positive benefits from tourism activities without harming the planet and the people. To ensure long-term viability of the tourism sector, key stakeholders must be able to identify common well-being domains within that destination. Through content media analysis of Lake Toba, the study was able to identify seven well-being dimensions: 1) Biopsychological; 2) Cultural Identity; 3) Social Connectedness; 4) Spiritual Attunement; 5) Social Enterprising; 6) Inspirational Mindfulness, and 7) Environmental Altruism. These dimensions will serve as the basis for future well-being framework, which then will be operationalized and transformed into quantitative well-being scale instrument. The outcome of these well-being measures should help inform the discourse among the destination key stakeholders regarding three key pillars of tourism destination competitiveness (Regulatory Framework, Business Environment, and Infrastructure, & Human, Cultural, and Natural Resources).

The study is not without its limitations. The time recency effect could affect the relevance of information collected from the media sources. For example, information about specific advocacy effort from Lake Toba Lovers Foundation (YPDT) may not be relevant, as the polemic issue at hand may have been resolved. Second, the study has not been able to transform its qualitative findings into quantitative measure as a substitute for traditional tourism macro-indicators. Third, our data condensations may not encompass all tourism products and services offered in the Lake Toba destination. Lastly, the well-being domains are drawn from discourse of one major tourism destination in Indonesia. It is not unthinkable that other tourism destinations may produce similar or different well-being domains.

With the identification of the seven well-being dimensions from the content analysis, future research for this study would operationalize and develop a quantitative scale instrument to be deployed in the destination. The success of quantifiable well-being measurement will have great implication into the management, preservation, and policy-making decisions of tourism destination in Indonesia, and by extension, in other countries as well. Future researchers may also explore well-being dimensions in other tourism destination to compare whether similarity or differences exist with the dimensions identified in this study.

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