

# Social Impact of Cultural Tourism in Indonesia: The Case of Tana Toraja

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**Abstract:** This study investigates the perceptions of leaders in Tana Toraja, Indonesia towards the social impacts of cultural tourism. The ethnographic qualitative approach to the five important participants revealed that host communities support the development of the tourism industry despite acknowledging the unfavorable social impacts of tourism. Despite this very clear and generally positive view, the participants identified specific social positive and negative impacts that, in their view, affected the host community. The results suggest that leaders of communities believe that tourism contributes positively to their communities socially and economically and that awareness of certain social negative consequences that do not bring the resistance of the development of the tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Social Impacts, Host Community, Cultural Tourism, Indonesia.

## 1. Introduction

The social impacts of tourism have changed and shaped the lives of people in tourist destination places and it is one of the important topics for tourism experts. Several researchers have explored the importance of understanding the social impacts of tourism: (King, Pizam, & Milman, 1993; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Albert & Dirk, 2017). These researchers recommend conducting further investigations of the social impacts of tourism in different geographical settings of tourist areas.

Globally, the social impacts of tourism can both positives and negatives for host communities (King et al., 1993). The positive impacts of tourism can stimulate both host communities and visitors in terms of cultural contacts and engagement (Chen & Rahman, 2018). On the other hand, tourism can also impact negatively for the host communities and visitors, therefore preparing strategies to mitigate negative influences is important for tourism

stakeholders (Albert & Dirk, 2017). It indicates that the impact of tourism can be both positive and negative effects on communities.

For the Indonesian contexts, many studies have been conducted in the area of tourism. For example, proposing a framework for analyzing environmental network (Charlie, Pearlman, & King, 2012), the application of environmental network in a small island in Lombok Indonesia (Charlie, King, & Pearlman, 2013), and the impact of the crisis on tourism (Hitchcock, 2001). However, none of the studies above explores the social impacts of tourism especially cultural tourism within the Indonesian tourism settings. Consequently, there is limited public information and knowledge on the issues of social impacts of cultural tourism within the Indonesian tourist destination places. Therefore, this research aims to explore the social impacts of cultural tourism in the context of the traditional community, Tana Toraja Indonesia.

### Social Impacts and Cultural Tourism

Despite a large number of definitions of cultural tourism, only very relevant definitions of cultural tourism are discussed here. Cultural tourism relates to any movement of people to particular cultural attractions such as cultural sites, historical sites, artistic and cultural manifestation, and arts (Mousavi, Doratli, Mousavi, & Moradiyahari, 2016). Also, cultural tourism relates to historical places or any historical objects for tourism purposes (Tri, David, & Jai, 2016). From these definitions, it is obvious that cultural tourism can both cultural-historical places and any cultural tradition and manifestations connecting to arts and historical sites in the communities. Thus cultural tourism can impact no both host communities and visitors. The impacts of cultural tourism can be in the form of social changes, social institutions, and social beliefs of the community.

McMichael (2016) investigates the impact of change including tourism change for the community. The change can cover social values, social norms, patterns of the behavior of social and cultural life, social institutions, social stratification, social power, and social responsibility. Social impacts vary including ways of life, socio-cultural tools, ideology, or the diffusion of discoveries within the community. Thus the social change relates to any changes that occur in people's social organization as an important change and social structure, and behavior patterns of social interaction (Harper & Leicht, 2015; Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Migdal, 2015). Besides, social effects can be in forms of the structure of social or community functions covering behavioral social and cultural life, social values, social norms, social institution, social structure, and social interaction (Harper & Leicht, 2015).

A study indicates that social impacts of change can occur in some ways:

demographic process, economic process, geographical process, institutional and legal process, emancipatory and empowerment process, and socio-cultural process. The demographic process relates to the movement of people in the tourist regions caused by tourism projects and the economic process relates to the way people make a living and macro-economic sectors in general. The institutional process deals with the effective and efficient bureaucratic and administrative process and the socio-culture process relates to the impact of tourism in the social and cultural lives of the people (Vanclay, 2002).

### Art Transformation

The art transformation is a kind of power. It is related to the notion of presenting a voice or an opinion in “a neutral public sphere; rather it can be seen to modify – design – that sphere itself” (Holt, 2016, p. 143). Other authors indicate that art transformation is related to the social movement in the field of sustainable entrepreneurship and technology (Mitra & Bhattacharya, 2019). The art transformation has several advantages: a medium for teaching and learning, research purposes, a document of the history of civilization, marketing, socialization, portray of artists, and prediction of the future of the civilization (Jayadi, Agung, Abduh, & Patak, 2019). The art transformation can also be positive for economic development, arts business and industry, and the appreciation of arts as a human creation.

Several authors have described the art transformation done in many forms: from non-digital to digitation, from non-visual to visual forms, and from traditional to modern types (Jayadi, Agung, Abduh, & Patak, 2019). For this research, the art transformation is related to the change of the purposes of the art creation. The original purpose of the *tau-tau statue* is for the replica of the dead body. However, the *tau-*

*tau* is transformed into the cultural tourism creation that is sold for the visitors coming to Tana Toraja.

### **About Tana Toraja**

Tana Toraja is one of the regencies in South Sulawesi province in Indonesia. In terms of population, Tana Toraja has 234.002 population that spread across 19 sub-districts. The majority of the population are Christian and ancient belief tradition, followed by a small proportion of Moslem and other religions (Statistics of Tana Toraja Regency, 2020).

Tana Toraja is known as one of the important tourist destination places in Indonesia. It is famous for rich cultural-historical tradition and festivals, historical sites, arts and performances, and natural panorama. The number of visitors in the last five years increases significantly both domestics and foreign visitors. The domestic tourists coming from different parts of Indonesia from 60.069 people in 2014 to 1.173.183 visitors in 2018, while the international tourists start from 19.324 in 2014 to 25.452 people in 2018 (Statistics of Tana Toraja Regency, 2020). It can be seen that tourism has rapid development in Tana Toraja, which encourages the local government, and communities need to meet the tourism demand.

## **2. Research Method**

### **Research Design**

This is an ethnographic study of cultural and rituals beliefs of the Torajan community. Creswell (2012) describes an ethnographic study is qualitative longitudinal research. The key characteristics of ethnographic are that the study aims to decipher an in-depth understanding of the cultural themes (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012) and provide thick descriptions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). To apply the characteristics of ethnography, this research explores the social impacts of

cultural tourism, which lasts more than 1 year. The data presentation of the result applies thick description criteria.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

The main instrument for this research is ethnographic interviews. The ethnographic interviews are a kind of two ways or dialogical interview between the researcher and participants (Gay et al., 2012). It begins with the questions relating to the topics covering their daily lives and moves to the main questions of the impacts of the current rapid development of tourism. The data collection of this study began and finished before the Covid-19 pandemic issues. The major questions for the interviews are: What do you think about the current tourism and development? What does it mean for you? How does it affect you and others? What are the challenges and strategies to overcome it?

### **Participants of the Study and data analysis**

As part of the longitudinal ethnographic study, this study recruits five key participants. The key participants in this study use their pseudonyms: Tato Dena, Sugi, Barani, Manarang, and Kinawa. Tato Dena is the religious leader in Tana Toraja. Sugi is the head of painters who create the artistic statue. Barani is the specialist statue maker for noble families. Manarang is the head of religious and cultural celebrations. Kinawa is the senior leader for statue making. All interview data were analyzed through systematic thematic analysis (Gay et al., 2012): transcription, categorization, interpretation, and data conclusion. All the data were transcribed and then were categorized to create themes and a core theme. Then, the data were interpreted to uncover the meaning and to draw the conclusion.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Change of art

The significant change in art here can be seen from different perspectives. The change occurs in the forms of shapes, styles, places, and materials for the *tau-tau* statue. The participants' comments are:

[In terms of materials], it is the selection and cutting of the jackfruit tree in the forest by cutting a chicken and a dog as an offering to the gods' ruler of the forest, but now the *tau-tau* statue can be made from any materials (Barani).

[In terms style and place], there is a ritual stage covering the *tau-tau* statue which has been carved completely with clothes, now there is less ritual and *tau-tau* statue is placed into shops or tourist shops (Sugi).

The change in the art of Tau-tau also occurs in the context of shape and purposes. The original shape of the *tau-tau* statue is the replication of the dead body that symbolizes all of the social life during the lives of the dead people (Errington, 1998). At present, many different shapes suit the need of the customers. This change reflects the power of the transformation of art that occurs in modern tourism development, especially cultural tourism.

#### Positive effects of cultural tourism

There are three types of social positive impacts of cultural tourism for the host communities: reinforce the ancient tradition, shift the historical arts that more artistic in shape, and provide additional income for the community. In terms of the reinforcement of the ancient tradition, the five participants in this study share similar opinions that the celebration of cultural festivals and the making of statue contribute to the reinforcement of the tradition and culture. Participants in this study comment:

It still reinforces almost all the elements of the tradition and culture that it is difficult to change, although the number of followers

of this clan continues to decline over time (Tato Dena)

The cultural commemoration, for example, the funerals ceremony (*Rambu Solo*) can be the main attraction for visitors. It is no doubt that this is to re-invent the traditional tradition (Sugi)

The phenomenon of cultural festivals is part of the interesting objects for visitors, even though it is the old tradition that we re-create again to remember the past (Barani).

It can be seen from the participants that the commemoration of historical and cultural tourism such as funeral festivals are part of the reinforcement of ancient and inherited traditional culture from past to current generation. The other two participants provide examples of cultural tourism that reinforce the old tradition:

Here [in Tana Toraja], the government programs also strengthen the local communities to maintain Torajan because it is considered as the local and national cultural assets (Manarang).

With the rapid development of the tourism in Tana Toraja, the festivals of cultural tradition, performing arts, and drama aims to strengthen the materials, styles, shape, and rituals of our culture (Kinawa).

From extracts, it indicates that the host community through their leaders believes that cultural tourism festivals, celebrations, and re-making of the statue and traditional symbols are part of the reinforcement activities. This reinforcement may bring new meanings and new values to the communities (Budiman, 2013). It is also a form of acceptance of the rituals and ceremonies that reinforce the presence of people personifications and families that have contributed to the early establishment of the cultural festivals and traditions (Errington, 1998).

The example of the old tradition that is reinforced by current communities in the

tradition of *Tau-tau* making. *Tau-tau* is the statue from the jackfruit tree that is made to resemble the dead people. The ritual and ceremonies of making *Tau-tau* is a similar way to the ancient Torajan tradition. Jayadi (2018) comments that this process is to respect and revere a deceased family of Torajan people. Also, it provides opportunities for families to record the history and tradition of dead people.

Besides, the current cultural tourism is a shift in the art shape that is more artistic. The reason for shifting is that there is a new feature of styles, materials, and shapes statue. It includes the new function of the statue. Most participants share similar opinions about the change of art shape for tourism:

Traditional arts such as '*tau-tau*' is still considered as a part of the artistic value of Torajan arts. With the new shape, it enlightens the artistic elements (Kinawa).

*Tau-tau*' ritual on tourism art objects beyond the boundary of tradition, old-fashioned values, and classic rituals (Tato Dena).

The shape of the *tau-tau* statue has single elements, but not there are many changes in the materials, shapes, and appearances. With these changes, several researchers have suggested that Torajan arts have attached modern aesthetic values to meet the demand of the tourism sector (Budiman, 2013) and it represents current modern society and identities (Jayadi & Arnidah, 2019). It is also believed that the new shape of the historical arts provides a new magical experience for the art [statue] makers with the aesthetic experience (Budiman, 2013; Errington, 1998; Kobong, 1992).

The other positive side of the cultural tourism is that the diversification of cultural festivals, historical objects, and art objects contribute to the net income for the community including artist [art maker],

sellers and communities. As participants comment:

Specialists only do the making of *tau-tau* statue in the past, now the statue is for tourists. Therefore, many people can make it now and those people gains benefit from it (Manarang).

The funeral festivals are open for the public and many visitors want to see because of its uniqueness (Sugi).

A large number of people gain benefits from cultural tourism. People who come to Tana Toraja require an accommodation, food, and transports. These sectors have direct benefits for the rapid development of tourism in this area. Besides, more and more people learn to create the creative and artistic shape of the statue due to the high demand of statue as tourist souvenirs. Jayadi (2018) categorizes this change as a form of economic benefit, which in turn becomes the economic capital of the community. The development of cultural tourism may have negative impacts on communities.

### **Negative effects of cultural tourism**

It is interesting to note that the art transformation for cultural tourism that happened in this study can potentially provide negative impacts for the community. One of the negative impacts as indicated by some participants in this study is that it can increase social gaps among the community. The reason is that many of the *tau-tau production* are produced by corporate and people who have large amount of capital so it discourages small and family *tau-tau* production. It in this case, the wealthier family the better they produce *tau-tau* statue. In this sense, the manufacturing of *tau-tau* is still closely linked to the social strata and is intended as a form of personification of a person (Budiman, 2013). It shows the social gaps among the community.

The symbol of statues portrays the social status of the nobility as a respectable identity in the stratification of Torajan society. The higher the noble family they have, the more artistic and more ornaments of the statue they make (Jayadi, 2018). Also, the art of tau-tau can symbolize the cultural co-evolution of institutional religion and human social inequality because it represents different social stratification (Bulbulia et al., 2017).

The other impact of the art transformation is that the loss of sacred values of *ta-tau* statue. The original aims for the *tau-tau* statue production is to use for religious and funeral purposes. It is related to the original belief system binds and regulates all tradition of Torajanese, rooted in various forms of art as a product of cultural tradition (Budiman, 2013). The culture was born of ancestral traditions with different ritual forms and meanings. It just told hereditary from generation to generation. This one of the power of a '*To Mina*' (leader of ceremonies), which has a very strong memory and close ties to ancestors transcendently. As expressed by Sumarjo (2000) that the concept of culture mythical microcosm and macrocosm is unity. Unity is imminent to the transcendent unity of the human world with spirits and gods. The concept of the unity of the cosmos can only be obtained through belief systems.

However, with the current transformation, *tau-tau* statue has lost some aspect of their sacred religious and traditional values due to the mass production for tourism purposes. Despite they provides the economic positive side, there is less traditional sides of *tau-tau* because it is made to suit the demand of the visitors and the trend of current modern art transformation. It is mixed between many types of arts happening around the world. As a consequence, it is hard to differentiate the original and traditional sense of Torajan

people rather than it is a need to meet the demand of visitors in Tana Toraja.

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of the study have indicated that host communities have strong support for the tourism industry in Tana Toraja. The key participants in the study reflect what King et al. (1993) that host communities "were not opposed to tourism at its current levels and even favored its expansion. They regarded tourists as being very different from themselves but expressed no negative feelings towards them. They demonstrated a predominantly positive feeling towards tourists and towards the industry" (p. 662). People acknowledge that the development of the tourism industry increases the social gaps of society and the loss of sacred values for historical objects. More importantly, the positive impacts that they pointed out were predominantly socio-cultural factors but included an economic aspect. The positive impacts were the reinforcements of their ancient tradition, the diversification of tourist souvenirs, and the additional income for communities.

This study has attempted to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the key local communities' beliefs on the impact of tourism industry development. Following this study, the research with including the tourists and key tourism industry stakeholders is important to conduct to provide an overarching understanding of the impact of the tourism industry.

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