Religious-Heritage Tourism Development Strategies in Balun Village, East Java

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Abstract: Religious tolerance (between Islam, Christian, Hindu) and multiculturalism is a special value in Balun Village, East Java. Religious inclusiveness does not only occur at the social life, but down to the family level. In Balun family, it is normal to have interfaith marriage. By using in-depth interviews and involved observations, this research is able to reveal that the tolerance value derives from the characteristics of rural communities that tend to place religion as a social religion. The sacredness of religion adapt with the existing traditions that is still be the most important control, rather than religion. The history of religious heterogeneity in Balun also gives an important role to the harmony. This research attempts to explain the potentials and challenges to develop multi-religious tourism and describe the appropriate strategy. A living lab approach that focusing attention to the user identified to be the best. In the living lab, experts and academics role to be the brokers and systems designers, stakeholders and potential local communities are regulators and executors, and the public directly involving in the development project as the evaluators. By utilizing social media, the development of a multi-religious tourism in Balun is possible action in the midst of the pandemic. Providing a platform or website as an alternative solution for virtual tourism is a genius offer for the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Keywords: Tourism Development Strategies, Religious Tolerance, Pancasila Village


Kata kunci: Strategi Pengembangan Pariwisata, Toleransi Beragama, Desa Pancasila

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Introduction

Indonesia has many fabulous tourism locations, but not the religious-heritage ones (Shinde, 2022). One of the interesting religious tourism places to discuss is Balun village located in Lamongan city, East Java, Indonesia. Balun is known as the “Pancasila village” because its residents consist of religious congregations living harmoniously. Its members succeeded in maintaining their religious lives without the slightest friction. The village residents are used to have members of a family with different religions within, but its citizens can respect others and live together. Nevertheless, as a famous Indonesian village with great potential in nature and heritage, the citizens of Balun have not developed tourism maximally. This article argues that whenever the people of Balun could make use of these potentials, the village will become an attractive and profitable tourism destination in East Java.

The population of Balun village is 4,744 people. Muslims are the majority of the village resident with a percentage of 75%, followed by Christians at 18%, and Hindus at 7%. However, the dominant religious congregations do not show arbitrariness to other minorities, due to the tolerance of each religious community to take care of each other. Its members are aware that people of any religion/belief, regardless of its quantity, are fellow citizens who have the same rights and obligations in the nation and state. There are no residential groupings based on religion proved that the citizens could live in unity, including the places of worship. Mosque, church, and temple within the village are built close hence its people can practice their religious beliefs peacefully (lokimedia.web.id, t.t.).

The potencies of religion-heritage tourism in Balun are in line with the values of Pancasila, the main ideology of Indonesia, which become illuminating goods that would attract tourists to visit the village. The tourism development for Balun Village may have a positive impact on its people their surroundings in the economic sector. The cultural and rural atmosphere of this village is one of the selling points that attract tourists to visit. In this case, there are the “ogoh-ogoh” and “karawitan” tradition in Balun. The “ogoh-ogoh” tradition is a parade with religious values, meanwhile, the “karawitan” tradition is a Javanese cultural music art that becomes the main sector of tourism in Pancasila Village. Aside from that, its citizens provide pilgrimage-tourism programs by visiting the gravesites of charismatic clerics, namely “Mbah Alun” and “Tawangalun” who are known as one of Sunan Drajat’s apprentices. These pilgrimages occur each Friday night of kliwon, based on the Javanese calendar (Alfariz, 2021, hlm. 118–123).

Based on these narratives, to develop the tourism strategies for the Pancasila Village, This research will describe in-depth the tourism potencies based on their sociocultural dynamics. The researchers observe the religious practices and daily activities of Balun citizens, both in the micro and macro-social structure, by applying interviews and observations in various settings hence carry out the data analysis shortly after to promulgate the strategies of promoting Balun village as a potential religious-heritage tourism destination in East Java.
METODE

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods, because qualitative research can produce descriptive data in the form of written or oral words consisting of observable behaviors (Moleong, 2013, hlm. 57). A living lab approach that focuses on the public is identified as the best strategy. In the living lab, experts and academics act as system designers, stakeholders and local communities are regulators and implementers, and the public or netizens are evaluators. In collecting data that supports this data, the method chosen by the researchers was in-depth observation for five months at the research location to obtain valid data. Researchers also use data collection using previous research that is relevant to the research object, using this research will be able to achieve valid results. The data analysis phase refers to the Milles and Habermas procedures, including data collection, data reduction, data display, and data verification (Sugiyono, 2009, hlm. 30).

HASIL

Brief History One Balun’s Citizenship

The heterogeneity of Balun Village is the result of the long development. As the location is under Majapahit rule, the majority of the population adheres to the teachings of animism-dynamism and/or Hindu-Buddhist (Nufus, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya). Along with the presence of Mbah Alun, or the figure known as the founder of Balun Village, people's beliefs have become more diverse. Mbah Alun, who is a Muslim, taught this religion to the residents of Balun Village, until some of its citizens officially became Muslims (Abadi & Azizah, 2020, hlm. 154–169).

With the development of the times and the massive preaching of Islam at that time, more and more Balun Village residents convert their faith and became Muslims. However, life goes on without any religious conflict, the traditions of Balun Village, the celebration of their respective religious days, and mutual cooperation are unifying for the people of Balun (Rozi & Utomo, 2019, hlm. 11–15).

Furthermore, Christianity began to enter the area of Balun Village through the intermediary of the Balun Village takeholder called Mbah Bati (Priyatno & Wibowo, 2014, hlm. 166–188). At first, Mbah Bati, who was a native of Balun Village, was a Muslim, but his profession as the TNI (soldier) required Mbah Bati to go outside Java. At the time of G30SPKI Mbah Bati returned to the land of Balun to secure the area. Later, Mbah Bati’s interest in Christianity led him to study and guided him to be a Christian. (Priyatno & Wibowo, 2014) At that time, Mbah Bati, who was considered to have an important role as a head of Balun Village, gained the sympathy of the residents and some residents began to follow Mbah Bati. Thus, religious heterogeneity becomes increasingly diverse (Abdurrazak dkk., 2022).

After the G30SPKI period in accordance with government instructions, Mbah Bati suggested to Balun Village residents who still adhered to the Kejawen belief to convert their religion with the religion recognized by the Indonesian government (official religion). Mbah Bati, who is considered to have a high tolerance value, frees his citizens to choose any official religion they want. Most people who adhere to Kejawen and or animism-dynamism, tend to choose Hinduism as their religion.
This is because there are some similarities between Hinduism and their pre-beliefs (Nufus, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya).

Life in Balun Village runs in harmony as usual. The process of religious heterogeneity that does not occur spontaneously makes the residents of Balun Village not shocked by the differences and shifts that arise due to religious differences. In fact, the Balun people are accustomed to mutual cooperation, both intra and inter-religious, as was the life in the past (Rozi & Utomo, 2019, hlm. 11–15).

Religious Tolerance in Balun

The characteristics of the Balun Village community, which are native to rural areas, tend to be very strong in upholding culture and tradition, placing religion in a different position from urban communities. (Huda, 2019) The majority of people place religion as something sacred and orthodox, but for the Balun people, religion is more valued as a social religion. (Huda, 2019) Like other indigenous rural communities, most of the people of Balun Village still believe in the animism-dynamism. Thus, the three religions that developed in Balun Village did not become a single belief system for their adherents. The majority of the residents of Balun Village, even though they have their official religion, believe in animism-dynamism and or Kejawen (Abadi & Azizah, 2020, hlm. 154–169).

The concept of sacred and regulatory religion does not appear in Balun Village. That it is true, there are differences and standard rules of each religion, but in practice, the people of Balun Village have their own social control which they have mutually agreed upon (Damayanti, 2020). The scriptures and the understanding of religion that emerged were in accordance with the tradition. From the development these three religions in Balun, religion has entered with good acculturation, there is no attempt to negate previous beliefs that have long developed. The religion that entered Balun Village, although it is true that it was spread intentionally, but the preacher of it’s religion has been very dedicated from the start to uphold harmony, social comfort, and tolerance (Rozi & Utomo, 2019, hlm. 11–15). The fact that there are still many adherents of Kejawen that exist after the arrival of Mbah Alun (the founder of Balun Village as well as the first spreader of Islam in this region) is one of the evidence.

Furthermore, the same thing still happened after the entry of Christianity which was spread by Mbah Bati. After the coming of this religion, there were still Balun residents who adhered to the Kejawen until Mbah Bati advised them to choose the official religion as recommended by the government at that time. Even in the process of religious conversion after the G30SPKI, Mbah Bati freed his citizens to choose the religion they wanted, even though at that time he was serving as the Village Head and had a very strong charisma for his citizens. The value of tolerance exemplified by these leaders slightly affects the character of the Balun Village residents. The government "coercion" made some Balun residents understand the religion as formality even though they still pay attention to some of the essence (Gemiharto & Sukaseh, 2017, hlm. 41). So it is not surprising that the level of inter-religious tolerance in Balun Village so strong. In fact, it is unsophisticated to find several different religions in one family in Balun Village (Khoiroh, 2017).

Socio-Religious Construction in Balun
The continuous dialogic process of socio-religious values with the heterogeneous social reality constructed Balun’s citizens as a tolerant society. This construction is a result of the long intersubjective experience of the villagers both in social and individual awareness. This social structure occurs in a repetitive process that will eventually become a pattern of social dynamics and retain their values in meaningful ways. (Berger & Luckman, 2016, hlm. 4) Thus the tolerant attitude in the multi-religious context has become a new social structure of the Balun residents (Abadi & Azizah, 2020, hlm. 154–169).

The social construction takes place from activities that are familiar to various types of actors. The indications of activities have become customary form institutions that belong together. These institutions then have a history that produced them, due to the fact of their existence controlling behavior by creating predefined patterns (Berger & Luckman, 2016, hlm. 5).

The habituation process precedes every formation or institutionalization. The institutionalization process occurs through a process of habituation and certification that takes place in the activities of the Balun Village community which can be seen in religious activities. One of them, the activity of kenduri (kenduren) is an Islamic religious activity in prayer. The Muslims of Balun Village when holding a kenduri (kenduren) always invite their neighbors who adhere to other religions (Christianity and Hinduism). Thus, it contains values of tolerance, becomes a typification, and is included as the role of other religions in religious activities that contain social values (Bettaliyah, 2015).

A collection of activities that are reciprocally typified are made into a habit by the Balun Village community and each communal group in various roles. Habits and typifications in life together will become historic institutions in the religious activities of the Balun Village community which are carried out from generation to generation to acquire their form or character as objectivity to the community (Berger & Luckman, 2016).

Society is a collection of groups or communities that have a common function. Society describes a generic reality that is formed from interactions and communications between indigenous peoples (Plummer, 2011). The institutionalization process undergoes a process of habituation as a social norm that is known, recognized, and appreciated. It is adhered to in the daily life of the Balun Village community. Furthermore, these norms are internalized by each individual in society.

Tolerance of inter-religious harmony as a pattern of behavior of the people of Balun Village is objectivity created and built by the community (social construction) through the values of tolerance which are internalized in individual or group activities. Then they acquire an objective character as a form of tolerance. Behavior and tolerance are forms of objectivity of cultural values that are mutually agreed upon in a society that becomes the culture of society (Rusdiyanta, 2019).

The values of tolerance in the Balun Village community are dynamics that drive institutionalized behavior and activities. The institutionalization marks a situation of harmony in the diversity of society. Institutionalization is a social activity that is objectivated as social action. These values of tolerance are stored in people’s memories and are socially objectivated as a set of generally accepted truths about
the realities of life. (Berger & Luckman, 2016, hlm. 83–84). The experiences stored in the human mind then settle. Their essence is stored in the memory as an entity that is commonly known and remembered (Berger & Luckman, 2016, hlm. 83–85).

**Promoting Religious and Cultural Tourism in Balun Village**

Balun Village as a religious and cultural tourism village can be promoted as a tourism village that has succeeded in maintaining and managing diversity well. This is very important for Indonesia to do in the superiority of each ethnicity, culture, and religion. Balun Village has long been building awareness of open diversity of solidarity and can reduce gaps between groups in society that are constantly changing.

Another promotion is Balun Village as one of the old villages that still preserves its past cultures. This cultural diversity further enriches Balun Village as a religious and cultural tourism village. Balun Village can be promoted as a village that has characteristics in social interactions among multi-religious residents, in this case, Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. Even since the entry of Hinduism and Christianity in 1967 in Balun Village, there have never been any conflicts related to religion. Uniquely, there is no classification of residence based on religion. Villagers can and are accustomed to living in peace. Currently, there are 3,780 Muslims, 688 Christians, and 282 Hindus in Balun Village (Nufus, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, hlm. 61). Even though these three religions live together in one area, the tolerance between religious believers is very high. Even the places of worship are not far away. Miftahul Huda Mosque is in the same location as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Tabiyatush Shibyan. Not far from the mosque and side by side only by the village road is the Sweta Maha Suci Temple, a place of worship for Hindus. Still, in the same area, the East Java Christian Church of the mosque stands in harmony.

So far, Balun Village is known to outsiders based on the results of research that tell about Balun Village and from word of mouth. However, promotions in a professional manner using facilities and infrastructure capable of advertising Balun Village thoroughly have not been widely carried out. Therefore, the weaknesses in terms of promotions in Balun Village need to be addressed and solutions should be sought out so that Balun as a religious tourism village in particular in promoting its harmonious inter-religious life can be increasingly recognized and become a source of education for visiting tourists.

**Reinventing Religious-Heritage Tourism Programs in Balun**

For the people of Balun Village, tolerance means harmony which is formed from mutual respect, accepting differences, and respecting each other’s beliefs. Adi Wiyono as a member of the community in Balun said that diversity does not mean to be equated. Differences are not meant to differentiate one another or to be forced to be the same. Tolerance of harmony in the Balun community can be seen through the social interactions and daily activities of the community with their traditions that are still preserved, including kenduri (kenduren), the Ogoh-ogoh festival, and community religious activities. Slamatan (kenduri or kenduren) or praying for the dead are usually held for seven to 100 days by the people of Balun Village.
The implementation of the *kenduri* or *kenduren* is attended by all residents. It does not differentiate between religions, even if one who dies is Muslim and one who holds it is Christian. All neighboring residents are invited regardless of their religion, including Hinduism, Christianity, or Islam. In prayer or religious rituals, it is usually adjusted to the beliefs of the deceased and the method of burial. Social relations that occur in everyday life like this are carried out by the villagers. Humanitarian social relations are carried out when there are members of the community who experience grief and fuse the religious boundaries between them. In religious ceremonies during the funeral of the person dying until after the funeral, such as Qur'anic recitation and *tahlilan* for Muslims, consolation services for Christians, and groups praying for Hindus are accessible for any other religion congregations without any exception (Bettaliyah, 2015).

A family consisting of three different religions also performs *kenduri* (*kenduren*). The family takes turns implementing it and according to the particular beliefs. In the implementation of *kenduri* (*kenduren*), usually, a separate place is provided for residents who pray according to the beliefs of the deceased. Other religious communities only participate in the implementation.

This form of tolerance can also be seen on the holidays of each religion, such as the Muslim *Idul Fitri*. Muslims ask for forgiveness, forgive each other, and provide various dishes of food at home for residents who visit. It is interesting because the joy of *Eid* is also experienced by Hindus and Christians, as they also provide food offerings and are open for other residents to come. This is a cultural form of the Balun Village community that respects, supports, and participates in celebrating the religious celebrations of people of different religions, where all of this is done with sincerity and without pressure or coercion from any party. There is no statement of mutual disbelief or that one religion is better than another in words and deeds. This mutual respect that is highly respected by all people is passed down from generation to generation and instilled by parents to the younger generation from childhood (Huda, 2019, hlm. 915–120).

As a case, there is a family in Balun which members embrace three different religions. This family does not face a disagreement related to religious differences, meanwhile, on contrary, they could celebrate each of the three religions’ traditions together as a whole family. The family annually cheers the member of each representative religion believer whenever his/ her holy days occur, e.g. *'id al-fitr* for Muslims, the Christmas day for Christians, and *ogah-ogoh* in *Nyepi* commemoration for Buddhists. Yet, the family would not participate in other religions’ rituals or mixing up one’s beliefs with anothers’.

The places of worship that are located side by side show their tolerance for mutual respect and understanding of differences. Tolerance can be seen when Hindus carry out the *Nyepi* ceremony. From the *Melasti* ceremony, which is held three days before *Nyepi*, various rituals are done for the temple ceremony and paraded to the lake. Then there is the *Buta Yadya* ceremony, which is held the day before *Nyepi*. During *Nyepi*, the residents are silent and do not turn on the electricity as a tribute. At the *Ogoh-ogoh* celebration, the community participates in the activity. Some *Ogoh-ogoh* celebrations are seen being paraded by groups consisting of the general public.
The commemoration of *maulīd* (the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday) held by Muslims is also participated by Christians and Hindus. This act including youths working together to prepare the event which reflects the form of tolerance. The habit of participation in helping others to celebrate each other’s religious commemoration is rarely to occur in other places (Gemiharto & Sukaesih, 2017, hlm. 41).

The Balun Village Youth also exhibit religious tolerance in the Balun Village community. In addition to cooperation in every community activity, youths also contribute to the appearance of music bands and entertainment by showing a collaboration of music arts combined with cultural elements of religious communities. The combination is made based on the incorporation of youths with different religious beliefs; each one fused in beautiful art. Community activities such as celebrating Indonesia’s Independence Day are common activities for fellow citizens.

**Strategic Planning in Maintaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Balun Villagers**

The right approach is needed in developing the potential of Balun to become a tourist destination. In the midst of the pandemic, the development of tourism certainly faced such a big obstacle. It is a certainty that technology, especially social media, is the spearhead in this effort. More than that, various other supporting factors are needed to optimize the potential of Balun so that its social and economic benefits can be gained.

The living lab approach, which focuses on the user, is a profitable option in this case. By combining the participation of experts and academics as brokers or initiators, office holders in the local area, and tourist, the project of making Balun Village a multicultural tourism destination in the midst of a pandemic is certainly possible (Kareborn & Stahlbrost, 2009). The emergence of social media such as Instagram, Facebook, and even Youtube can be an alternative solution to promote and or divert tourism directly into virtual or online tourism.

Experts or academics who have the capacity to scenario the management and marketing of Balun tourism have an important role in empowering Balun residents to realize the huge potential they have (Guimont & Lapointe, 2016). Religious heritage tourism should be highlighted by developing its religious historical sites, religious celebration, and the multireligious tradition such as *Kenduren* and *Ogoh-Ogoh* festival.

Furthermore, academics also have a role for bridging between office holders and potential local communities to manage this multicultural tourism (Calzada, 2019). With the awareness and synergy between the office holders and the local community or the surrounding community, it will certainly have a big positive impact on project development. In accordance with the living lab approach, tourist become the central center of this project (Budweg dkk., 2011). The tourists will play an important role to be the control of this project. They will contribute to this project by actively give their arguments of the project and the existing regulations (Pucihar dkk., 2014). They can send their opinions through various social media platforms. By maintaining harmony between academics, office holders, local
communities, and the tourist itself this development project will be sustainable and growing.

PEMBAHASAN

Balun Village is commonly known as the village located in Lamongan city which carries educational values in building a prosperous and harmonious multireligious milieu. This passage does not casually mean that Balun Village is a great tourism destination (Bagus Setiawan, t.t.). The inclusive and tolerant behavior between Balun residents has become a model that can be imitated by other religious congregations (Damayanti, 2020, hlm. 74–86). Implementing these behaviors without being patronizing is not easy, therefore, letting visitors experience the religious pluralism in Balun might inspire the answers needed. While traveling, tourists can directly see and experience the peaceful multireligious life that can be seen from its citizens’ interactions, communication, friendship, and neighborliness (Huda, 2017, hlm. 45).

The potencies of Balun as a tourism palace have several advantages namely by providing financial support for the residents of the village and its surroundings (Imron, 2013). This program would also ignite rapid developments for infrastructures and public facilities. Making Balun Village a central tourism destination would also support agriculture, social systems, food-making, and the environment.

The tolerant attitude of the Balun citizens is certainly rooted in the religious-heritage values hence reflected in their daily behaviors (Huda, 2019, hlm. 915–920). This phenomenon means that tolerance is the shared value of the community hence is considered to have an important role in binding harmony in diversity (Coleman & White, 2011, hlm. 44).

A weakness of Balun Village is the lack of promotion or marketing related to its uniqueness. This is because there are not enough human resources specifically to carry out promotions concerning the village. In addition, the local village community is also less aware of its potential, so that they do not have the desire to promote their village as a tourism village to visit. The role of the local community, in this case, is very important to be empowered to be involved in the marketing or promotion of Balun Village, in addition to promotions from the Regional Tourism Office of East Java. In marketing theory, it is stated that marketing is one of the most important activities in terms of selling products, services, etc. Promotions are carried out to introduce and/or show an advantage that is owned by the product owner to be exhibited to consumers or users

KESIMPULAN

The culture of tolerance in the Balun Village community is formed from the construction of tolerance values internalized by the community as a natural attitude that contains beauty and meaning in people’s daily lives. These things then are engrained in their memory through religious activities and other activities that bring together the three religions, so that it eventually becomes the habit of people’s behavior in everyday life. This habit is a form of tolerance that has a social meaning and implies a moral commitment which is very important for its role in inter-religious harmony in the Balun Village community. As a form of ancestral values,
tolerance gains legitimacy in the culture of the Balun Village community. Tolerance is expressed in the daily activities of the people who associate with them and the religious activities that bring these three religions together.

The problem is, Balun Village has not significantly developed its strengths and uniqueness, both by the local community and by the local government, so that the potential of Balun Village as a tourist village is not widely known by the general public due to the lack of broad promotion, and it is only limited to promotion by word of mouth. In this case, living lab approach that gain cooperation from the local government and the local community is needed to develop the potential of Balun as a religious tourism village that has high educational value, especially in terms of instilling religious values and local wisdom, especially in successfully building healthy and natural religious tolerance.
DAFTAR PUSTAKA
Religious-Heritage Tourism Development


