

# Factors Influencing Economic Empowerment in Tourism Development

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## Abstract

Tourism is believed to be able to empower people economically, both at the individual and community levels, by providing various employment and business opportunities to community members to help alleviate poverty. This study offers insights into community empowerment outcome, particularly in economic dimension, through a quantitative approach. This study aims to identify the level of community empowerment outcome perceived by the local communities in tourism development in their area and analyze the factors that influence the outcome. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this study collected data through household survey, field and participatory observation, and document analysis. The questionnaire responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis (i.e., frequency distribution and cross tabulation) and chi-square analysis. The findings suggest that tourism was able to increase the income of the people working in the tourism sector. However, only several people perceived that tourism could provide benefits for them. Several factors influencing the community perception related to economic empowerment in tourism development were identified. These include involvement in the tourism industry, community culture (kinship), nature of tourism affecting the type of available job, lack of engagement, lack of capital, education, and geographical factors.

**Keywords:** community involvement; education; income; peripherality

**JEL classifications:** I3; Q5

## 1. Introduction

Empowerment is one of the 12 aims for sustainable tourism (United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization [UNEP & WTO] 2005) and considered an important requirement for achieving sustainable tourism development (Boley & McGehee 2014; Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam 2015; Cole 2006; Li & Hunter 2015; Scheyvens 1999; Sofield 2003; Timothy 2006). Community empowerment in and through tourism development is frequently expected to enhance the life quality of rural communities (Ahmad & Talib 2015). Tourism is believed to be able to empower people economically, at both the individual and community levels, by alleviating poverty through the provision of various employment and business opportunities to commu-

nity members, including the disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, young people, and ethnic minorities).

Tourism is a complex and ever-changing phenomenon with diverse and often contradictory consequences, creating impact on communities, including economic impact, both positive and negative (Butler 2017; Cole 2006; Dolezal 2015). However, the positive impact is not always shared equally within the community (Cole 2007; Dolezal 2015; Blanke & Chiesa 2013). In the context of Indonesia, previous research on tourism and community empowerment has also investigated community empowerment outcome in tourism development (Butarbutar & Soemarno 2012; Cole 2006, 2007; Dolezal 2015; Hidayat et al. 2017; Herawati et al. 2014; Sumarja, Hartoyo & Wahab 2014). In measuring the outcome in the context of Indonesia, most scholars have used a qualitative approach (Cole 2006; Hidayat et al. 2017; Sumarja, Hartoyo & Wa-

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hab 2014). This study offers insights into community empowerment outcome, particularly in economic dimension, through a quantitative approach. The limitation of this study is that the indicators of empowerment are only observed through the perceptions of the community. More in-depth research is needed to better understand the impact on the community, such as changes in income and livelihood, the extent of benefit sharing, and the ratio of income and expenditure. Therefore, this study aims to identify the extent to which community empowerment outcome is perceived by the local community in tourism development in their area and analyze the factors that influence this outcome.

The significance of this study is that it identifies the factors that may affect the success or failure of empowerment in tourism development in Indonesia. A broader and deeper understanding of the barriers to community empowerment will help tourism decision makers initiate appropriate strategies to overcome those barriers and plan suitable community involvement strategies in tourism development to attain community empowerment.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Community Empowerment in Tourism Development

The term “empowerment” has several definitions. However, the concept comprises two key aspects: empowerment as an outcome/result/condition (an empowered individual or group) and empowerment as a process (to empower group or individual) (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005; Pigg 2002). This study focuses on the concept of empowerment as an outcome. Empowerment outcome is generally the consequences of empowerment processes at various levels that can be assessed at the individual or community level (Hur 2006). This outcome can take several forms, namely economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment, and may not be equally shared within a community (Scheyvens 1999).

Empowerment outcome relates to specific extents, both qualitative and quantitative, which might be used to identify the effects of empowerment processes and contribute to a better understanding of the relation between empowerment processes and outcomes (Zimmerman 1995). Literature on tourism notes that being empowered means that the community can participate in tourism planning and industry, and has the power and ability to find solutions to their difficulties or problems, make decisions, and implement these decisions. There must be a reception of responsibility for those decisions or actions, and the consequences as well as the ability to evaluate the decisions and outcomes that directly benefit the community and its members, or divert or channel them into other communities (Cole 2006; Scheyvens 2002; Sofield 2003; Timothy 2006). Thus, there is a need to identify and analyze the perceptions of the host community regarding the empowerment perceived and how these perceptions influence their attitudes to and support for tourism (Boley & McGehee 2014; Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam 2015). Furthermore, researchers can identify how tourism development affects the community and determine which initiatives are successful or not in empowering the community (Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam 2015; Scheyvens 2002). This understanding will allow stakeholders to design a suitable plan for community involvement in tourism development to increase community support for the development and improve the community welfare and quality of life (Scheyvens 1999, 2002).

To analyze the impact of tourism on local communities, Scheyvens (1999) proposes an empowerment framework which includes economic dimension. This framework is mainly related to empowerment as an outcome although political empowerment is also related to empowerment processes. She notes that the framework can be applied to both developed and developing countries and can be used by stakeholders to design a community involvement strategy in sustainable tourism development.

## 2.2. Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment relates to community access to economic prospects and benefits resulting from tourism development that are fairly distributed (Scheyvens 1999). It is also related to poverty alleviation through increasing self-determination at the individual level (Sen 2000). Tourism might support economic empowerment by providing a variety of employment and commercial opportunities (entrepreneurship) to the community, including the disadvantaged groups (e.g., women, young people, and ethnic minorities), which can lead to financial independence (Aghazamani & Hunt 2017; Cole 2007; Kundu 2012; Ndivo & Cantoni 2015). Entrepreneurship is essential, particularly for women and other disadvantaged groups, who may not have the skills to access different forms of employment (Cole 2007).

Scheyvens (2002) designs several indicators to determine whether a community is economically empowered or disempowered. The empowered indicators are: (1) Tourism provides lasting economic benefits to the local community; (2) The financial benefit produced is shared between numerous families within the community; and (3) There are noticeable improvement signs from the money earned (e.g., improved water systems, improvement in housing condition (better material), more children going to school). Meanwhile, the disempowered signs are: (1) Tourism generates only small sporadic amount of money for the local community; (2) Most of the profits go to government agencies, local elites, and outside operators; (3) Only a few individuals or households obtain direct financial benefits from tourism; and (4) Others cannot find a way to share these economic benefits because they lack the appropriate capital, experience, and/or skills. Unequal distribution of tourism benefits within a community might discourage participation and form or intensify divisions (Coria & Calfucura 2012) and may result in disempowerment within a community.

Several factors that influence the extent of empowerment perceived by the community are a lack

of coordination among stakeholders, weak policies and regulations, a lack of community participation in the planning process, a lack of human capacity, limited access to the empowerment resources, and a lack of knowledge (Cole 2006,2007; Dodds, Ali & Galaski 2018; Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2010; Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia and the International Labour Organization 2012; Ramos & Prideaux 2014; Scheyvens 2002).

## 3. Method

### 4. Data Collection

The study was conducted from August–December 2016 at Perkebunan Bukit Lawang (PBL) village, North Sumatra Province, located adjacent to Gunung Leuser National Park (GLNP). The village community uses the park resources as a tourist attraction and for tourism activities. They manage most of the tourism activities and accommodations. Bukit Lawang is famous among international tourists for its orangutans.

This study uses a mixed-methods approach, involving household survey, field and participatory observation, and document analysis as the data collection methods. A quantitative approach (i.e., a household survey) was employed to determine the degree of empowerment perceived by the local community. The literature notes that the quantitative approach is a frequently used method to measure the outcome of community empowerment in other countries (Chiang & Hsieh 2012; Kara 2012; Kundu 2012; Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam 2015; Maruyama, Woosnam & Boley 2016). The unit of analysis is the household members aged  $\geq 17$ .

The questionnaire was designed based on the framework by Scheyvens (1999) to give a mechanism to define the tourism impact on the local community. The questionnaire was designed to identify the community's demographic characteristics, involvement in the tourism industry and planning

process, and perceived benefits from tourism. The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each item in the questionnaire using a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

The researcher employed a cluster sampling technique in selecting the survey respondents to ensure that the sample was drawn from all hamlets in the village. The sampled households were selected proportionately from each of the seven hamlets in the area based on the number of households in each hamlet. Cluster sampling means dividing the population into 'clusters' (i.e., geographical areas), taking a sample of the clusters, and then taking a case sample from each selected cluster. This sampling method is appropriate to draw sample from a large and dispersed population (Newing 2010). The sample size for participants was calculated using the Research Advisors (2006) table, and the total number of samples was 263 households.

The researcher also conducted a participatory and field observation to study the community and tourist activities at the location and gain familiarity with the village landscape and its tourism resources, services, facilities, and attractions. The information gathered through the participatory observation was used to confirm the data obtained from the other sources and complement the survey results. Using the passive participatory observation, the researcher attended and listened to conversations at local community meetings and events, and meetings and training activities of tourism organizations. The goal of attending community meetings and events is to gain insights into the community's way of life, behavior, and interactions. Document analysis was conducted to obtain the required background and contextual information for the study. The documents analyzed included policy and planning papers compiled by the central and local governments, and research and project reports regarding tourism development in the area. The document analysis informed the entire research process.

## 4.1. Data Analysis

### 4.1.1. Quantitative Data Analysis

The questionnaire survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency distribution and cross-tabulation) and chi-square analysis using SPSS 23. These methods of data analysis have been in previous studies (Aghazamani & Hunt 2017; Boley, Maruyama & Woosnam 2015; Chiang & Hsieh 2012; Kara 2012; Kundu 2012; Maruyama, Woosnam & Boley 2016). Frequency distribution was employed to examine each variable distribution (Veal 2017). The seven-point Likert scale was collapsed into three categories (i.e., agree, neutral, and disagree) to facilitate the analysis, particularly for the indicators of community empowerment. While the chi-square test still used the seven-point Likert scale. The cross-tabulation was used to identify the relationships between respondent characteristics and the community empowerment indicators. The significance of the relationship between variables was tested using chi-square analysis (Veal 2017). The chi-squared test can show the difference between the observed counts and the expected counts supposing there is no relationship in the population.

### 4.1.2. Qualitative Data Analysis

The qualitative result was analyzed to identify themes, ideas, or patterns, based on the existing theories and new issues from the field supported by the observation. The data was coded manually using open coding to identify the ideas and themes (Babbie 2012). Open coding involves breaking down the data into parts and searching for similarities and differences within and across interviews. The interview topics and questions were used to organize the analysis. The questions centered around the involvement of the respondents in tourism development as well as the factors that influence their perceptions of the indicators of economic empowerment.

## 5. Results and Analysis

### 5.1. Respondent Characteristics

Most of the respondents had school education (senior high school =35.4%, elementary school =33.8%, and junior high school =21.7%). The remaining respondents had either no formal education (4.2%) or higher education (bachelor's degree =3.8% and diploma =1.1%). They were from Six ethnic groups, with Javanese being the largest ethnic group (59.3%), followed by Karonese (17.9%), Malays (9.5%), others (6.1%), Mandailing (4.9%), and Tobanese (2.3%). Their occupations could be grouped into nine occupation types, with entrepreneurs being the largest category (20.5%), followed by housewives (18.6%), employees of plantation company (15.2%), tour guides (11.0%), farmer (9.5%), tourism industry employee (8.4%), retirees (7.6%), odd jobs (6.5%) and civil servant (2.7%). Entrepreneurs in this regard include owners of a tourism business (e.g., accommodations, food stalls, or tour operators) and owners of other businesses not related to tourism services (e.g., selling building materials).

To understand the livelihood of the respondents, the researcher also asked whether they had a secondary occupation. A total of 22.1% of respondents had a secondary occupation, and 37.4% of those working in the tourism industry stated that they had another occupation. Several respondents had a secondary occupation related to tourism, such as traders, drivers, assistant guides, and managers of accommodations or restaurants, while their primary income came from farming.

When asked whether they were involved in tourism activities, 40.7% of respondents stated that they were involved (at the time of the data collection), and 6.8% had previously been involved in the industry. The natural disaster (flash flood) in 2003 that hit the village was one reason, among others, that caused a number of people who used to own tourism businesses or work in tourism to be no longer involved in the industry. The flash flood also

allowed the entry of non-locals to be involved in tourism in PBL.

The results of the survey also indicated several factors that inhibited the community from being involved in tourism industry, such as community perceptions of the ability of certain gender to perform a particular job, norms, and geographical factors (i.e., the distance of the hamlet from tourism centre). The geographical factor, in this regard, is peripherality, which is rarely mentioned in the literature. Another surprising finding is that gender and education level did not hinder the community from being involved in tourism industry. The literature notes that those factors have, in some cases, become obstacles to community involvement in tourism.

In addition to involvement in tourism activity, the survey also asked the respondents about their involvement in tourism development, i.e. whether they had attended or participated in informal meetings and discussions regarding planning, organizing, monitoring, or evaluating tourism activities in the area. Compared to the percentage of respondents directly involved in tourism activity, the percentage of respondents involved in tourism development was much smaller. Only 12.2% of the respondents stated that they were involved in tourism development, such as participation in meetings or discussions held by stakeholders such as the government, Non-governmental Organization (NGO), or a tourism organization. Based on informal observation, most of them only attended the meetings, but did not actively participate by offering their opinions. Several factors that influenced community involvement in tourism decision-making process were their involvement in the tourism industry, gender, community culture, and geographical factors.

### 5.2. Perceptions of Economic Empowerment

The perceptions of the respondents concerning the indicators of economic empowerment resulting from tourism development are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Perceptions of the Respondents Concerning the Indicators of Economic Empowerment in Tourism Development in PBL (n=263)**

| Indicators                                                                                                | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|
| 1. Tourism in my village helps me pay my bills.                                                           | 44.5% | 4.2%    | 51.3%    |
| 2. Income from tourism provides me with choices of how I spend my money.                                  | 30.8% | 8.7%    | 60.5%    |
| 3. Tourism in my village provides lasting economic benefits to the local community.                       | 58.2% | 31.2%   | 10.6%    |
| 4. Tourism in my village supports the development of public facilities.                                   | 20.2% | 28.5%   | 51.3%    |
| 5. Most profits from tourism in my village go to local elites, outside operators, or government agencies. | 91.3% | 7.2%    | 1.5%     |
| 6. Only a few individuals or families gain direct financial benefit from tourism in my village.           | 90.1% | 9.1%    | 0.8%     |

Referring to the indicators of community empowerment at individual level, the results indicated that the respondents generally did not feel that tourism had empowered them economically. Less than half of the respondents reported that tourism in their village helped them pay their bills, while about a third (30.8%) perceived that tourism provided them with choices of how to spend their money. This is not surprising, considering the percentage of the population working in tourism sector. More than 90% of the respondents agreed that the economic benefits went to other parties. While more than half of the respondents agreed that tourism provided lasting economic benefits for the local community, the benefits were not allocated to the improvement of public facilities since only 20.2% agreed that tourism supported the development of public facilities.

The involvement of the respondents and their family in tourism influenced their perceptions of the economic benefits of tourism development ( $p < 0.001$  and  $p < 0.01$ ). Those currently involved in tourism were more likely to agree that tourism helped them pay their bills (83% vs 13.5%;  $p < 0.001$ ) and provided them with choices of how to spend their money (64.3% vs 6%;  $p < 0.001$ ). The fact that the percentage of those who had choices of how to spend their money was smaller than that of those who felt that tourism helped them pay their bills suggests that income from tourism was sufficient only to fulfil their basic daily needs. This is supported by the comments of the respondents that tourism did not provide sufficient money to spend on non-basic needs.

Family involvement also influenced the respondents' perceptions regarding the benefits of tourism.

Those whose family was involved in tourism were more likely to agree that tourism helped them pay their bills (59.8% vs 37.6%;  $p < 0.001$ ) and provided them with choices of how to spend their money (45.1% vs 24.3%;  $p < 0.01$ ). Several respondents mentioned that the family involved was distant relatives, thus they received no benefits.

The primary occupation also influenced the respondents' perceptions of whether tourism helped them pay their bills ( $p < 0.001$ ) and provided them with choices of how to spend their money ( $p < 0.01$ ). It is unsurprising that the respondents whose main occupation was related to tourism perceived the benefits of individual tourism development more positively. For example, 95.5% of those working as employees in tourism industry agreed that tourism helped them pay their bills and 86.4% agreed that they had choices on how to spend their money. For tour guides, 79.3% agreed that tourism helped them pay their bills and 58.6% agreed that they had choices on how to spend their money. For entrepreneurs, 70.4% agreed that tourism helped them pay their bills and 48.1% agreed that they had choices on how to spend their money. Based on informal conversations, tour guides, mainly those working with foreign tourists, and tourism business owners earned more money than other employees of tourism industry. People who can guide international tourists should be able to speak English or other foreign languages (e.g., German and Spanish), meaning that skills (i.e., foreign language) can enhance opportunities to obtain more benefits from tourism.

The results showed that gender did not influence the respondents in perceiving whether tourism

helped them pay their bills ( $p > 0.05$ ) or whether income from tourism provided them choices on how to spend their money ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the results indicated that men were likely to perceive more profits than women. More men agreed that tourism in their village helped them pay their bills (50.8% vs 38.7%) and provided them with choices on how to spend their money (37.3% vs 24.8%). Several respondents whose husbands worked in tourism reported that they did not obtain any money from their husbands.

The results indicated that education level did not influence the respondents' perceptions that tourism helped them pay their bills or provided them with choices on how to spend their money. This may be because one is not required to have a certain education level to work in the tourism sector in this area. In other words, those with no qualifications can still work in the tourism sector. However, only 54.5% of those without qualifications agreed that tourism helped them pay their bills. Meanwhile, the percentage of those with the highest education level (diploma/bachelor's degree) who agreed that tourism helped them pay their bills was low, namely 30.8%. This may be because salary in tourism businesses is low with respect to their education level. The salary of tourism employees is not based on education level, but rather depending on the owner of the tourism business (personal communication with tourism business owner). Conversely, the percentage of those who agreed that tourism provided them with choices on how to spend their money increased with the increase in the education level of the respondents. Only 18.2% of those without qualification agreed with the statement, while those with a higher level education had a higher percentage of agreement (19.1% for elementary school; 35.1% for junior high school, 39.8% for senior high school; and 38.5% for diploma/bachelor's degree). However, the results suggest that the economic benefits may potentially empower the next generation, particularly in the psychological dimension. Several respondents explained that tourism increased their income, allowing them to have more money to send

their children to pursue higher education.

Most respondents perceived that tourism did not provide equal benefits to all community members. Table 1 shows that most respondents felt that the profits of tourism went to other groups (91.3% agreed that most profits of tourism went to local elites, outside operators, or government agencies, while 90.1% agreed that only a few individuals or families obtained direct financial benefits from tourism in their village). Based on conversations with the respondents who were not involved in tourism, the profits of tourism mostly went to those involved or having family involved in tourism. In contrast, the respondents involved in tourism felt that most of the benefits went to government agencies, particularly the national park manager (the Ministry of Forestry), through entrance fees, specifically for international visitors. The respondents felt that they did not obtain a meaningful share of profits. They did not realize that the financial mechanism at the national level is quite complicated.

Several respondents involved in tourism also reported that tourism businesses with foreign connections obtained the most financial benefits. Based on informal conversations with several respondents, most accommodations in Bukit Lawang were owned by foreigners or local people with a foreign partner or spouse. Those owners usually promoted their businesses more professionally and reached a wider audience, for example by utilizing a website in English and other languages. Meanwhile, other tourism businesses, particularly those owned by locals, promoted their businesses in a simpler manner (e.g., using Facebook and brochure) or did not promote their businesses at all. Therefore, the profits obtained were different. Based on observations and conversations with several respondents, businesses owned by foreigners or those having a relationship with foreigners were constantly busy with foreign tourists paying a higher price. Local businesses usually struggled to attract more tourists by cooperating with other local businesses. For example, the owners of local accommodations worked with tour guides or the owners of small restaurants

to promote their business.

Despite the lack of personal benefits, a small majority (58.2%) of respondents agreed that tourism could provide lasting economic benefits for the community. However, tourism involvement seemed to influence community perceptions of the benefits of tourism for the community ( $p < 0.01$ ). The results of the survey showed that the respondents who agreed that tourism benefited the local community were currently involved in tourism (77.7%). By comparison, only half (50%) of those previously involved in tourism and 42.9% of those not involved in tourism agreed with this statement. However, quite a high percentage of those involved in tourism in the past or not involved chose neutral (33.3% and 40.6%, respectively), suggesting they did not have enough information to form an opinion. The respondents with no qualifications were more likely to choose neutral (63.6%). This means that many respondents did not see any apparent benefits received by the local community.

Educational qualifications impacted the perceptions of whether tourism provided lasting economic benefits to the community ( $p < 0.01$ ). The percentage of those with the highest education level (diploma/bachelor's degree) agreeing with the statement was the highest (92.3%), while only 36.4% of those without qualifications agreed with the statement. This may be because the higher the education level of an individual, the greater the opportunity to access and obtain information, including information about the potential benefits of tourism (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005) and the intangible benefits in addition to the tangible benefits of extra income from tourism (Scheyvens 1999).

Even though the respondents agreed that tourism could benefit the local community, it was not related to the improvement of public facilities since only 20.2% agreed that tourism supported the development of public facilities in their village. A factor influencing this perception was the location of their hamlet ( $p < 0.05$ ). The respondents who were more likely to agree that tourism supported the development of public facilities were those who lived in the

tourism hamlet (25.6%), a hamlet adjacent to the tourism hamlet (Dusun I, 25%), and a hamlet on the direct access to the tourism hamlet (Dusun V, 23.8%). Those who agreed explained that there had been improvement in public infrastructure (e.g., the road and communication networks) since tourism began to flourish, even though they did not know whether the budget to build the road actually came from tourism. It indicates that even without benefit-sharing, tourism development seems to increase the attention of the government and other stakeholders to the condition of the village, particularly public facilities. However, the development is more likely to fulfil the needs of tourists than the community since the improvements occur primarily to aid access for tourists.

Based on the interviews with the representatives of tourism organizations, the development of rural facilities was the responsibility of the plantation company or the central government (e.g., the Ministry of Forestry or other ministries related to the development of public facilities). It is in line with the opinion of the village council. The tourism organizations felt that they already helped the villagers by providing new employment opportunities, organizing social activities such as Independence Day celebrations, and providing material support during religious celebrations, mainly Muslim celebrations. Based on informal conversations with the villagers, most did not know about those supports. A few who did know claimed that they did not mind not being able to share the benefits of tourism, though they would hope so.

Factors influencing economic empowerment in tourism development The results indicated several factors that influenced community perceptions of economic empowerment in tourism development. Those factors are being involved in the tourism industry, community culture (kinship), the nature of tourism that affects the type of available jobs, a lack of engagement, a lack of capital, education, and geographical factors. The first three factors are frequently discussed in the literature, while the last factor (geographical factor – peripherality) is rarely



discussed. The study indicates that locations adjacent to the tourist attraction frequently receive more benefits than those in peripheral areas.

The results indicated that the involvement of tourism industry could enhance community empowerment at the individual and community levels. By being involved in the tourism industry, the community members can have more opportunities to interact with other stakeholders. Social interactions with outsiders (e.g., tourists and NGOs) visiting the area enable community members to obtain more resources from and build networks with the outsiders. Networking is essential to increase the opportunities to gain more profits from tourism. By having a network, community members can promote their business to the broader world through the network and gain more skills and knowledge to enhance their opportunities to obtain benefits from tourism development.

The results also suggested that community culture could affect how a community distributed information related to tourism, with several villagers receiving more than others. As suggested by Kosack & Fung (2014), a lack of transparency with or the provision of public information can inhibit empowerment. Elite domination or 'power over' by the tourism organizations seems to limit the involvement of the community in tourism and benefits from tourism development. These results are in line with those of Knight & Cottrell (2016) that power over can hinder community empowerment. In addition, as indicated in the previous section, benefit sharing can enhance community empowerment, particularly in economic dimension, elite domination can lead to the unequal sharing of benefits from tourism development. A lack of mechanism for fair distribution of local benefits from tourism frequently leads to these benefits being shared by certain people only – the community elites (Bookbinder et al. 1998; Coria & Calfucura 2012; He et al. 2008; Lapeyre 2010).

In the villages, community culture also seemed to limit certain community groups (e.g., women and certain ethnicities) from being involved in tourism, and furthermore limit their opportunity to become economically empowered through tourism develop-

ment. This result is similar to that of Dolezal (2015) that community culture in Bali, Indonesia, limits the involvement of certain community groups in tourism. It is also in line with the study by Cole (2007) in Ngadha, Indonesia that identified that culture can inhibit the empowerment of women in tourism development.

The results indicate that the type of available jobs can influence community perceptions of community empowerment in tourism. Job opportunities in both villages were mostly low-skilled jobs with a low salary, limiting the opportunities of the community to obtain higher empowerment, particularly at the individual level. This result is similar to that of Walpole & Goodwin (2000) and Wilkinson & Pratiwi (1995) that a local community is more likely to fill low-skilled and low-paying jobs, limiting their opportunity to obtain more profits from tourism. The type of available jobs related to tourism might also be related to the type of tourism in the area. Since the tourism in the area of study is based on natural attractions, the available jobs are related to natural resources, sometimes favoring men over women.

Another factor that was found to inhibit community empowerment was a lack of engagement or a sense of connection with tourism development that could discourage people from being involved in the planning. The results of the study showed that several people in both villages, particularly women and those working as employees of the plantation company, did not want to participate in the planning since they did not feel engaged or had connection with the development. As argued by Steiner & Farmer (2018), engagement with a development program is the first step to increase community participation and enhance the opportunities to become empowered.

The literature notes that a lack of capital frequently hinders community empowerment, and the results from this study strengthen this idea. The results suggested that the lack of capital provided non-locals with more opportunities to invest in tourism industries since the local community did not have sufficient capital to do so. This can limit the local

community's opportunity to be involved in tourism. A lack of supporting regulations is another inhibiting factor for the community to obtain benefits from tourism. For example, a lack of regulation related to 'plantation village' caused some community members to not be able to get a share of benefits from tourism revenue.

Education can increase community empowerment since it can enhance community awareness of obtaining intangible and tangible benefits from tourism (Scheyvens 1999) or offer the community with greater access to information and occasionally improve their capacity to see other options (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005). The limiting factor of economic empowerment is a lack of skills and knowledge. For example, the lack of foreign language skills inhibits community members from becoming tour guides for international tourists, who can potentially earn a higher income. Education, formal or informal (e.g., training), is one way to enhance the skills and knowledge of the community and is considered crucial for community empowerment in economic dimension both at the individual and community levels. For example, at the individual level, English skills and knowledge can lead people to earn more from tourism (e.g., tour guides who can speak English can charge a higher fee than those who cannot).

The peripheral characteristic (in geographical sense) also influences the broader community from obtaining tourism benefits (Knight & Cottrell 2016). The village is located relatively close to the capital of the province and has several hamlets spread across a large area, with several hamlets located closer to the tourist attraction, and others farther away or even isolated from it. The results indicated that those living in the hamlet closest to the tourist attraction received more benefits, both personal and public benefits. This finding indicates that the community that is geographically peripheral to tourist attraction is less likely to feel empowered by it.

## 6. Conclusion

Tourism development in Perkebunan Bukit Lawang does not seem to empower the community to a great extent. In the economic dimension, tourism primarily increases the income of those working in the sector. However, several acknowledged that tourism could provide benefits to the community, even though the form of the benefits remains relative. The study results indicated that there is a relationship between the dimensions of community empowerment. For example, economic empowerment seems to be related to psychological empowerment. The increase in income from tourism inspires several villagers to send their children to pursue higher education.

Two identified factors that can potentially increase community empowerment in this context are knowledge and being involved in tourism activity. However, the research also indicated several factors that hindered the community from being involved in the tourism industry, such as culture, a lack of government support, and a lack of capital, all of which have been frequently mentioned in the literature. The study also suggested another factor rarely mentioned in the literature, namely peripherality. Several factors hindering community empowerment are information asymmetry, a lack of knowledge/experience and skills, tourism type, employment type, trust among stakeholders, cultural characteristics (e.g., norms), and political structure. In this context, those factors may limit opportunities to be involved in tourism industry and the planning process for certain community members, including women and members from certain ethnic groups.

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