

PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF THE WATERFALL TOURISM POTENTIAL IN BENGKULU PROVINCE AFTER THE ENACTMENT OF THE NEW NORMAL COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to know public perception about the Waterfall tourism potential in Bengkulu Province involving six waterfall tourism objects in three regencies such as North Bengkulu Regency, Central Bengkulu Regency and Kepahing Regency where each regency has two waterfall tourism objects investigated here. Perception on the accessibility to the waterfall, infrastructures supporting the accessibility of the waterfall, security of the location of the waterfall, promotion and marketing, the organization managing the objects of the waterfall, the presence or absence of community economic activities, the presence or absence of the tourism industry, and environmental comfort including health protocol for prevention of COVID-19 pandemic are all evaluated in this study. This research represents a survey research using quantitative and qualitative analytical descriptive methods. The data were analyzed using an average distribution with measurement of 5-point Likert scale and frequency distribution with the help of SPSS software. The results showed that the public perception of the waterfall potential investigated in the six waterfall locations were good. In associated with the public perceptions studied here, most respondents felt that the indicators were good. This certainly could be used as input for the local government in order to further improve the indicators requested by the community. The results of this study can be used as a basis by decision makers in Bengkulu Province because most districts all have waterfall tourist destinations. This good tourism potential should be considered appropriately, especially in the New Normal Era, tourists like visiting the nature.

Keyword: Waterfall, Tourism Potential, Public Perception

INTRODUCTION

Bengkulu, the city of *Batik Besurek* that is famous for its Rafflesia Anorldii Flower, is one of the provinces in Sumatra Island having incredible natural beauty with a variety of tourist destinations. Nature tourism in this province is not only amazing, it is natural and exotic with its beautiful beaches, jungle explorations, waterfalls and culinary tours that are worth a try. Currently, Bengkulu Province is actively promoting and developing the tourism sector since its tourism potential is no less appealing than other regions in Indonesia, especially in Sumatra Island. The Bengkulu Provincial Government, through the Tourism Office, is intensively conducting various efforts in increasing tourist visitation. Those efforts have been carried out by the local government so that tourist attractions in Bengkulu province improve their quality and get more crowded by tourists, both domestic and foreign visitors (Nasution & Noviantoro, 2019). But since the COVID pandemic hit almost all regions in Indonesia, tourism experienced an intense shock and the tourism sector almost collapsed due to corona or COVID-19. Instructions to maintain social distance and do all activities at home caused all events related to the tourism sector to be less enthusiastic, all sectors related to the tourism sector was suddenly lacking in vigor as if in suspended animation, and people could not go anywhere because access was very restricted. This restriction ran for approximately three months. And it can be ascertained that no tourism development occurred during the restriction. This access restriction resulted in deserted tourist attractions in the municipality and those in regencies. Let alone tourists from outside the Province, local tourists are not even allowed to visit those tourist attractions.

After all this time the community was in isolation, surely people experience major boredom and ennui and they certainly have a strong desire to leave the house to visit tourist destinations. The tedium will encourage them to find a place that can treat boredom, even if it is just to hang out, spend time out, and breathe fresh air in the open. As luck would have it, the government chose to coexist with corona, the term is: "living in harmony with corona". Through the new normal life order that the government is going to enforce, which still pays attention to health protocols, the community is expected to be able to bounce back to rebuild the ruined life order due to the corona pandemic. All economic agents must be prepared to follow health protocols, including the tourism sector because the revival of the tourism sector is anticipated by the government and various tourist destinations in Indonesia are expected to organize and be ready to welcome tourist

visitation. This is intended so that the economy of the community and economic agents could rise again, but still feel comfortable from the threat of COVID-19 and enjoy the convenience of traveling freely without fear.

One of the interesting things after the enactment of the new normal era is that there is a very widespread tourism phenomenon in the area of Bengkulu province, namely the emergence of various waterfall tourist destinations that were not so popular before the COVID-19 pandemic. Visitors, especially those from Bengkulu city, flock to the waterfall tourist destinations. The nature tourism seems to be an exciting and adrenaline-stimulating matter after all this time being cooped up due to isolation and staying at home. This seems to be a new tourism trend for Bengkulu people who generally prefer beach tourism, shopping tourism, and culinary tourism.

The prediction of tourism trends in the new normal era that says many people will choose open space tourism makes sense. As reported by *Tribunwartakotatravel.com*, the Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani, in the virtual discussion with the theme "Industry Roundtable: Tourism and Hospitality Industry Perspective" on Friday (4/24/2020), explained that her department was preparing to face changes after the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We will prepare destinations for the new normal conditions. The destinations are arranged by promoting the principle of sustainable tourism, including health and safety," Giri said. Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani also described that the government divided three stages in handling COVID-19, namely the emergency response period, recovery, and normalization. The government has also reallocated the budget and implemented special programs during the COVID-19 emergency response period.

"Reallocation is directed to a variety of supporting programs for the emergency response period, to help the tourism sector and the creative economy. The government also asks stakeholders to be able to collaborate with various parties in facing the current situation," Ni Wayan Giri Adnyani stated, as reported in the press release of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy.

This opportunity offered by the government must be seized by the local government to encourage tourism that had fallen asleep due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Regional governments need to see tourism potentials that emerged in the post-pandemic to be reviewed and developed as a source of regional income and especially a source of livelihood for the community around the tourist sites.

Considering that, nature tourism is one of the sectors that can create a tourism industry in the service sector and, most importantly, can have a significant impact on people's income and economic development. From a previous research (Putra et al., 2018), it said that nature tourism is a form of recreation and tourism activities that utilize the potential of natural resources, both in natural conditions and after cultivation efforts, and thus enabling tourists to obtain physical and spiritual freshness and foster a sense of love for nature. Therefore, the perception of tourists is one measure that is so important and fundamental. Many similar studies discuss waterfall tourist destinations, both in terms of community perceptions and in terms of potential exploration strategies. The results of Pasdo Putra's research entitled "Public Perception of Rombo Panga'a Waterfall in Antan Rayan, Sungai Durian Village, and Landak Regency" stated that the perception of the Sungai Durian Village community on Rombo Panga'a Waterfall is that it can be a potential natural tourist destination.

The second similar title is "Public Perception of the Development of Ecotourism of Guruh Gemurai Waterfall, Karang Village, Kuantan Mudik Subdistrict, Kuantan Singingi Regency". The development of Guruh Gemurai Waterfall ecotourism is perceived well with the total percentage of community answers of 84.04%. All elements of the community in Kasang Village want to be more involved in the management and development of the Guruh Gemurai Waterfall ecotourism. Tourism development can also increase the people's income, change the type of work of some people from previously farm laborers into the tourism industry, and increase the average level of public education regarding various knowledge related to tourism and other knowledge aspects related to tourism (Hidayat & Maryani, 2017).

From the many previous studies regarding public perceptions of the potential of waterfall tourism or the development of existing tourism, what distinguished this research from them is the number of tourism objects studied is not only one but there are six Waterfalls studied since only the public perception is sought to respond on whether the waterfall objects under the study have the potential to be natural tourist destinations. The situation of the research also changed, in which the circumstances and conditions of the community's environment changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which certainly shifted the mindset of the community in visiting tourist attractions. Also, it raises new policies in terms of handling the environment of tourism objects that must be guided by the provisions of health protocols that have been set by the government in the form of SOP that must be carried out by the community and economic agents, including the tourism sector.

METHOD

The type of this research is a survey, Kerlinger (1996) said: "survey research is a study conducted in large and small populations, but the data studied is data from samples taken from that population". Survey research is

usually done to generalize observations that are not in-depth, but it can be more accurate when a representative sample is used. On the other hand, the method used in this research is quantitative and qualitative descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis represents a research method that takes a sample from a population using a questionnaire as the data collection tool (Nasution&Noviantoro, 2019).

The variables analyzed in this study were measured using the 5-point Likert scale, starting from the answer A with a score of 5 to the answer E with a score of 1. All statement values based on the Likert value are subsequently combined to obtain a total value that can describe an object to be studied (Arikuntoro: 2004) referring to previous studies (Metri et al., 2018). Likert scale is used to measure attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or group about social events or phenomena (Riduwan, et al 2013). The point of departure for assessing public perception is measured using scores obtained from the calculation of the number of alternative answers answered by respondents. Answer and statement are made based on the following categories (Table 2).

The variables analyzed in this study are as follows: accessibility, infrastructure, location security, promotion and marketing, destination management organization, the presence of community economic activities, the presence of the tourism industry, and environmental comfort.

The study was carried out from January to June 2020, where a preliminary survey was conducted from January to February 2020. The place of the study was six locations of waterfall tourism objects in Bengkulu Province. The study was carried out for approximately 100 days, 60 days for surveying, questionnaire distribution, and data filling, and the rest were for data processing and preparation of the research report.

The sampling method used is the accidental sampling method, which is a sampling method by determining respondents in line with the objectives to be examined.

Table 1. Research Samples and Population Data

<i>Informants</i>	<i>Population (person)</i>	<i>Sample (person)</i>
Tourists	150	90
Tourism Office	50	5
Local Community	100	25
Vendors	50	30
Total	350	150

Source: Researchers' Processed Results based on 2020
Quota sampling technique

Table 2. Categories and Weighting Criteria

No	Information	Weight Value (score)	Rating Indicator
1	Strongly Agree (SS)	5	Excellent
2	Agree (ST)	4	Good
3	Undecided/Neutral (RG)	3	Fair
4	Disagree (TS)	2	Poor
5	Strongly Disagree (STS)	1	Very Poor

Source: Sugiyono (2009:133)

The data sources of this study consisted of primary and secondary data collected by techniques as follows:

1. Observation Technique, namely by making direct observations of the state of objects in the field. The variables analyzed in this study include: accessibility, infrastructure, location security, promotion and marketing, destination management organization, the presence of community economic activities, the presence of the tourism industry, and environmental comfort.
2. Questionnaire Technique (primary data), namely a data and information collection technique by proposing a written list of closed-ended questions because the choices of answers have been determined to the person who became the respondent.
3. Secondary data retrieval is obtained through documentation, namely by conducting an assessment of available data related to research on the website of the Tourism Office of Bengkulu Province, and official sites related to the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bengkulu Province is located on the west coast of Sumatra Island, between 2°-16°-3°-31° South Latitude and 101°-110°-103°-41° East Longitude. The Bukit Barisan Mountains that stretch from the North to the Southern part of Sumatra Island cut across this Province.

The North, with the furthest regency of Muko-muko, is bordered by the West Sumatra Province. The South is bordered by Lampung and the Indian Ocean, Kaur is the closest regency on this border, and the West is bordered by the Indonesian Ocean. The East is bordered by South Sumatra and Jambi, with the closest regency of Lebong Rejang that has the capital city of Curup.

Bengkulu Province with its capital, Bengkulu, is directly adjacent to the Indonesian Ocean, with a coastline of 433 km. The eastern part of the land is hilly with fertile highlands, while the western part is a relatively narrow lowland, from north to south in alternating undulating areas. Bengkulu Province has an area of 1,978,870 ha or 19,788.7 km², which administratively consists of 9 Regencies and 1 municipality that are Muko-Muko Regency, North Bengkulu Regency, Central Bengkulu Regency, Lebong Regency, Rejang-Lebong Regency, Kepahiang Regency, Seluma Regency, South Bengkulu Regency, Kaur Regency, and Bengkulu Municipality (Suwarni&Soleh, 2014). Bengkulu Province that is actively conducting reforms in all sectors, including currently managing various existing tourist objects, realized that tourism can make a significant contribution to increasing regional income.

Tourism it self is a whole of related elements consisting of tourists, tourist destinations, travel, industry, and so on that constitute tourism activities (Devy&Soemanto, 2017). Tourism is one of the mainstays of the Bengkulu Province's revenue source because Bengkulu Province is one of the Provinces that have various types of tourism such as nature, social and cultural tourism, which are spread across nine regencies and one municipality.

Waterfall tourist destinations in Bengkulu Province can be seen in the following table:

Table 3. Waterfall Tourism Objects in Bengkulu Province

Regency	Waterfall Tourism	Location	
1. North Bengkulu	1. Curug Sembilan Waterfall (9-level waterfall)	Tanah Hitam Village, Padang Jaya Subdistrict	
	2. Kemumu Waterfall (KepalaSiring)	Kemumu Village, ArgaMakmur	
	3. Pacitan Waterfall	Unit Empat Village, Padang Jaya	
	4. Batu Layang Waterfall	BatuLayang Village, Hulu Palik	
	5. Lemo Nakai Waterfall	Hulu Pelik Village	
	2. Kepahiang	1. Bukit Hitam Waterfall	Bukit Hitam Village, Kabawetan, Kepahiang
		2. Donok Waterfall	Ampar Village, Merigi Subdistrict, Kepahiang
		3. Sengkuang Waterfall	Sukasari Village, Kabawetan
4. Tearambon Waterfall		Daspetah Village, Ujan Mas	
5. Curug Embun Waterfall		Tapak Gedung Village, TebatKerai, Kepahiang	
6. Curug Gendang Waterfall		Sukamerindu Village, Kepahiang Subdistrict	
7. Curug Gayung Waterfall		Gunung Agung Village, Bermanillir Temdak Village, Seberang Musi	
3. South Bengkulu	8. Curug Temdak Waterfall		
	1. Three-Tier Waterfall	Air Tanam Village, Ulu Manna	
4. Kaur	2. Geluguran Waterfall	Pino Village, Ulu Manna	
	1. Batu Rigis Waterfall	BunginTambun Village, Padang Guci, Hulu	
	2. Kembar (Twin) Waterfall	Tebing Rambutan Village, Nasal	
	3. Seven-Level Waterfall	Bukit Indah Village, Nasal	
	4. Cughup Surameka Waterfall	Padang Guci, Hulu	
	5. Cancap Waterfall	Raje Mandere Protected Forest	
	6. Napalan Waterfall	CokohEnau Village	
	7. Nunung Waterfall	Tritunggal Baktu Village, MuaraSaung	

	8.	Curug Perpah Waterfall	Tebing Rambutan Village, Nasal Muara Saung Subdistrict
	9.	Three-Level Waterfall	Trans Village, Tanjung Agung
	10.	Curug Nibung Waterfall	
5. Benteng	1.	Tabalagan Waterfall	Tabalagan Village, Benteng
	2.	Curuq Embun Waterfall	Langan bungin Village, Talang Empat Taba Penanjung Protected Forest
	3.	Datar Lebar Waterfall	Penembang Village, Merigi Kelindang Rindu Hati Village, Taba Penanjung
	4.	Luang Tengah Waterfall	Rena Kandis Village, Pagarjati
	5.	Cughup Hujan Waterfall	Surau Village, Benteng
	6.	Pintu Langit Waterfall	Bukit Village, Talang Empat
	7.	Cughup Putri Mayang Waterfall	
	8.	Curug Cay Waterfall	
6. Muara Aman/Lebong	1.	Ketenong Waterfall	Ketenong Village, Lebong
	2.	Paliak Waterfall	Embong Village, Uram Jaya
	3.	Semelako Waterfall	Semelako Village
	4.	Tik Gumaceak Waterfall	Lemeu Village, Uram Jaya
7. Seluma	1.	Batu Bekinyau Waterfall	Sengkuang Jaya Village
	2.	Lubuk Resam Waterfall	Lubuk Resam Village
	3.	Melancar Waterfall	Air Melancar Village
8. Muko-Muko	1.	Mandi Angin Waterfall	Air Berau Village, Pondok Sughu Bunga Tanjung Village
	2.	Lalayang Waterfall	Lubuk Silandak Village
	3.	Stikiay Waterfall	Sendang Mulya Village
	4.	Sendang Mulya Waterfall	Penarik Subdistrict
	5.	Penarik Waterfall	SP4, Penarik Subdistrict
	6.	Singkai Waterfall	Lubuk Bangko Village, Selagan
	7.	Lubuk Bangko Waterfall	Langan Bungin Village
	8.	Sungai Bungin Waterfall	Talang Baru Village, Ipuh
	9.	Talang Baru Waterfall	Talang Buai Village, Selagan Raya
	10.	Talang Buai Waterfall	Lubuk Silandak Village, Teramang Jaya
	11.	Sungai Sikai Waterfall	Tunggal Jaya Village, Teras Terunjam Teras Terunjam Subdistrict
	12.	Tunggal Jaya Waterfall	
	13.	Setia Budi Waterfall	
9. Rejang Lebong/Curup	1.	Kepala Curup Waterfall	Kepala Curup Village, Padang Ulak Tanding
	2.	Batu Betiang Waterfall	Babakan Baru Village
	3.	Tri Muara Karang Waterfall	
	4.	Panas Paoa Seribeu Waterfall	Blitar Village, Sindang Kelingi Sumber Urip Village, Selupu Rejang

Source: Processed Data of 2020

Of the many waterfalls scattered in nine regencies in Bengkulu Province, three regencies become the research location by taking samples of two waterfall locations of each regency visited by tourists, namely:

1. Curug Sembilan Waterfall and Lemo Nakai Waterfall, North Bengkulu Regency



Blogger bengkulu.com.curug9, @curug9 lemonakai, @wonderfulbengkulu

Curug Sembilan Waterfall is located in Tanah Hitam village, Padang Jaya, and people call it the nine-level (Curug Sembilan) waterfall. To go to the location, tourists from Bengkulu traveled a distance of approximately 3 to 4 hours to reach the site that is situated in a protected forest region and hilly area that is still full of gorgeous and charming shrubs. Upon reaching the location, we will be indulged by the amazing natural scenery that paid off all the travel fatigue from getting to this waterfall. For novice tourists, some guides will show you the direction to the location.

This waterfall has the potential to be developed. Based on the results of the questionnaire obtained, the scores of all variables of supporting indicators encourage this tourist destination. The majority of the community states that Curug Sembilan waterfall should be the main destination of North Bengkulu since this is the only waterfall in Bengkulu Province that uniquely has 9 levels. Various efforts need to be upgraded, be it for location access, supporting infrastructure, and improving the tourism industry. Through the Tourism Office, the local government must empower the locals to promote the tourism industry. It can be in the form of unique souvenirs from the North Bengkulu region or specialty souvenirs of the Padang Jaya region, and tourists also suggested for handicrafts from the local community industry such as waterfall reliefs, waterfall paintings, or culinary specialties of the Padang Jaya region. For example, since tourists have enjoyed the trabas coffee from the local area, this coffee can be used as a souvenir of the region, which only by mentioning the name of this coffee, tourists will immediately know that this is the typical drink of Curug Sembilan waterfall. Although it still has not increased the regional income, the management of the tourist attraction is already underway and at least the presence of this waterfall has stimulated the local economy.

Regarding Lemo Nakai waterfall that went viral on social media, access to the location is temporarily closed by the local government because this waterfall is a new discovery with pristine natural scenery, resplendent and mostly untouched. Also, to reach this location tourists have to pass through severe terrain as it has not been supported by adequate infrastructure, and the management is still impromptu so there is no guarantee of tourist safety. On average, respondents would like to revisit Lemo Nakai but they are hesitant and worried about the security. Although environmental comfort is attained, most visitors are concerned about safety. The many visitors who want to go to this waterfall accompanied by no good road access make tourists hope for the local government to put special attention to the development of the tourism potential of North Bengkulu.

Table 4. Rating Indicators of Perception

Perception Value	Interval Value	Category	Respondent Value
1	400 - 720	Strongly Disagree	Very Poor (TB)
2	721 - 1041	Disagree	Poor (KB)
3	1042 - 1361	Neutral/Somewhat Agree	Fair (CB)
4	1362 - 1682	Agree	Good (B)
5	1683 - 2003	Strongly Agree	Excellent (SB)

Source: The Results of the Questionnaire Data Processing 2020

Table 5. Public Perception of the Potential of Curug Sembilan Waterfall and LemoNakai Waterfall Tourism, North Bengkulu

Based on the Variable of Rating Indicators							
No	Rating Indicator	Respondent Value					Amount
		SB	B	CB	KB	TB	
1	Accessibility	10	20	15	5	0	50
2	Infrastructure	5	10	15	18	2	50
3	Location Security	20	10	9	1	10	50
4	Promotion and Marketing	30	5	5	5	5	50
5	Destination Management Organization	25	10	5	5	5	50
6	The Presence of Economic Activities	30	8	5	5	2	50
7	The Presence of Tourism Industry	10	8	5	25	2	50
8	Environmental Comfort	35	5	10	0	0	50
	Number of Respondents	165	76	69	64	26	400
	Value Score X Number of Respondents	825	304	207	128	26	1490
	Average Value Score of the Answer	5	4	3	2	1	4

Source: Research Results processed in 2020

From the results of the respondents' perceptions statement above, the local government can develop the two waterfall tourist destinations starting from infrastructure improvements, opening access or roads to the locations, encouraging the community to improve the tourism industry, increasing the security of the locations both from disruption from irresponsible people and to protect the health of visitors and the local community from contracting the COVID-19 pandemic, and improving management because, with proper management, both of these attractions can increase the regional income that certainly also affects the community.

For the variables of community economic activities and environmental comfort, through the local village apparatus, the local government can socialize programs related to local community empowerment. Whereas the promotion and marketing variable will follow on its own. With the current dynamic social media, the promotion will move by itself, provided that these two waterfall tourist destinations are worth promoting.

2. Tabalagan Waterfall and Datar Lebar Waterfall, Central Bengkulu Regency



caribengkulu.com.Datarlebar, caribengkulu.com.Tabalagan

Tabalagan is the name of a village located in Central Bengkulu that only takes more or less 2 hours of leisurely driving from the center of Bengkulu city. The access to get to the center of the waterfall location is not difficult, the road to reach it is only about 50M, and for those on motorbikes can go straight to the location of the

waterfall but for those who use four-wheeled vehicles, the car is parked on the road and tourists have to walk to the location. If Tabalagan waterfall is easily accessible, it is not the same for the Datar Lebar waterfall that is also located in the Central Bengkulu (Benteng) region. It takes approximately 1 hour to walk to the location of the waterfall in Datar village, though the advantage is that tourists can enjoy the natural scenery along the way to the location with the verdant rice fields that can momentarily eliminate fatigue, not to mention the stunning views of the protected forest where fresh air immediately hits once entering it. From the results of the questionnaire that was also distributed in the areas of the two waterfalls, tourists also hope that the waterfall tourism potential in Benteng can be immediately improved by the local government, particularly for the Datar Lebar waterfall in which its access road is still red soil. One can only imagine the struggle to get there when it rains.

Table 6. Public Perception of the Potential of Tabalagan Waterfall and Datar Lebar Waterfall Tourism, Central Bengkulu

No	Rating Indicator	Respondent Value					Amount
		SB	B	CB	KB	TB	
1	Accessibility	40	5	5	0	0	50
2	Infrastructure	30	10	8	2	0	50
3	Location Security	35	5	5	5	0	50
4	Promotion and Marketing	5	5	30	8	2	50
5	Destination Management Organization	10	5	5	20	10	50
6	The Presence of Tourism Industry	10	10	5	25	0	50
7	The Presence of Community Economic Activities	20	10	5	5	10	50
8	Environmental Comfort	10	5	10	20	5	50
	Number of Respondents	160	55	73	85	27	400
	Total Value Score x Respondents	800	220	219	170	27	1,436
	Average Value Score of the Answer	5	4	3	2	0	4

Source: Research Results processed in 2020

From the variable assessment table that determines which tourism destination has the potential to be developed, any variables that need serious attention from the government can be sorted out and the first is promotion and marketing because visitors are mostly locals, who already know the location in detail, so that is why inadequate access and infrastructure is not a significant obstacle for them. The second thing that needs attention is environmental comfort. Cleanliness and nature conservation needs to be improved and socialization from the local government is needed to foster public and visitor awareness to attract more tourists from other regions. Especially in this new normal era, nature tourism is the first choice to keep mind, mental and body stay healthy and focused. The next concern is the improvement of waterfall management, including fostering economic development around tourist attractions. All this time, tourists are expected to bring supplies and complete preparations to travel to these destinations because there are no vendors around the location, especially at Datar Lebar waterfall.

The main focus of improvement is the access road to Datar Lebar waterfall. By building the road, visitors from many directions will certainly arrive. Moreover, the beauty of the two waterfalls is already widely known in Bengkulu, it is just that tourists sometimes complain on social media about the difficult road access that, at least, could discourage someone from enjoying the natural beauty.

Waterfall tourism is usually for the youth, though if all the variables that are indicators of potential improvements are improved, the old but young at heart will be enthusiastic to go adventuring there.

3. Sengkuang Waterfall and Curug Embun Waterfall, Kepahiang



Bengkulunews.co.id, curugembun.bloggerbengkulu.com

Kepahiang is one of the regencies in Bengkulu province that preserves many beautiful natural tourist destinations. It is a cool region due to located in the mountains and we will pass this area when heading for Rejang Lebong Regency, people usually stop by here to buy specialty souvenirs of Kepahiang region. There is diverse processed food from Kepahiang crops and tourists who will travel to the waterfall need to bring snacks that are widely available in this area.

This time we are not seeing the public perception of Kepahiang cuisine, but we will review two gorgeous and popular waterfalls in Kepahiang, namely Sengkuang Waterfall and Curug Embun Waterfall. Tourists will pass the Kabawetan tea plantation to reach Sengkuang Waterfall, it only takes less than 2.5 hours from Bengkulu city to Sengkuang waterfall, but keep in mind that during holidays Kabawetan tea plantation is also crowded by tourists because this is also one of Kepahiang tourist destinations that is popular with the community, we only need to come earlier. Access to get there is easy because some infrastructures have been built even though it is still not completely paved, and the downward sloping road to the waterfall has also been prepared with stairs. The fatigue will be paid off when we reach the waterfall, bathing and playing water over there.

The access road to the next waterfall, Curug Embun, has also been paved, though it's a bit narrow and tortuous typical of a village road, but this is more tolerable rather than walking. Don't worry about parking since the locals' homes have been conditioned into parking lots. No entry fees are charged, we only pay parking fees for motorcycles of Rp.5,000 and four-wheeled vehicles of Rp.10,000. Tourists must bring a change of clothes and food because there are no rental clothes around the location and food vendors are very limited.

Table 7. Public Perception of the Potential of Sengkuang Waterfall and Curug Embun Waterfall Tourism, Kepahiang

Based on the Variable of Rating Indicators							
No	Rating Indicator	Respondent Value					Amount
		SB	B	CB	KB	TB	
1	Accessibility	20	20	5	5	0	50
2	Infrastructure	25	15	5	5	0	50
3	Location Security	30	10	8	1	1	50
4	Promotion and Marketing	30	5	5	5	5	50
5	Destination Management Organization	20	10	5	10	5	50
6	The Presence of Tourism Industry	30	10	5	5	0	50
7	The Presence of Community Economic Activities	30	8	5	5	2	50
8	Environmental Comfort	35	5	10	0	0	50
	Number of Respondents	220	83	48	36	13	400
	Total Value Score x Respondents	1100	332	144	72	13	1.622

Average Value Score of the Answer	5	4	3	2	1	4
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Source: Research Results processed in 2020

From the results of the questionnaire data processing that is seen in table 7, the people's aspirations that need to be considered by the government are indicator number 1 that is accessibility, then indicator number 5 that is the destination management organization, and indicator number 3 namely infrastructure. These three things are considered inadequate because they are the main supporting factors in increasing the tourism potential of the two waterfalls. Furthermore, Kepahiang region is a connecting road to Rejang Lebong Regency and Muara Aman Regency, and also the main road to Bengkulu. When tourists are visiting from South Sumatra to Bengkulu, the road is surrounded by hills and tortuous (*Kelok Sembilan*). If it's not handled properly, access to the waterfall tourist destinations will also be hampered.

Other indicators which are excellent according to tourists are including location security, environmental comfort, promotion and marketing, the destination management organization, and the tourism industry development. However, the government still should make various efforts to find new breakthroughs so that the potential of the two destinations is increasingly realized. Tourist security around the location of the waterfall is not only guarded, but access to it must also be regulated. The activities of the tourism industry need to be more diverse, various handicrafts in the form of nature miniatures need to be studied to be developed. Not forgetting to implement health protocols under the SOP, the management is facilitated and trained so that the SOP runs in an orderly manner.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of this research data, it can be concluded that the public perception of the waterfall tourism potential in Bengkulu Province can be used as a reference to develop the potential of waterfall tourist destinations. The development and improvement of waterfall destinations will certainly contribute to the regions, especially in stimulating the economy of the local community. It will have a good impact for Bengkulu Province extensively, the Bumi Rafflesia will be known again for its waterfall tourism charm. The numerous waterfalls where each has its uniqueness is a great potential and become a valuable main capital of a region. Through the Tourism Office, Bengkulu Provincial Government must arrange and re-map which waterfalls should get top priority for the construction of supporting facilities and infrastructure, and of course, the development must be based on the aspirations of the people or visiting tourists.

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