

The utilization of Indonesia soft power: Promoting Toba Caldera as UNESCO global geopark 2020

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Abstract

The goal of this project is to provide an analytical description of Toba Caldera's potential to become a UNESCO Global Geopark by 2020. The research employed qualitative methods and was carried out through a review of the literature. Journals, government papers, news media, and the internet were all utilised as sources of supporting information. There are interconnections between Indonesia soft powers and the ongoing contributions of stakeholders in the Toba Caldera Promotion Project, which is intended to assist sustainable tourist growth. Toba Caldera is a popular tourist attraction across the world since it is home to 13 geo-sites that offer breath-taking views. According to the findings of this study, Toba Caldera's international fame will likely result in an increase in incoming tourist arrivals.

Keywords:

Indonesia soft power, Toba caldera, UNESCO, sustainable tourism development

1 Introduction

At present, in a world of globalization and in the midst of a pandemic COVID-19, development on an international scale as well as within a country requires an active role and participation of local governments to spearhead regional development. Until

now it has been realized by various parties that the achievement of the country's development goals is largely on the shoulders of the provincial and city governments. This paper aims to elaborate further on the utilization of Indonesia soft power in promoting Toba Caldera tourist destination.

Tourism has grown and evolved significantly in past decades, and some of the destination hassles, e.g. crowding, rubbish, facility accessibility and conflicts become more pronounced (Mandić & Vukadin, 2021). The greater adaptation of smart technologies in the provision of tourism experiences, greater analytical capabilities of tourism service providers and destinations open up new opportunities for creating and managing tourist flows and influencing specific tourist behaviour. According to Uno in National Tourism Forum in April 2021, the world is facing an unprecedented health and economic crisis. Tourism has been hit hard, with millions of jobs at risk in one of the most labour-intensive sectors. The number of international tourists drops by 60 to 80 percent during one year (Uno, 2021). Further, what constitutes good management remains an ongoing challenge. Successful area-based conservation requires better collaboration with the indigenous peoples, community groups and private initiatives that are central to its success (Maxwell et al., 2020). Ever-increasing visitation such residents, domestic and international tourists induced a deepening crisis within these unique ecosystems associated with, among other effects, population growth, increasing consumption, climate change, increasing reliance on visitor-based revenues, and growth in demand for rural outdoor and nature-based recreation from increasingly urbanized societies (Weaver & Lawton, 2017). The notion of the nation brand is known as a destination marketing axiom for countries tourism (Matiza, 2021). Once established, mass tourism mobilizes the specialization of the place in the touristic activity and promotes economic growth. At the same time, other places remain protected due to the backwash effects of the touristic activity (Mandić, 2021).

2 Literature Review

Soft power diplomacy has become the key to Indonesia's success in managing relations between countries. In diplomacy, the most important thing is the ability of human resources in making foreign policy an inseparable part of a process to achieve positive and better things for the nation and state. In the midst of global pandemic, globalization and internationalization which are coloured by theological disparities and so on are new challenges that are not easy in international relations. Indonesia's foreign policy platform is also carried out through elements of soft power diplomacy.

Indonesia's cultural diplomacy through a cultural event such Lake Toba Festival 2016, where this cultural event was carried out by Indonesia as an instrument to achieve national interests in proposing the Toba Caldera to become part of the UNESCO Global Geopark. Policy changes related to the development of domestic tourist destinations have transformed Indonesia's foreign policy abroad (Manurung, 2017). Nye defines soft power as a strategy to influence other countries through appeal or the state-owned attraction without using force or threats (Nye, 2012). Soft

power comes from the values, culture, and policies that implement and apply to particular areas. Using hearts and minds, thus, is considered one of the keys to the successful unification of countries in the world without posing the threat of widespread conflict or war. The national tourism development supported by soft power usages, which is supported by the utilization of natural and human resources in tourist destinations, creating a desire among various stakeholders in the country and abroad related to the establishment of cooperation in order to strengthen the relationship that both existing and new relations to be built.

Tourism has become one of Indonesian leading sectors whose impact is quite influential for an area and is chosen as one of the leading regional development sectors. In 2019, the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism targeted foreign tourists to visit 18 million people. Further, there is a need for continuous cooperation between government and non-government actors. North Sumatra province also participated to achieve the target by designing the promotional tourism strategies and policies. Previously, it has been done through local culture, unique culinary dishes, tourist destinations, and the people's kindness brings tourists to this tourist destination. The tourism sector is one of the soft powers used by the North Sumatra government, business entities, and local people in seeking cooperation and mutual benefit with various communities. Indonesia tourism and creative economy ministry also supports the regular event of a cycling tour entitled "Toba Caldera **Geo Bike #6**" to promote Toba tourism in the new normal era.

Foreign tourists visiting Indonesia through the whole entrance in December 2019 amounted to 1,377,067 visits or decreased by 2.03% compared to December 2018 amounted to 1,405,554 visits (IMTCE, 2020a). By nationality, the number of visits by foreign tourists in December 2019 in 26 main entrances recorded the highest number of visits, i.e.: 239,783 Malaysian, Singapore 207, 263, China 154,175, Australian 125,624, and East Timorese 106,643 visits. While the growth in the number of foreign tourists in December 2019 in 26 of the main entrance when compared with the month of December 2018 recorded the highest growth, namely Vietnam amounted to 52.86%, United Arab Emirates amounted to 41.19%, and Russia amounted to 31.35%, South Africa 23.38% and Papua New Guinea 21.02%.

While, foreign tourists visited Indonesia whole entrance in July 2020 amounted to 159,763 visits a decrease of -89.12% compared to July 2019 amounted to 1,468,173 visits (IMTCE, 2020b). The incoming foreign tourists at three major entrances from 26 main entrances in July 2020 compared to June 2019, i.e.: Ngurah Rai decreased by -100%; Soekarno-Hatta declined by -98.83%; and Batam decreased by -98.81%. Based on nationality, the number of foreign tourist visits in June 2020 at all entrances recorded the highest number of visits, namely: Timor Leste with 85,280; Malaysia with 58,610; China with 2,747; the US with 1,398; and Papua New Guinea with 1,295.

3 Methodology

Indonesia sees that diplomacy and friendly relations can be carried out through arts and cultural activities. The strength of art and culture that is owned by Indonesia is one of Indonesia's soft power assets. It supports the implementation of Indonesia soft power utilization in promoting tourist destinations and its attractions. Through this research, the author wants to elaborate on the soft power utilization and the determination by UNESCO on Toba Caldera Global Geopark through Indonesia promotional effort in many years. In explaining these dynamics, the author uses the Liberalism approach, in elaborating Toba Lake tourist destination plays significantly for strengthening Indonesia soft power and makes the state cooperate with other countries collaboratively. The concept of national interest is used by the author to see how Indonesia's interests work in emphasizing tourist destinations as the preference for the country's national economic empowerment.

The experiences of North Sumatra prove the developments of tourist destinations contribute in promoting Indonesia's soft power through art, culture, custom and culinary to international society. This research showed that Toba Caldera is a new kind of tourism object that produces a new close relationship between Indonesian people and foreigners, functioned as an instrument to make foreigners love Indonesia, prolong their stay, and promote traditional culture when they come back to their country.

4 Findings

On July 2, 2020, Toba Caldera or Toba Lake was designated as a UNESCO Global Geopark at the 209th UNESCO Executive Council meeting in Paris, France. The executive board members set 16 new UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020, including Toba caldera located in North Sumatera (KLNRI, 2020). Indonesia Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Wishnutama Kusubandio stated:

“Lake Toba has become one of Indonesia's top tourist destinations that is certified worldwide by UNESCO Global Geopark (UGG), thus making Lake Toba more famous on international level, and the most important thing is beneficial for local people”.

Toba Lake should become a profitable source for surrounding communities that are able to generate destination enhancement, especially in terms of combining geo-diversity, biodiversity, and culture diversity. Through consistent and committed sustainable geo-tourism, it will develop local people to generate opportunities and economics benefits in enhancing local ancestor culture, and traditional cultural products such Batak people traditional cloth or known as Ulos (Niessen, 2009), along with opening more job employment. It also identified that Samosir Music International Festival 2018 had utilized the role of mass media as a daily communication (Hutasoit & Dermawan, 2019). In creating more efficient and targeted communication, Samosir regency had conducted a series of events and the Indonesian music community as a strategic communication medium.

Indonesia tourism recovery can be accelerated by reducing the COVID-19 case. There are six steps that can be taken by all stakeholders during the global pandemic, i.e.: 1) the application of strict health protocols must be a major focus; 2) accelerate the CHSE certification in tourist destination; and 3) regulate the maximum visitors in one place should be implemented to prevent crowds. From authors' point of view, Toba Caldera destination should 4) create new attractions; 5) arrange attractive tourist event such MICE, festival, concert, art performances, etc., wellness tourism, culinary tourism, sport tourism, and educational tourism; and 6) manage marketing strategies in building a safety and comfort image along with domestic tourism acceleration promotions, #DiIndonesiaAja.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Indonesia National Super Priorities Destinations

In international politics, soft power is the ability to attract and cooperate, rather than coerce. It involves shaping the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. According to Nye, a defining feature of soft power is that it is non-coercive; the currency of soft power includes culture, political values, and foreign policies. This term also has been used in changing and influencing social and public opinion through relatively less transparent channels and lobbying through powerful political and non-political organizations, and through economic influence. In 2012, former South Korean President Park Geun-hye also stated: "In the 21st century, culture is power". Nye (2012) international relations scholar at Harvard University explained that with soft power, "the best propaganda is not propaganda", further explaining, that during the Information Age, "credibility is the scarcest resource".

In October 2019, Indonesia tourism is projected to be a core economy and the nation's largest foreign exchange earner for the next five years ahead. In May 2020, foreign tourists visiting Indonesia through the entire national entrance amounted to 163,646 visits, a decrease of -86.90% compared to May 2019 amounted to 1,249,536 visits. Foreign tourist arrivals at 3 major airports and seaports from 26 main entrances in May 2020 compared to May 2019, namely: Ngurah Rai decreased by -99.99%; Soekarno-Hatta declined by -99.75%; and Batam decreased by -98.76%.

Meanwhile, based on nationalities, the number of foreign tourists visiting in May 2020 at all entrances recorded the highest number of visits, namely: Timor Leste with 81.486; Malaysia with 66.385; China with 1.878; the Philippines with 1.819; and Singapore with 1.335. Indonesia's current diplomacy challenges related to the management of foreign relations to focus more on diplomatic efforts in the form of soft power diplomacy. Indonesia's foreign policy priorities are focused on four things, one of which is economic diplomacy to sustain national economic independence. It is important and necessary, thus, implementation of proactive public-diplomacy, down-to-earth diplomacy, provide direct benefits to the people, and diplomacy for the people. These stakeholders and policymakers in the region should further enhance

coordination and synergy in order to explore and build on the potential areas that have opportunities for collaborative cooperation with neighbouring countries. It should stick to the strategies of national promotion, enhancement of local economic growth and strengthening economic empowerment.

It can be done in the form of virtual interactive dialogue such as regular virtual talk-show, by raising concerns including soft power, maritime, economy, and the role of public relations. Based on data from the World Travel & Tourism Council, tourism in Indonesia is to be the fastest-growing ranks 9th in the world, number three in Asia, and number one in Southeast Asia. This achievement in the tourism sector was also recognized by the British mass media, The Telegraph which listed Indonesia as "The Top 20 Fastest Growing Travel Destinations" (Smith, 2019).

Since 2019, the tourism sector has been designated as the leading sector in contributing to the nation's economy by the government surpassing crude palm oil exporting. The Toba Caldera is located in North Sumatra province formed by the explosion of a super-volcano 74,000 years ago. The base of the caldera is filled with water and is the largest lake in Indonesia. The beauty of the natural panorama of the Toba Caldera and the cultural richness of the Batak tribe, has made Lake Toba as one of the mainstay Indonesia tourist destinations which is included in the list of '10 New Bali'. After waiting for 9 years (2011-2020), finally, Indonesian Ambassador to France concurrently Andorra, Monaco and UNESCO, Arrmanatha Nasir after the establishment of Toba caldera, stated clearly (Antara News, 2020):

"Through this decision, Indonesia can develop Geopark Toba caldera through a network of Global Geoparks Network and the Asia Pacific Geoparks Network, especially in terms of empowerment of local communities".

Indonesia has succeeded in convincing international organizations such UNESCO that Toba Caldera has a high geological connection and heritage of ancestral traditions with the local community, specifically related to the efforts of stakeholders in preserving culture, biodiversity, and strengthening local wisdom of the Batak people. Most tourists are interested in coming to tourist destinations to learn and experience life as a Batak village community.

Meanwhile, with the world's recognition of Toba Caldera, Indonesian government, local communities, and stakeholders are required to commit to environmental sustainability and the integrity of the integrated tourist destination region.

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendation

Indonesia's soft power diplomacy activities should enable various political proximity which to gain economic benefits, especially in assisting the tasks of promoting bilateral trade, attracting foreign investment, tourism, and labour employment. In the international world, Indonesia's diplomatic activities are mainly focused on continuous efforts to overcome the threat of the global financial crisis related to the outbreak of a global pandemic.

Indonesia's cultural diversity is a soft power that should be utilized optimally as the nation-branding effort to visit tourist destinations. The good image of Toba Caldera actually creates mutual respect, understanding, tolerance and friendship between nations in a wide, complex, pluralistic and challenging world. With the condition of the world in the midst of a pandemic, mutual understanding and tolerance are the keys to harmony and peace. Still, it should prioritize consistency, commitment, and synergy with other stakeholders to attract incoming tourists.

The government and stakeholders should be able to develop a synergy between geological heritage and other territorial heritages; develop methodological strategies and criteria for partnering with accommodation, catering, transportation providers, and local product procurement; strengthening the involvement of the activities of the Global Geopark Network and the Asia Pacific Geopark Network; develop educational strategies in collaboration with other UNESCO Global Geoparks; improve education on mitigation of natural damage and climate change in schools and universities as well as local communities; strengthen the involvement of UNESCO Global Geoparks in collaborative research, natural conservation and promotion of indigenous peoples, cultures and local languages.

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