



## Sustainable Tourism Development Group Communication: Puppet Village Kepuhsari

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### **Abstract**

Sustainable tourism development is now a necessity of time. Through its multiplier effect, tourism can accelerate economic growth by encouraging various other economic sectors. This article analyzes group communication theory from the perspective of developing tourism in the puppet village of Kepuhsari Wonogiri as a sustainable cultural tourism commodity. Culture has an important role in the tourism sector as a unique and authentic attraction. This paper is qualitative and analyzes models from the literature review, to provide their strengths and limitations in the study of the factors of group communication theory. The results of this study show that local culture is a highly valuable asset, cultural commodities as tourism do not reduce the values contained in the culture. Group communication is a form of information needs of each member as a collective decision-making effort.

**Keywords:** *Group Communication; Sustainable Tourism; Cultural Commodification*

### **1. Introduction**

The village is an administrative area of Indonesia that has a variety of uniqueness. The village is a forming part of state life and has a big role in giving color to the dynamics of cross-sectoral, social, economic, educational, political, and cultural. This is the basis so that the village can be positioned as a subject of development, where the community has rights and obligations to be able to actively participate. One of the critical issues in the 21st century is the ability of local and rural communities to adapt to global changes and achieve sustainable economic growth without compromising old traditions. One of them is to make culture part of the tourism experience. Efforts to restore the existence of local wisdom do not mean that they will return to life in traditional nature (Hudayana, 2017).

Tourism activity has the potential to have a positive impact on the contribution of regional economic growth. The existence of a tourist village is a cultural hot spot where the pattern of community life in the village informing unique attractions can attract tourists. The Society is required to innovate according to needs. The process of adopting innovation is influenced by the development of science and technological progress which sooner or later will be adopted by the social system. Exposure to technology and media affects cultural arts and people's behavior (Surahman, 2016). The social structure of a

community can be said as an interconnected network between individuals which will eventually become an important network in the success of a community development program (Saad et al., 2017).

As a creative product, the expertise of making leather puppets can be categorized as cultural heritage tourism which is a tourist activity that it can provide new information and experiences about cultural knowledge to tourists. The local community of Kepuhsari village formed a tourism awareness group as a place where each individual discussed and determined a tourism village development strategy. Group communication occurs in determining joint decisions in adopting the attitude of adopting the puppet village innovation and modifying its craft. Development goals in the tourism sector can be achieved if the commitment of all parties has the same vision and mission (Reynaldi, 2018).

In addition, the speed in deciding to adopt an innovation is influenced by the type of decision-making of the group communication. The process of disseminating information that occurs between two or more people explains the existence of a network that arises as a result of information needs. Continuous relationships are formed through continuous communication (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The tourism awareness group developed the concept of puppet village tourism and modified the form of shadow puppet crafts. One of the pinnacles of the success of his craft innovation is to become a souvenir vendor for the leaders of representatives of each country at the 2018 Asian Games held in Indonesia. Because groups are part of a larger system, they take input from the system and produce products.

Opinion leaders are individuals who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and attitudes of others (Saad et al., 2017). Sustainable tourism development is a necessity, where tourism has a multidimensional nature. Sustainability is one of the best businesses today, so that the concept and practice of sustainable tourism can be considered as a new form of innovation in the tourism industry (Dibra, 2015). The creative tourism industry, such as the commodification of tourist villages, has developed and can overcome the problems that have plagued traditional-based tourism, including (a) lack of financial resources to deal with intangible heritage; (b) the loss of cultural identity can be reversed by sparking interest in the culture; (c) the power relationship between hosts and guests (tourists) can be rebalanced by positioning residents who used to have the connotation of servants to become teachers (Blapp & Mitas, 2018). In this article, the author wants to see the form of group communication in developing the puppet village tourism and see the drivers and obstacles.

## **2. Literatur Review**

### **2.1 Group Communication**

Communication is the most important and complex aspect for humans. Every human being tries to understand each other's events by giving meaning to what is happening to themselves or the environment. Every aspect of our daily lives is affected by our communication with others, as well as by messages from people we don't even know, people near and far, living and dead (Littlejohn and Karen, 2011). Communication is a systemic process of interacting verbally and through symbols to create and interpret meaning (Wood, 2012). Communication is systemic which means it occurs in a system in interconnected parts so that they can affect each other. All forms of behavior can be said to be communication if it involves two or more people. Communication occurs when a message source evokes a response to the recipient of the message in the form of symbols, both verbal and nonverbal. A symbol is something that represents something else based on mutual agreement.

Groups can generally be defined as two or more people who have a psychological attraction to each other. In addition, there is awareness from members that they are part of the group; there is a reciprocal relationship; structured; and have a pattern of behavior (Soyomukti, 2010). Groups have goals

and organizations (not always formal) and involve interaction among each of its members (Rakhmat, 2013). A group needs to set criteria for judging the proposed solution because group members need to be clear about what they want to achieve (Griffin, 2012). The exchange of information occurs due to face-to-face meetings in the form of meetings or through the media of communication tools and the intensity of individual meetings occurs because of the purpose and function factors.

A tourism awareness group is a collection of puppet artisans who form a (non-formal) organization as a collaborative effort to develop a sustainable tourism village. The collaboration can be either temporary or permanent (Sudarmo, 2009). Tourism can be seen as a system that is interrelated and interacts with each other (Suardana, 2013). Support from local governments and the role of stakeholders is absolutely needed by tourism awareness groups. Policies made by the government of course have an impact that encourages the management of the puppet village tourism. Government systems and powers can direct social relations, including social rules and values, such as tourism provision technology, which can influence the introduction of more sustainable tourism practices (Bramwell et al., 2017). Individuals interact to build group reality to create their environment, internal state, and products through symbols (Littlejohn et al., 2011). The decision to implement the puppet village tourism program is the result of a collective decision by the group by considering social, economic, and cultural factors.

## **2.2 Sustainable Tourism**

The puppet village tourism can be seen as an example of cultural heritage tourism because it preserves culture, elevate the nation's image, foster a sense of love for the homeland, and teaches traditional arts. Cultural tourism can involve experiences or have contacts of different intensities with the unique social order, heritage, and character of a special place (Cros et al., 2015). Culture is dynamic so it can create social institutions and local wisdom. However, utilizing culture as a tourist attraction raises the issue of cultural commodification, which can eliminate the original elements of culture itself. For responding to this issue, it is very necessary to do damage control so that culture does not change only as a paid performance, it is necessary to have awareness of tourism actors to separate sacred culture and which culture can be promoted to tourists.

## **2.3 Cultural Commodification**

Indonesia's tourism creative industry can be referred to as the cultural industry (Aquino et al., 2018). We can understand that the creative industry is the basis of the creative economy which is in one of the waves of the world economic system. The tourist village displays the structure of community life in the form of attractions, accommodations, and facilities that maintain their originality. Creating a positive business climate such as a collaboration between the community and stakeholders can revive a sense of shared identity. Collaboration is an effort to solve various kinds of obstacles that involve various groups so that they influence in making decisions together (Sudarmo, 2009).

In various studies, it is stated that groups will tend to discuss and base decisions on information that is known by most of the group members. In the theory of group communication, symbolic convergence theory illustrates that each member in the group has a shared reality through communication (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The exchange of information by interacting between members in a group that runs continuously can be believed to lead to a common understanding in the communication process so that a communication network structure emerges.

The socio-cultural tourism shown by the puppet village tourism is an attraction that has the potential to be maintained. This tour will provide new information and experiences to tourists by involving tangible and intangible assets. The definition of tangible assets is a culture that has cultural

values, while intangible assets are representations of "software" from a community or can be interpreted as a form of knowledge, skills, or instruments that are considered as their cultural heritage (Cross et al., 2015). At this time tourist destinations will be viewed as a whole product. Destinations need a regulatory framework that can enable tourism activities to take place efficiently and fairly. The framework covers safety factors, quality standards, sustainability approaches, and regulations (Andrades & Dimanche, 2017).

Many studies have identified the competitiveness of tourist destinations by looking at the high number of visitors and market share as benchmark factors (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2016). This view has limitations because it ignores the perspective of the sustainability of tourist destinations which does not burden tourism actors in addition to pursuing high profits but still has the responsibility to maintain the balance of nature. The description of something can affect the shared belief in the scope of the group that has the same goal.

Rural tourism encourages the creativity of local entrepreneurs to increase trade, which helps in achieving income equality (Situmorang et al., 2019). The social effect of the existence of a tourist village is by changing the mindset of the community (Reynaldi, 2018). In the process of building tourism village human resources are a very important instrument. This is because the local community or residents will be frontliners and managers of tourist destinations. So that it will have an impact on increasing community welfare and culture and traditions remain sustainable. Increased opportunities and potential for regional businesses can reduce unemployment and poverty.

### **3. Research Method**

This paper analyzes models from the literature review, to give their advantages and limitations in the study of sustainable tourism development group communication. In addition, the researchers also conducted interviews with the managers of the tourism awareness group to see the reality that occurred in the group. To achieve the expected goals, the research is based on secondary sources such as theoretical literature that has been published in research journals. The published literature was analyzed to test the theoretical model used in the study. Researchers tried to identify the advantages and limitations used in the study to determine the appropriate theoretical model of group communication in the practice of sustainable tourism.

### **4. Analyzes and Results**

Several theories of group communication have been developed to measure the effectiveness of the communication carried out. The level of effectiveness can affect the satisfaction of each member. Group communication is an interaction that takes place for each individual in the group with all activities that are clear in the vision and mission as well as functions in a group. In the following, the researcher selects several important theories that the researcher considers to have a perspective in developing sustainable tourism in the puppet village tourism: Symbolic Convergence Theory; Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory; Groupthink Theory; Adaptive Structuring Theory; Socio-Egocentric and Group-Centric Model. Each of these theories has its advantages and limitations in explaining the factors that affect the integration of sustainability in the tourism business.

#### **4.1 Symbolic Convergence Theory**

Also known as fantasy-theme analysis, is a group communication theory initiated by Ernest Bormann, John Cragan, and Donald Shields. This theory discusses how everyone in the group has a

shared reality through communication and the description of something can affect mutual trust (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The existence of communication allows each member to discuss the depiction through conversations with other people. The more often it is discussed, the longer it will be believed together. This depiction is known as the Rhetorical Vision concept. Rhetorical Vision is a visual image that contains certain characters, stories, and events (Littlejohn, et al., 2017).

In the puppet village tourism awareness group, each individual has the same reality in seeing the cultural heritage that they make into a tourist destination. Cultural commodification is considered to be something they must choose to preserve their culture. Not only as a cultural product but also as an economic product. The emergence of tourism-aware groups provides benefits for the excavation and preservation values that are more organized to enrich the resource of innovations. Activities such as seeing the process of making wayang puppets so that tourists can create their puppets, studying the philosophy of the wayang story behind each puppet character are benefits that will be obtained by tourists. In the process of making the puppet itself, several factors must be passed, accuracy and patience. These factors can build a shared reality between each member of the tourism awareness group.

#### ***4.2 Effective Intercultural Workgroup Communication Theory***

The theory explains how culture and cultural diversity shape group communication, which in turn has an impact on group outcomes such as decision-making quality, satisfaction, and group work productivity (Littlejohn et al., 2017). However, this theory only focuses on groups with members who have different cultural backgrounds. John Otzel is the person who developed this theory and it is based on the input process output model. In this theory, a group with cultural diversity (input) has a frequency of interaction that creates an influence on each member of the group (process) and results in both satisfaction/dissatisfaction (output).

Before the establishment of tourism awareness group, the community or shadow puppet craftsmen carried out the manufacturing and selling process independently. Craftsmen only make shadow puppets for performance. As puppet performances began to diminish, the community or craftsmen's efforts to maintain the existence of art did not fade. Pioneered by opinion leaders from the younger generation, the development of art which is a variation of the wayang art is well developed. Although there are no cultural differences in each member of the tourism awareness group as described in this theory. However, the process of group communication frequency that occurs creates a result of satisfaction (output) that can be felt by all members of the wayang village community.

#### ***4.3 Groupthink Theory***

Groupthink is a direct result of group cohesiveness (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The theory was popularized by Irving Janis. Furthermore, Littlejohn explained that the focus of this theory lies in how certain conditions create high group satisfaction, but with ineffective outputs. This satisfaction is due to group cohesiveness, which is the degree to which a person belongs to a group. Conditions with a high level of group satisfaction but have ineffective outputs can be referred to as Groupthink. Groupthink usually occur when group cohesiveness is followed by openness, poor decision making, group isolation, inadequate input (usually from outside the group), and also situations that create a sense of stress in members (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

The development of the puppet village tourism requires a fairly long process to achieve the expected goals. Tourism destinations must have elements of a safe, orderly, clean, beautiful, friendly environment and an element of memories. To achieve these elements, it takes a collaboration of every element such as stakeholders. The success of collaboration can be seen from the element of access to resources, namely the availability of financial, technical, and other resources that support the achievement

of the agreed goals (Sudarmo, 2009). According to the researcher's observations, the development of the wayang village has not been seen optimally, because there are still several factors that have not been fulfilled. Such as highway access to tourist sites that do not support the convenience during tourist's visit.

#### ***4.4 Adaptive Structuration Theory***

Marshall Scott Poole and Gerardine DeSantis are experts who developed adaptive structuration theory to explain how information and communication technology (ICT) is used by groups and organizations. This theory explains the fact that the same information and communication technology product can be used differently by each group or organization. (Littlejohn et al., 2017) This theory has two important elements, namely structural features and spirit, namely the features possessed by technology have benefits. If synergized well, the technology will produce positive results for the group (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

The Utilization of technology to obtain information and expand the trade network of tourist destinations has been carried out by tourism awareness group. They do digital branding in attracting tourists. In addition, for the marketing of handicraft products, tourism awareness group use social media technology to reach a wider range of consumers. The use of this technology is used in various ways by each member of the group, which can be seen, in addition to preserving culture and increasing economic income.

#### ***4.5 Socio-Egocentric and Group-Centric Model***

The group communication theories assume that communication is a vital element for group effectiveness (Littlejohn et al., 2017). Joseph Bonito criticized this theory. According to Dean Hewes, communication in groups will only be done because its members have certain interests, However, Bonito theorises that egocentric theory occurs in groups when problems need to be solved easily, groups are formed in a study, informational work results and discussions are carried out in groups early on when the group was formed and members had no previous history of cooperation (Littlejohn et al., 2017). While group-centric communication theory is a form of communication that occurs when problems have to be solved because they are more difficult, groups are formed naturally and the work is problem-solving and members have a history of working together (Littlejohn et al., 2017).

Tourism awareness groups are formed because of public awareness of the importance of preserving cultural heritage. They realize that tourism is multidimensional. The group is formed naturally because the community faces problems that are considered important to be solved together. Each group member has different preferences regarding decision making, while opinion leaders have preference options and the authority to get advice and then decide what to do for the common good. The decisions taken can risk affecting personally and the whole group (Gurdal, 2018). In addition, the community lived in the same environment long before the tourism awareness group was formed, so they had unconsciously collaborated on other activities.

#### ***Conclusion***

The purpose of this study is to assess a theoretical model that is more suitable in research on the perspective of the group communication in sustainable tourism development. To achieve the objectives of this study, the research was based on secondary sources such as theoretical literature that has been published in research literature, as well as from interviews with several tourism awareness group administrators to see the reality of the group. After analyzing and evaluating in-depth the advantages and limitations of the theoretical model in the study of the perspective of group communication in sustainable

tourism development, with a case study of the puppet village. The right group communication theory to analyze is the Group-Centric Model. Factors that should be considered are group characteristics and external characteristics. Based on this theory, the conceptual research model of group communication in sustainable tourism development can be extended to other factors related to certain conditions of tourism and its groups.

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