TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HALAL TOURISM ECONOMIC POTENTIAL FOR THE EMPOWERMENT EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Taking advantage of potentials that are owned by surroundings has not yet the concern of many people despite their promising benefits, including those living in Tanah Datar Regency. It is a fact that Tanah Datar has so many economic potentials due to its tourism objects, its culture, and its culinary tour. Unfortunately, those potentials have not been well used yet. One of the potentials that it has is its halal tourism for the foreigners, especially for those from Middle East because this area has Moslems as the majority of its population. Since English has been widely used as a means of communication in tourism world, taking advantage of halal tourism economic potential for the empowerment English Foreign Language Learners is a wise action.

This paper, therefore, discussess the ways to take advantage of halal tourism economic potential for the empowerment EFL Learners.

Keywords: Halal Tourism, economic potential, EFL Learner

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a very beautiful, rich country with many tourism spots to visits. It is undeniable that tourism sector has greatly contributed to Gross National Product (GNP) of Indonesia. In the year 2000, the tourism sector in Indonesia has contributed 9.27% of Gross National Product (GNP), and able to absorb 8% labor (Arida, 2009). It is a fact that many domestics and foreign tourists are the contributors for the GNP. Of course this potential should be more developed and used.

Every region in Indonesia has its own specialties and has prospects to be developed. Among the regions is Batusangkar in West Sumatera. This town is one of the mostly visited places since it has many, interesting tourism spots, either nature, social or culture. Every year, many domestics and foreign tourists come to this town and the number always increase. The increasing number of foreign tourists to this town will give benefit to its people or community. What to do? We, the people living in the region, universities located in this region with the faculty members and the students), the local government should take maximum advantage of it.

For universities, especially, one of the ways is to get benefit of the foreign tourists to empower their students (mastering foreign language skills). The universities take advantage of the tourists visits to prepare their students for their future career. That way, the students (English major) are expected to be able to be front-line staff (as hosts) in the hospitality industry who are able to communicate effectively with guests (Blue and Harun: 2003), as an alternative job, for example. The availability of multilingual staff is, partly at least, a function of education (Leslie., Russell,& Forbes. (2002). In other words, universities (teachers) should integrate business English and English for academic purposes by bridging workplace communication and classroom use (Fuentes, 2004). Mastering foreign language skills is essential for people working in the tourism sector which is viewed as an area of business English (Cho, 2005), as it is the means for
communicating with tourists and understanding cultural differences, and for increasing employees’ job opportunities in this international industry (Leslie & Russell, 2006). That is, it deals with teaching the language needed for communication and interaction between people of different cultures in airports, tourism and travel firms, markets and hospitality (Jacob & Strutt, 1997; Seong, 2005; and Afzali & Fakharzadeh, 2009). This article, therefore, discusses the way of taking advantage of tourism for the empowerment of EFL Learners.

HOW TO EMPOWER EFL LEARNERS THROUGH HALAL TOURISM?

To empower EFL learners through halal tourism (because Batusangkar is a town with Moslems majority), the concept of Community Based Tourism (CBT) as proposed by Suansari (2003). CBT, does not seek to address the question: “How can communities benefit more from tourism?”. It seeks, instead, to address a different, developmental question: "How can tourism contribute to the process of community development?". CBT is not simply a tourism business that aims at maximizing profits for investors. Rather, it is more concerned with the impact of tourism on the community and environmental resources. There are ten principles of CBT. They are:
1. Recognizing, supporting and promoting community ownership of tourism;
2. Involving community members from the start in every aspect;
3. Promoting community pride;
4. Improving the quality of life;
5. Ensuring environmental sustainability;
6. Preserving the unique character and culture of the local area;
7. Fostering cross-cultural learning;
8. Respecting cultural differences and human dignity;
9. Distributing benefits fairly among community members;
10. Contributing a fixed percentage of income to community projects;

Based on the previous principles, in can be stated that “The utilization, processing, financing of tourism objects have to get serious attention from local governments, stakeholders and citizens of the surrounding attractions” (Brahmanto: 2013).

The local government as the Policy Maker should devote every effort to the development of the community. The government should make the local communities get involved in the process of taking advantage of the tourism activities. The development of rural tourism requires the participation of local communities in the entire development phases starting from the planning, implementation, and supervision (Dewi, Fandeli, and Baiquni: 2013).

Universities may take advantage of it by making it as hidden curriculum of the universities. Therefore, the faculty members should do the followings:

Assigning tasks for individual or unison related to tourism

Every teacher should assign the EFL learners related tourism. For the Vocabulary teacher, for example, the students should be assign to enlarge their vocabulary useful for tourism sector. For Listening teacher, the students are assigned to find recordings that contain tourism material and, then, they are assigned to practice listening comprehension. For Speaking teacher, the students are assigned to have practice speaking materials used in tourism sector. Yet, the most important skills to be trained are: listening and speaking. English communication skills are most needed for tourism workplaces, thus listening and speaking skills should be emphasized in students’ English courses. (Ghany and Latif: 2012). Therefore, for speaking especially, they should be a model for the students in communicating with English. Unfortunatly, the English language proficiency of many teachers is not sufficient to provide learners with the rich input needed for successful foreign language acquisition. (Nunan: 2003)

Another technique that the teacher can use is to assign the students to be companions of the people in the tourism object. In this case, the students are assigned to make the people living
surrounding the tourism spots to be able to use English to help them get in touch with the foreign tourists.

**Providing the students with the materials to suit the need of the region**

It means that every faculty member (teacher) should choose materials that can be useful for the students’ future career. One of the possibilities of job that the students may have is in the tourism sector. Ready or not, the teacher should try to find materials related to tourism. Unfortunately, most teachers have not yet consciously directed learning materials to suit the needs of the region, which involve cultural preservation and tourism development (Hermayati, 2007). The English courses taught to the students need to be revised in accordance with their real needs, and their expected uses of English in their workplaces. (Ghany and Latif, 2012).

**Doing public apprenticeship at the tourism spots**

The next activity that universities can do is to make students do public apprenticeship at the tourism spots. Through the program, the EFL learners can also share information with the local community about cross-cultural understanding, about table manners, etc.

The last thing to do is that the EFL learners should voluntarily find their own opportunities to make them have better English for communication.

**REFERENCES**


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