

Feasibility Study In The Aspect Of Ecotourism Destination Products, In Puncak Village, Cigugur District, Kuningan Regency

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Abstract. Since 2016 the District Government declared "Kuningan as a conservation district", but despite the declaration as a conservation district, the development of tourism businesses tends to be far from conservation values. One of the villages that wants to maintain conservation values is Puncak Village, Cigugur Sub-district on the slopes of Mount Ceremei, by becoming an ecotourism destination. This research aims to conduct a feasibility study of Puncak Village as an ecotourism destination by assessing the condition of product feasibility both in the elements of tourist attraction, amenity feasibility and accessibility feasibility as an ecotourism destination. This feasibility study was pursued with an interactive qualitative method with in-depth interviews with informants, direct observation and collecting a number of data and documents. The result of the study state that the elements of the Puncak Village tourist attraction have fulfilled high feasibility criteria. A number of potential tourist attractions have been charged with ecotourism, namely adventure tourism, agrotourism, cultural tourism, educational tourism, and MSME tourism, which support the occurrence of ecotourism values in nature conservation, cultural conservation, learning and community empowerment. In the amenity element, Puncak Village has amenity criteria that are in accordance with ecotourism, both basic amenity, complementary amenity, and supporting amenity with a community empowerment model. In the accessibility element, it has a fairly good feasibility condition, well-paved village roads, and the road to the core zone is a path with very limited access. Ecotourism activities focus on jungle, special, utilization, religious, cultural and historical zones.

Keywords. Feasibility Study, Ecotourism Destination, Tourist Attraction, Nature Conservation, Community Empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

It is required for tourism to increase environmental awareness, pay attention to the ecological environment, and increasing ecotourism demand (CREST, 2019). Environmental, social and economic challenges in increasing in the development of ecotourism led by the increase in tourism demand. For example, ecotourism is developed amid low public awareness of the environment, tourism development has a negative impact on the local ecological, cultural and economic environment. In order to meet the needs of tourist, tourism need to develop more infrastructure and create economic burden (Xu et al. 2022). These contradictions and challenges are important issues that need to be addressed by the sustainable development of ecotourism. Moreover, in the post-pandemic conditions, which tourism has suffered from many environmental issues and climate change that have not been improved (CREST, 2020). Thus, it is increasingly important to return to the path of ecotourism development in the future.

Therefore, literatures in the field of ecotourism are needed to understand research progress and issues, challenge identification, suitable methods and future ecotourism research directions. Ecotourism, which has emerged in academic literature since the late 1980s,

Received November 19, 2023; Revised Desember 01, 2023; Accepted Desember 31, 2023

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ecotourism is a special form of nature-based tourism that safeguards the welfare of local communities while protecting the environment and providing tourists with satisfying experiences and enjoyment of nature (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996)

Ecotourism main objectives emphasize on the long-term sustainable development (Whitelaw, King, and Tolkach 2014), including natural resources conservation, income generation, local participation, education and promotion of social benefits such as infrastructure and local economic development (Oladeji, Awolala, and Alabi 2022). It can also reduce poverty and boost rural economies in developing countries (Snyman 2017). (Ardoin et al. 2015) conducted a literature review, analyzing the influence of nature tourism on ecological knowledge, attitudes, behavior and potential research into the future. (Niñerola, Sánchez-Rebull, and Hernández-Lara 2019) on sustainable development of tourism, including the literature landscape and development trends. Shasha et al. (2020) reviewed the progress of ecotourism research from 2001 to 2018, providing important insight information for ecotourism research at present. Current research trends and new developments in ecotourism in terms of timeliness, data integrity, research topics or methods (Xu et al. 2022).

In Indonesia, destinations that develop ecotourism and have received awards from the Ministry of Tourism to nine of the best environment-based tourist attractions in Indonesia. From these nine places there are several similarities, among others, having the aim of educational and conservation tourism activities. Educational activities are tourist trips with added educational value, not just travelling but providing a number of educational values for all participants. Meanwhile, conservation is an effort to preserve the environment by paying attention to the benefits obtained at this time while maintaining the existence of each environmental component for future use.

As a district located at the foot of Mount Ciremai has cool air, the activities of the people are farming and gardening. One of the hamlets in Kuningan Regency is Mulya Asih Hamlet, Puncak Village, Cigugur Subdistrict, which is located at an altitude of around 1000-1300 above sea level with a population of around 1,700 people. Like the Kuningan community in general, the livelihoods of the people in Mulya Asih Hamlet are mostly farming as vegetable farmers and raising dairy cows (milk). Vegetable farming is carried out around the foot of Mount Ciremai which borders the Mount Ciremai National Park.

The geographical condition of Mulya Asih Hamlet is very beautiful with views towards the city of Kuningan and the Darma reservoir, and neighbors the archaeological site "Sagara Hyang." Currently, the farmers in Mulya Asih hamlet are elderly farmers, because the young

people there are more likely to urbanize to big cities and leave the hamlet. If this continues to happen, it is feared that the agricultural lands in Mulya Asih will be sold to tourism investors that are not in accordance with the mission of Kuningan Regency as a Conservation Regency.

In terms of maintaining the concept of Kuningan Regency as a Conservation Regency, a pilot place with an integrated ecotourism conservation concept is needed. Mulya Asih Hamlet, which is currently still beautiful, is very appropriate if it is used as a tourism site in Kuningan Regency with the concept of ecotourism and it would be a shame if in the future Mulya Asih Hamlet falls to investors who are not in accordance with the vision of Kuningan Regency as a Conservation Regency.

Previous research explains several important factors in the feasibility of ecotourism destinations. Abdurahman et al. (2016), proposed four new attributes of ecotourism product were identified, included cultural, natural, attraction, and community attributes. Ecotourism destination also need tourists' environmentally related knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and actual behaviors (Ardoin et al. 2015), while Fallis (2013) put the importance of ecotourism principle implementation. Other study proposed creative industry to support ecotourism (Hendriyana, Putra, and Sunarya 2020) and the need for destination zonation (Hidayat and Maryan 2019). Other scholars also study in ecotourism found that a significant difference was found among the satisfaction with ecotourism product and services of different groups of Geopark visitors. In many cases, compare to local travelers and those who coming from ASEAN Countries, international tourists reported high satisfaction levels (Jaafar et al. 2014). Culinary ecotourism (Untari 2016). Several evaluation criteria need to be considered, including the state of the surrounding environment, management and services, lodging, proximity to local attractions, the capacity of the area, and visitor management (Ardiansyah and Iskandar 2022).

To ensure that this hamlet can be developed with the concept of ecotourism, it is necessary to study the feasibility of ecotourism criteria owned by Mulya Asih hamlet. This research aims to assess the feasibility of peak villages to be developed as ecotourism destinations with a number of research question formulations, namely What is the condition of the feasibility of ecotourism destination attraction elements. Secondly, what is the feasibility condition of the amenity element of ecotourism destinations and thirdly, what is the feasibility condition of the accessibility element of ecotourism destinations.

METHOD

This feasibility study was carried out using interactive qualitative research methods, on a single case in Mulya Asih Hamlet, Puncak Village, Kuningan. Data collection was carried out using in-depth interviews with informants, direct observation and documentation. To maintain the validity and validity of the data, multi-source and multi-technique data collection was carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Product Aspect Feasibility Conditions in the Peak Village Ecotourism Attraction Element

Wood (2002) explains the components of ecotourism, namely contributing to the conservation of biodiversity or biodiversity, sustainable for the lives of local people, providing interpretation and learning experiences, involving responsible actions from tourists and tourism industry players. Ecotourism activities should provide for especially small-scale groups and be carried out by small-scale businesses or MSMEs. Consume only the lowest level of non-renewable resources. Emphasizes the opportunity for local people to participate, own and run businesses, especially rural communities.

From the results of the research, the potential feasibility of tourist attractions can be presented in 5 forms, namely adventure tourism, agrotourism, educational tourism, cultural tourism and MSME tourism.

1. Adventure Tourism

From the results of the research, there is a lot of potential for adventure tourism based on Mount Ceremei. The potential for natural tourist attraction is so great with beautiful natural scenery that can be utilised for adventure tourism packaging, on foot. Some types of adventure tourism include mountain climbing, trekking the slopes of Mount Cermeri to Curug Cidadali, camping activities, and Curug Cidadali Waterfall Tours. The feasibility of adventure tourism is highly dependent on collaboration between the community tourism group Kompepar Wanareksa Puncak Village and the Ceremei Mountain National Park Office. However, considering that tourism awareness group is already under the guidance of Gunung Ceremei National Park Management, it is necessary to hold follow-up cooperation, so that the wealth of mini-style can be managed through the Mount Ceremei adventure tour package, as shows in figure-1 below:

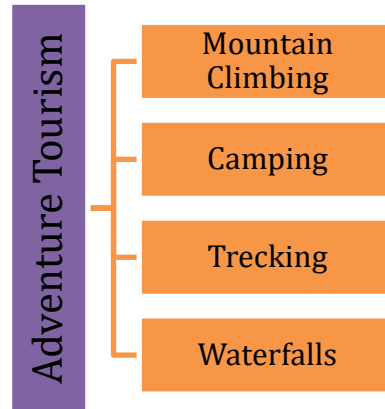


Figure-1. Potential Ecotourism Attractions - Adventure Tourism

2. Agritourism

With the fertility of the land in the Puncak village area and for generations an agricultural community, it is very potential and feasible to develop as an agrotourism attraction, namely in vegetable farming, animal husbandry and endemic fruit plantations as in the figure-2

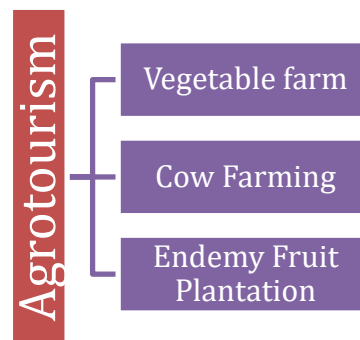


Figure-2 Ecotourism-Agriculture Potential

Vegetable farming tourism will provide opportunities for visitors to be able to interact directly with Puncak village farmers who have planted Chickpeas, Corn, Leeks, Chickpeas, Red Beans etc., in this vegetable farming tourism activity in addition to getting an explanation of the planting process, visitors can immediately get a direct picking experience on the farmer's land.

Considering that most of the residents of Puncak Village are cattle breeders, the Dairy farm tour is an important tourist attraction for visitors. In this tour, visitors can be taken to the location of the cowsheds in the middle of the residential area in the morning, then get an explanation of dairy cattle cultivation and all kinds of problems of farmers in the cattle farming business, witness the milking of cows, and witness the deposit of cow products to the cooperative. Another interesting agrotourism is related to endemic fruit plantations, especially persimmons. Puncak Village is a persimmon fruit producing area which is an endemic fruit of West Java. Visitors can be invited to persimmon fruit plantations, and get an explanation of the persimmon fruit plantation. The results are in accordance with research from Kuntari and Widiyanti (2021) which

states that agrotourism is very suitable for development in ecotourism areas.

3. Educational Tourism

The next opportunity for Puncak Village tourism in the ecotourism theme is educational tourism to fulfil the principle of learning for tourists and the host community. Forms of education that are worth developing are endemic animal education, endemic flora education, education on the use of herbal plants, and environmental education according to the following figure:

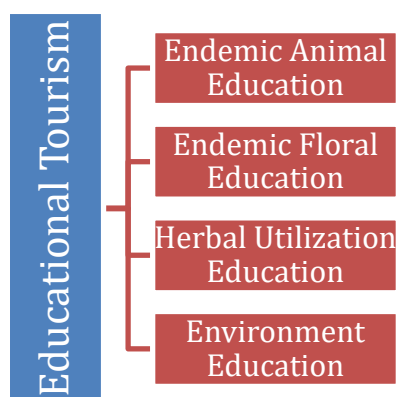


Figure-3. Ecotourism Potential - Educational Tourism

Educational tourism of endemic animals is one of the potential outcomes of ecotourism in Puncak village. With some potential endemic animals in Ceremei Mountain can be utilized as animal tourism. Puncak Village can be declared as a Javanese Eagle Sanctuary. Javanese eagles routinely fly in the Puncak Village sky area at certain hours can be studied, tools can be prepared to spy on animals, and animals can be prepared to eat so that eagles or other animals can come to the tourist activity center. The ecotourism education center can package Endemic Flora education activities, where tourists learn about some endemic plants in the Puncak Village area.

From the above activities, the principles of ecotourism will be realized, namely minimizing negative impacts on nature and culture that can damage a destination, educating tourists about the importance of conservation, emphasizing the importance of responsible business, which works with local authorities and communities to meet local needs and provide direct conservation and income benefits for the conservation and management of natural areas and protected areas.

4. Cultural Tourism

As in general, rural life has its own cultural roots. In supporting the development of ecotourism, Puncak village can develop cultural tourism attractions which include the typical Rudhat dance art in the village, Cimande martial arts culture and agricultural and religious traditions such as the following figure:

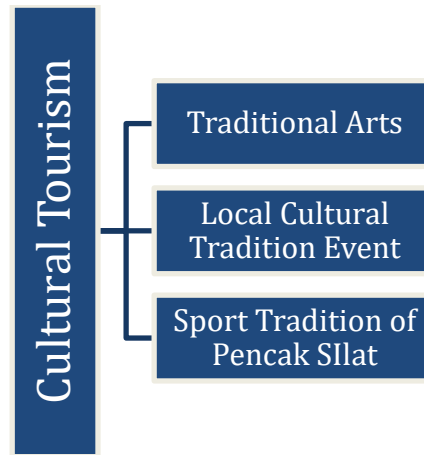


Figure-4. Ecotourism Potential - Cultural Tourism

5. Micro Small Medium Enterprise (MSME) Tourism

In order to involve the community more in the concept of ecotourism in Puncak village, it is feasible to develop tours based on MSME products, namely the process of making variety of vegetable-based foods, the process of making of variety foods made from fruit, the process of making various foods made from livestock products and the process of marinating bamboo woven souvenirs and carving typical of Puncak village,

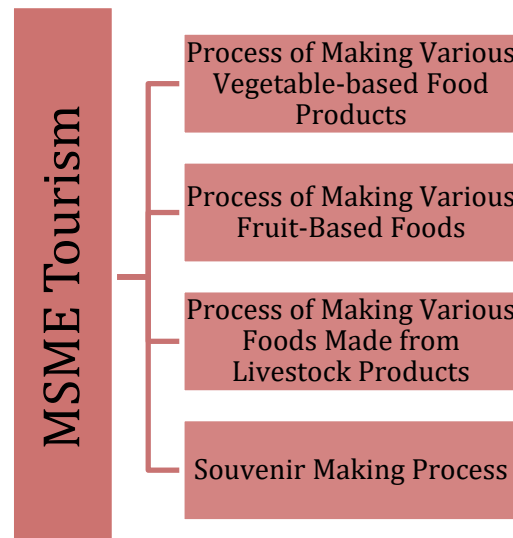


Figure 5. Ecotourism Potential - MSME Tourism

Micro, small and medium-sized home industry tourism can act as an industrial tourism attraction. This form of industry-based tourism presents tourists with a diverse selection of vegetable agricultural products and processed food sourced locally. In addition, visitors can observe the production of various fruit and livestock-based foods. The production of locally sourced souvenirs can further be offered as an educational tour on souvenir-making. The development of MSME for tourism is in line with the opinion of Hendriyana et al. (2020) that destination can use the creative industry of craft products to support tourism through an eco-design and eco-tourism approach.

Ecotourism Values in the development of Tourism Attraction Elements

In the development of tourist attractions with the concept of ecotourism through adventure tourism, agritourism, educational tourism, there are some values that emerge namely: environment conservation, cultural conservation, environment education, cultural education, and community empowerment value. The emergence of these five values guarantees that ecotourism is implemented, is presented in the following figure:

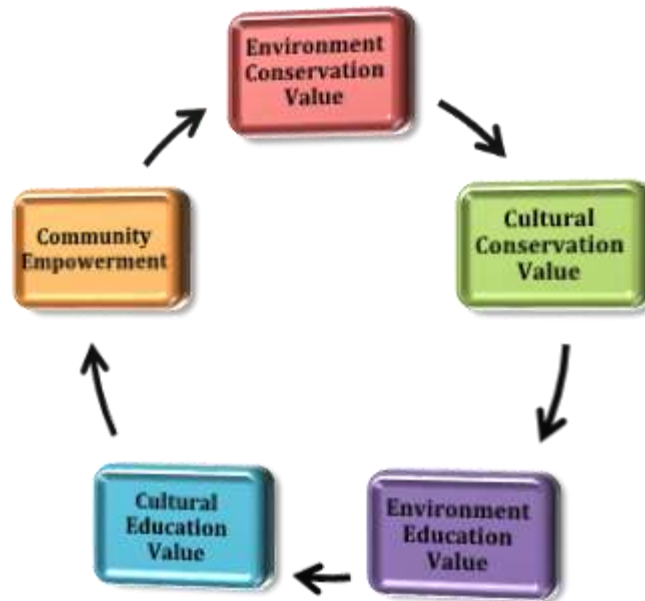


Figure 6. Ecotourism Values in Tourism Attraction/Attraction Elements

1. Environmental Conservation Value

Puncak Village as a place to live endemic animal habitats such as Javan eagles, wild boars, pangolins, hedgehogs, monkeys, can cooperate with the Ceremei Mountain National Park Agency (BTNGC) to document endemic animals as material for endemic animal environmental education tourism. In the implementation of documentation and conservation learning, use local residents.

2. Cultural Conservation Value

The existence of ecotourism that will be developed in Puncak village will reactivate local arts and cultural activities. Rudhat art as a regional characteristic can be presented and taught to visitors. The community can make art practice as a routine activity and can be displayed at welcoming events and art attraction performances. Traditions in religion and agricultural traditions that already exist in Puncak village can be packaged as a cultural event tourism attraction for visitors.

3. Environmental Education Value

One of the important emphases in ecotourism is the occurrence of learning for both visitors and

hosts. Puncak Village, which is the last village next to the Mount Ceremei National Park, needs to emphasize both the community and visitors about environmental values. Packaged tourism activities must ensure the internalization of these environmental values in tourist activities. In this case, it fulfils the ecotourism criteria in the conservation aspect, which is that these tourism activities help local nature conservation efforts with the minimum negative impact possible.

4. Cultural Education Value

The presentation of cultural attractions both in the form of art and religious-based cultural events and based on the life of the agricultural community, in ecotourism needs to be packaged to be able to become a cultural educational value both for the community and for visitors. In this case, the eligibility in the Education criteria is fulfilled, namely tourists who take part in the tour will gain knowledge about the unique biological, ecosystem and social life in the area visited.

5. Value of Community Empowerment

One of the important elements of ecotourism assessment is if in Puncak village tourism activities there is always community involvement. Community involvement that can be done is in terms of adventure tourism involving tourism awareness group administrators under the guidance of the Ceremei Mountain National Park, agrotourism tourism by involving farmers and dairy farmers, herbal education tourism by involving Chemist's formulator, herbal plant farmers and PKK women's groups in Puncak Village. Cultural tourism involves the community in presenting art, as organizers and participants in cultural event activities. In this case, there is a fulfilment of ecotourism criteria in the social aspect, namely the community gets the opportunity to carry out these activities.

Product Aspect Feasibility Conditions in the Amenity Element of Puncak Village Ecotourism

Accommodation In tourism activities requires the role of accommodation facilities. The availability of accommodation at a tourist location is an important factor for visitors who want to stay at that location. According to (Ginting et al. 2021) stated that accommodation is one of the factors that make visitors interested in making a tourist visit. The availability of accommodation in tourist sites is very helpful for visitors when visitors want to stay at the location they visit.

Supporting Facilities and Infrastructure Tourism facilities referred to here are tourism activities that produce goods and services to meet the needs of tourists, starting from tourists leaving for tourist destinations, until returning to their home countries. According to the theory put forward by Pendit (2006) that facilities are all facilities whose function is to meet the needs of tourists who live for a while in the tourist destination they visit, including restaurants, bars, cafes and others. According to Pendit (2006) the world of tourism is known 3 (three) facilities

that complement each other, namely:

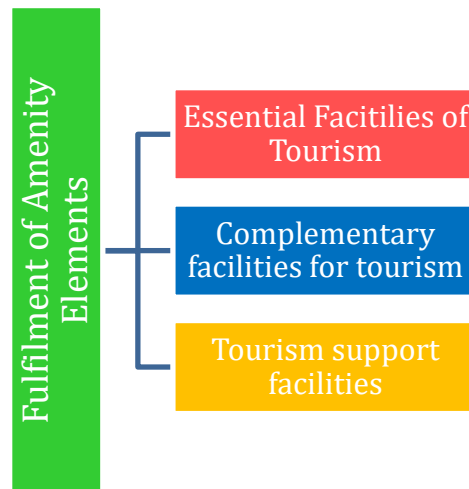


Figure-7 Provision of Amenities for Ecotourism in Puncak Village

a) Main tourism superstructures

are tourism actors whose lives are highly dependent on tourist traffic and other travelers ". Its function is to provide basic facilities that can provide services for the arrival of tourists, namely housing facilities, eating and drinking in stalls or cafes.

b) Supplementing tourism superstructure

namely tourism business activities that provide facilities for recreation whose function not only complements the basic facilities but can make tourists feel at home and want to stay longer in tourist areas. Included in this are gazebos, seating in parks, gates, ticketing, health facilities, prayer rooms, toilets.

c) Means of supporting tourism

Supporting Tourism Superstructure, namely tourism business activities that support basic facilities and complementary facilities that have a function to make tourists feel entertained and spend more money in the places they visit, which are available in Puncak Village are grocery stores, souvenirs, regional arts entertainment.

Product Aspect Feasibility Condition in the Accessibility Element of Puncak Village Ecotourism

In terms of accessibility, it is important to highlight the necessity of implementing regional tourism zoning and visitor management plans that are specifically tailored to natural areas or those earmarked to become environmental destinations. It is crucial to emphasize the employment of environmental and social baseline studies, along with long-term monitoring program, in order to evaluate and limit the potential impacts. The primary objective is to maximize economic advantages for host nations, businesses and local communities,

particularly those residing within and neighboring natural areas and protected territories. Strive to ensure that the expansion of tourism does not surpass the limits of acceptable social and environmental change that have been established by researchers in partnership with local inhabitants. Employ infrastructure that is environmentally friendly, reduces the reliance on fossil fuels, preserves regional flora and fauna, and harmonizes with the natural and cultural landscape.

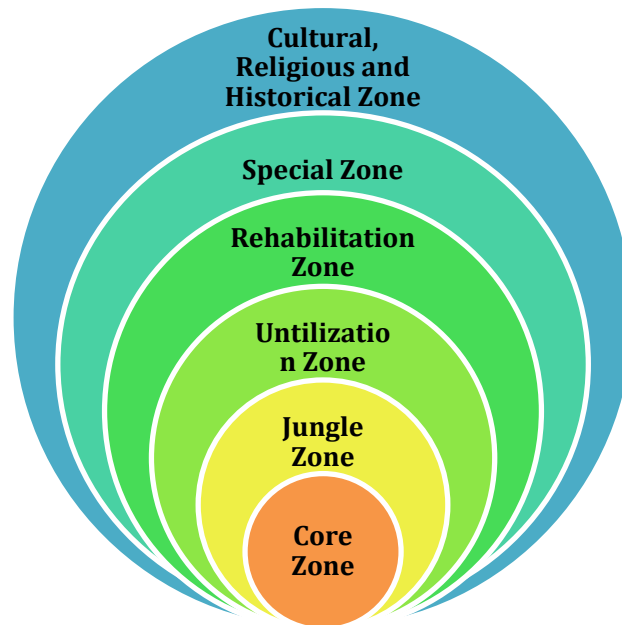


Figure-8 Zonation of Mount Ceremei National Park Area

The division of access areas for tourist activities in Puncak Village is divided into the following zonation:

1. The Core Zone

is the Ceremei Mountain National Park (TMNGC) area which is absolutely protected and no changes are allowed, this area is the full authority of the TMNGC Hall, there is no access for tourists, only limited to environmental research activities.

2. The Jungle Zone

is part of the National Park which because of its condition and potential is able to support the interests of preservation in the core zone and utilization zone, in this area the community can manage under the guidance and cooperation with the National Park Office, which includes Curug Cidadali, Kesemek Forest, Campground. This zone is given access to tourists with limited tourist purposes, namely adventure and research, with strict visitor restrictions.

3. Utilization Zone

is part of the Mount Ceremei National Park which is determined because of its location and natural conditions and potential which is mainly used for the benefit of natural tourism and its

natural environmental conditions. In this area, communities and investors can utilize the area for tourism activities both education, agricultural tourism, and livestock tourism, in this area tourists are given access to ecotourism activities.

4. Special Zone

is a part of TNGC that is designated as an area for the settlement of community groups and their life activities and or for the purposes of building telecommunications and electricity facilities, transport facilities and others of a strategic nature. In this area the community can maximize the provision of tourism amenities such as homestays, eating and drinking facilities, educational tours of livestock in community settlements. The provision of complementary and supporting facilities, namely prayer rooms, toilets, health and security facilities, souvenir center and souvenir center that can be accessed by tourists, is part of the development of village MSMEs so that the community is increasingly empowered.

5. Religion, Culture and History Zone,

is part of TNGC which is designated as an area for religious activities, customary and cultural activities, protection of cultural or historical values. The area in the Ceremei Mountain area has a historical area for the tomb of the founder of Puncak Village, and this area can be accessed by tourists and the community to carry out religious and cultural agricultural events.

One important aspect of a destination is accessibility or the smooth movement of a person from one place to another. The movement can be in short, medium and long distances. To make these moves, adequate mobility support facilities are needed, such as good road access, the presence of public transport and clear directions. Improving accessibility and security is paramount to enhance natural resource-based ecotourism. It is imperative to prioritize improving these two components to establish the Ecotourism area as a premier ecotourism destination (Rosmaiti and Iswahyudi 2022)

Puncak Village already has a good condition and paved accessibility of the main village road. However, it is necessary to realise the difficulty of access because the road tends to rise and winding towards the mountainside. There is already city transport accessing to Puncak village, but for ecotourism activities all public and private transport will stop at the parking area of the selected area. After the parking area, ojek transport will be provided from residents or the choice of tourists to walk. This is in order to maintain the sustainability of nature. Resident motorbikes are intended to create ease of transport, in addition to reaching a tourist spot but also the time required, signposting to tourist sites and so on.

CONCLUSION

1. In the aspect of product elements of tourist attractions have met the criteria of high feasibility, Mulya Asih Hamlet in Puncak Village has a million potential ecotourism-charged tourist attractions, namely adventure tourism, agrotourism, educational tourism, cultural tourism and MSME tourism. From the results of the analysis of tourism potential, it supports the occurrence of ecotourism values in nature conservation, cultural conservation, learning and community empowerment.
2. In the aspect of amenity element products, Mulya Asih Hamlet, Puncak Village has amenity criteria that are in accordance with ecotourism, both basic amenity, namely lodging and eating and drinking facilities, complementary amenity such as religious facilities, health facilities and security facilities, as well as supporting amenity, namely shops, souvenirs and souvenirs which are products from MSMEs, made from local agricultural and livestock products, and community empowerment.
3. In the product aspect of the accessibility element, it has a fairly good feasibility condition, the village road is well paved, and the road to the core zone is a path with very limited access. Ecotourism activities focus on the jungle zone, special zone, utilization zone, religious, cultural and historical zones.

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