

The Development Strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism and Its Impact toward Community Economy in Langkat Regency

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ABSTRACT

The development of tourism area brings many benefits to the community economically, socially and culturally. This study aims to analyse the development strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism to improve the community economy and to analyse the influence of community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure on the community economy in Langkat Regency. This study was conducted in Bukit Lawang Ecotourism, Sei Bahorok District, Langkat Regency towards Bukit Lawang tourism visitors with a sample of 99 respondents selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaire and analysed using SWOT analysis and quantitative descriptive approach. The SWOT analysis revealed that the potential development strategy to use is S-O (Strength-Opportunity). It refers to a strategy using the strengths by taking advantage of strategic opportunities. It allows the implementation of strategies that support aggressive growth policies. Moreover, the results showed a positive influence of community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure on the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism in improving the community economy in Langkat Regency. Community participation and infrastructure significantly affect the development of the tourist site. Finally, the implication of the study is discussed further in this paper.

Keywords: Human Resources Competence, Implementation of RMIS, Organizational

Commitment, Ease of Use of Information Systems.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism sector holds significant contributions to the national development. Besides generating income, it also increases the revenue as it highly correlates to foreign investment (Law No. 10 of 2009). Tourism activity has been a great potential to a country's economy and its development has been prioritized in several countries, especially in the developing countries like Indonesia, as it has wide areas and various sources to attract visitors that increase visitation rates. Indonesia has a lot of natural resources specifically natural tourism objects and affluent cultures that can be found over its regions.

One of the regions with higher tourism potentials is Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. This area can be a new magnet for the tourism sectors in North Sumatra. There can be found many tourism sites in this region. Among those sites, Bukit Lawang seems to have higher visitation rates and to be the most favorable sites to visit. Bukit Lawang tourism site is known as an environmental tourism or conservation site or it is also to be called ecotourism site.

In general, the objective of ecotourism is to encourage and increase community economy in terms of institution, education, community participation, job opportunity, and infrastructure. However,

some perspectives claim that natural tourism in the form of ecotourism has not yet successfully contributed to be natural conservation tools or even to escalate community economy. One of the challenges is that obtaining funding for the purpose of intensifying tourism activities seems to be difficult. The management of ecotourism has employed the funding from tourism income obtained from visitors, which is considered as a refunding of management fee and the effort to conserve tourism activity. These are considered not optimally achieved. One of the examples is the Bukit Lawang Ecotourism. The development of this region requires relatively high investment especially in terms of planning, executing the development and developing basic factors which all needs high attentions. Those basic factors include the objects and tourism attractions, tourism facilities and infrastructures, and community or environment.

The development of a tourist area is greatly influenced by tourist attractions available in the site. The tourist attraction becomes a strength or a factor that can influence the development of tourism sites. This aspect can increase the number of visitors to have a visit to the tourism sites. The amount of tourism attractiveness can influence the number of tourist visitation (Spillane, 1994). According to Yoeti (2001:177), a tourism area needs to fulfill three of the following requirements: (1) "Something to see", it means that the tourism objects and tourist attractions are different to what other regions might have; (2) "Something to do", it means that there are many objects that can be visited or witnessed, and there must be a lot of recreational facilities provided or amusement aspects that can make visitors convenient staying in the location; and (3) "Something to buy", this means that the area provides the place selling souvenirs and traditional crafts from the local products that visitors can take home. In addition, the tourism site should also offer other facilities, such as money changer, bank, post

office, calling centres, and others. In other words, it is essential to equip a tourism site with many kinds of facilities that can be contributing factors to support the development of a tourism site. It can be done by facilitating attractions that can entertain the visitors and make them enjoyed, providing accessible transportation, accommodation and other sufficient facilities to fulfill the visitors' need during their stay in the area.

The development of tourism sector aims to increase living quality and community's welfare by providing benefit that can fulfill the community need, besides contributing to government revenue, primarily in the funding sector toward government administration and government function. Furthermore, the development of tourism sector in Langkat Regency can trigger the acceleration of socio-economic development. This happens as an open opportunity of job vacancy for the local community. At the same time, the development of tourism sectors in Langkat Regency can encourage the growth and the extensification of the region in a direct or indirect way, either physically (e.g., the availability of hotels, cottages, restaurants, transportations and other facilities), or socially, culturally and economically.

According to Ridwan (2012:39-52), there are five approaches of tourism development plans, namely: (1) community empowerment, (2) sustainability, (3) systematicity, (4) regionality, and (5) supply and demand. Thorough a comprehensive development strategy that can accommodate all aspects related to tourism development efforts, the advancement of ecotourism can be on track and well-planned. Also, engaging community participation in developing the tourism sites can invite many visitors to come. A research conducted by Delita, Yetti, and Sidauruk (2017) revealed that the development strategy of *Pemandian Mual Mata* tourism is providing the site with sufficient facilities, such as accessible main road, transportations, accommodations, tourism attraction,

tourism promotion and tourism products development as well as community participation. Besides, the research conducted by Handayani (2007) showed that there is a greater influence of community participation on tourism development. In addition, Batubara (2013) concluded that tourism attractions and supporting facilities are the factors contribute to the positive influence and are significant to the optimisation of visitation to Muara subdistrict, North Tapanuli Regency. Another aspect is information and promotions, these factors seem to provide positive and significant impacts toward the optimization of visitation to the Muara site. Meanwhile, the environmental quality seems to have positive but insignificant influences toward the optimisation of visitors' visitations. The study of Siahaan, Nasution, and Purwoko (2014) showed that the development of housing area in Siantar Marimbun subdistrict shows a positive influence to the community income and infrastructure development. This research confirmed that the higher level of entrepreneurship capacity of the community has, the greater range of people's creativity

in the area can be identified (Kaslam, 2017). This factor is also affected by significant influences and motivations and the role of youth toward the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Batu Bara Regency (Suhendrik & Dalimunthe, 2016).

Based on the above explanation, this research aims to analyse the management strategy of the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism to improve the economy of the community in Langkat Regency and to analyse the influence of community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure on the community economy in Langkat Regency. This research proposes the following hypothesis:

1. The development strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism shows a positive impact toward the increase of the economy of the community in Langkat Regency.
2. Participation, education, institution, infrastructure and job opportunity have a positive influence on the increase of the community economy.

RESEARCH METHODS

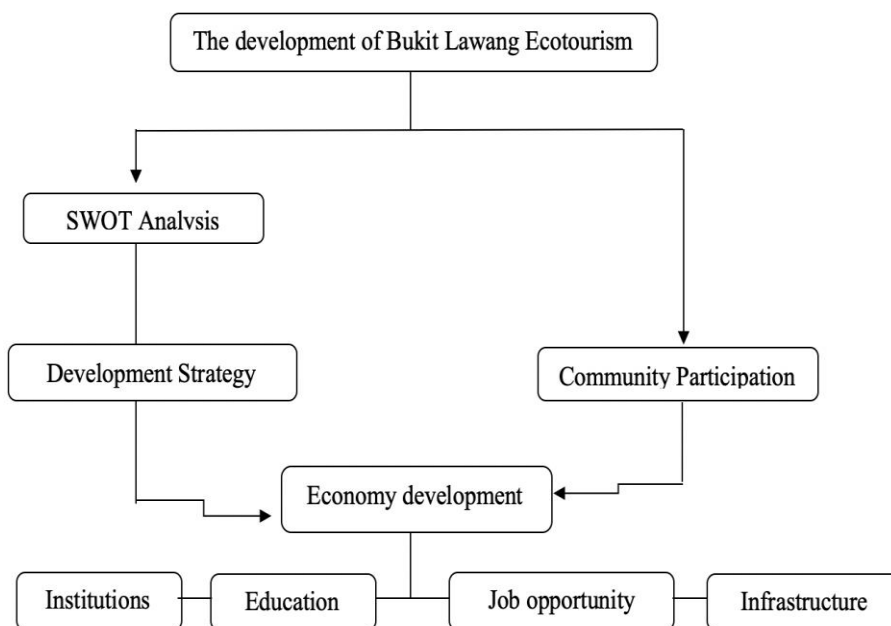


Figure 1. Research framework

The research employing a quantitative descriptive method was conducted at Langkat Regency North Sumatera Province, precisely at Bukit Lawang Ecotourism. It was held from August to November 2020. The researchers analysed the development strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism toward the community economy. Community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism toward the community economy was also analysed. The framework of this research is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

This research used primary and secondary data. The primary data were directly collected during field research by direct observation and administering the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained from collecting data by other researchers or institutions in the form of publications, reports, documents, and other related books that are relevant to this research.

Table 1. Respondents' demographic background

Demographic Background		Number of Participant	Percentage
Gender	Male	86	86.86 %
	Female	13	13.13 %
Age	17-25	8	8.08 %
	26-35	35	35.35 %
	36-45	34	34.34 %
	46-55	16	16.26 %
	Above 55	6	6.06 %
Occupation	No job	9	9.09 %
	Civil servant	24	24.24 %
	Village coordinators	7	7.07 %
	Entrepreneurs	27	27.27%
	Farmers	12	12.12%
	College Students	20	20.2%
Education level	Graduated from primary school	8	8.08%
	Graduated from secondary school	14	14.14%
	Graduated from senior high school	22	22.2%
	Bachelor's degree	36	36.3%
	Master's degree	19	19.9%
Place of origin	Langkat Regency	14	14.4%
	Binjai City	24	24.2%
	Medan City	39	39.3%
	Deli Serdang	10	10.1%
	Regencies/other cities	12	12.2%

Source: Primary data, 2020

This study involved 99 respondents selected based on a purposive sampling

technique. The samples were the visitors of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism which were selected proportionally. The respondents were selected based on the following classifications: (1) respondents' age criteria between 17 to 55 years; (2) respondents' education level, starting from elementary school to magister level, the level of education is included to certify if the respondents are eligible to answer the questions related to tourism sectors and regional development; (3) respondents' occupation information, either they have jobs, enterprises or small businesses, or not working at all; (4) respondents' main income, which relates to visitors' feasibility and community awareness to take part in advancing the tourism site. Respondents' demographic background of this study is illustrated in **Table 1**.

The data in this research were collected through observation, interview, literature review, and documentation methods. The instrument used in this study was the questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was tested using Corrected Item Total Correlation while the reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The result of validity test showed that all questions on community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, infrastructure and regional development variables are confirmed to be valid.

The data in this research were analysed by using Strengths, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis. This analysis is based on logic that aims to maximize the strengths and opportunities factors. Meanwhile, at the same time, it can minimise the weaknesses and threats. The devise used to analyse the data was internal factor evaluation matrix dan external factor evaluation matrix, SWOT diagram and SWOT matrix. Moreover, the influence of community participation, education, job opportunity, institution and infrastructure of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism toward the community economy was analysed using a multiple linear regression. According to

Wijaya (2013), multiple linear regression is used to test the influence of more than one independent variable toward the dependent variable. Prior to hypothesis test using regression analysis, classic assumption test was applied, including normality test, multicollinearity test, heteroscedasticity test, simultaneous test (F-test), and partial test (t-test).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Analysis of Development Strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism

In regard to its attractiveness, Bukit Lawang Ecotourism offers the uniqueness of its natural resources, such as the Sumatran orang utan sanctuary, panoramic view of tropical rainforest, and flora and fauna conservation area. Rhinos, elephants, and tigers are among those animals habituating the Bukit Lawang forest. Several tourism activities to perform in Bukit Lawang include enjoying the natural views, tracking, researching and some other sporting activities such as running.

In relation to its accessibility and accommodation, the condition of the main road from the capital city of North Sumatera, Medan, up to Bukit Lawang village, Bahorok sub-district, Langkat Regency is considered to be appropriate. The distance is about 120 km from the capital city to the site by taking inter-city bus taking 3-4 hours from the city central. The main gate of Bukit Lawang is located one kilometer from Gotong Royong Station. It is also possible to take local public transport, such as *betor* (rickshaw) and spending IDR 5000 or take a walk to the site.

The supporting facilities to be found within 9 Km in the nearby area are a dine-in restaurant, traditional market and public transport station. Meanwhile, the infrastructures that can be found are health facility (*Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat* or called *Puskesmas*), mosque, and electric network. Some facilities available in Bukit Lawang site are natural tourism cottages, in which the visitors could spend IDR 150.000 up to IDR 600.000 per night. Other tourism facilities offered in Bukit Lawang includes restaurant, camping ground, feeding site, and canoes for crossing the river to Leuser conservative area. To ease the visitors, there are many experienced local tour guides who can lead the exploration.

The implementation of the development strategy is believed to give a good impact on the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism and help improve the economy of the local community because the increasing number of visitors can create a new market that contributes to their economy. Currently, Indonesia has a great opportunity to alleviate poverty by learning poverty problems in forest areas, and how government can overcome cross-sectoral problems and monitor changes that occurs. The government should be involved in setting the price because it has a broad impact on environmental sustainability and society at large. Subsidies are still highly needed to attract investment into Indonesian natural tourism and most importantly, the development of natural tourism must be able to improve the welfare of the local community (Todaro, 2003).

2. Development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism Using SWOT Analysis

Table 2. Analysis of internal factors

Internal Factors				
Strength	Ra-te	Weight	Rate x Weight	Code
Located in a strategic area	4,00	0,13052	0,52	S1
Having a unique natural attract-tion and beautiful panorama	3,80	0,15742	0,60	S2
Having diverse cultures	3,04	0,14666	0,45	S3
Designed for natu-ral science researchers and an affordable camping spot	3,00	0,14581	0,44	S4
			2,00	

Source: Primary data, 2020

Table 2 Continued...

Weakness	Ra-te	Weight	Rate x Wei-ght	Code
Lack of promotions and socialisasti-ons related to the capacity of the tourism site	2.24	0.10844	0.24	W1
Limited budget for developing the tourism site	2.16	0.10617	0.23	W2
The management has not yet been professional	2.32	0.11183	0.26	W3
The infrastructure has not yet been sufficient	1.88	0.09315	0.18	W4
			0.91	
Total of Internal Factors			2.91	

Source: Primary data, 2020

Table 3. Analysis of eksternal factors

Eksternal Factors				
Opportu-nity	Ra-te	Weight	Rate x Wei-ght	Co-de
Open tourism marketing	3.92	0.134855	0.53	O1
Research location for natural tourism and flora and fauna	3.96	0.134855	0.53	O2
Providing attractive spots for photoshot and local cultural gifts	2.52	0.125519	0.32	O3
Organizing an annual tourism event involving local cultures	3.48	0.137967	0.48	O4
			1.86	
Threat	Ra-te	Weight	Rate x Weight	Co-de
Natural disasters, such as landslide and flood	3.36	0.135633	0.46	T1
Development of other tourism sites around Bukit Lawang Ecotourism	2.80	0.12111	0.34	T2
There is a negative image inside tourist activities	2.52	0.112033	0.28	T3
Unpredictable weather and Covid-19 pandemic	2.16	0.09802	0.21	T4
			1.29	
Total of Eksternal Factors			3.15	

Source: Primary data, 2020

The SWOT analysis was utilised to determine a strategy for developing community-based tourism at Bukit Lawang. Internal conditions of the site, both positive (strength) and negative (weakness), are regarded as internal factors, while threat and opportunity are considered as external factors. The internal and external factors were listed and then analyzed. The results are illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3.

To determine the development strategy of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism site, a matrix space was generated (see **Figure 2**). The results showed that the strategy supporting the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism site is in Quadrant I, which is S-O (Strength-Opportunity) strategy. That is an aggressive strategy taking advantage of the strength optimally to achieve opportunity.

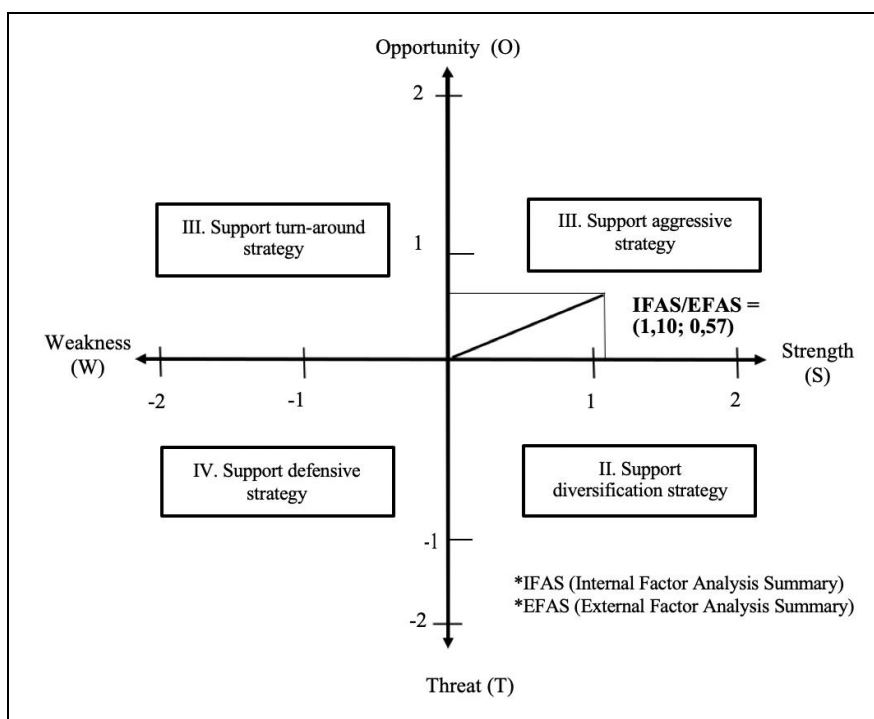


Figure 2. Space Matrix of SWOT Analysis

Bukit Lawang Ecotourism can be offered as an alternative tourist destination for domestic and foreign tourists who seek natural attractions. Besides, it can be used as a location for scholars and academicians living in Medan City who need to carry out activities in the open air or it can be employed as a research location for flora and fauna studies. The government can also organize cross-country competitions to attract enthusiasm of the community and to promote environmental care programs.

3. The Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic on Bukit Lawang Ecotourism Site

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the tourism sector. The tourism sector in Langkat Regency has been paralyzed due to the temporary closure during the pandemic. The pressure on the tourism industry is evident from the large decline in foreign visitors. The decline also occurs due to a slowdown in domestic travel. It is most likely because Indonesians are so worried about Covid-19 infection that they are reluctant to travel. This decline has impacted Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and employment opportunities.

Public participation, in this case as local tourists, during the Covid 19 pandemic is an important factor in improving the economy of the local community in Bukit Lawang area. Bukit Lawang Ecotourism was closed during the Covid 19 pandemic and reopened on July 4, 2020 by following health protocols, based on the Circular Letter of the Regent of Langkat Regency No 430-1028/DISPARBUT- LKT/2020. Based on the visitor information, during the Covid 19 outbreak, the number of visitors has decreased by 75% compared to the previous year. In addition to the Covid 19, natural disasters such as floods and landslides have become a threat to the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism. Based on the research results, the number of visitors amid the Covid-19 outbreak from March to November 2020 has decreased. This condition leads to the decrease in the

regional competitiveness of the tourism sector. As a result, it decreases the income of the community, specifically those around the Bukit Lawang Ecotourism area.

The Effect of Community Participation, Education, Job Opportunity, Institution, and Infrastructure of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism on the Community Economy

Multiple linear regression was calculated to test if regional development is significantly predicted by community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure of Bukit Lawang ecotourism. A significant regression equation was found ($F(5, 93) = 17.078$, $p < .05$ with an R^2 of $.479$). Thus, community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure positively and significantly influence community economy. The value of R^2 ($.479$) shows that community participation, education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure influence regional development by 47.9%. Furthermore, the partial t-test was used to test the effect of each independent variable. The results found that community participation positively and significantly affects regional development in improving the community economy, $b = .485$, $t(93) = 4.739$, $p < .05$. That means the increase in community participation will improve regional development that impacts the economy of community of Bukit Lawang by $.485$. Similarly, infrastructure positively and significantly affects regional development in improving the community economy, $b = .518$, $t(93) = 3.686$, $p < .05$. This finding infers that the improved infrastructure in Bukit Lawang site will foster the regional development in the site by $.518$.

Moreover, regression coefficients showed a positive relationship between other variables- i.e., education ($b=0.205$), job opportunity ($b= 0.203$), and institution ($b= 0.036$) and regional development. However, education ($t(93)=1.483$, $p=0.142$), job opportunity ($t(93)=1.544$, $p=0.126$), dan institution ($t(93)=1.088$, $p=0.699$)

insignificantly affect regional development in improving the community economy.

Regarding community participation, the finding is aligned with the study of Bratt and Fainstein (as cited in Wibawa & Budiasa, 2018), revealing that community participation becomes a driving component for information exchange to build entrepreneurship. The community is likely to derive benefit from entrepreneurship, including encouraging economic growth by leading to rising income, improving living standards, increasing investment opportunities, developing technologies, developing skills, and increasing employment opportunities. However, in fact, the community still has limited involvement in the provision and management of homestays, parking area, souvenirs and restaurants at tourist sites. The government has made efforts to increase community participation through the initiation of the formation of tourism awareness groups in every village in Bukit Lawang Ecotourism area. Increasing human resources in tourism services is an important part of community participation and the success of a development program depends on their participation. For that reason, the local government of Langkat Regency, should conduct training for the community to more actively participate and improve themselves in welcoming tourists.

Moreover, in respect of infrastructure, the finding is supported by Handayani (2007) which provides empirical evidence that government policy has been directed at providing subsidies, tax incentives and financial support to develop human resources to ensure accelerated development. In addition, the influence of education, job opportunity, institution, and infrastructure in the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism is embodied in the entertainment provision, the beauty of nature, and traditional arts so as to encourage the increase in visitors that gives an impact on the community welfare. The contribution to the development of rural tourism objects has an influence on the

community welfare since the community earns income by getting a job from hotels, inns and restaurants as well as by selling food, drinks, and souvenirs (Manurung, 2011). Thus, tourism development needs to provide several important aspects, namely tourist attraction, accessibility, activities and amenities (Todaro, 2003).

To support the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism, the local government of Langkat Regency can develop a strategic tourism marketing by offering affordable tourism products and services with a wide variety of choices that can attract more visitors and providing attractive offers not only on weekends but also weekdays. Besides, professional management is needed to make Bukit Lawang Ecotourism more attractive and more family-friendly. Coordination with the private sectors and the community is also important to attract investors and the government. It can be done through cooperative partnership based on agreement and mutual needs in order to increase capability in a particular business. These strategies aim to support the sustainability of tourism development in terms of infrastructure, accommodation, additional tourist attractions and other facilities that have not been professionally provided.

Therefore, as a concluding remark, the development of tourism sector is likely to have a positive impact on regional development in the tourism site. It also can increase regional income, improve education, and provide job opportunity. A high participation of the community, sufficient infrastructure supporting ecotourism, the role of institutions and academicians as well as employment opportunity can certainly encourage the improvement of the community economy and welfare.

CONCLUSION

The results of SWOT analysis suggest that the first quadrant of the SWOT analysis matrix is highly profitable for Bukit Lawang Ecotourism. That is, SO (Strength-

Opportunity) strategy that builds on strength by taking advantage of opportunities; thus, the opportunities can be maximally explored. This situation supports tourism development to improve the economy of community in Langkat Regency. Moreover, the results of the multiple regression analysis found that community participation, education, institution, job opportunity and infrastructure have a positive effect on the community economy in Bukit Lawang Ecotourism area. Community participation and infrastructure significantly influence tourism development in improving the community economy. Meanwhile, education, institution and job opportunity have a positive but an insignificant impact on tourism development in Bukit Lawang Ecotourism.

This study recommends that it be important to optimize community participation, infrastructure, education, institutions and employment in tourism planning or floating to be more effective and successful in development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism for local economic improvement. Synchronization of the management and development of infrastructure to access Bukit Lawang Ecotourism is necessary. The local government needs to effectively allocate funding for the development of local leading tourism sector through coordinations with all private parties. The government also needs to establish better and more sustainable cooperation with competent and experienced parties in the tourism sector, such as diving centers, travel agents, and hotels. This aims to build understanding, communication and knowledge regarding the development of Bukit Lawang Ecotourism. The local community should also be involved in management of tourist sites, such as in providing tourism facilities (e.g., homestays, cottages, restaurants), selling souvenirs and improving infrastructure. Finally, the government and community should continue maintaining the beauty of the panorama and environment that surround the ecotourism sites by

minimizing land tenure, land use change, and deforestation in order to sustain the natural ecosystems.

Acknowledgement: None

Conflict of Interest: None

Source of Funding: None

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How to cite this article: Fhonna DR, Lubis S, Purwoko A. The development strategy of bukit lawang ecotourism and its impact toward community economy in Langkat Regency. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2021; 8(7): 67-76. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52403/ijrr.20210711>
