

An Empirical Study on the Sustainable Tourism in West Sumatera: A Case of *Bilih* Fish Product

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ABSTRACT

This aim of this research is focused on the innovation of the culinary products called Bilih Fish (*Mystacoleucus Padangensis*) as the tourism destination and as one of the main products on the sustainable tourism ecosystem in West Sumatera of Indonesia. Bilih fish (*Mystacoleucus Padangensis*) is endemic and only can be found in Singkarak Lake of West Sumatera Province. The research problem was about sustainability issue of the Bilih fish on the supply chain ecosystem as well as significant strength of sustainable tourism in West Sumatera, Indonesia. The research used qualitative approach using primary data sources where data were collected by using direct non-participant observation and structured-interview techniques. Interview was conducted with Bilih fish entrepreneur. In addition, this research also used the secondary data used research notes from the Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIGS) which was tabulated on the data analysis by using validity and triangulation techniques. This research shows strategic ecosystem of fisherman Bilih fish integrated into tourists empowering local society for a sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Culinary Tourism, Bilih Fish, Tourism, Sustainable Tourism, West Sumatera

ABSTRAK

*Tujuan penelitian ini berfokus pada inovasi produk kuliner bernama Ikan Bilih (*Mystacoleucus Padangensis*) sebagai destinasi wisata dan sebagai salah satu produk unggulan ekosistem pariwisata berkelanjutan di Sumatera Barat, Indonesia. Ikan bilih (*Mystacoleucus padangensis*) merupakan hewan endemik yang hanya dapat ditemukan di Danau Singkarak, Provinsi Sumatera Barat. Masalah penelitian ini adalah tentang isu keberlanjutan ikan Bilih pada ekosistem rantai pasok serta dampak yang signifikan dari pariwisata berkelanjutan di Sumatera Barat, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menggunakan sumber data primer, dimana proses pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan teknik observasi langsung nonpartisipan dan teknik wawancara terstruktur. Wawancara dilakukan dengan pelaku usaha Ikan Bilih, pengurus organisasi Masyarakat Indikasi Geografis (MIGS) Singkarak. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menggunakan data sekunder berupa catatan penelitian dari Masyarakat Indikasi Geografis (MIGS) Singkarak yang analisis datanya ditabulasikan dengan menggunakan teknik validitas dan triangulasi. Penelitian ini menunjukkan ekosistem strategis nelayan ikan Bilih yang terintegrasi dengan wisatawan untuk pemberdayaan masyarakat lokal untuk pariwisata berkelanjutan.*

Kata Kunci: Wisata Kuliner, Ikan Bilih, Pariwisata Berkelanjutan, Sumatera Barat

Introduction

Singkarak Lake is located in West Sumatra where it is the second largest lake on the Sumatera Island after Toba Lake (Purnomo, 2005). It has a high tourist attraction value for the

development of tourism supported by the implementation of an annual international event called Tour de Singkarak (Budiman & Ningrum, 2019; Gao, Barbieri, & Valdivia, 2014). Beyond the famous Singkarak Lake with all the tourism attractions, there is another strong potential of natural resources where it can be becoming an icon for the tourists as culinary tourism in it, which is familiarly known as *Bilih* fish (Kaban et al., 2013). *Bilih* fish is a fresh fish where its location is only in Singkarak Lake of West Sumatra. There are 19 species of fish and one of them is *Bilih* Fish, which has a delicious taste with a different texture and shape from other fish living in the other lakes. It will not be complete for tourists, if they had not tasted yet *Bilih* Fish (Purnomo, 2005).

Bilih fish has a potency to be used as an culinary tourism by using maintaining the principle without damaging its habitat. Culinary tourism means that a tourist activity tasting and enjoying food or drink (Akbar & Pangestuti, 2017). It can be inferred that the development of sustainability tourism of *Bilih* Fish defines that tourists do not only enjoy the view of the beauty of the Lake but they can also enjoy supporting facilities such as local culinary. By considering the potency, *Bilih* Fish will not only be tasted on the spot, but it also can be a souvenir, which is in line with the concept of sustainability tourism i.e. improving the local economics (Rusdi, Basri, Hardi, & Alberida, 2021). *Bilih* fish is categorized as an endemic rare fish. Because of the high demand of *Bilih* fish by the tourists, therefore, it is important to find out the innovative efforts to meet the supply of *Bilih* fish where it still remains good for the development of sustainable tourism, but it does not damage the nature and life of it for the future.

The local people of Singkarak Lake, working as fisherman, are known as Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG S) keep trying to make the innovation for *Bilih* fish. It is marketed not only in a fried condition but it is served by various variants such as boiled fish, Smoked fish, *Pangek/Asam Padeh* fish, *Pepes/Palai* fish, crispy fish and curry fish. All of it are expected to improve the sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism is reviewed from the Natural Conversion Law Number 5 of 1990 concerning the Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Ecosystems where Indonesia's biological natural resources and ecosystems have an important position and role for life. It needs to be well- managed and utilized as well as balanced for the welfare of all people both in the present and even in the future (Fernanda & Yulianingsih, 2020).

Development Concepts

Sustainable tourism is a tourism that has the principle value of quality improvement where the quality includes the realization of three qualities for example: tourism must be able to realize the quality of life of local communities; tourism must be able to provide quality efforts "Quality Of Opportunity" to serve providers in the tourism industry; and the important one is the creation or innovation of quality tourist experiences (Albouy & Lue, 2015; Firdaus & Tutri, 2017; Valeriani & Wardhani, 2015).

The Quality of Life (WHOQOL) group defines that an individual's perception of the position of life in the cultural context and value system. It relates into the individual lives and his relationship to one's goals, expectations, establishing standards and concerns (Mardiana, Erfina, & Nurmaulid, 2013). Quality of life pictures out an individual's perception and his position in life (Mandzuk & McMillan, 2005). Based on the explanation, it can be concluded

that quality of life is an individual's assessment of the individual's position in life, in the context of psychological circumstances, and social relations as well as the environment.

Quality of opportunity is a positive factor rising from the environment and providing opportunities for organizations or programs advantages. Opportunity is not only a policy or opportunity in terms of getting capital in the form of money, but it can also be a rising response or issues in a community (Albouy & Lue, 2015; Mardiana et al., 2013). Quality of opportunity is also a long-term sustainability, which is not only seasonal. A developed product must open many opportunities for the community. It also affects the sustainability where it is in line with the principle of sustainable tourism (Budiarta & Ketut, 2014; Partelow, 2021).

Quality of experience is a psychological measurement referring for affective responses about happy or not happy against the tourist experience about services or products (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez, & Moliner, 2006). Affective response arises from a deep feeling responding to something slightly different from ordinary. So, it can be a calculation for the sustainability of the product. By having a development product using the main ingredients of *Bilih* fish, it is expected that it does not only for sustainable value for fishermen and sales but it is also for tourists. For reaching the value for sustainability, the author includes the sustainability of *Bilih* fish product with a quality of experience from the tourist responses (Masbiran, 2020).

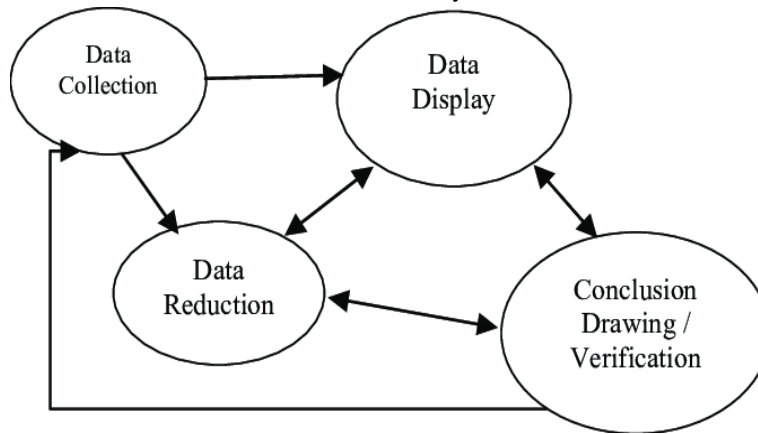
After analyzing some research, it shows that the previous research only focused on the sustainable management of *Bilih* fish. However, this research analyzed about the innovation of *Bilih* Fish production used as a souvenir product of Singkarak Lake without damaging the life of *Bilih* fish. All these innovations can produce quality value or life of the fishermen community, quality of business opportunities for local people with quality of opportunity, and the improvement of the quality of new experiences for tourists tasting *Bilih* fish with a variety of variant products. Then researchers formulated this research problem into how to implement local culinary innovations towards the management of *Bilih* fish to improve the quality of life for fishermen, quality of opportunities for entrepreneurs and quality of experience for tourists. The purpose of this research was to find out the implementation of tasty innovation in local culinary called *Bilih* fish for a sustainable tourism in Singkarak Lake.

Methodology

This research used qualitative approach by describing or providing an overview of the object based on the real or existing condition (Waldeck, 2015). Source of data was primary data collected by direct non-participant observation and structured-interview. Data collecting also used sampling technique and it was emphasized into interview by using purposive sampling respondents (Taylor, Guarte, & Barrios, 2014).

The research informants were the Chairman, Secretary and two members of the Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG-S). Singkarak Geographical Indication Society is an organization focusing on the preservation of *Bilih* fish. There were five owners interviewed on this research where they are local persons becoming entrepreneurs selling various *Bilih* fish products sold around the Singkarak Lake and 10 tourists buying the fish products. This study was conducted for 6 months from August 2021 to January 2022 using data analysis technique from Miles & Huberman model (Hashimov, 2015). There are 4 stages for data analysis processes as follows:

Picture 1. Data Analysis Process



Source: Hashimov, 2015

Data validity testing technique with credibility test used triangulation technique by checking through the interviews, observation, and documentation (Sidiq & Choiri, 2019). By combining these credibility testing techniques, it will show a homogeny data. If the data show differences, the researchers will conduct further discussions with other data sources to determine the correct data.

Findings and Discussions

The development of culinary tourism *Bilih* fish are divided into three indicators such as quality of life, quality of opportunity, and quality of experience as following:

Table1. Research Indicators

Quality of Life	Quality of Opportunity	Quality of Experience
Psychological state	Sustainable economic value opportunities for the future	Different experiences by tourists
Social and environmental relations	Opportunities for sustainable culture, social and ecological value	Interesting as an additional attraction

Source: Researcher, 2021

The quality of life of sustainable tourism development in the previous research shows that there is an increase of welfare and happiness of the individuals. This study also finds that quality of life increases the happiness with indicators of the psychological state of fishermen in Singkarak Lake, Tanah Datar Regency, Indonesia and indicators of improving welfare with social and environmental approaches.

1. Psychological State

The psychological situation of the local people working as fishermen gives them new spirit to make innovation from *Bilih* fish into various products such as crispy, *rendang*, and *serundeng*. The fishermen must maintain legal in order to protect *Bilih* Fish as well as make into interesting products. Interview with the Chairman of the Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG-S) informs that "*fishing bilih by fishermen around Singkarak Lake consider the sustainability*

of the ecosystem starting from fishing gear and do not use stun". In the past, there were many illegal fishing and it made *Bilih* fish became rare. It also makes the price rising so high prices. Because of these conditions, the community economics turn to be difficult and to make innovation is limited because the rare sources. If the sources are available, the economics condition will keep improving. This is also confirmed by the Chairman of the Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG-S), whose daily life is to become a fisherman in Singkarak Lake, informs that *"By using this innovation we do not longer have difficulty for selling Bilih fish because our fishing process has already implemented Standard Operation Procedures (SOP). We are not afraid or worried about damaging nature. With this innovation, it makes us feel calmer and safer when catching for fish without having to compete with other fishermen and make hostility"*.

The data were taken from the interview in relation to the Quality of Life from psychological indicators are:

Table 2. Indicators of Psychological Quality Of Life

Quality Of Life	Checklist	Details:
Psychological state	V	Giving new hope by being marked with a new spirit
	v	A calmer and safer life marked by not worrying about ruining nature and competition with fellow fishermen

Source: Researcher, 2021

2. Social and Environmental Relation

Social and environmental relations are something existing around society affecting development directly and indirectly. The elements of social relations are like the environment and culture made from value systems, ideas, and beliefs in behavior as social creatures. In social relations, there is an increase between the relationship between fishermen and *Bilih* fish entrepreneurs innovating *Bilih* fish with various products. It is in line with the Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG-S). *"With the new Bilih fish culinary innovation, it certainly brings a very good relationship because the community cooperates in creating and catching for Bilih raw materials to be developed. Then, it will get benefit and at the same time have a good impact on the development of Bilih fish in its nature"*.

Bilih fish entrepreneurs also inform the innovation of *Bilih* fish products with several choices of flavor variants made a familial relationship between fishermen and sellers. People's lives can achieve order and they should thank to the existence of value systems and norms recognized and adhered to by all members of society.

Table 3. Quality of Life Social and Environmental Relations Checklist:

Quality Of Life	Checklist	Details:
Sosial and Environmental Relations	V	Good relations between fishermen and traders who are warm

Source: Researcher, 2021

2.1. Quality of Opportunity

Sustainability must include the basic principles of ecological, social and cultural sustainability, and economic sustainability for present and future generations (Bagiada, 2018). The opportunities presented on this innovation are ecological, social, cultural, and economical sustainability. It also shows that the innovation of *Bilih* Fish products opens the opportunity for local people to develop the quality of *Bilih* fish without damaging its ecology started from the innovation of various flavors. In the past, *Bilih* fish is processed with crispy flavor, so that the *Bilih* fish becomes crispier compared into common frying. This frying process uses a furnace to make the taste well-cooked and will be savory. The process with this furnace has become an original culture from time to time and it also advances opportunities for cultural values in the future.

Picture 2. Product of Innovation from Crispy *Bilih* fish



Source: Courtesy of *Bilih* Fish Traders, 2021

Selling the crispy *Bilih* fish products, the market responses are quite good and many of the buyers are eager to try a new variant of *Bilih* fish. Considering this good condition, it triggered the entrepreneurs make an open-order-system for the products in stores. The crispy fish process also provides benefits for entrepreneurs where it lasts longer than ordinary fried *Bilih* Fish. During the Covid-19 pandemic, although the number of visit decreases, the economics of the local people or community is still stable because there are many requests from outside the city. It is also added by the various options from *Bilih* fish products. It is in line with statement from Mrs. Rosie, one of the company owner of a souvenir shop around Singkarak Lake, “*towards the innovation of Bilih fish products such as Rendang, Crispy and Serundeng, it makes the process of Bilih fish drying have more durable of the product than ordinary fried Bilih Fish products, especially during Covid-19 and it is safe for regional and national shipping.*”

Picture 3. Product Innovations from *Bilih* Fish with *serundeng* and *rendang* seasoning

Source: Courtesy of Bilih Fish Traders, 2021

This innovation also opens up increasing opportunities for local people having business in local culinary by becoming an agent or distributor "*because this innovation, we also sell our products to the largest souvenir center stores because one order can have 100 packs with various flavors*". The innovation gives high profit opportunities for entrepreneurs to increase the quality of opportunities for fishermen selling their catch, which has been fried firstly. It is emphasized by Singkarak Geographical Indication Society (MIG-S), "*by having this innovation, some fishermen, also working as traders, do not only fried sell but also raw fish*" and this is also reinforced by Mrs. Ayu Wahyuni as a Bilih Fish entrepreneur where "*we also get half-fried Bilih fish Crispy from fishermen. It also provides convenience for us for the production of Bilih Fish with the innovation of flavor variants, and certainly, it also makes a profit for fishermen*".

The data shows that an opportunity for people to open businesses such as selling directly and becoming distributors for a large-scale souvenir centers as well as also open opportunities to improve the fishermen's economy. The relevant data from previous research show that the development of tourism with the principle of sustainable tourism has characteristics by the improvement of the economy of local communities with the presence of community opportunities for economic improvement processes providing value for the future (Faganel, 2011; Stanov, Peković, Vukčević, & Perović, 2018).

2.2. Quality Of Experience

Innovations carried out for local culinary development to achieve sustainable tourism can trigger the emergence of qualities that will be aimed at and sought by tourists as consumers (Mamirkulova, Mi, Abbas, & Mahmood, 2020). The quality of experience is a unique value for tourists when experiencing *Bilih* fish with the innovation of product variations to be more crispy such as *rendang* and *serundeng*. Tourists usually only find *Bilih* fish in the form of ordinary fried or in *pangek*. Now, the new variants and attractive packaging makes tourists feel a new sensation of bringing souvenirs in the form of flavor variants of *Bilih* fish. It is also based on the previous research conveying the quality of the experience for sustainable culinary tourism is a product that can be defined as a link to the reference point of view from a cultural point of view, a perceived tradition (López & Martín, 2006).

Another data from the interview about tourist's point of views, "*very interested in trying the taste of rendang in Bilih Fish. Rendang is not only made on meat but it can be on Bilih fish and good taste*". The same response from another informan who first bought Bilih Fish with a

new flavor variant, "I am very excited to give this to my friend for souvenirs i.e. *Bilih fish*, because it tastes savory and has a delicious and sweet texture, and the packaging on this product is also very good."

It is new experiences with a unique value, so that they can be used as a new attraction for tourists by making the innovation of *Bilih fish* products as souvenirs. From this interview data, it is clearly illustrated the opportunities for tourist experiments when using *Bilih fish* products with several product innovations as follows:

Table 3. Quality of Experience Checklist:

Quality of Experience	Checklist	Details:
Different experiences by tourists	V	New Experience by trying different flavors than ordinary flavor
	v	Become an attraction in terms of packaging and the choice of flavors that can be sold as superior products

Source: Researcher, 2021

Picture 3. Packaging of *Bilih fish* Innovation



Source: Courtesy of Bilih Fish Traders, 2021

Conclusions and Recommendations

The application of innovation in *Bilih Fish* products with a local culinary tourism approach produces several flavors of processed Fish *Bilih*. It can create a sustainable tourism. Quality of life of fishermen is in the form of freedom from fear and a sense of security over disputes between fishermen for a good competition. Furthermore, the quality of life of fishermen in a psychological state also provides better social relations i.e. establishing a sense of kinship between fishermen and entrepreneurs. So that, fishermen in Singkarak Lake feel that the fishing profession becomes good option for the sake of life in the future.

The innovation of *Bilih fish* products with several tastes has triggered local culinary for a sustainable value. Towards the indicators, there is an increase in the quality of life opportunities for entrepreneurs, who are from ordinary people become entrepreneur, open businesses to improve the economy by ensuring innovations with maintaining good local wisdom by using traditional cooking process (without damaging the nature) as well as being able to be a

distributor's opportunity for large-scale souvenir centers. Next, recommendation is that the selling area can be broadening into international level by having a good system of local MSME. The innovation of *Bilih* fish products, with various flavors, also provides an added value for tourists, while maintaining the ecosystem running sustainability and can be a potential product as souvenirs from of West Sumatra.

Conflict of Interest

The author stated that he has no conflict of interest in the research and writing of this article.

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