

Sustainable Tourism Management in Sekotong: Potentials and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism management is a crucial aspect that needs attention to improve the quality of destinations. Sekotong, an area in West Lombok regency, has a lot of potential that can be developed to support sustainable tourism, while studies on identifying the potential and implementing sustainable tourism in this area are still limited. This study aims to identify tourism potential in Sekotong as a tourism product and evaluate the implementation of sustainable tourism management in each destination of Sekotong. Data collection was carried out through the observation of four representative destinations, namely Mangrove Sekotong Tengah and Elak-Elak Beach representing marine tourism, Mareje Village for rural tourism, and 3 Gilis (Naggu, Tangkong, Sudak) representing island tourism. The research was conducted by observing the potencies of these destinations and then reviewing the implementation of the concept of sustainability. To obtain more information, researchers interviewed managers or tourism operators at each destination. The observation and interview referred to 4 pillars of the GSTC sustainable tourism standards. The results showed that there is a potential for cultural tourism products in Mareje village, marine and underwater tourism activities in 3 Gilis and Elak-Elak beach, as well as marine-based educational tours in Mangrove Sekotong Selatan. Referring to the 4 pillars in sustainable tourism, however, the management and provision of facilities need to be standardized and improved. In addition, several important strategies need to be implemented in improving the quality of these destinations such as synchronization among stakeholders and training in implementing destination management by considering all sustainable tourism concepts in accordance with the 4 pillars in the GSTC criteria.

KEY WORDS: Sekotong; Sustainable tourism; Marine tourism; Strategy; Management.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism growth has been increasingly encouraging people to utilize the natural and cultural potential to gain profit and prosperity. However, it is commonly found that utilizing without any consideration of proper management can lead to conflict and contrary to sustainability principles (Higgins-Desbilles, 2018). As the tourism sector provided positive impacts on economic sectors, it has contributed to several negative consequences for environmental and socio-cultural degradation due to a lack of awareness among tourism operators. Thus, the concept of “Sustainable Tourism” was developed to minimize the negative impacts of tourism activities, in which the concept includes all considerations of tourism activities including environmental and socio-cultural protection as well as economic development that provides benefits especially for local communities in tourism destinations (Pranita, 2016).

Sustainable tourism is important to be adopted by policymakers in planning and developing the programs. The concept of sustainable tourism emphasizes the importance of tourism development with sustainable principles, a step that optimizes positive impacts and minimizes negative impacts. Tourism management also needs to apply the principles as mandated by The Global Sustainable Tourism Development Council or GSTC (Borland & Lindgreen, 2013) in destination, where it can benefit the local community and destination by considering four main pillars namely environment, economy, culture and management.

Research on sustainability and its relation to tourism has

become the concern of academics who are associated with various aspects of tourism. Pan et al., (2018) examined tourism and sustainability from an interdisciplinary perspective including elements in sustainable tourism. Tourism is the key to success for sustainable development in rural areas (Junaid, Dewi, Said, & Hanafi, 2022; Martínez, Martín, Fernández, & Mogorrón-Guerrero, 2019). Assessment of sustainable tourism management requires studies to produce the best recommendations for sustainable tourism practices. This requires a mechanism or process that involves various stakeholders as well as leads to several studies in finding strategies to achieve sustainable tourism goals (Junaid, 2014).

Although the tourism literature tends to discuss sustainable tourism in terms of development point of view, there are limited sources discussing the concept of sustainability in tourist areas. In addition, development in tourism areas as a tourism asset has not been developed optimally. For example, Sekotong, one of the marine tourism areas in Indonesia has been only used as a tourism asset with limited support and concert by the government or other stakeholders. Even though the government have designated on tourism area in Lombok as a super-priority destination, the number of tourists visiting Sekotong does not improved significantly. In 2015 the number of tourists visiting Sekotong reached 25,261. This number is the highest in the period from 2014 – 2020, and even during the COVID-19 period the number of tourists only numbered less than 5,000 people (Dinas Pariwisata Lombok Barat, 2021). In addition, based on the interview with locals in Sekotong on the baseline study (2022), there was no economic impact on the local community in Sekotong due to the development of the Mandalika SEZ or even when MotoGP or World Superbike was held in Mandalika.

Sekotong has a lot of potential that needs to be explored by academics or other related sectors, especially how this area can be maintained through a good management system. Understanding the natural and cultural characteristics and potential in Sekotong can be a source of community economic income and even a source of national income (Rahmawati, Hadie, Siregar, Sukarno, & Cahyani, 2020).

This sector should be able to provide several employment opportunities for the local community if it can be managed and utilized properly. Therefore, it is necessary to study the potential possessed by Sekotong as a tourism

product both from its socio-cultural and environmental conditions. In addition, the concept of sustainable tourism needs to be studied by looking at the current conditions that exist in destinations in Sekotong so that it can become a scientific reference in the context of developing the area in the future. Therefore, this research will then identify the tourism product potential in Sekotong, analyze the actual condition of tourism area management based on the concept of sustainability; as well as determining strategies to encourage the application of the concept of sustainability in the management of Sekotong.

METHODOLOGY

The study is descriptive qualitative research focusing on reviewing the conditions of each destination in Sekotong and its relation to the implementation of the sustainable tourism concept. There were three categories of destinations concerned in this study, namely Mangrove Sekotong Tengah and Elak-elak represented marine tourism destinations, Mareje village represented rural tourism and the 3 Gilis in West Sekotong (Gili Nanggu, Gili Tangkong and Gili Sudak) as a representation of island tourism. Observation and documentation were conducted on these destinations by reviewing their potential and the suitability of 4 aspects (economic, environmental, socio-cultural and managerial) in sustainable tourism standards. To obtain supporting information from the results of observations and documentation, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the operator or developer in each destination. The interview aimed to deepen information from the observation process by selecting male and female informants with the same ratio, 1:1 and aged above 18 years old (Zhou, Yan, Yan, & Shen, 2020).

To obtain in-depth information, the key informants were interviewed three times each. The first interview was conducted to determine the characteristics of the informants. The second interview with the same informants focused on exploring the informants' understanding and actions in the implementation of sustainable tourism as a part of the managerial system in the destinations (Vieira da Silva et al., 2021). The last interview was conducted to complete information that had not been identified in the first and second interviews. All activities carried out are documented in the form of photos, notes, videos and recordings.

Data obtained from in-depth interviews from voice

recordings was transcribed and translated into Indonesian (if the informants used a traditional language). The transcript of this process was then analyzed using an open coding approach to obtain several topics and sub-topics. These topics and sub-topics were then grouped so that emergent themes were produced. The frequency of the same theme was collected and calculated as a frequent response and analyzed into the storyline in the codification process section 2. This process adopts the technique of Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2018). All the results obtained from observations and interviews were then connected to obtain conclusions which are then elaborated on in the discussion.

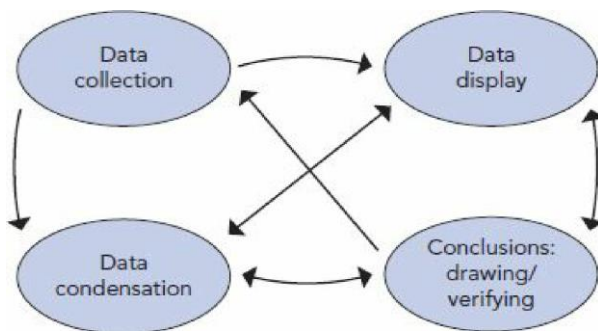


Figure 1. The concept of data analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2018)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Overview of the Sekotong

Sekotong has nine villages and seven of them are located on the coast. Demographically, most people in Sekotong District live as a farmer and rely on agriculture (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Lombok Barat, 2021). Even so, there are still many coastal areas that have not been managed and utilized properly. Not many residents around the coast are fishermen and utilize marine products in the Sekotong as local products. This is indicated by the absence of small marine products around the area. Most beaches in Sekotong have calm waves, with the colour of the seawater from turquoise green to dark blue. The sand on the beach or island varies from black to white sand. However, most forms of sand in the area are beautiful fine white and suitable for camping activities.

“ ... we usually camp on this island. This island belongs to us, friends from the city or those from Jakarta come here to grill fish, fish and camping. They bring their own tools. We also sometimes

take them or they stay in the huts we made.”
 [SK020P002].

The land leading to the beach in the Sekotong is hilly with most of it overgrown with weeds and small bushes. So far there have been no major issues related to water, air or soil pollution in the Sekotong, although several places were found to be traditional gold mining and gold panning locations (Astiti & Sugianti, 2014; Diskominfo Kabupaten Lombok Barat, 2022; Moro, Kasiamdari, & Sancayaningsih, 2011; Priyambodo, Rahmat, Buanayudha, Widiastuti, & Nurbaiti, 2020). Apart from the beautiful beaches, the beauty of underwater in Sekotong is also mostly unspoiled. There are various types of marine life and coral reefs that are starting to be preserved. Tourists who want to enjoy the underwater beauty must bring their own equipment because there is no place to rent *diving* or *snorkeling equipment* at several tourist sites.



Figure 2. Wave conditions at Sekotong beach (left) and several amenities at a destination in the Sekotong area (right)

Potencies of Tourism Products in Sekotong

There are several destinations that are currently viral on social media and have been visited by both domestic and foreign tourists. However, these destinations tend to be visited only one time due to a lack of facilities and the destination is below tourists’ expectations. Thus, selected destinations are analyzed from the aspects of tourist attraction, accessibility, and amenities.

In terms of attractions, Sekotong offers beautiful beaches, underwater, the sunset and a beautiful atmosphere that is still natural, away from the crowds. Mangrove Sekotong Tengah is a mangrove forest with an area of around 15 ha. The area began to open in November 2019 under the name Tanjung Batu Eco Tourism with the role of the community as manager. There are various types of

mangroves cultivated, especially from *Rhizophora*, *Avocenia* and *Sonneratia*. The dominating marine biota includes shellfish, shrimp, crabs, fish, birds and *molluscs*. This vegetation and biota are attractions for tourists to learn and enjoy the natural beauty that exists in the mangrove forest. The vegetation and marine biota that live around the mangroves are natural attractions for tourists, most of whom are domestic tourists. Tourists can go any time because the mangroves cover the trails, causing the location to get cool. However, it is recommended that the visitors come at the right time, either morning or evening. At the destination, there are several *Instagramable photo spots* for taking a moment while it is not allowed for visitors to bring their own food because there is a local street food occurred in the area.

Elak-elak Beach also offers the experience of enjoying the beauty of white sand, calm waves, clear sea water, safe conditions and basic supporting facilities. This beach is close to several small islands, such as Gili Kedis, Gili Nanggu and Gili Sudak. There are several interesting *spots* on Elak-Elak beach such as sunset spots and beautiful underwater beauty, especially the area which is close to Gili Nanggu, Gili Kedis, Gili Tangkong and Gili Sudak. It is also suitable for families or groups to come to Elak-elak Beach because the amenities and food are provided at a reasonable price. Mareje Village is situated in a highland area with a height of about 400 meters above sea level. This village was viral on social media due to its similar landscape as in Ubud, Bali. It has beautiful rice terraced blended with two cultures, from Buddhism and Islam. The architecture of the local building in this village is esthetic with distinctive wood carvings, a combination of motifs representing the two religions. The best season to visit is during the rainy season when the rice begins to grow because during the dry season, the scenery around the fields is brown and less attractive. Other tourism potentials are Gili Nanggu, Tangkong and Sudak. The islands have the beauty of the turquoise blue sea and fine white sand. Referring to the environmental concern, there is turtle conservation and breeding in Gili Nanggu. That can be accessed by all tourists.

Several destinations in Sekotong are difficult to access using a four-wheeled vehicle. Visitors should use motorbikes or boats to reach the destination. Ideally, a tourist area has good accessibility so that tourists get a positive experience in terms of reaching an area. Good accessibility also has an impact on the quality of the tourist experience. Gili Nanggu, Gili Sudak and Gili

Tangkong can only be accessed by sea using a *slow or fast boat*. The experience of travelling tourists with a slow or fast boat can be an experience, but it needs to be supported by security and safety. Elak-elak Beach and Mangrove Sekotong Tengah can be accessed by boat or vehicle, while Mareje Village can only be accessed by land with certain types of vehicles due to slippery and uphill access roads.

The amenities of each destination are complemented by public infrastructure facilities. Several tourist sites already have settlers for tourists. The condition of the toilets at each tourist site is fairly clean with the availability of water and soap in the existing toilets. Some places even provide lodging or camping spots such as Gili Nanggu and Elak-Elak Beach which can increase the duration of visiting these destinations. The availability of worship can almost be found throughout or around the destination. However, restaurants are only found in several destinations visited by domestic and foreign tourists, such as Gili Nanggu and Elak-elak Beach, while in other destinations there are several snacks sold by local people and street vendors.

Sustainable Tourism Management in Sekotong

Sustainability analysis in this study refers to four aspects, such as, economic, environmental, socio-cultural, and managerial. These aspects are interrelated in order to support the management of sustainable tourism areas muncul (Asmoro, Bachri, & Yusrizal, 2021; Hall, 2008; Peeters, 2007; Scott, Hall, & Stefan, 2012; Wakhidah, Dewi, & Ristianti, 2014; Wibowo, 2018).

a. Economic aspect

Most population in Sekotong still depend on farming and fishing activities. Tourism activities are still considered as side jobs or additions to the population's main job. There are only a small number of local people who do business in the tourism sector, such as the manager of homestays or inn or resorts and opening boat rental services to go the Gili islands. Observations and interviews with local residents showed that lodging, restaurant and other tourism businesses come from investments by foreigners or outside Lombok. Giving an example, the owner of all lodging and boat rental businesses in Gili Nanggu are from Jakarta.

“... if the previous owner of this island was

Chinese, then the Balinese who were adopted became innkeepers. The owner is not here but lives in Jakarta. ... [SK010L001]

The reason why tourism in Sekotong is focused on people's income is that tourism facilities in the area are still lacking, especially access to several tourism destinations, such as Orong Bukal, Goa Landak Beach, Mekaki Beach and others. This was also found in several studies related to the development of tourism destinations in Sekotong in supporting the community's economy (Nurul, 2020; Rahma, 2019). Sekotong has a potential tourist attraction that can be developed and maintained in its authenticity, such as Elak-Elak Beach and Mangrove Sekotong Tengah which are managed and owned by the local residents in these destinations. Management by the local people is an indication of an economic impact that provides opportunities for the community. Furthermore, Mareje village also has the potential to be developed, where the main livelihood of the community as farmers can be used as a tourist attraction by selling local products produced by local people.

The beauty of terraced views and rice field activities for tourists, especially foreign tourists and city tourists, can be also a tourism product. The observations identified that there are several spots that are designated as tourist entrances and become attractions in Mareje village. However, some houses look deserted and neglected. The interviews with informants found that a tourism awareness group was just about to be formed. This shows that there are positive efforts and support from the Mareje village government for tourism. Commitments and action plans such as training and tourism assistance need to be held to support tourism activities in the village.

"... we are quite aware that Mareje village has natural beauty and tourism potential. We, ourselves have actually made spots for tourists in several of our hamlets. People who are dating can take pictures there. But indeed, we don't have a tourism awareness group yet, this has been planned and will be formed as soon as possible. In order to be able to manage the place we have prepared." [SK010D002]

The natural conditions of the research location have advantages and are feasible to be developed as tourism products. However, there is a need for adequate and measurable waste management. Based on the results of observations at Elak-elak Beach and 3 (three) Gilis, due to tourist visits, waste production in these places is increasing. Even though the management has carried out waste management, it ends in burning waste at several locations close to attractions and tourist spots for visitors. Burning garbage is an option for the community even though from an environmental perspective, it is not the right solution.

"We collect the trash together, we don't take it across in canoes. If we collect a lot of trash, we burn it on the spot. The waste that we burn is like plastic waste from drinking bottles and snacks that are usually brought by visitors to this island. [SK010P006]

At the Mangrove Sekotong Tengah, there is still a traditional gold distillation plan where the process of separating gold from the rock is done traditionally and using mercury. The location of the activity is right on the edge of a mangrove forest where the waste produced can have a negative impact on the health of marine life in that area. Despite these destinations, Mareje village has abundant resources and looks un-spoilt and well-preserved. Based on the interviews and observation, it appears that the community has an understanding and knowledge about agriculture which has been passed down from generation to generation, whereas in the context of sustainable tourism, the existing implementation in Mareje village is almost similar to that in Ubud in maintaining existing environmental conditions.



Figure 3. Mine product purification site (left) which is in the vicinity of residents' houses and 600 meters from the destination, photo of Mareje village terracing (right)

b. Environmental Aspect

c. Socio-Cultural Aspects

Most tourist sites in Sekotong are inhabited by local people who come from the Sasak tribe. The community still adheres to the teachings and customs that apply in everyday life. There are still some of these people who still maintain a number of traditions which are generally part of the religious ceremonies in that place, such as the Prophet's birthday ceremony and the Ketupat Eid, Galungan, Kuningan and Vesak Ceremony. Mareje Village is a village that has cultural potential and unique customs which are a blend of Islam and Buddhism. These customs can be introduced to tourists visiting the place.

"... for us, the people here still maintain their customs. Marriages from the community are carried out with residents who are both from Mareje village, for example, there are residents who marry people outside the island or this place, the bride and groom must decide to stay in Mareje village, not move... family members who are Buddhists in this Muslim family Lots. If, for example, there are family members who celebrate Eid Ketupat, other family members who are Buddhists or neighbours will help in the preparations, and vice versa." [SK010D010]

By introducing the culture of Mareje through tourism is not only for sharing information and knowledge but for maintaining the existence of this unique culture for the future generation. The interviews indicated that although Mareje's culture and customs have been maintained and applied from generation to generation, there are still some changes, due to the development of technology and the use of electronics in helping the lives of the surrounding community. Modernization eroded the implementation of customs and culture which ultimately resulted in the loss of some traditional rules conducted in local livelihood.

"In the past, when people worked they wore sarongs. In earlier times, those who wore pants were considered company, who came to colonize. But now society has accepted. The signal is also good, many residents own cell phones, including motorbikes, so if in the past people needed to look for ingredients for their daily needs, now it's easy. In the morning they

go shopping, when they return, other people can shop for necessities. [SK010D012]

d. Managerial Aspect

Some destinations do not have tourism awareness organizations yet, also the managerial tendency of destinations is managed by private parties or certain groups. The 3 Gilis (Nanggu, Kedis and Sudak) have quite high visits compared to other destinations in the Sekotong area. However, the promotion and management that was carried out did not come from tourism organizations but from the private party that owned the place. As for other destinations that tourism organization, it is not guaranteed to be shown optimal management. As happened in the Mangrove Sekotong Tengah, where waste management is still not under control. Another obstacle arisen in the management of Elak-Elak Beach is that parking fees have not been set for each type of vehicle. Apart from that, waste management has not been fully maximized even though the management has withdrawn cleaning money from each visitor or trader selling at the destination. This can be seen from the large amount of plastic waste that has accumulated at the entrance to the destination. In Mareje Village, it was found that an organization that focuses on tourism has not been formed because the people in the area still relied on agriculture as their main livelihood. An attraction has been built by the village, but at the time of observation, the attraction was closed. This is due to a lack of guidance or management from certain organizations which causes the attractions that have been built to be not managed properly and tend to be abandoned.

Tourism Area Management Strategy Based on the Concept of Sustainability

There are several problems found in destinations including improper waste management, lack of connection at several destinations, entrance fees in several destinations, SOP, the existence of tourism organizations, unfunctional/ unmaintained amenities, unavailability of information centres and many more. These phenomena arise inseparable from the lack of parties/organizations that manage and the governance system that is implemented is still not appropriate (Revolina, Hidayat, & Basuni, 2020). This is because of several reasons, such as the management does not

involve other stakeholders, the management system that is applied tends to be partial yet holistic and policies are not yet integrated between the provincial, city/regency governments up to the hamlet/community level in these destinations.

The phenomenon in several destinations of Sekotong is generally caused by institutional factors that have not been optimally coordinated and integrated. This is shown by the unclear management institutions, such as the absence of tourism awareness organization which has a role in the promotion and management of the destination. In addition, there are no clear rules and regulations for each destination that reflect the implementation of sustainable tourism. The role of both the provincial and hamlet governments as decision-makers or policymakers is urgently needed to maximize the management and development of regional potential (Revolina et al., 2020), such as in Mareje village which has not been well marketed. In addition, the government must continue to guarantee the existence of natural resources and the naturalness of destinations on an ongoing basis so that every tourist has a good impression while visiting the destination. Marine tourism basically prioritizes coastal and cultural resources owned by the surrounding community as its attraction. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to and develop an understanding of the characteristics and potential of existing resources in destinations involving various stakeholders, who work synergistically with one another (Revolina et al., 2020; Yulianda, 2020).

By adopting the framework from Feyers, Stein, and Klizentyte (2019), there are several strategies that are possibly to be applied in the destinations of Sekotong (Figure 4).

1. *Attraction*

Attraction is an important element in a destination where these elements influence tourist motivation to visit and carry out activities at a tourism destination (Habaora, Riwukore, & Yustini, 2021). In the development of a tourism destination, the first strategy to be carried out must be focused on the arrangement of place settings that will later become an attraction for tourists. This process needs to instil understanding and concern for sustainable tourism through communication with stakeholder groups especially those at the destination. The capacity of the stakeholders involved needs to be

considered and measured according to the needs of each tourist attraction. If the amount is too small, the attractiveness management will be less to be considered and developed and vice versa. Therefore, the identification of stakeholder capacity needs to be carried out to find out the characteristics of which stakeholders can work in groups and individually and can map the qualities and capabilities of each individual in an organizational structure (Feyers et al., 2019).

2. *Integration*

The next stage is to build relationships between stakeholders and the preparation and implementation of action plans that have been prepared together. In this case, the involvement of stakeholders does not only come from developers in tourism destinations but many actors involved, namely the tourism industry such as accommodation/lodging and transportation managers; NGOs, local communities, DMOs and tourists. The relationship between these stakeholders is related to the targets that are determined jointly in the form of effective participation by taking into account the risks that may arise. In *integration*, relationship management *between* stakeholders needs to be built in a collaboration that is tailored to the interests and expertise of current stakeholders. By itself, the support of the parties involved will be able to assist in advancing engagement in sustainable tourism (Feyers et al., 2019).

3. *Culmination in management*

When stages 1 and 2 have reached, more stakeholders can be involved, and the results obtained from the involvement are measured and monitored periodically. As described in Figure 4, this strategy is influenced by tourism professionals, businesses, residents and other stakeholders and this will affect the social and natural systems of the destination. By involving various stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism in a destination such as a marine destination, the possibility of various conflicts arising is very high. Therefore, monitoring the involvement of all existing stakeholders is very important to maintain collaboration and minimize conflicts that may arise during the implementation of tourism activities (Feyers et

al., 2019).

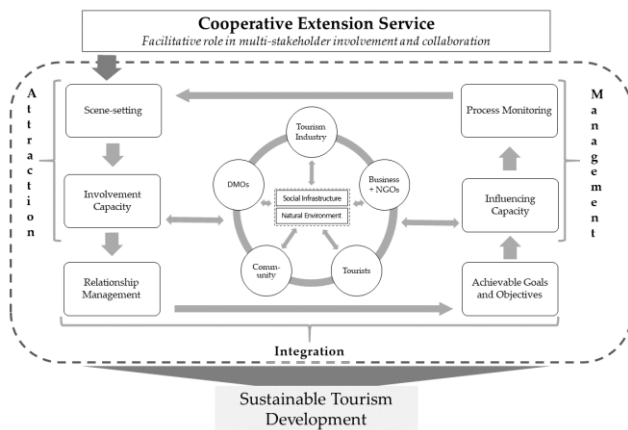


Figure 3. Integrated Framework on sustainable tourism development

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, there are several potentials found in Sekotong with a variety of uniqueness and attractiveness in the form of natural beauty that is rarely visited by tourists. Besides that, the strong culture of the Sasak (indigenous people) who are influenced by religion can be a potential special attraction if it is developed as a tourism product. However, in terms of the management and implementation of the sustainable tourism concept, Sekotong has several challenges. For instance, the environmental management system in several destinations has not been carried out properly and optimally, and from an economic standpoint, the community around the destination still lacks attention. Therefore, a strategy needs to be created to improve the quality of each destination in Sekotong through synchronization among stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism integrated with environmental, socio-cultural, economic and management dimensions that provide benefits and positive impacts for future generations.

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