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## Knowledge Acquisition in Toraja's Local Wisdom Context Toward Sustainable Tourism Development

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**Abstract.** The tourism sector is spurred as a source of national income, a provider of employment and a means of equitable distribution of national income. As one of the tourist destinations, Tana Toraja Regency has also been managed to take advantage of existing tourism potential, such as natural beauty, distinctive culture and values embraced by the Toraja people hospitality. To use the cultural heritage to boost the tourism business, all organizational members should acquire, elaborate and use all relevant information for decision making in tourism Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Data were collected using a set questionnaire hand-delivered to MSMEs owner/manager. As many as 50 questionnaires were distributed and 35 questionnaires were completed and then analyzed. The results reveal that MSMEs knowledge acquisition concerning their local wisdom and environment was above the middle range. It is suggested that a model of continuous learning by combining local wisdom and external knowledge.

**Keywords:** *tourism, local wisdom, knowledge acquisition, MSMEs, Toraja*

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is one of the economic growth drivers in Indonesia (Ministry of Tourism, 2018). The Government of Indonesia, places Tourism as the backbone of the nation's economy because Indonesia has many competitive and comparative advantages (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). In 2019 the Tourism Industry was of the largest foreign exchange earner, USD 24 Billion, surpassing the Oil and Gas, Coal and Palm Oil sectors. This confirms the importance of tourism in the Indonesian economy.

The tourism industry is an information-intensive industry (Yenidogan and Sencan, 2017). An information-intensive industry, demanding that all actors continue to search for information, find, share, use and store information on an ongoing basis (Mariani et al., 2018). Information search, dissemination to members of the organization, use and storage of information in a sustainable manner leads to the concept of organizational learning (Khoshkhoo and Nadalipour, 2016). Thus, for the tourism service business to be sustainable, the concept of organizational learning needs to be used.

In addition to information-intensive, the tourism industry also needs to utilize all the potential of the local area as a tourist attraction (Ma et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2018). The tourism assets that can be used exist in several forms, such as can be in the form of natural attractions, cultural tourism attractions and man-made tourism attractions (Ministry of Tourism, 2016). The three tourist attractions are strengthened by local wisdom which becomes the overall tourist attraction (Ma et al., 2018; Valdes et al., 2018). Local wisdom is the foundation of the three tourist attractions.

In Regulation No. 2 of 2015 it is expressly stated that one of the principles of tourism in South Sulawesi is local wisdom. The tourism industry in South Sulawesi must be developed

following the values of life and culture of the region which reflects local wisdom (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018b). The tourism industry, which is supported by local wisdom, will create distinctive tourist attractions that don't exist anywhere in the world (Kraleva, 2011; Ūbeda-Garcia, et al., 2018). This unique attraction will create sustainable tourism.

There is an interesting phenomenon related to the tourism industry of Tana Toraja Regency. Data from South Sulawesi Tourism Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017) shows that in 2016, the number of domestic tourists increased sharply from 82,673 in 2015 to 1,056,592 and foreign tourists from 15,731 in 2015 to 20,271 in 2016. The increase was around 1278% for domestic tourists and 29% for foreign tourists. On the other hand hotel occupancy rates in 2016 for star hotels were 40.63% and non-star hotels 24.85%. Restaurants declined from 43 units in 2015 to 36 units in 2016. Non-starred hotels decreased from 14 in 2015 to 10 units in 2016. The saddest thing is that, service providers other accommodations dropped dramatically from 17 units in 2015 to 3 units in 2016. So, on the one hand there is a very high increase in the number of tourists, but hotel occupancy rates are only around 40 percent and there has been a decline in the number of accommodation providers. This phenomenon indicates that the increase in the number of tourists does not help the growth of tourism support service industries such as hospitality.

These tourism phenomena are very interesting to be studied. Firstly, efforts to develop sustainable tourism are expected to help encourage the development of supporting business units such as hospitality services, accommodation and improving the welfare of the community. Secondly, the effort to develop sustainable tourism must involve MSMEs that own tourism objects. Efforts to find patterns of utilization of local wisdom as a driver of the benefit of the tourism industry such as hospitality and accommodation.

Tana Toraja BPS data (2018a) shows that in the Tana Toraja Regency there are 80 tourism sites and attractions. A total of 6 or 7.5% are owned by private foundation, 63 or 78.7% are privately owned and 11 or 13.8 are owned by the government. This large percentage of family-owned tourism objects indicates that to develop a tourism business, Tana Toraja must develop family-owned tourism objects that are categorized as Micro and Small Businesses. Knowledge acquisition and local wisdom are two aspects that can support business development.

Local wisdom can be the content of all tourist attractions be it natural tourism, cultural tourism and man-made tourism (Castro-Spila et al., 2018; Putra et al, 2018). Local wisdom as a form of genuine knowledge in the community that comes from the cultural noble value of the local community to regulate the order of community life (Byrd, 2007). In other words, the wisdom of local wisdom can be understood as ideas, values of local views that are wise, full of wisdom, good values are planted and followed by members of the community (Ma, et al, 2018). Local wisdom includes all forms of knowledge, beliefs, understandings, insights, and customs or ethics that guide human behavior in their lives in their communities. Because local wisdom is very unique to each region, the results of local wisdom can be a special attraction to attract tourists, both foreign and domestic tourists.

To develop MSMEs, knowledge acquisition concerning their environment is crucial. Knowledge acquisition is one integral part of organizational learning. Organizational learning involves the individual learning process of members of the organization which subsequently accumulates in the organization (Nugroho, 2018; Ubeda-Garcia et al, 2018). The learning process involves emotions and feelings and in this case, cultural values determine the occurrence of organizational learning (Kyriakidou and Gore, 2005; Kraleva, 2011). Organizations that give freedom to their members to experiment and discover new things can become learning organizations (Edmonstone, 2018; Nugroho, 2018). So the organizational learning process assumes organizational support.

Dorcic, Komsic and Markovic (2018) stated that the acquisition of sustainable information and its consistent use will be a determinant of the success of the tourism industry in the future. In line with the claim, Edmosntone (2018) emphasized that information acquisition has a significant role in the service industry, especially tourism services. Furthermore, in their research on the tourism industry managed by MSMEs in the city of Alvaz - Iran, Khoshkhoo

and Nadalipour (2016) found that information acquisition and combining it with local wisdom became a determining factor for the sustainability of the tourism industry, local wisdom combined with new information from aspects of life new can become a sustainable tourist attraction.

The study was intended to identify the level of knowledge acquisition and organizational support to MSMEs employees to acquire new information. Based on these findings, this study will identify the impact of information acquisition in supporting sustainable tourism in the Toraja cultural context.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This was a qualitative descriptive method. The study was conducted in Tana Toraja Regency. Tana Toraja Regency has 19 Districts, all of which have MSME owners and managers of tourism services. Information acquisition is defined as the activities of a member of an accommodation company organization to search and use the information on an ongoing basis. Indicators of the acquisition of information were adopted from Byrd (2007); Hoppstadius and Möller (2018) and Mariani *et al.*, (2018) as follows: employees are given the freedom to think from a broad perspective, staff help each other to learn new things, employee builds mutual trust to share work information; employees are given time to continue to improve their knowledge and skills; employees are valued if they continue to study; employees are free to pioneer changes in work techniques; employees are supported to take calculated risks; employees are free to adjust work techniques as needed; the leader builds a unified vision for all members of the organization; All members of the organization have the same vision and mission; all members of the organization have the same goals, employees are given the possibility to obtain the required information quickly and easily; maintain the latest employee knowledge database and employees like to share knowledge. Data collection techniques used are library research and structured interviews with tourism service business owners. The data found in this study were analyzed descriptively using means and standard deviations to gain data from the respondents.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent background

The respondent's background is divided into four groups namely gender, age, education and years of service.

#### Gender

Most respondents in the study were male. The complete gender of the respondents is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Gender

Gender	Frequency	Valid
Male	21	60.00
Female	14	40.0
Total	35	100.0

Data collected for the study

As can be seen from Table 1, as many as 21 or 60 percent of respondents are male and 14 or 40 percent are female. This situation illustrates that male managers or owners are dominant in the tourism business in Tana Toraja Regency. As gender may influence openness to new information acquisition (Edmonstone, 2018), and males tend to be more enthusiastic about new information (Byrd, 2007) it can be anticipated that knowledge acquisition will be favorable.

## Age

The age of the respondents was divided into four groups namely between 20 and 29 years, 30 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years and 50 years and above. Details of respondent's age are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Age

Age (year)	Frequency	Valid Percent
20 - 29	8	22.85
30 - 39	14	40.00
40 - 49	9	25.71
50 ≤ year	4	11.42
	35	100

Data collected for the study

As can be seen from Table 2 above, most respondents were aged between 30 and 39 years. As age may influence openness to new information and knowledge (Matthews et al, 2017) and 50s age would be more favorable, it is anticipated that the respondents range age would lead to favorable knowledge acquisition (Hoppstadius and Möller, 2018), This illustrates the maturity in thinking and in the learning process.

## Education

It is quite encouraging that the education of respondents is mostly bachelor. In detail, the education of respondents can be seen in the following Table 3 below:

**Table 3.** Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
Senior high school	9	25.71
Diploma	10	28.57
Bachelor	18	51.42
Total	35	100.0

Data collected for the study

From the Table 3, it appears that from the aspect of education, most respondents have a bachelor's education, while senior high school was ranked second. A total of 18 or 51.42 percent had a college degree, 9 or 25.71 percent had a high school education and 10 or 28.57 percent had a diploma education. It is anticipated that the higher level of education, the higher intention to gain new knowledge.

## Tenure

Most respondents have a tenure between 2 to 6 years. In detail, the respondent's tenure is shown in Table 4 below:

**Table 4.** Respondent's tenure

Tenure	Frequency	Percent
< 2 year	2	5.71
2,1 - 6 years	20	57.14
6,1 - 10 years	8	22.85
> 10 years	5	14.28
Total	35	100.0

Source : data analysis

From the Table 4, it appears that 20 or 57.4 percent of respondents have worked between 2 to 6 years, 8 or 22.85 percent have worked between 6 to 10 years, 5 or 14.28 percent have worked for more than 10 years and 2 respondents have worked less than 2 years. Tenure may have impact on knowledge acquisition, more years in working increase experience and work expertise (Sampe, 2012) and tend to inhibit new knowledge acquisition. As respondents' tenure between 2 and years, it was anticipated that knowledge acquisition will be favourable.

### Descriptive analysis of information acquisition

Using indicators of information acquisition adopted from Byrd (2007), Hoppstadius and Möller (2018) and Mariani et al, the dimensions of information acquisition is measured. Freedom to think from a broad perspective, employee opportunities to learn new things, efforts to build mutual trust, time to continue learning, freedom to experiment with new ways of working, efforts to continue to build unity of vision and mission, build unity of purpose, sharing information and always have new staffing data were used to identify the level of knowledge acquisition.

Fourteen items were applied to assess knowledge acquisition. In detail, description, mean, standard deviation and favorability of these indicators can be seen in Table 5 on the next page.

**Table 5.** Information Acquisition

No	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Group
1	Employees are given the freedom to think from a broad perspective.	4,18	0,611	Favorable
2	Employees help each other to learn new things.	4,11	0,712	Favorable
3	Employees build mutual trust to share work information	4,18	0,722	Favorable
4	Employees are given time to continue to improve their knowledge and skills.	4,05	0,780	Favorable
5	Employees are valued if they continue to study.	3,91	0,616	Favorable
6	Employees are free to pioneer changes in work techniques	3,85	0,731	Favorable
7	Employees are supported to take calculated risks.	3,73	0,804	Favorable
8	Employees are free to adjust work techniques as needed	3,89	0,712	Favorable
9	The leader builds a unified vision for all members of the organization	2,76	0,881	Not favorable
10	All members of the organization have the same vision and mission.	3,00	0,923	Not favorable
11	All members of the organization have the same goals.	3,45	0,603	Favorable
12	Employees are given the possibility to obtain the required information quickly and easily.	3,45	0,765	Favorable
13	Maintain the latest employee database.	3,44	0,877	Favorable
14	Employees like to share knowledge.	3,27	0,891	Not favorable

Source : data analysis

Information acquisition indicators as can be seen on Table 5, reveal that respondents were not favorable on items of effort to continue to build a unity of vision, mission and goals as well as employee openness to share knowledge. The unity of vision, mission and goals that are basic indicators of overall organizational learning is seen by respondents. Employees build mutual trust to share work information.

Individually, knowledge acquisition indicators are generally responded to favorable by the respondent owner or manager of hotels and lodging in Tana Toraja. Employees are allowed to continue enrich their knowledge by learning new things. The positive thing that can be seen from the responses of respondents in this study is that employees are given the opportunity to experiment with new techniques which very crucial to experiment to ways of working in a very competitive tourism business environment. Four items can be grouped as very favourable namely employees are given the freedom to think from a broad perspective; employees help each other to learn new things, employees build mutual trust to share work information; employees are given time to continue to improve their knowledge and skills.

## Discussion

In general, knowledge acquisition tends to be favorable. The results confirm previous studies that male tends to be more enthusiastic to new information (Byrd, 2007) and age of 50s tend to be more favorable for knowledge acquisition (Hoppstadius and Möller, 2018). The tendency to be more favorable for knowledge acquisition concerning to education level and tenure also in line with the previous research finding that higher education and relatively new in the job are favorable for knowledge acquisition.

The descriptive finding of this study reveals that information acquisition in MSMEs tourism are favorable. The finding is in line with information importance for the tourism industry. The tourism industry is an information-intensive industry (Yenidogan and Sencan, 2017) and information-intensive industry, demanding that all stakeholders continue to search for information, find, share, use and store information on an ongoing basis (Mariani et al., 2018). Information search, dissemination to members of the organization, use and storage of information in a sustainable manner leads to the concept of organizational learning (Sampe, 2012; Khoshkhoo and Nadalipour, 2016). Thus, for the tourism service business to be sustainable, continuous knowledge acquisition is very important.

Sustainable tourism needs continuous information acquisition of current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, meeting the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and the local community wisdom (Kyriakidou and Gore, 2005; Castro-Spila et al., 2018; Dorcic et al., 2018; Hartman, 2018; Heidari et al., 2018; Jones and Navarro, 2018; Putra et al., 2018). Efforts to take advantage of tourist attractions are not only concerned with current profits but also safe and support future welfare (Kraleva, 2011; Marasco et al., 2018). The tourism objects offered must be kept attractive so that they will be visited until future generations (Hoppstadius and Möller, 2018).

In the organizational learning context, the finding of knowledge acquisition also support the findings of the previous studies. Olympia Kyriakidou and Julie Gore, (2005) interviewed 89 MSME owners in the United Kingdom and found that MSMEs operating in the tourism industry used cultural values as a stimulus for knowledge acquisition on sustainable tourism business. Furthermore, they found that MSMEs in the tourism industry built the future by establishing missions and strategies based on excellence and continuous learning processes. Erick T. Byrd, (2007) in his research at SMEs in New York, United States found that the culture of sharing knowledge and cooperation among members of an organization helps the organization to achieve its strategic goals. Continuous knowledge acquisition has a positive influence on corporate sustainability. Mohammad Hossein Imani Khoshkhoo and Zahra Nadalipour, (2016) examined organizational learning in MSMEs in Iran. They found that the quality of the acquisition, distribution, use and storage of MSME organizations determines organizational performance. The continuous learning process has positive implications on improving organizational performance.

In the Indonesian context, the study finding confirms the finding of Putra et al. (2018). Ridwan Manda Putra, Usman Muhammad Tang, Yusni Ikhwan Siregar, Thamrin, (2018) investigated how communities around the Kampar River, Riau Province to run their daily tourism business. They found that ecosystem sustainability could encourage the sustainability of the tourism industry. The social and cultural dimensions and legal knowledge acquisition have an important role in ensuring the sustainability of the tourism industry.

## CONCLUSION

From the study analysis, 5 conclusions can be proposed:

1. MSMEs male managers/owners tended to be more favorable for knowledge acquisition in local wisdom and competitive tourism environment.
2. MSMEs managers/owners of tourism business between 30 and 39 years were favourable to knowledge acquisition.
3. MSMEs managers/owners relatively new to a job stimulate continuous knowledge acquisition.

4. MSMEs managers/ owners were not favorable in terms of effort to continuously build unity of vision, mission and goals as well as employee openness to share knowledge.
5. MSMEs managers/ owners tended to support individual employee knowledge acquisition concerning to local knowledge.

### SUGGESTION

For academics, it is recommended that knowledge acquisition of MSMEs organizations especially in the tourism sector need to be further explored so that business organizations may gain benefit from any available information especially from local wisdom and business environmental changes.

For tourism business MSMEs owners/managers, it is recommended that in addition to encouraging individual employees to continue to develop themselves, the company's vision, mission and goals are continuously embedded in each member of the organization so that the learning process in the organization can continue in following the specific context of the organization.

For policy decision-makers, it is recommended to create continuous learning for businesses by providing information hub and friendly governmental data.

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