

## TOURIST PERCEPTION OF ATTRACTIONS, ACCESSIBILITY AND AMENITIES AT THE KARO REGENCY FRUIT AND FLOWER FESTIVAL

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### Abstract

The Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival is an annual event held in Karo Regency. This festival is rooted in local traditions such as thanksgiving for fertile soil and abundant harvests. This study aims to determine tourist perceptions of attractions, accessibility, and amenities at the Fruit and Flower Festival. The method used in this study is descriptive quantitative. In this study, the data source is domestic tourists who have visited the Fruit and Flower Festival one or more times. The number of respondents in this study was 124 respondents. Based on Descriptive Statistical Analysis, tourist perceptions of Attractions, Accessibility, and Amenities at the Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival are generally classified as very good, when associated with the range of interpretation of the average score on a Likert scale of 1–5. Attractions and Accessibility received consistent ratings from tourists, indicating that the attractiveness of the festival and ease of access to the location were considered satisfactory and were the main factors in shaping their experience. Meanwhile, tourist perceptions of Amenities were also classified as very good, but showed slightly higher variations, indicating differences in individual experiences regarding comfort, supporting facilities, and additional services during the festival.

**Keywords:** *Tourist Perception, Fruit and Flower Festival, Tourist Attractions, Tourist Accessibility, Tourist Amenities*

### INTRODUCTION

The emergence of tourism in a country or region will certainly help the local economy through the development of tourist attractions in that area. This will certainly also have an impact on other sectors that develop in line with the development of this sector, such as agriculture, livestock, crafts, and increased employment opportunities. In Indonesia, tourism is the number one foreign exchange earning sector outside of non-oil and gas (1). Karo Regency, often referred to as Tanah Karo, is located in the Bukit Barisan highlands, North Sumatra, and is surrounded by mountains. Kabanjahe is the capital of Karo Regency. The area of this regency is 2,127.25 km<sup>2</sup> and the population is approximately 500,000 people. Karo Regency is 77 km from Medan City (the capital of North Sumatra Province). The Karo highlands are characterized by cool air, beautiful mountainous nature, and fertile agricultural land. This is evident from the agricultural products of Karo Regency, especially horticulture, which are often sent to other regions in Indonesia and abroad. Its strategic geographical location with a cool climate and beautiful natural scenery makes Tanah Karo one of the tourist destinations in North Sumatra. Kawar Lake, Grand Forest Park (Tahura), Mount Sibayak and Mount Sinabung with their craters, Hot Springs, Tongging, Tanah Malem resort, Gundaling Farmland and Lumbini Park are tourist destinations that are quite frequently visited by tourists (2).

Besides being a tourist destination, Tanah Karo also boasts annual cultural festivals such as the Fruit and Flower Festival, rooted in local traditions such as thanksgiving. This festival has been held since the 1980s and attracts many tourists. The Karo Regency Culture and Tourism Office continues to facilitate this festival as a community gathering event where families and friends gather to express gratitude for the fertile land and abundant harvests. The festival features a parade, an exhibition of creative products from the best MSMEs in North Sumatra, traditional and modern musical performances, and competitions featuring flowers and fruit. This event, rich in local cultural and intellectual content, is maintained by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism through the Karo Regency Culture and Tourism Office with the aim of increasing tourism opportunities in Indonesia and the surrounding region (3). Based on data (4), the

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number of tourists visiting the Fruit and Flower Festival in 2023 and 2024 was approximately 65,000. The relatively small number of tourists in the past two years demonstrates the need to understand consumer perceptions so that organizers can adjust their products, services, and marketing strategies to increase tourist satisfaction and encourage return in subsequent years.

## THEORETICAL BASIS

### 1. Perception

Sugihartono (2007) defines perception as the ability of the five senses to translate stimuli or the process of translating stimuli that enter the human sense organs. Human perception has different points of view in sensing, perceiving something as good or positive perception or negative perception which will influence human actions that are visible or real. Mulyana (2000) states that perception is the core of communication, while interpretation is the core of perception, which is identical to decoding in the communication process. According to Mulyana, perception determines the selection of a message and the ignoring of other messages.

### Factors Influencing Perception

Perception is determined by personal and situational factors (Rakhmat, 2005). David Krech and Richard S. Crutchfield in Rakhmat (2005) call it functional factors and structural factors. Functional Factors: Functional factors come from needs, past experiences and other things that are included in personal factors. Perception is not determined by the type or form of stimuli, but the characteristics of the person who responds to the stimuli, but the characteristics of the person who responds to the stimuli. Structural Factors: Structural factors come from the nature of physical stimuli and the individual's neural effects. According to Restiyanti Prasetijo (2005), the factors that influence perception can be grouped into two main factors, namely:

1. Internal factors include:
  - a. Experience,
  - b. Need,
  - c. Evaluation,
  - d. Expectations/hopes, and
2. External factors include:
  - a. Outward appearance,
  - b. Stimulus properties,
  - c. Environmental situation.

### 2. Attractions

A tourist attraction is a travel activity related to local attractions designed to explore the life and culture of a particular area (Ramdhani, 2023). According to Rif'an et al. (2023), attractions in a tourist destination are classified into three categories: things to see, things to do, and things to buy. Soekadijo in Abdulhaji et al (2016) revealed that good tourist attractions can also attract as many tourists as possible, retain them at the attraction for a long time and provide satisfaction to visiting tourists. To achieve these results, several conditions must be met, namely, the activities (acts) and objects (artifacts) that constitute the attraction itself must be in good condition. According to Mariotti in Yoeti (1987) as quoted by Suryatina (2010), there are three important things that attract tourists to visit a tourist destination.

### 3. Accessibility

Accessibility is a tool that can make traveling easier for someone. This requires a means of transportation. With advances in science and technology, various types of transportation are now available and serve as a supporter and driver of tourism development (Sammeng, 2000). Yoeti (2000) in Suryatina (2010) defines accessibility as the elements of convenience provided for tourists visiting a place and for which they must pay a reasonable price. Meanwhile, the definition of accessibility according to Trihatmodjo in Yoeti (1997) quoted by Ahmad (2014) is that accessibility is an ease in reaching a tourist destination either in terms of geographical distance or technical speed, as well as the availability of transportation facilities to the destination. Soekadijo (2003) accessibility requirements consist of access to information where facilities are easy to find and easy to reach, must have access to road conditions that can be passed and reach tourist attractions and there must be an end to the place of a journey. Therefore, there must always be: 1. Access to

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information. With progress, humans to channel all forms of their desires have made this world a place without limits. 2. Access to road conditions to tourist attractions, and road access must be connected to public infrastructure. 3. Access to the end of the trip (parking lot).

### **4. Amenities**

Amenities are a series of facilities provided by a tourist destination that are used to meet the needs of visitors or tourists who come. While facilities are a tool provided by the management of a tourist destination to provide services to tourists to enjoy it, facilities can be in the form of accommodation, parking, shopping areas, management rooms, bathrooms, and toilets (Spillane, 2000). Amenities are all forms of supporting facilities that can be used by tourists to meet their needs. Amenities are related to accommodation facilities, restaurants, public toilets, rest areas, souvenir shops, parking areas, places of worship and others that should be available at a tourist destination (Rusvitasari and Solihin, 2014). Meanwhile, according to Cahyani and Aditya (2014) amenities are various facilities such as accommodations, restaurants, and local transportation that tourists might travel to that place as well as other communication tools. According to Yoeti (2003) tourism facilities are all things that function to fulfill the needs of tourists who stay temporarily in the tourist destination they visit, where they can relax and enjoy and participate in the activities available in the tourist destination. Suwanto (2000) states that facilities consist of accommodation, restaurants, recreation and entertainment businesses, transportation and other facilities such as souvenir shops, water providers, and toilet facilities. Tourism facilities can also be interpreted as tourism facilities, according to Yoeti (1990) in Ahmad (2014) consisting of several types of tourism facilities, where one complements the other.

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The method used in this study is descriptive quantitative. In this study, the sample data sources are domestic tourists who have visited the Fruit and Flower Festival once or more. The determination of the number of samples used the Slovin formula so that the sample size was obtained as many as 100 respondents. The data used in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by researchers through questionnaires filled out directly by respondents and the results of interviews with stakeholders, in this case the Karo Regency Tourism Office or the event organizer of the Fruit and Flower Festival, while secondary data was obtained from the Karo Regency Central Statistics Agency in the form of statistical data on the number of tourist visits, data from journals and from other sources. The variables used in this study are attractions, accessibility and amenities. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire consisting of indicators of all research variables, outlined in questions. Each question was scored between one and five on a Likert scale. The answer choices were weighted as follows:

1 : Strongly disagree

2 : Disagree

3 : Neutral

4 : Agree

5 : Strongly agree

Respondents will provide answers between the numbers one and five, so the measurement data is interval data which will be analyzed using a data testing tool, namely SPSS (Statistical Program For Science).

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of respondents analyzed was 124 respondents and they were grouped based on gender, age and occupation.

### 1. Respondent Age

Age	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
17–27 years	62	50.0
28–38 years	35	28.2
39–49 years	24	19.4
50–60 years	3	2.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The majority of respondents in this study were aged 17–27, indicating a predominance of the younger age group or early productive generation, while respondents aged 50–60 were few or a minority. This indicates that the majority of tourists attending the Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival are from the young and productive age group. This is important to consider because respondents' perceptions and behaviors toward the research variables are likely influenced by the dominant age characteristics.

### 2. Respondent's Occupation

Work	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Private sector employee	23	18.5
Civil Servants/State-Owned Enterprises	23	18.5
Student	46	37.1
Student - Farmer	1	0.8
Farmer	8	6.5
Private Employees - Farmers	1	0.8
Entrepreneur - Farmer	1	0.8
Entrepreneur/Self-Employed	21	16.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>100.0</b>

In line with the dominant age range of respondents 17–27 years, the majority of respondents in this study were students, indicating the involvement of the younger generation in the Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival. Formal employment groups such as private sector employees, civil servants/state-owned enterprises, and entrepreneurs were also quite prominent, while respondents with combined jobs were only a minority and therefore did not contribute significantly to the research results. The implication is that the research results more closely reflect the views of the younger generation, who are generally more adaptive, dynamic, and open to innovation and change.

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**Research Instrument Testing**

**1. Validity Test**

Variables	Item	r-count	r-table (N=124; $\alpha=0.05$ )	Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
<b>ATTRACTIONS (ATR)</b>	ATR1	0.864	0.176	0,000	Valid
	ATR2	0.851	0.176	0,000	Valid
	ATR3	0.869	0.176	0,000	Valid
	ATR4	0.893	0.176	0,000	Valid
	ATR5	0.838	0.176	0,000	Valid
	ATR6	0.889	0.176	0,000	Valid
<b>ACCESSIBILITY (ACC)</b>	AKS1	0.902	0.176	0,000	Valid
	AKS2	0.944	0.176	0,000	Valid
	AKS3	0.857	0.176	0,000	Valid
<b>AMENITIES (AME)</b>	AME1	0.881	0.176	0,000	Valid
	AME2	0.917	0.176	0,000	Valid
	AME3	0.896	0.176	0,000	Valid
	AME4	0.819	0.176	0,000	Valid

Based on the validity test results, it is known that all items in the Attractions (ATR1–ATR6), Accessibility (AKS1–AKS3), and Amenities (AME1–AME4) variables have r-values ranging from 0.819 to 0.944, which means all are greater than 0.3. In addition, the significance value of each item is 0.000 (<0.05). Thus, it can be concluded that all statement items in the questionnaire are valid, so they are suitable for use in further analysis stages.

**2. Reliability Test**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Information
<b>Attractions (ATR)</b>	0.934	6	Reliable
<b>Accessibility (ACC)</b>	0.877	3	Reliable
<b>Amenities (AME)</b>	0.898	4	Reliable

Based on the results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha, all research variables have values above 0.6, namely Attractions at 0.934, Accessibility at 0.877, and Amenities at 0.898. This indicates that the three variables have an excellent level of internal consistency, meaning each variable can be relied upon to measure the construct being studied. Thus, it can be concluded that the questionnaire instrument in this study is reliable and can be used in the next stage of analysis.

**Descriptive Statistical Test**

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
<b>ATTRACTIONS (ATR)</b>	124	1	5	4.49	0.693
<b>ACCESSIBILITY (ACC)</b>	124	1	5	4.48	0.722
<b>AMENITIES (AME)</b>	124	1	5	4.26	0.804

The interpretation range for the average score (mean) on the Likert scale 1–5 is:

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Average Score	Assessment Categories
1.00 – 1.79	Very low
1.80 – 2.59	Low
2.60 – 3.39	Enough
3.40 – 4.19	Good
4.20 – 5.00	Very good

Based on Descriptive Statistical Analysis, tourists' perceptions of Attractions, Accessibility, and Amenities at the Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival are generally classified as very good, when associated with the range of interpretation of the average score on a Likert scale of 1–5.

### CONCLUSION

Attractions and Accessibility received consistent ratings from tourists, indicating that the festival's appeal and ease of access to the venue were considered satisfactory and were key factors in shaping their experience. Meanwhile, tourists' perceptions of Amenities were also rated very good, but showed slightly higher variation, indicating differences in individual experiences regarding comfort, supporting facilities, and additional services during the festival. These findings confirm that strengthening attractions and accessibility remains a strategic priority in festival development, while improving the quality of amenities can be a differentiating factor to enrich the tourist experience. Thus, tourist perceptions of these three aspects provide an important basis for further analysis of their influence on satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intentions at the Karo Regency Fruit and Flower Festival.

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