

## **Geopark ecotourism development in Indonesia and perception of international tourists**

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Indonesia is a country rich with natural and cultural resources, which have the potential to be developed further in the tourism sector. Although tourism offers high economic benefits for the country, at the same time it can cause a decline in environmental conditions. Extensive travel using transportation vehicles and human interaction with nature can damage local ecosystems and contribute to global climate change. Geopark is a new tourism product that can educate tourists about environmental protection, develop the local economy, and deepen the understanding of geological heritage resources. One of the geoparks developed in Indonesia is the Merangin Jambi Geopark which is divided into four groups, as follows: Kerinci Highland Park, Merangin Paleobotany Park, Sarolangun Gondwana Park, and Suku Anak dalam culture Park. The study attempts to explain following aspects: development of the Geological park for ecotourism, the ecotourism resources of the Merangin Jambi Geopark, and tourist's perception on ecotourism. The study is descriptive type of research and conducted using a survey on international tourists. Findings reveal the Geoparks development taking into account protection of geological heritage resources based on ecological thinking, if the development ecotourism products are to meet different needs of tourism. The study results also showed international tourists have a preference for ecotourism, and several factors were found that influence their intention to visit geoparks in Indonesia. The findings can used for better design and planning practices for further development of the Geopark Merangin Jambi and ecotourism resources development that will have impact on tourist's intention to visit the Geopark. The paper presents a new approach to sustainability by capturing the dynamic assessment and identifies Geopark ecotourism development and tourist's perception in Indonesia, using the Merangin Jambi Geopark as a case study. It also presents a new analysis that should be of interest to users, the local authority and stakeholders to develop better policies for a more sustainable future.

Presented in Theme 1