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**Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism** is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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## Exploring Key Indicators of Community Involvement in Ecotourism Management

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### Abstract

This research tries to find key indicators of community involvement in ecotourism management that can ensure that local communities are involved and take part in ecotourism activities must uphold the values of ecotourism, minimize negative impacts; build awareness and appreciation of ecosystems and culture; provide positive opportunities for visitors and hosts; provide direct financial benefits for conservation; provide monetary benefits and empowerment for local residents and increase the hospitality of rural communities. This study uses a desk research method with data and information search techniques online, secondary sources, and other sources of scientific publications. Meanwhile, the analysis technique used is a descriptive qualitative analysis technique, analogy, and comparison of several research results and other scientific publications related to ecotourism management problems. The ecotourism which is directly adjacent to the conservation forest be able to measure the success based on community participation that namely the MOA method which consists of Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability can be used. The ecotourism which is located in the middle of a village or village settlement can be measured by first that ecotourism can integrate nature and tourism so that (1) a unique tourist attraction that is completely different from other types of tourism, (2) optimally maintains nature according to its main function, (3) can encourage the community's economy as a whole, both the community, investors, and local governments, (4) integrating nature and the tourism system to form attractive tourist attractions in the future. The second conclusion is that ecotourism as an opportunity for local workers and attracts government interest (1) can involve local workers as personnel in its operations, (2) attracts government attention to building public facilities, (3) attracts government attention to providing public transportation, terminals, systems passenger safety, information systems. This study uses only a desk research method with data and information search techniques online, secondary sources, and other sources of scientific publications. Key



Indicators of Community Involvement in Ecotourism Management for ecotourism which is directly adjacent to the conservation forest, and ecotourism which is located in the village settlement.

**Keywords:** ecotourism, community participation, motivation, opportunities, capabilities.

**JEL Classification:** Q00; Q56; Z32.

## Introduction

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourism industry was recognized as one of the fastest-growing sectors leading to the main source of economic income in most developing countries. The tourism sector looks increasingly diversified towards a new form of tourism. People travel to enjoy nature (ecotourism), engage in various cultures (cultural tourism), explore the past and locations (heritage tourism), enjoy the climate, residents, and tourists (green tourism), or get appropriate medical care and facilities (health / medical tourism) (Tang 2014).

In comparison, the most common and popular part of tourism is the ecotourism industry. Ecotourism is generally recognized as one of the components under the tourism industry that represents the nature of environmental prudence and local involvement also stated that ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors in global tourism since 1990 after the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) was formed (Yu *et al.* 2016). Since then, the ecotourism industry has become an industry that has attracted a lot of attention from rural communities, especially in developing countries, to get involved. Basically, this industry is an alternative for people to improve their quality of life by utilizing existing resources such as nature and culture (Zolfani *et al.* 2015).

In accordance with Montes and Kafley (2019), it is explained that ecotourism has been actively marketed as an effective environmental resource and an opportunity to have a meaningful influence on the climate for rural communities. They noted that ecotourism has always had the ability to increase biodiversity and culture. Besides that, ecotourism also preserves the habitat of wild animals. Apart from that, ecotourism also improves the economic conditions of the host country (Zolfani *et al.* 2015). Activities in ecotourism are usually small in scale so they are quite easy to make. Primarily because it is village-based and requires local involvement, the attractiveness of ecotourism that is strategically designed and managed can offer direct benefits that can reduce the burden on other non-productive businesses that require the use of cultural and natural capital. However, to ensure the right direction for ecotourism, there are some basic principles that must be followed. According to Cobinnah (2015), there are many principles put forward by various researchers, but the most common principles put forward by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES). According to TIES, Ecotourism is about bringing biodiversity, culture, and sustainable tourism together.

According to TIES (Zolfani *et al.* 2015), ecotourism is characterized as responsible travel to natural areas that protect ecosystems, sustain the welfare of local communities, and require understanding and education. Participation The community must include different types of stakeholders at all levels of the cycle including preparation, discussion, consultation, dissemination, and decision making on the progress of the ecotourism market (Sanjeev and Birdie 2019). While participating in discussions local activities are always able to communicate their views and exchange ideas and expertise with others. This requires the efforts and cooperation of the local community. According to StoneandDuffy (2015), community-based ecotourism is a type of ecotourism that aims to involve local communities and communities in the management of natural resources with the aim of preserving economic, cultural, and environmental diversity. The main objective of community-based ecotourism is to encourage local communities by involving them in these ecotourism activities and at the same time empowering them to secure their place of residence. Good ecotourism should be based on Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability (MOA) (Pookhao *et al.* 2018).

This research tries to find key indicators of community involvement in ecotourism management that can ensure that local communities who are involved and take part in ecotourism activities must uphold the values of ecotourism, minimize negative impacts; build awareness and appreciation of ecosystems and culture; provide positive opportunities for visitors and hosts; provide direct financial benefits for conservation; provide monetary benefits and empowerment for local residents and increase the hospitality of rural communities (Utama *et al.* 2021).

## 1. Literature Review

### 1.1 The Evolution of Ecotourism

The concept of ecotourism existed long before the 80s, but the expression ecotourism openly began to appear in tourism papers in the late 1980s. Initially, ecotourism has been shown to provide environmental and economic benefits for all stakeholders of this form of tourism, but it is debatable how these goals can be achieved (Utama and Trimurti 2021). The expression in the late 1980s was a clear product of the appreciation of fair communities and global ecological activities and is considered one of the most popular concepts of ecotourism: "traveling to relatively undisturbed or undisturbed natural areas with a specific purpose of studying, admiring, and enjoy the scenery and wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) that are found in this area " (Dimitrovski, Todorović and Valjarević 2012). Since ecotourism has become more prominent, its meaning has expanded to include the notion of ecotourism accountability, environmentally responsible destination management, and sustainable growth of local human populations. Ecotourism has been defined from multiple perspectives by policymakers tasked with developing ecotourism destinations, tour operators, tourism organizations, or even academics who wish to contribute to creating a multiplicity of definitions surrounding the word ecotourism (Conway and Cawley 2016).

### 1.2 Ecotourism Currently

Ecotourism has been around for several years but nevertheless, the exact concept of ecotourism has been discussed in a vague way. There are also challenges in describing ecotourism without paying attention to basic metaphysical and ethical concepts. However, the most common ecotourism concept is put forward by TIES. In today's world, the term ecotourism has been referred to in various terms such as sustainable tourism, nature tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism (Chandel and Mishra 2016).

However, there is still debate among authors regarding the characteristics of the term alternative ecotourism (Chandel and Mishra 2016; Oxoli *et al.* 2019).

Although there are differences of opinion among researchers about the characteristics of ecotourism, the current tourism trends should not be ignored in order to grow an ecotourism business that is in line with the modern world. Most of the theories and concepts of ecotourism in the world are considered outdated as the world moves towards the modernization era. Therefore, scholars put forward three main criticisms of the modernization theory being extended to ecotourism as a form of sustainable development. Regmi and Walter (2016) suggest the first modernization theory to support a false distinction between 'new' and 'traditional'. In this way, the ideals, traditions, and behavior of rural and aboriginal peoples are relics of ancient activities that must be discarded in order to become new and therefore gain a more advanced status. The second hypothesis involves a spreading agenda that assumes that the direction and pace of the transition that has taken place in Western countries are the only path to growth and that this route is slowly occurring at some point. Thus, to be stable and democratic, non-Western countries must follow the same general pattern of development or 'one production paradigm' (Jenkins 2015). The new modernization theory has been criticized for its ethnocentric orientation (Cohen, E. and Cohen, S. A. 2015). Things that sound strange and bizarre in non-Western countries that are socially marginalized are treated as conservative and orthodox, and as such will be focused on ontological values and perceptions of Western society. However, in the face of such old criticism, a modernist approach to development continues to dominate policy and practice in the South internationally.

### 1.3 Ecotourism Business

It is a common fact that ecotourism has three dimensions, namely being managed in a sustainable manner, environmentally sound, and based on nature. The concept of sustainability is based on two principles (i) to support conservation and (ii) to support the local economy (D'Souza *et al.* 2019).

Therefore, ecotourism and sustainable tourism may be compared; in a way that ecotourism encapsulates sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is a sub-component in the sustainable tourism sector that seeks to promote sustainability by preparing and managing to promote its environmental and social goals. Ecotourism companies provide various kinds of commodity facilities, such as homestays, health, and wildlife (Pulido-Fernández and López-Sánchez 2016).

### 1.4 Homestay

Homestays may not be considered to represent a new form of tourist accommodation, but they are likely to gain popularity in the scientific literature as a way to provide significant, complementary, or alternative income to local

communities, promote local empowerment, eradicate poverty, attract tourists, showcasing local cultural and natural heritage (Bhalla, Coghlan and Bhattacharya 2016). International tourists also find homestays attractive in search of local lifestyle experiences, tailored service, and real or genuine social experiences with the host, preferring local forms of hospitality, especially in small and sometimes remote rural communities. Homestay programs are often integrated with other community-based tourism activities, such as trekking, camping, bird watching, showcasing traditional cultures and festivals, and so on, to provide a decent income for local communities and to create rich and rewarding interpersonal and cultural experiences for tourists (Bhalla, Coghlan and Bhattacharya 2016).

### 1.5 Food or Culinary

Food is a core component of almost all tourism encounters. However, the significance of food in the tourist experience and its meaning varies based on the wishes and desires of each visitor. Food, in general, can be seen as satisfying individual needs, whether someone is on a trip or not, or it may be the main driving force in motivating tourists to visit certain destinations (Fennell and Markwell 2015).

The increasing demand for new cuisines has supported a sizable expansion of food as niche or special-interest tourism. In this situation, food is an attraction, so there is a lot of literature on partnerships like this one between tourism and health. Traditional cuisine is most often used as a foundation for sustainable community growth, with an increasing increase in farmers' markets, green restaurants, organic food projects, and social initiatives such as food fairs (Shani and Arad 2014). The meaning and importance of conventional food are very complex and highly subjective in multicultural and transcultural cultures. On the social stage, food is always the object of various important activities and gatherings and is closely related to the traditional concept of hospitality. Food can represent ownership and can be a uniting and dividing force. Food is used to define a sense of community identity based on interests, ethnicity, religion, locality, and nationality (Barbosa *et al.* 2017). For example, Australia is known for its abundance of fresh seafood. Therefore, tour operators will take advantage of these culinary characteristics when marketing their products, especially if most of the businesses are located in coastal areas or near the coast. Some hosts even offer some exotic food and wine (Fennell and Markwell 2015). Examples of exotic animal species being eaten in Australia as a traditional diet are kangaroos, crocodiles, and, to a lesser extent, promoted too.

### 1.6 Wildlife

Zee (2015) defines ecotourism as ethical travel to environmentally protected places, safeguard the welfare of local communities, and requires understanding and education. This term is particularly relevant to the wildlife ecotourism sector. On the other hand, this concept applies especially with respect to the impact of ecotourism on biodiversity (Buckley, Morrison and Castley 2016). Ecotourism and biodiversity are related or in conflict with the economic sector (Zanamwe *et al.* 2018). Globally, scientific research has shown that the demand for ecotourism-based goods continues to increase. Ecotourism revenues will also be used to finance biodiversity protection and socio-economic growth to support local communities (Zee and Vanneste 2015). According to Gutierrez, *et al.*, (2019), in Costa Rica, ecotourism provides a large part of the income for research, captivity, and conservation efforts of endangered species, such as the black-and-white ruffed lemur and many species of sea turtles. This type of service is capable of generating 50 times more income than the economic losses caused by human-wildlife conflict. The economic, biological, and behavioral effects of ecotourism on biodiversity have been documented, with less promising findings (Blumstein *et al.* 2017).

Gutierrez *et al.* (2019) found that ecological and behavioral disturbances caused by feeding animals, littering, collecting artifacts, erosion affecting species survival, distribution, reproductive success, or ecological community structures are caused by the impact of visitors on natural areas. On the other hand, Geffroy *et al.* (2015, 2016) proposed that ecotourism could establish 'human protection' with detrimental effects on wildlife. Under these hostile screens, the animals are accustomed to the perception of the visitor, which may lead to behavioral adjustments, which ultimately makes them more vulnerable to abuse and predation. Meanwhile, the experimental results of Fitzgerald & Stronza (Geffroy *et al.* 2015) provide strong observations that suggest that mass or inappropriately controlled tourism impacts wildlife species and their ecosystems at several different levels. However, these findings are rarely based on ecotourism activities and implications alone, especially with regard to current ecotourism concepts (Fennell and Markwell 2015). Blumstein *et al.* (2017) is a perfect illustration of this claim, demonstrating the detrimental consequences of birds, penguins, aquatic species, oceans and, in general, on the biodiversity resulting from a large number of visitor impacts, thus using the term 'ecotourism' indiscriminately to include them all.



## 2. Methodology

This study uses a desk research method with data and information search techniques online, secondary sources, and other sources of scientific publications. Meanwhile, the analysis technique used is a descriptive qualitative analysis technique, analogy, and comparison of several research results and other scientific publications related to ecotourism management problems. This study can be divided into two types, namely ecotourism which is directly adjacent to a conservation forest, and ecotourism which is located in the middle of a village or village settlement.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Community-Based Participation in Ecotourism

Community-based ecotourism (CBE) is part of the tourism industry activities that are recently practiced by rural communities in developing countries (Afenyo and Amuquandoh 2014). The criteria for community-based ecotourism are based on the different perspectives of many authors. First, it is known as an efficient tool to increase community empowerment in tourism services. Second, community-based ecotourism activities are managed by the community for their livelihood interests. Third, educate the public to appreciate and manage the natural and cultural resources around them.

According to Pornprasit and Rurkkhum (2019), community-based ecotourism is one type of ecotourism that aims to involve local communities and communities in managing their natural resources in order to preserve economic, cultural, and biological diversity, and this type of ecotourism management is a growing pattern. The ecotourism tradition has shaped community-based ecotourism in the last two decades. The development of community-based ecotourism is considered to have the potential to positively change people's perceptions about the use of natural and cultural resources. Community-based ecotourism makes people value and manages natural and cultural resources more after knowing the benefits they get (De Urioste-Stone, Scaccia and Howe-Poteet 2015).

### 3.2 The Role of Ecotourism

Various reports have shown the impact of community involvement in ecotourism on local people and the climate. Various studies on community-based ecotourism projects have verified the possible benefits to communities, in special "commercially based" projects.

### 3.3 Increase community participation

Community participation is an important element of community-based ecotourism (CBE) especially for sustainable tourism development (Towner 2015). Sustainable tourism according to Stone (2015) is defined as tourism that can maintain its feasibility for an unpredictable period of time and does not disturb humans and the physical environment in which they are located. The drivers of sustainable tourism development emphasized by Stone (2015) are community participation, ownership, and empowerment through the rubric of community-based natural resource management. As emphasized by Stone (2015) that ownership is important for the sustainable development of community-based ecotourism, Chirenje, GilibaandMusamba (2013) have verified that community participation will be less successful if local people feel they lack ownership.

In his research, local communities are excluded from the crucial decision-making process, namely project planning and budgeting, so that the community is less involved because they feel they do not own the project. As mentioned above, community participation is the key to sustainable tourism development and is also an important component in ensuring the successful implementation of community-based ecotourism. According to Bhalla, et al. (2016) community participation can be increased through the homestay program. Homestay activities include the involvement of all villagers who contribute explicitly and indirectly to the ecotourism project by providing property for homestay construction and manual labor. To provide food for tourists, farmers supply locally produced crops, dairy products from pets.

They can also hold musical activities, tell storytelling, and show local traditions to meet visitor demands. Finally, the aspects of maintenance and security are also taken care of by the local community. The profits from this program are shared equally among the villagers, thus motivating them to work more. In the end, the community bonding became stronger, thus increasing community participation.

### 3.4 Job Creation

Another benefit that is recognized as a community-based ecotourism product is based on employment (Gupta, Tiwari and Voda 2021). Afenyo and Amuquandoh (2014) explored the gleaned from a project obtained from an

ecotourism project in Tafi Atome, a rural community in Ghana. Based on the results of his research, before the development of tourist destinations in Tafi Atome, farming was the main income that contributed to the community's economy. Following the establishment of the Monkey Sanctuary as a tourist attraction, a significant alternative source of employment has been created for the local population. It said the Tafi Atome Monkey Sanctuary had employed a total of 10 local residents to become members of the local tourism council for two years, during which incentives would be given to others. There are also job possibilities for five area tour guides, two receptionists, and two assistants. In fact, the neighborhood homestay service offers additional income for households participating in the program. Community cultural groups and central storytellers are also regularly involved to attract visitors.

### **3.5 Helping Environmental Conservation**

Some literature shows ecotourism assistance in efforts to conserve animal protection (Afenyo and Amuquandoh 2014) stated that ecotourism can integrate wildlife conservation with human welfare. For example, researchers studied the relationship between wildlife conservation and ecotourism in Ladakh, India. The latter found that Ladakh has a species of snow leopard and according to the World Wildlife Fund (Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar 2016), snow leopards are experiencing a decline in population due to poaching. Vannelli, et al's (2019) research found that tourists willingly travel to Ladakh to see snow leopards. Therefore, a local village in Ladakh took this opportunity to build a homestay program where visitors can stay and see snow leopards. This has indirectly prevented the snow leopard from falling prey to poachers so as to conserve the snow leopard population (Hall 2019).

### **3.6 Case Study of Community Based Tourism Implementation in Jatiluwih, Bali, Indonesia**

The village of Jatiluwih is located in Penebel District, Tabanan Regency, Bali. This village is located at an altitude of 500-1500 meters above sea level and has an average rainfall of 2500 mm/year. The air temperature ranges from 26-29°C so the air is relatively cool. The topography of this village is hilly with a slope of up to 60° so that the rice fields as the mainland for people's livelihoods must be terraced. Rice terraces are made in addition to fulfilling its main function as a regulator of rice field irrigation; it is also a reflection of the survival of local culture, particularly the survival of livelihood systems in agriculture (Singgalen, Sasongko and Wiloso 2019; Lu and Nepal 2009). Based on the CBT indicator developed by Hunter (Lu and Nepal 2009), the application of Community Based Tourism to the tourist attraction of Jatiluwih Tabanan Bali can be seen from the following five indicators.

#### **3.6.1 First, a Healthy Economic Indicator**

The results of the interview show that the transparency of the management of Jatiluwih's Tourism Attraction starts from daily to monthly income until it is finally reported and distributed to various parties. Funds are obtained every day from entrance tickets, parking fees, and deposits from the homestay manager. Judging from the chart, the operational management of the Jatiluwih Village Tourism Attraction is under the Regional Government with the General Chairperson of the Regent, the tourism office as the secretary or deputy. Homestay owners contribute to the Tourism Attraction manager for operations. All finances are supervised by the Tabanan Regency Audit Board. Funds obtained from the management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction are used to support the preservation of Subak and activities in the Traditional Village and the Jatiluwih village (Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019; Utama, and Trimurti 2019).

#### **3.6.2 The Welfare of Local Communities**

Second, indicators of the welfare of local communities are an inseparable part, because local people are in direct contact with tourism activities in their area. The management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction is completely left to the Jatiluwih Village community so that the management carried out has great benefits for the welfare of the Jatiluwih Traditional Village community and Gunung Sari Traditional Village which means self-help management by the Jatiluwih Village Community. Welfare as the impact of tourism felt by the village community is that the youth of Jatiluwih Village get jobs as employees in the management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction so that they get income to support the welfare of their families. Farmers can also sell their agricultural products in the form of brown rice, glutinous rice, and agricultural products directly to visitors (Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019; Utama, and Trimurti 2019).

### **3.6.3 It does not Change Nature**

Third, the indicator does not change nature, namely sustainable tourism, which is tourism that pays close attention to the quality of the natural environment for the sustainability of tourism itself. The management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction has paid attention to environmental aspects and is well maintained. The management carries out activities that maintain the environment, such as community service carried out every Sunday, planting shade trees, maintaining natural beauty, structuring the subak irrigation canals to achieve sustainable tourism (Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019; Utama, and Trimurti 2019).

### **3.6.4 Healthy Culture**

Fourth, indicators of a healthy culture, namely the existence of sustainable tourism, the community's appreciation of cultural heritage are getting higher. The management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction contributes to the existing cultures in the village community by forming dance and tabuh studios. The groups or sekeha currently owned are the angklung, joged, dance, and gong groups. This is a characteristic of maintaining culture. The culture that develops in the community is used as a tourist attraction in order to support tourism activities at Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction. The culture that exists in the community is still alive and tourism activities are also running well and sustainably (Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019; Utama, and Trimurti 2019).

### **3.6.5 Tourist Satisfaction**

Fifth, indicators of tourist satisfaction that cannot be separated, because tourist satisfaction is the result of the management of Tourism Attraction which cannot be measured in the material. The management of Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction seeks to create tourist satisfaction with the existing natural and cultural environment. The way this is done is by improving the infrastructure, using resources that are not destructive, but sustainable so that tourists do not feel bored visiting Jatiluwih Tourism Attraction (Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019; Utama, and Trimurti 2019).

## **4. Conclusions, Limitations and Further Research**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

This conclusion can be divided into two types, namely ecotourism which is directly adjacent to the conservation forest, and ecotourism which is located in the middle of a village or village settlement.

The ecotourism which is directly adjacent to the conservation forest be able to measure the success based on community participation that namely the MOA method which consists of Motivation, Opportunity, and Ability can be used. The motivation for ecotourism development can be measured by indicators (1) money motive, (2) knowledge motive, (3) optimism, (4) villager's mindset, (5) interest, (6) exposure, (7) income, (8) Other Commitments, (9) Fear of outside interference. The opportunity consists of (1) Facilities, (2) Awareness, (3) Beautiful Nature, (4) Training, (5) tourist arrivals, (6) infrastructure. Ability consists of (1) funding, (2) skills, (3) participation, (4) employment, (5) leadership, (6) youth support, (7) cooperation. While the measurement of the success of Community Based Tourism can be measured at least on five indicators, namely: (1) healthy economic indicators, namely a healthy economy, (2) indicators of the welfare of local communities, (3) natural preservation, (4) indicators of a healthy culture, (5) tourist satisfaction (Rasoolimanesh and Jaafar 2016; Sigala 2016; Leung and Bai 2013).

The ecotourism which is located in the middle of a village or village settlement can be measured by first that ecotourism can integrate nature and tourism so that (1) a unique tourist attraction that is completely different from other types of tourism, (2) optimally maintains nature according to its main function, (3) can encourage the community's economy as a whole, both the community, investors, and local governments, (4) integrating nature and the tourism system to form attractive tourist attractions in the future. The second conclusion is that ecotourism as an opportunity for local workers and attracts government interest (1) can involve local workers as personnel in its operations, (2) attracts government attention to building public facilities, (3) attracts government attention to providing public transportation, terminals, systems passenger safety, information systems(Widari, Antara and Paturusi 2019).

### **4.2 Limitation and Study Forward**

This study uses only a desk research method with data and information search techniques online, secondary sources, and other sources of scientific publications. For the future researches are need confirmation of key

indicators of community involvement in ecotourism management for ecotourism which is directly adjacent to the conservation forest, and ecotourism which is located in the village settlement by conducting field studies.

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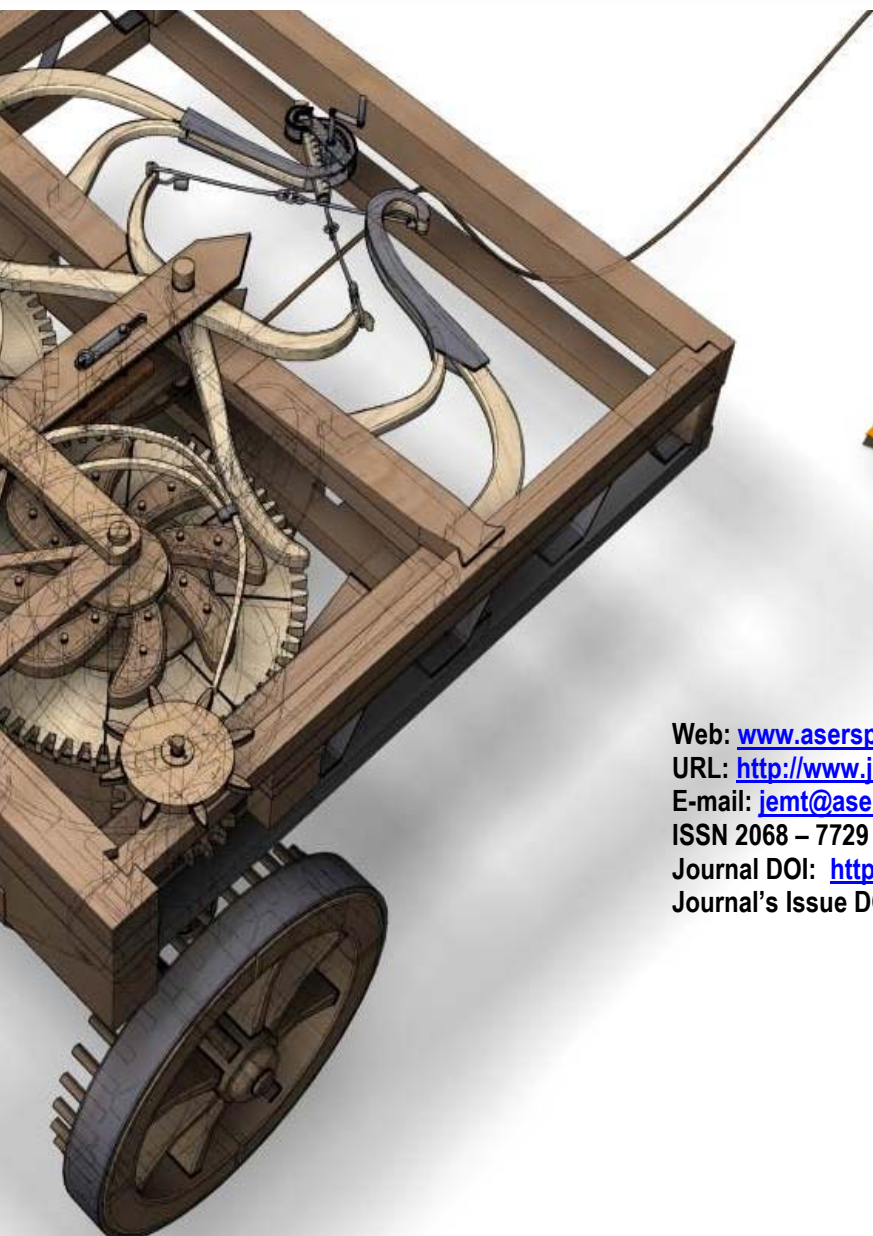
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