



MAPPING THE POTENTIAL OF MARINE TOURISM AND THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN SOUTHERN EAST LOMBOK

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to identify the potential of marine tourism from the hospitality sector in the southern East Lombok region and design its development strategy in a sustainable manner. The research method used is an exploratory qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The data analysis technique used is a thematic analysis methodology. The results of the study show that this area has great potential in marine tourism, culture, and ecotourism with several leading destinations such as Ekas Bay, Pink Beach, and Ekas Bay Mangrove Forest. However, there are various challenges that must be overcome such as lack of supporting infrastructure, limited human resources and marketing that is not optimal. The recommendations of this study include increasing human resource capacity, strengthening digital-based marketing strategies and sustainability-based tourism management.

Keywords: Marine Tourism, Hospitality, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country with an extensive coastline, possesses tremendous potential for marine tourism. With its rich marine ecosystems and distinctive natural beauty, Indonesia's marine tourism sector attracts both domestic and international visitors. In particular, the southern region of East Lombok demonstrates considerable potential for the development of marine tourism and the hospitality sector, which can boost the local economy while providing sustainable benefits to local communities (Andini, Guskarnali, & Irvani, 2019; Sobari et al., 2006).

Southern East Lombok represents an area endowed with significant maritime tourism potential, characterized by captivating natural landscapes that include pristine beaches, diverse marine ecosystems, and authentic expressions of local culture. The region's strategic geographical position serves as a protective buffer



zone for the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ), designated by the Indonesian government as one of the super-priority destinations. Despite these advantages, much of the tourism potential in this region remains underdeveloped. Many attractions are still little known among domestic and international travelers, resulting in a predominance of local visitors. This condition underscores the urgent need for strategic initiatives to map existing potentials in order to enhance tourism attractiveness and support local economic advancement.

The importance of advancing the marine tourism sector in Southern East Lombok is reinforced by numerous scientific studies emphasizing its broad economic potential through sustainable maritime tourism management. Previous research has shown that marine-oriented tourism not only contributes to regional revenue but also improves community welfare by creating new employment opportunities and enhancing prospects for small and medium enterprises (Yudita, 2017; Sykur et al., 2020). However, the region faces several challenges in optimizing its marine tourism potential, including low public awareness of tourism's economic benefits and inadequate infrastructure such as accessibility and visitor facilities (Basri et al., 2023; Suhastini, 2019).

The villages of Jerowaru, Sekaroh, Ekas Buana, and Pemokong serve as prominent examples, each possessing distinctive characteristics and substantive tourism potential. These four villages not only form part of the Mandalika SEZ buffer zone but also feature various attractions, including exotic beaches, seagrass ecosystems, and opportunities for marine sports such as snorkeling and diving. For instance, Ekas Beach has gained recognition for its coral reef beauty, underwater scenery, and its role as a lobster aquaculture site—offering strong potential for development into a marine-oriented tourism destination (Basri et al., 2023). Additionally, local cultural traditions, such as the Madak ritual practices, can serve as unique attractions for tourists seeking authentic cultural experiences (Sykur et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the region's aesthetic appeal and resource abundance remain underutilized. The variety of tourist destinations has yet to significantly increase visitor numbers due to inadequate promotion. The limited promotional activities and lack of information dissemination regarding marine tourism potential are compounded by the low influx of international visitors. In fact, with proper management, this area could become a leading tourism hub in Southeast Asia (Kurniawati et al., 2022). Moreover, community participation in strengthening the tourism sector remains minimal, mainly due to limited understanding of its economic benefits. This aligns with conclusions from various studies advocating for community education and local capacity development as crucial steps toward successful community-based tourism management (Ratmaja & Pattaray, 2019).

Mapping the marine tourism potential of this region constitutes a strategic initiative aimed at identifying existing strengths and opportunities for development while addressing weaknesses that hinder progress. By mapping destinations across the four villages, this effort is expected to provide solutions for improving promotional strategies, accessibility quality, and active community involvement in tourism management (Hadmoko et al., 2021).

This mapping effort holds particular relevance within the framework of East Lombok's designation as the Mandalika SEZ buffer zone. As an integral component

of this support area, tourism advancement in these four villages could significantly contribute to the overall success of the Mandalika SEZ. Enhancing the quality of tourism destinations within the buffer zone is expected to foster a mutually beneficial synergy between the Mandalika SEZ and the local communities of East Lombok (Triyanti et al., 2020). Furthermore, this strategy has the potential to stimulate the development of a sustainable green economy, as discussed in various scientific studies on green investment in the tourism sector (Nurasmah, 2015).

To effectively facilitate this potential mapping, a collaborative methodology involving governmental, community, and business stakeholders is essential. The government plays a vital role in developing fundamental infrastructure and providing training for local residents to strengthen their competencies in tourism management. Simultaneously, business operators can channel investments into establishing environmentally friendly tourism facilities, thereby attracting greater tourist inflows without compromising the integrity of natural ecosystems. Furthermore, community participation is crucial in preserving environmental sustainability and offering authentic experiences to tourists through their engagement in various community-based tourism initiatives (Jupri et al., 2023).

Overall, this study aims to provide a holistic understanding of the prospects and challenges faced by the marine tourism and hospitality sectors in Southern East Lombok. By focusing on these four villages, it seeks not only to identify exploitable opportunities for tourism development but also to offer strategic recommendations that stakeholders can implement to enhance the region's competitiveness as a leading tourism destination

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism and Marine Tourism

Tourism is a temporary travel activity undertaken by individuals or groups to specific destinations for various purposes such as recreation, education, or other interests. Several studies have shown that the tourism industry has a significant impact on the economy. This activity involves multiple sectors—such as transportation, accommodation, and entertainment—and influences the social and cultural life of local communities (Pujiyanto, 2023). In Indonesia, with its long coastline and rich marine biodiversity, marine tourism holds enormous potential. Marine-based tourism includes activities such as diving, snorkeling, cruising, observing marine life, and coral reef conservation. These elements have become major attractions in several Indonesian destinations, including Bali, Raja Ampat, and Labuan Bajo (Salim, 2023). Marine tourism plays an essential role in economic development, both locally and globally, as it creates employment opportunities in hospitality, transportation, and tour guiding, while also increasing regional income through higher tourist arrivals.

Mapping Tourism Potential

Mapping tourism potential is a crucial initial step in tourism development, encompassing the identification and analysis of various tourism assets—natural, cultural, and infrastructural. Such mapping helps identify areas with specific advantages that can be promoted as attractive tourist destinations. According to

Hadiyanto (2022), this process serves as a foundation for designing sustainable tourism development strategies. Given Indonesia's vast natural and cultural wealth, the nation has substantial opportunities in this area. Geospatial technology, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), plays a vital role in mapping tourism potential. GIS can identify high-potential areas that remain underutilized. Research by Sari and Hidayah (2022) revealed that the use of GIS facilitates more efficient mapping and management of tourist destinations, enabling policymakers and stakeholders to design appropriate infrastructure. The involvement of local communities in the mapping process often leads to more accurate and relevant information about potential tourism sites that have not yet been developed. Rachmawati (2022) emphasized that community participation in tourism planning and management strengthens residents' sense of ownership over destinations, thereby supporting sustainable tourism development.

Development of the Hospitality Sector

Alencastro et al. (2023) explored the concept of marine tourism development and identified two key dimensions shaping recreational fishing preferences: "safety and local culture" and "service quality." Emphasizing safety and local culture positively influences tourists' willingness to book fishing tours and their overall travel satisfaction. These findings serve as managerial guidelines for destination managers in marine-protected areas and communities offering adventure fishing experiences. Tourism has become an integral part of community life in Manado (Tangian et al., 2019). Tourism activities have significantly improved the quality of life by supporting the sustainability of economic, social, cultural, and environmental activities in the city. The coastal area has become increasingly valuable since Manado was promoted as the "Manado World Tourism City 2010." Since then, coastal zones have grown more vibrant, hosting numerous annual events and festivals that have positioned Manado as a globally open destination. Tourist sites in Manado are often located near beaches or Manado Bay, and are supported by hospitality-related activities such as hotels, restaurants, and shopping facilities (Allokendek et al., 2024).

The development of marine tourism areas along the coastlines and small islands of Makassar will succeed only if supported by appropriate institutions, community groups, policies, and management techniques. It is recommended to establish a management institution that addresses strategic management issues to ensure the creation of an integrated management system. Implementing a conceptual model of sustainable marine tourism development is one effective way to establish a management institution capable of developing integrated and balanced marine tourism management practices for Makassar's coastal and island areas.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative exploratory methodology through a case study approach, carefully designed to conduct an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of both existing conditions and untapped potentials. The research team conducted direct field observations, interactions, and interviews with various stakeholders to address the formulated research questions.

The primary focus of this investigation is the southern region of East Lombok, encompassing the villages of Jerowaru, Ekas Buana, Wakan, Pemokong, and Seriwe—all of which exhibit significant but largely underutilized marine tourism potential. The study's subjects include diverse tourism stakeholders such as government representatives, industry players, community members, and academics, each of whom plays a critical role in the sustainable development and enhancement of tourism infrastructure in Southern East Lombok. This comprehensive approach aims to capture the diverse interactions and relationships among stakeholders, thereby providing a holistic perspective on the dynamics of tourism development within these villages. Ultimately, the findings of this research are expected to contribute valuable insights to inform future strategic planning and policy decisions aimed at fostering sustainable growth in the region's marine tourism and broader hospitality sectors.

Data analysis in this study employs a thematic analysis approach. The initial phase involves aggregating data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. The data are then coded to identify emerging themes, which are subsequently grouped into broader categories for deeper analysis. In the final stage, the categorized data are interpreted in relation to relevant theories and prior research findings, establishing connections with the study's results—particularly within the context of the developed conceptual framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on field observations and interviews, various tourism potentials have been identified across the southern region of East Lombok. These potentials can be further developed to enhance the area's economic and social sustainability, as described below..

Development Potential in Southern East Lombok

The tourism potential in southern East Lombok exhibits substantial diversity, encompassing natural, marine, cultural, and ecotourism dimensions. For instance, the Jerowaru area possesses distinctive attractions, including pristine beaches such as Pink Beach and several promising Gili islets; however, their management remains suboptimal. The local government has initiated management strategies aimed at enhancing the area's attractiveness, including the restoration and improvement of previously neglected mangrove zones (Interview with Subdistrict Head, 06:12). Moreover, local traditions, including dance and handicraft arts, represent valuable cultural assets that warrant further development (Village Secretary, 06:24).

Infrastructure has emerged as a critical factor in advancing tourism in the region. The local government has begun improving roads leading to major tourist sites, thereby facilitating better visitor access. However, conflicts between governmental authorities and private entities sometimes hinder progress—for example, hotel management objections to road hardening projects perceived as disruptive to their guests (Interview with Subdistrict Head, 08:23). Furthermore, ports such as Elong Bay, which serves as a transit point to Sumbawa, hold significant potential for future development (Village Secretary, 14:12). Local communities, through tourism-oriented collectives such as POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness

Groups), have taken an active role in tourism management. They oversee activities such as transportation, snorkeling, and fishing, generating direct income for residents (Tourism Industry Stakeholder, 09:06). Some community members also engage in small-scale enterprises, including equipment rentals and souvenir sales (POKDARWIS, 03:57).

Challenges in Tourism Development in Southern East Lombok

The main challenges across tourism destinations in southern East Lombok include the lack of supporting facilities such as toilets, gazebos, showers, and parking areas. These deficiencies often reduce visitor comfort and weaken the region's competitiveness compared to more developed destinations like Bali. Additionally, land ownership conflicts and regulatory issues pose significant obstacles. Land transfers to investors often occur without transparent community involvement, leading to disputes that delay tourism development. Similarly, central government construction regulations imposed without coordination with local authorities result in poorly aligned planning initiatives.

Another major challenge lies in waste management, which remains suboptimal at tourist sites. Educational initiatives aimed at local communities and tourists regarding environmental cleanliness have not been fully implemented, resulting in visible litter at tourist locations. This situation tarnishes the destination's image and may reduce visitor interest. Furthermore, the quality of local human resources in the hospitality sector requires serious attention. Most residents lack foreign language proficiency and the skills necessary to provide internationally competitive services. Therefore, intensive training and capacity-building programs are urgently needed. Public awareness of the long-term consequences of selling land to investors also remains low. Many residents sell their land without considering future economic and social impacts, ultimately limiting their access to tourism-related resources.

Development Expectations and Recommendations

Community empowerment is essential to ensure that tourism management produces tangible benefits for local residents. Tourism Awareness Groups (POKDARWIS) have emerged as pioneers in fostering community participation, particularly by facilitating services for tourists such as transportation, snorkeling guidance, and equipment rental. However, key challenges persist, including limited English proficiency and insufficient understanding of international cultural norms—both of which are critical for effectively serving foreign tourists (POKDARWIS, 11:13; Industry Stakeholder, 12:21). Improving access to technology and digital marketing is also crucial for expanding market reach. Several stakeholders have proposed initiatives to utilize digital platforms to promote local products and highlight tourism destinations. Online markets can help individuals reduce reliance on intermediaries while securing better prices for their products (Village Government, 04:23).

Sustainability principles form the foundation of tourism management in southern East Lombok. To maintain the area's attractiveness while preserving ecological integrity, local authorities have proposed ecotourism as a key strategic initiative. This includes efforts to conserve mangrove ecosystems, protect coral

reefs, and educate tourists about the environmental impacts of their activities (Village Secretary, 03:40).

CONCLUSIONS

The tourism and hospitality potential of southern East Lombok is highly promising, encompassing marine and natural attractions, cultural and ecotourism assets, as well as man-made tourism developments that can support the region's growth and complement the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ). If developed under a more professional and sustainable management framework, these assets could significantly increase tourist arrivals. Several challenges remain, including inadequate supporting facilities (amenities) at various destinations, unresolved land ownership disputes, limited human resources and service quality, and suboptimal marketing efforts. A comprehensive program grounded in sustainability principles—focusing on human resource capacity building, active community involvement, improved technological access, and sustainable tourism management—is essential to address these issues. By integrating environmental conservation, community empowerment, and cross-sector collaboration, southern East Lombok can evolve into a globally competitive tourism destination that generates economic, social, and ecological benefits for local communities while safeguarding its cultural and natural heritage for future generations.

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