

## The Phenomenon Sustainable Competitive Advantage for Alor Island Ecotourism Development: Background Review and Literature Review

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#### ABSTRACT

Various research results regarding ecotourism development have been carried out, but only a little research has been carried out on Alor Island. This results in the literature on this topic not being sufficient as a supporting theory. Therefore, there is a need to understand the resources that contribute to Alor Island's competitive advantage. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach, through document and literature studies at national and regional levels related to the research theme, namely sustainable ecotourism. This research fills this gap with a Resource-Based View approach. The main objective of this research is to develop a sustainable competitive advantage for ecotourism development on Alor Island. This research reviews the background and previous literature regarding the definition of ecotourism, sustainable tourism development, resource view, dynamic capabilities, and sustainable competitive advantage. To mitigate or prevent socio-cultural and environmental harm, it is imperative for all relevant stakeholders, including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities, to collectively address the challenges associated with tourism development that leads to adverse impacts.

**Keywords:** Alor Island, Dynamic Capability, Ecotourism, Resource-Based View, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Sustainable Development

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of Ecotourism in Indonesia

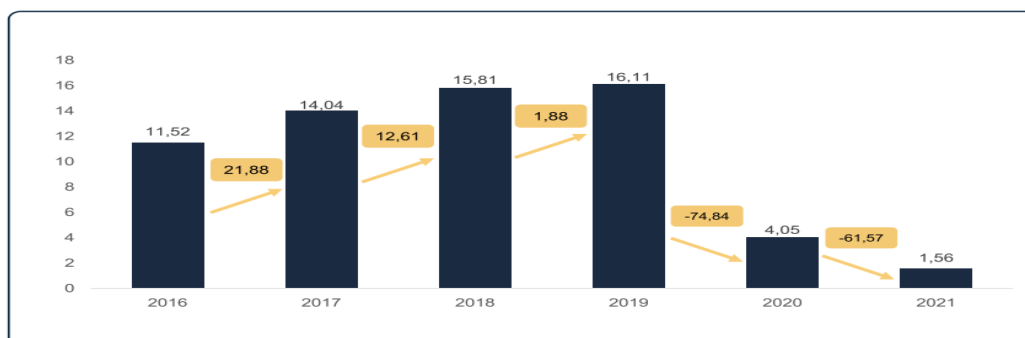
Ecotourism is a combination of conservation and tourism where the income obtained from tourism must be returned to areas that need to be protected for the protection and preservation of biodiversity and socio-economic improvement of the surrounding community (Andriana et al., 2022). Ecotourism is an environmentally friendly tourism activity prioritizing nature conservation, empowering local communities, and education. Indonesia has a very high natural potential, so ecotourism is an economic activity that allows tourists to experience nature and culture to advance sustainable development. Kholik and Sholeh (2021) in their study explained that the development of the tourism sector in Indonesia cannot be separated from the natural potential of Indonesia. The natural beauty of Indonesia is one of the main attractions for tourists who choose Indonesia as their destination. The most visited tourist activity in Indonesia is natural tourism, divided into urban tourism activities and rural tourism.

This is in line with Law number 10 of 2009 about tourism, which states that the implementation of tourism aims to increase national income to improve the welfare and prosperity of the people, expand and equalize business opportunities and employment, encourage regional development, introduce, and utilize tourist objects and attractions in Indonesia, foster love for the homeland, and accelerate friendship between nations (The Audit Board of Republic Indonesia, 2009). In its development, the world of tourism has experienced the development of tourism development patterns due to the negative impacts caused by tourism in general on the natural environment. Ecotourism is a tourism development concept that offers a form of tourism that is friendly to nature and cultural preservation (Mu'tashim & Indahsari, 2021). Ecotourism was born as a protest against the mass tourism development model, emphasizing environmental preservation, cultural preservation, community participation, economic benefits, and empowerment of vulnerable groups (Kaharuddin, Pudyatmoko, Fandeli, & Martani, 2020).

### Tourism Performance in Indonesia

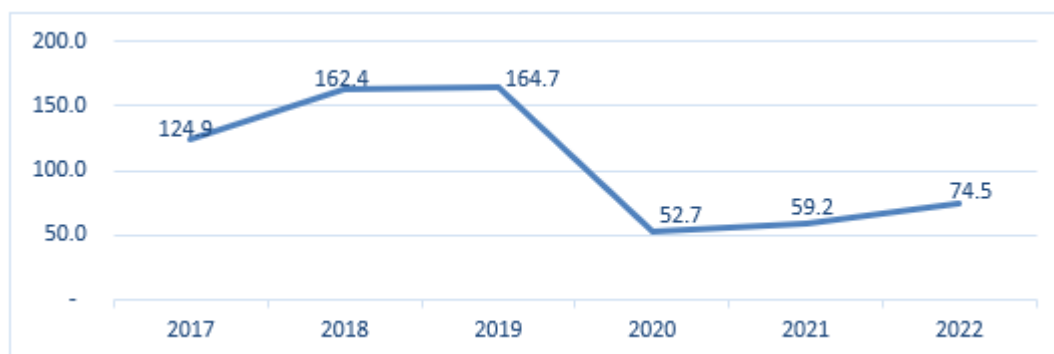
Indicators to measure tourism performance in Indonesia can be divided into two categories, namely quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators. Quantitative indicators are measured through the number of tourist visits, income from the tourism sector, the average length of stay of tourists, and the country of origin of tourists visiting. For the number of tourist visits, data (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2022) shows that in 2016, there were 11.52 million visitors; in 2017, there were 14.04 million. In 2018, there were 15.81 million visitors. In 2019, there were 16.11 million visitors; in 2020, there were 4.05 million visitors; in 2021, there were 1.55 million visitors. In 2020 and 2021, there was a significant decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in travel restrictions.

**Figure 1. The Arrival of Foreign Tourists to Indonesia in 2016-2021 (Million Visits)**



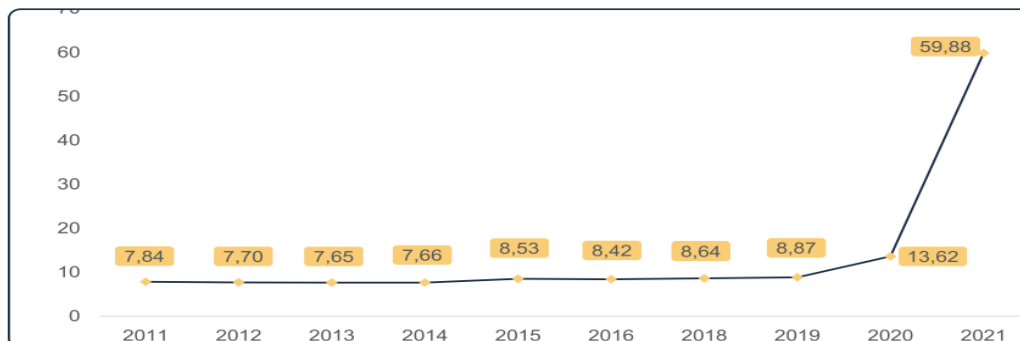
Furthermore, the contribution of revenue from the tourism sector to the Indonesian economy shows that in 2017, it was 124.9 trillion; in 2018, it was 162.4 trillion; in 2019, it was 164.7 trillion; in 2020, it was 52.7 trillion; in 2021, it was 59.2 trillion, and in 2022 it was 74.5 trillion. The general picture can be shown in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Tourism Sector Revenue Contribution (in Trillion Rupiah)**



Furthermore, data on the average length of stay of foreign tourists in Indonesia varies greatly. The longer foreign tourists stay in Indonesia, the more their expenses for daily needs in Indonesia will increase. An explanation of the length of stay of foreign tourists in Indonesia is described in these three pictures.

**Figure 3. Average Length of Stay of Foreign Tourists (Days), 2011 – 2021**



Data on foreign tourist visits based on country of origin is based on the top five countries. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Indonesia (BPS, 2020) shows that Timor-Leste ranks first with 819,488 people, Malaysia with 480,723 people, China with 54,713 visits, the United States with 21,962, and Singapore with 18,704. Qualitative indicators cannot be measured quantitatively but can be assessed subjectively, such as the quality of tourist attractions, the quality of tourist services, and the safety and comfort of tourists.

### Tourism Development in Alor Island

Alor is one of the small islands in eastern Indonesia, located in the East Nusa Tenggara province. Alor Island is dubbed as a paradise area in the east of the sun because it has a beautiful panorama and is one of the core areas of sea island tourism; it is endowed with wild natural beauty and great resources that make it an advantage to develop tourism and make Alor Island known as one of the most attractive tourist destinations local, national and foreign tourists. Disparekrap NTT (2019) said that the attractiveness of tourist destinations is still the primary motivation that moves world tourists to travel in

addition to several other supporting factors such as the strengthening of the global economy, rapid technological advances, the development of new business models, as well as increasingly affordable travel costs and ease of visa arrangements. It is further known that half of the world's total tourists travel for leisure and leisure purposes (56%). In comparison, those who travel to meet relatives and acquaintances and for health and spiritual purposes are as many as 27% of tourists.

Business travel is the reason for travel made by as many as 13% of the world's total 1.4 billion tourists throughout 2018. Data from the Rencana Induk Pengembangan Pariwisata Daerah (RIPPD) of the Alor Regency Tourism Office shows that the total potential tourist attractions on Alor Island are 112 destinations, consisting of 37 marine tourist attractions, 19 natural tourist attractions, and 56 cultural tourist attractions. The tourist attraction on Alor Island absorbed 60.349 visitors, consisting of 10.312 foreign tourists and 50.037 domestic tourists from 2014 to 2018. This data shows the significant contribution of rural tourism activities, especially tourist attractions on Alor Island.

**Figure 4. Number of Tourist Visits in Alor Island**



## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Understanding Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a form of tourism that involves responsible travel to natural areas, preserving the environment, and improving the welfare of local communities (Soemarwoto in Prihatini, Sutikno, & Iskandar, 2023). It is defined by certain conditions, including engaging in tourism within relatively untouched natural surroundings, minimizing environmental impact, preserving natural and cultural heritage, involving local residents who gain from tourism, ensuring that tourism revenue contributes to sustainable development, and providing educational experiences on nature and culture for tourists (Prihatini, Sutikno, & Iskandar, 2023). The goal may be to educate tourists, provide funding for ecological conservation, provide direct benefits for the local community's economic development and political empowerment, or foster respect for different cultures and human rights (Cobbinah, 2015). Ecotourism provides an opportunity to immerse yourself in nature in a fun and effective way, resulting in a greater sense of affection (Mbaiwa, 2017). The travelers have the opportunity to not just appreciate the natural beauty but also gain insights into the unique lifestyles of distinct local communities. These communities continue to be deeply connected to local wisdom, traditions, religion, and culture, which collectively constitute the main attractions of each destination (Ismail & Vennecya, 2022). Ecotourism guiding principles and best practices ensure that visitors, residents, and the environment benefit from a sustainable tourism

industry (Thys, 2016). Widely promoted ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas that preserve the environment and improve the well-being of local communities (Bluwstein, 2017). Ecotourism can be an essential means of reducing poverty in economically underdeveloped areas and having enormous natural resources. Ecotourism experiences allow tourists to increase their awareness of the ecological environment and engage in environmental behaviour (Lee & Jan, 2018).

Within the outlined specific criteria, a crucial aspect of ecotourism lies in its emphasis on the involvement of local communities throughout the entire process, spanning from the inception of ideas to planning and implementation. The objective is to achieve a fair and equitable distribution of benefits between local communities and external investors. It is imperative that residents receive reasonable benefits, enabling them to sustain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families through the development of ecotourism (Ismail & Vennecya, 2022).

### **Sustainable Tourism Development**

Sustainable tourism development should be seen as an adaptive paradigm, part of the master concept of development and sustainable development, and should aim to contribute to the goals of sustainable development and development in general by defining specific principles based on the parent concept (Angelevska-Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012). Tourism development is driven by supply and demand (Tandaju, Sumual, & Korompis, 2021). The provision of tourist facilities and services arises in response to increasing demand or aims to stimulate tourist demand. Whatever the initial impetus, successful development in the long run requires a balance of supply and demand in terms of reach, quality, quantity, and price. Evolution on one side of the market supply equation will usually be accompanied by changes on the other, indicating growth, stagnation, decline, or qualitative transformation (Liu, 2003).

### **Resource Based View (RBV)**

The resource-based view is defined as strengths and weaknesses for organizations in exploring the usefulness of the company from the resource side rather than the product side, then used to highlight new strategic options that naturally arise from a resource perspective (Mahoney & Pandian, 1992). A resource-based view is an attempt at self-satisfaction that one can build a consistent foundation for classical theories of business policy. Many central aspects of strategic reasoning have been reinterpreted in a resource-based view (J. Barney et al., 2001). Resource-based theory relative to evolutionary economics explains the superior performance of sustainable firms by focusing on differential capabilities to develop new capabilities as the environment changes (Barney, 2001a). Business activities must constantly monitor all elements of its resource pyramid and coordinate these resources in such a way as to support the growth of the company (Lim, 2008).

### **Resources**

Resources, representing what business activities can do, and the competitive environment, meaning what must be done to compete effectively to satisfy user needs, are essential in strategy making. Strategists have no choice but to address resource-side issues simultaneously, and strategists may not fully understand their company's current and future capabilities and potential demand-side problems. At the same time, requesters may not be aware of their future needs (Priem & Butler, 2001).

This phenomenon requires elaborative, evolving, and emerging processes that seek to reach solutions by addressing the core relationship between resources and the environment. Academics must again openly accept the knowledge and resource relationships (not separation) essential elements in strategy (Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990). Resource theory attempts to identify a series of experimental operations that provide convenience, such as an operational series that can be used indefinitely. In contrast, it is considered necessary to sacrifice in other aspects and, therefore, treated empowering as a resource (Gour et al., 2015).

### **Dynamic Capabilities**

Dynamic capabilities are one of the most dynamic approaches to strategic management. Dynamic capability is a different approach to strategic management related to the company's capability level (Vogel & Güttel, 2013). Dynamic capability refers to a firm's ability to renew itself in a changing environment by changing its resources (Rabbil, Yasmine, & Comm, 2017). Dynamic refers to renewing resources and competencies to cope with a changing environment. As an orientation, dynamic capabilities are the main objective of developing a role in increasing competitive advantage in the relationship between strategic resources (García & Moreno, 2018) — dynamic capabilities and performance. The achievement of competitive advantage, which determines business outcomes, depends on the strategic resources available and the generation of dynamic capabilities (García & Moreno, 2018; Wirmayanis, 2014).

### **Sustainable Competitive Advantage in RBV Perspective**

Sustainable competitive advantage indicates an enduring value creation strategy, which differentiates it from its competitors and has sustainability over time (Campbell, Coff, & Kryscynski, 2012). Competitive advantage comes from integrating capabilities and resources as valuable core competencies, and not many products can be replaced (Barney, 2000). Sustainable competitive advantage is a company's strategy to achieve its ultimate goal, which is performance that results in high profits (Lev, 2017). The goal of increasing competitiveness is based on competitive advantages derived from resources and petitions developed by humans supported by comparative advantages derived from various kinds of natural resources (Jones, Harrison, & Felps, 2018). The resource-based view emphasizes that competitive advantage comes from integrating capabilities and resources as core competencies that are scarce, valuable, and have few products to replace (Barney, 2001a). Sustainable competitive advantage arises when a business can retain resources that have value criteria as resources that help the firm create valuable products and services in a way that no one else can replicate or competitors cannot easily replicate those resources and can exploit them at will (Barney, 2001a).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method used was qualitative with a descriptive approach. Document and literature studies at the national and local levels were done that were related to the research theme, which was sustainable ecotourism. Based on the literature review and background, the author explains phenomena, challenges, obstacles, and strategies for sustainable ecotourism development.

## RESULTS

Alor Island has biodiversity as a high ecological wealth both on land and sea areas because, geographically, it is part of the Lesser Sunda seascape. According to data (RIPPAR, Alor Regency, 2020), the Lesser Sunda region, referred to as the Lesser Sunda Islands or Nusa Tenggara, is an ecoregion included in the Coral Triangle (CTI). The Lesser Sunda seascape is home to 76% of coral reef species and 2,631 fish species, as well as a pathway for cetacea, sea turtles and several species of Peruaya fish such as tuna and several other large pelagic fish species, including shark species.

The old providers dominate the environmental conditions of Alor Island with a very high classification. This is because the dominant landscape on Alor Island is volcanic mountains, so it has fertile soil types. The district that has the potential to be the largest high-to-very-high food provider is East Alor District, with an area of 50,717.60 ha. Meanwhile, sub-districts with low to very low food provider conditions are located in Pantar Tengah District. In order to maintain the ecological wealth of land and sea on Alor Island, conservation activities have been carried out on biological resources. Biodiversity conservation is carried out to maintain the function of environmental services in order to provide sustainable welfare for the community. There are several conservation areas on Alor Island, which are categorized based on their characteristics and functions, namely (1) Nature Conservation Area is an area with specific characteristics on land and in water that protects life support systems, preserves plant and animal species diversity, and sustains biological natural resources and ecosystems. Nature conservation areas protect life support systems, preserve plant and animal species diversity, and sustain biological natural resources and ecosystems (Wabang, Yulianda, & Susanto, 2017); (2) Nature Tourism Park is a nature conservation area mainly used for tourism and natural recreation. In the natural tourism park, activities can be carried out for the benefit of research, science, education, supporting cultivation, culture, and natural tourism; and (3) Marine Protected Areas are protected marine areas managed with a zoning system to realize sustainable management of fish resources and their environment. One type is the Suaka Alam Perairan (SAP), a marine protected area with particular characteristics to protect the diversity of fish species and their ecosystems.

**Table 1. Ecological Wealth as Tourism Potential of Alor Island**

No	Site/Destination Name	Ecological Types		
		Nature Conservation Areas	Natural Tourist Park	Marine Protected Areas
1	Pantar Strait Nature Reserve and Surrounding Seas	√	√	√
2	Tuti Adagae Hot Springs		√	
3	Lapang and Batang Island Nature Tourism		√	
4	Deer Island Nature Tourism Park		√	√
5	Hading Mulung dan Hoba Mulung, Baranusa Community Customary Law	√		√
6	Pecan and walnut forest area	√	√	
7	Mangrove forest	√	√	√
8	Marine Park, diving, and surfing centre	√	√	
9	Sikka Island Beach Tourism	√	√	√

Source: RIPPAR Kabupaten Alor, 2020-2030.

## DISCUSSION

### **Strategy for Sustainable Competitive Advantage Development in Alor Island**

Khan et al. (2020) in their study to determine tourism potential based on public perception of existing natural resources and determine the management strategy of the tourist area. The results showed that some natural resources in Alor can be used as tourist attractions. The results of the analysis using quantitative and qualitative SWOT Matrix show the strategy that is suitable to be applied in sustainable tourism development in Alor is to maximize the power to take advantage of all opportunities, such as developing tourism activities that are fully managed by local communities, promoting safe tourist sites, providing field laboratories for sustainable tourism development for students and academics, and increasing community involvement as a local tour service provider. Many natural and historical resources in Alor can be developed into tourist attractions, and the proper development strategy is to maximize the strength to seize all opportunities. Furthermore, Khan et al. (2020) explained that the appropriate tourism development strategy in Alor is an S-O strategy that maximizes strength to take advantage of opportunities, namely (1) Tourism development with conservation-based activities fully managed by local communities with support from local governments and non-governmental organizations; (2) Promoting safe tourist sites with friendly community hospitality and non-polluting activities to develop sustainable tourism; (3) Provide a field laboratory for sustainable tourism development for students and academics who research biodiversity flora and fauna as a reference for environmental protection; and (4) Increase community involvement as a provider of local tourism services: tour guides, food services and homestays to increase employment opportunities and the local economy.

### **Challenges and Obstacles in Developing Sustainable Competitive Advantage**

The development of the tourism sector of Alor Island shows a significant increase. This can be seen from the increase in the number of foreign and domestic tourist visits, which have contributed to local income. This condition is not only a tremendous opportunity but also a challenge in its development, and many new issues require immediate attention and solutions to prevent continuing conflicts and damage to marine natural resources that become tourism assets. All stakeholders must try to improve tourism management efforts properly, to avoid the condition of natural resources as tourism assets that are feared to experience a decline in quality, ultimately reducing the popularity and number of tourist visits. As the number of visits increases, no small challenges exist in realizing sustainable tourism development.

Several general strategic issues in current tourism development include small island ecosystems vulnerable to visitor activities and climate change. Because small islands do not have many resources and are easy to get to, developing tourism there needs a robust management system. This is especially important for keeping natural resources as the main attraction for tourists. Archipelagic areas also have access problems and depend on sea and air travel. There are also problems with developing tourism in border areas that are right next to the RDTL of Timor Leste, and there are problems with developing tourism in the new standard tourism era.

## CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism development is the responsibility of all stakeholders. To prevent or avoid socio-cultural and environmental damage, all interested stakeholders must address all tourism development problems that cause negative impacts, namely the government, NGOs, local communities, etc. With the participation of all stakeholders, sustainable tourism development will be easier to achieve. This study can meet the



marketing needs of national tourism in general and local tourism, especially Alor Island. Therefore, this research can be used as a reference for tourism marketing studies in various research studies on the international tourism market. This study can also be helpful for tourism policymakers as well as managers of travel organizations. This study approach can be applied to further research regarding Alor Island ecotourism.

#### LIMITATION

This research is only limited to conducting a study of research results, theoretical reviews, and background related to the chosen theme, so it tends to provide results that are still abstract and do not describe current conditions. There is a need for a more in-depth study of the research theme by directly involving the research object with more measurable and systematic research instruments.

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#### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors reported no potential conflicts of interest.

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