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We hope that this publication will continue to serve as a valuable source of knowledge and inspiration for scholars, practitioners, and stakeholders in the field of tourism and event studies.

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Small island tourism: Future investment or environmental time bomb? A comparative study of Cempedak Private Island and Funtasy Island

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Abstract: The development of private islands as luxury tourism destinations is expanding in Indonesia, particularly in the Riau Islands. This qualitative research uses a comparative case study method to examine two private island projects (Cempedak Private Island and Funtasy Island) to assess whether private island development constitutes a sustainable investment or poses an environmental threat. Primary data were collected through interviews with stakeholders and supported by document analysis. Findings show that Cempedak Island successfully implemented eco-tourism principles through strong governance and local community involvement, while Funtasy Island suffered from mismanagement, regulatory issues, and ecological degradation. The analysis, framed using the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) perspective, reveals the significance of inclusive planning, sustainable architecture, and transparent leadership in ensuring long-term viability. The study provides insights for investors, policymakers, and scholars, although its findings are context-specific and may not be generalizable to all private island developments. Future research is needed to test the ESG framework across diverse geographic and regulatory environments.

Keywords: Comparative Study, Private Island, Small Island Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development

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Introduction

Small island tourism refers to tourism activities that occur on small islands that have unique characteristics, such as distance and remoteness that often require them to import many resources to meet the needs of tourists. Tourism on small islands faces sustainability challenges due to fragile geographic and environmental conditions, such as limited infrastructure, dependence on external resources, and the negative impacts of unplanned tourism development (Graci & Dodds, 2010). Islands that focus solely on tourism as their main source of foreign exchange, without long-term planning for sustainable development, are likely to face a crisis equal to or worse than the collapse of their agricultural sectors (Graci & Vliet, 2020). Developing sustainable island tourism is complex, as it is difficult to find a model of island tourism development that has universal relevance. The tourism sector must be more open to alternative concepts of development paths that focus on sustainable tourism and do not prioritize short-term economic growth, but instead recognize social, cultural, political and environmental well-being as well (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024). Optimizing tourist numbers while maintaining ecological and social balance is a challenge, as sustainable tourism must improve the quality of life of residents without damaging the environment and cultural capital of island destinations. An understanding of the dynamic relationships between infrastructure, environmental quality, socio-cultural preservation, and policy issues is essential (Ali & Li, 2024).

Private islands have become an attractive asset for tourism investors, especially in archipelagic regions such as Indonesia. However, not all islands developed as private resorts are able to maintain economic and environmental sustainability (Narotama, 2022). Some islands have

managed to develop into successful tourist destinations, while others have created serious environmental and social problems (Walker et al., 2021). In this study, several examples of successful and failed private islands will be examined, to identify the key factors that contributed to success or failure.

Islands in Indonesia, especially in areas such as the Riau Islands, are increasingly becoming the center of attention for investors and tourism developers. Many of them are interested in acquiring small islands to be developed into luxury resorts or exclusive destinations (Narotama, 2022). This private island phenomenon not only promises huge profits for investors, but is also considered a status symbol. However, does this investment really have a long-term positive impact, or is it a time bomb that will destroy the environment in the future? On the one hand, the development of private islands can generate income for the region and improve infrastructure. However, on the other hand, large-scale development activities, exploitation of natural resources, and disruption to marine and terrestrial ecosystems are often unavoidable (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015). This article aims to explore in depth the environmental and social impacts of private islands through qualitative research, and assess whether these investments are viable in the long term or need to be controlled with strict policies.

The concept of Environment, Social and Governance (ESG) is one aspect in the development of sustainable tourism (Kumar et al., 2015). ESG includes factors that are considered important in the sustainability of the company. Environmental aspects include the use of natural resources and environmental impact management. Social aspects involve relationships with employees, suppliers, customers, and the communities in which the company operates. In addition to social impacts, private island development also has the potential to cause significant environmental impacts. A study of Serangan Island in Bali showed that the development project on the island had a negative impact on the local ecosystem and the welfare of the local community (Adveni et al., 2023). However, some cases show the existence of exclusive control of islands by individuals or companies, which often causes conflict with local communities. In the Seribu Islands, for example, control of islands for personal interests has disrupted the access and livelihoods of local fishermen (Khabibi et al., 2022).

The studies actively explore over-tourism and its socio-ecological impacts in the Caribbean, emphasizing the importance of implementing sustainable practices, involving local communities, and promoting balanced development. They highlight the necessity of addressing environmental degradation and socio-economic inequality through responsible tourism management. Collectively, these cases demonstrate that while small island tourism offers significant economic opportunities, it demands careful governance and a strong commitment to sustainability to prevent it from causing environmental and social harm (Peterson, 2023). There is one highlights that relevance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles in sustainable tourism development, particularly in small island ecosystems like Karimunjawa (Lukman et al., 2022). This study focuses on environmental aspects by mitigating the negative impacts of tourism, such as coral reef damage, poor waste management, and damage to seagrass and mangrove ecosystems, through effective environmental management. Socially, researchers explore the perceptions and involvement of local communities, and emphasize the importance of their role in implementing sustainability through empowerment, job creation, and strengthening socio-cultural interactions. From a governance perspective, this study highlights how policies such as coastal zoning and conservation strategies play a critical role in creating balanced development. Overall, researchers integrate ESG principles to address the environmental, socio-economic, and governance challenges posed by tourism activities, in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of local communities and ecosystems (Connell, 2021; Lukman et al., 2022). Governance aspects include how the organization organizes its leadership structure, establishes a compensation system for executives, carries out regular audit processes, implements effective internal controls, and ensures that shareholder rights remain protected (Clément et al., 2022).

The application of ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles in sustainable tourism helps address the challenges of this sector. Tourism players reduce emissions, manage waste, and conserve biodiversity and natural resources to minimize ecological impacts (Stepanova et al., 2023). Tourism actors promote inclusivity and reduce disparities by involving local communities, implementing fair work, and preserving culture (Bae, 2022). Good governance

embodies sustainable tourism practices by encouraging transparency, policy compliance, and ethical management (Hassan et al., 2024). In addition, visionary leaders and environmentally conscious employees contribute greatly to improving ESG performance in the tourism and hospitality industry (Zheng et al., 2025). Researchers emphasize the need to integrate ESG principles to build sustainable tourism that maintains a balance between the environment, society, and economy, while strengthening innovation and resilience in facing global challenges.

Behind the enthusiasm for building private islands, there are major concerns about the impact on the environment and the future of these investments (Rahmania et al., 2021). Promises of environmentally friendly tourism from developers are often not reflected in the field (Darmawan, 2022). Cempedak Island shows that development and conservation can go hand in hand. Conversely, the failure of Funtasy Island is proof that without wise management, development can harm the environment and surrounding communities. This study highlights the comparison of the two cases to understand the success and failure factors in private island development. By analyzing these two cases, this study aims to answer an important question: Is private island development an investment for the future that can sustainably improve the tourism sector, or is it an environmental time bomb that threatens the sustainability of nature in the area? This study will explore the role of environmental management, investment strategies, and long-term impacts on the ecosystem and local communities.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative case study method from Robert K. Yin and descriptive qualitative. The comparative analysis was conducted over several months to allow for in-depth data gathering and ESG-based evaluation of the two island cases. Comparative case study research allows researchers to explore the complexity in a particular context, for example differences in the management of private islands, as well as the relationship between causal factors (such as environmental policies, community involvement) and desired outcomes (such as sustainability or failure) (Yin, 2011).

The following are the main components of the Comparative Case Study framework according to Yin:

1. Purpose and Rationale of Case Studies
   Comparative case studies are usually conducted to answer "how" and "why" questions, especially in the context of complex phenomena. The main goal is to understand the differences and similarities between the cases being studied and the factors that influence the outcomes.
2. Developing Research Questions
   Yin emphasizes the importance of developing clear research questions. These questions typically revolve around "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs.
3. Case Study Selection
   Case selection is an important element in Yin's framework. For comparative studies, the cases selected should have characteristics that allow for relevant comparisons, such as cases that show contrasting outcomes (success vs. failure). Yin suggests a theoretical sampling approach, where cases are selected based on their potential contribution to the theory or hypothesis being tested.
4. Data Collection
   Data in comparative case studies can come from a variety of sources: interviews, field observations, documentation, and archives. Yin emphasizes the importance of using multiple sources of evidence to increase the validity of the study. Data collection should be done using consistent methods across cases so that comparisons can be made fairly.
5. Data Triangulation
   Yin strongly emphasizes the importance of triangulation in case studies. Triangulation is the process of using multiple data sources to confirm findings and ensure the validity of the results. In comparative studies, triangulation allows researchers to ensure that conclusions drawn from one case are also relevant and comparable to other cases.
6. Data Analysis

In comparative data analysis, Yin suggests using the analytical technique of cross-case analysis. This technique involves identifying themes or patterns that emerge in each case, then comparing them to find differences and similarities.

7. Conclusions and Generalizations
    After conducting the analysis, researchers must draw conclusions from the comparisons between the cases.
8. Validity dan Reliability
    Yin emphasizes the importance of maintaining validity and reliability in case study research. To increase validity, researchers must use triangulation and clarify the chain of evidence that connects the data to the findings. To increase reliability, researchers must document the entire research process so that it can be repeated by other researchers.

Results and Discussions

The Phenomenon of Private Island Tourism Destinations in the Riau Islands

The Riau Islands are strategically located between Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand. This makes the region attractive to international tourists who want to enjoy a luxurious vacation in a remote place, but still close to international city centers. In terms of investment, the Riau Islands have several advantages compared to other provinces. Because it has an area that is included in the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and Special Economic Zone (KEK), namely Batam, Bintan and Karimun. The Riau Islands are attractive to investors due to their strategic location and good accessibility, as they have several international ports.

Table 1. Transportation Infrastructure in the Islands

No	Name	Location	Information	Rute
1	Pelabuhan Harbour Bay	Batam	Domestik	Karimun dan Tembilahan
			Internasional	Singapura (HarbourFront), Malaysia (Stulang Laut)
2	Terminal Ferry Telaga Punggur	Batam	Domestik	Tanjung Pinang, Tarempa (Anambas), Lingga, Kijang, Lagoi (Bintan) dan Tanjung Uban
3	Pelabuhan Roro Telaga Punggur	Batam	Domestik	Tanjung Uban, Bintan; Kuala Tungkal, Jambi; dan Sei Selari Pakning, Riau
4	Terminal Ferry Sekupang	Batam	Domestik	Tanjung Balai Karimun, Tanjung Samak, Buton, Selat Panjang, Dumai, Bengkalis, Tembilahan, Moro, Tanjung Batu, Kuala Tungkal, Tanjung Berlian, Kuala Gaung, Kuala Enok, Durai, dan Tanjung Pinang
			Internasional	Singapura (Harbourfront)
5	Terminal Ferry Internasional Teluk Senimba		Internasional	Singapura, Malaysia
6	Internasional Ferry Terminal Batam Center	Batam	Internasional	Singapura (Harbourfront dan Tanah Merah), Malaysia (Stulang Laut, Putri Harbour, Pasir Gudang, dan Tanjung Pengelih)

7	Pelabuhan Nongsa (NongsaPura)	Batam	Internasional	Singapura
8	Pelabuhan Sri Bintan Pura	Tanjungpinang	Domestik	Batam, Lingga, Tanjung Balai Karimun, Selat Panjang, Bengkalis, dan Dumai
			Internasional	Singapura, Johor Bahru
9	Pelabuhan Bulang Linggi	Tanjunguban, Bintan	Domestik	Batam
10	Pelabuhan Bandar Bentan Telani (BBT)	Lagoi, Bintan	Internasional	Singapura, Johor Bahru
11	Bandar Udara Raja Haji Fisabilillah	Tanjungpinang	Domestik	Batam, Matak, Pekanbaru, Dabo Singkep dan Tangerang
12	Bandar Udara Internasional Hang Nadim	Batam	Domestik	Jakarta, Natuna, Anambas, Padang, Palembang, Pekanbaru, Pontianak, Surabaya, Yogyakarta, Medan, Bangka, Jambi
			Internasional	Korea Selatann
13	Pelabuhan Sri Bayintan Kijang	Kijang	Domestik	Jakarta, Natuna, Anambas

(Source: Riau Islands Tourism Office, 2024)

Private islands provide an exclusive experience for tourists seeking tranquility and high privacy. In the Riau Islands, several islands are managed specifically for high-end tourists, such as Nirup Island and Bawah Island, which offer luxurious accommodation and premium facilities. Tourists who visit these islands are often looking for a vacation away from the hustle and bustle of mass tourism, making them a major attraction.

The Riau Islands show great potential as a leading tourist destination, both for domestic and foreign tourists. Its proximity to Singapore and Malaysia makes this region very strategic in attracting tourists, especially from neighboring countries. In recent years, the development of private island-based tourist destinations has become popular, offering exclusive concepts targeting the upper-class market segment. These islands are marketed as premium destinations that offer more than just natural scenery, but also luxurious facilities such as private villas, personal services, and access to limited and personal tourist activities, such as snorkeling, diving, and exclusive beaches.

The study also noted that increasing accessibility is a key factor in the development of private island tourism in the Riau Islands. Improved transportation infrastructure, such as the presence of international airports in Batam and Bintan, as well as the many ferry ports connecting the region to Singapore and Malaysia, have opened up wider access for foreign tourists. This has a direct impact on increasing visits to private islands, while also encouraging accelerated investment in the sustainable tourism sector.

These findings indicate that the combination of geographical advantages, natural potential, commitment to sustainability, and ease of access are important factors in supporting the growth of the private island tourism sector in the Riau Islands. However, proper and sustainable management remains key so that the development of this destination is not only economically profitable, but also maintains the ecological balance and local socio-cultural values. The combination of ecological appeal, exclusivity value, and economic prospects make private island tourism in the Riau Islands a strategic choice for premium tourists and tourism investors.

Private Island: Cempedak Island, Bintan Regency

Cempedak Private Island was developed by entrepreneur Andrew Dixon, who also manages Telunas Private Island. Construction began in 2013 with an eco-luxury concept that emphasizes

the principle of sustainability. This project is designed to preserve the island's nature by implementing minimalist architecture using environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo, wood, and alang-alang. In the process of construction to management, the management involved local workers significantly. This reflects a commitment to empowering the surrounding community as part of a sustainable tourism development strategy.

Cempedak Private Island, which officially opened in 2017, offers 20 luxury villas exclusively for adults as part of the resort's exclusive branding strategy. Each villa is designed to blend in with its surroundings, offering views of the ocean or tropical forest, and most are equipped with private pools. This design approach reflects a commitment to the extinction and protection of the local ecosystem.In its implementation, Cempedak carries out various environmentally friendly initiatives, including:

Sustainable Architectural Design

The island's management has implemented a number of eco-friendly initiatives as part of its commitment to sustainable tourism. They built the villas using natural materials such as bamboo and local wood, thus minimizing the environmental impact during the construction process.
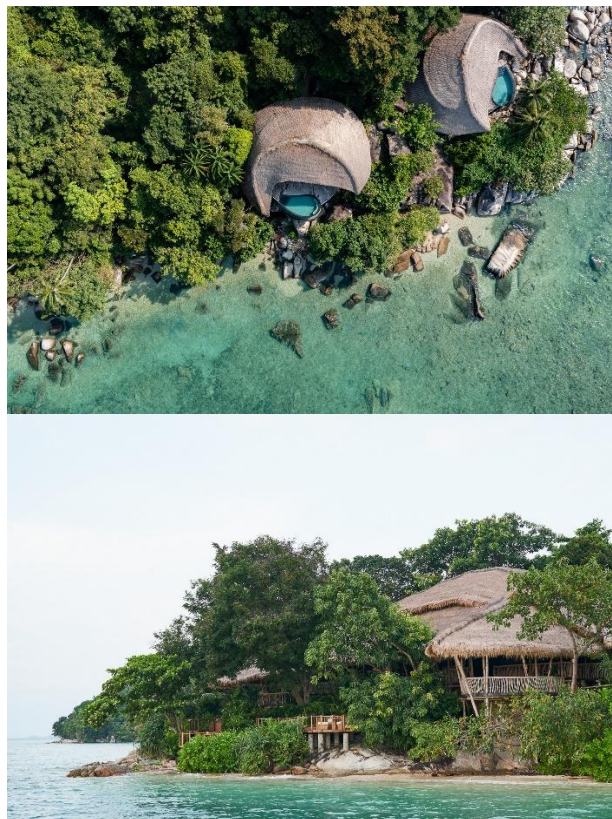
(Source: Cempedak Island Website, 2024)
Figure 1. Cempedak Island

Renewable Energy

To meet energy needs, the management relies on solar power and implements a natural ventilation system without air conditioning. They deliberately do not provide televisions and telephones in order to create a holiday experience that focuses on nature and tranquility.

Waste and Environmental Management

In addition, the management also manages waste sustainably by reducing the use of single-use plastic, processing organic waste, and developing a recycling system. They continue to maintain the local ecosystem through coral reef conservation and turtle conservation programs. This eco-friendly policy not only appeals to eco-conscious travelers, but also enhances Cempedak's reputation as a responsible destination. Since its opening, Cempedak has attracted international tourists, especially from Singapore, which is only 2-3 hours away by ferry. The resort has received numerous awards and praise in various international media for its natural beauty and commitment to ecotourism. Guests praise the exclusive experience and high-quality service, making Cempedak one of the favorite destinations for travelers seeking tranquility and luxury combined with nature. Based on the report on foreign tourist visits to Cempedak Private Island in January 2023, the total number of visitors reached 170 people. The largest number of tourists came from the UK (28%), followed by France (15%), Australia (14%), Singapore (11%), Malaysia (5%), the Netherlands (4%), the United States (3%), Sweden (3%), other countries in Europe (13%), and 4% from other countries. From this data, the largest number of visitors came from countries in the European Continent. Like many other tourist destinations, Cempedak has also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially due to the decline in international tourist arrivals. However, the resort has managed to survive by implementing strict health protocols and attracting domestic tourists as well as tourists from nearby countries such as Singapore which is starting to open up cross-border travel.

Today, Cempedak Private Island remains one of the most exclusive destinations in the Riau Islands, with high occupancy rates during peak seasons. The resort continues to attract interest due to its consistent sustainability concept, quality services, and stunning natural scenery. Its success can be attributed to careful planning, environmentally friendly architectural execution, and a commitment to preserving the local environment. With an international reputation and strong marketing strategy, Cempedak Private Island has proven itself as one of the successful examples of sustainable tourism development in Indonesia.

Private Island: Funtasy Island, Batam City

Funtasy Island was first conceived in 2012 and began development around 2013-2014. The project was promoted as the "world's largest ecotourism," with a promise to develop a tourist area that preserves the natural beauty and biodiversity of the area. Funtasy Island is a luxury resort and theme park project located on a private island near Batam, Indonesia. Claimed to be one of the world's largest ecotourism sites, the project aims to attract international tourists, especially from Singapore and other neighboring countries. The Singaporean developer is working with local Indonesian parties to begin construction of the luxury resort, private villas, marine park, and various entertainment facilities targeted for completion in 2015. Ownership of the Private Island Resort Funtasy Island is owned by Michael Yong with 30% of Funtasy Island Development shares, while the rest is owned by Indonesian businessmen Ade Soehari and Luky Winata. Land ownership regulations in Indonesia mean that foreign investors are given a lease for 25 years and can be extended for a period of 20 years. PT Batam Island Marina promised to extend the lease until 2112. Director Michael Yong said at the time that initial sales had "exceeded expectations" with 70% of buyers being Singaporeans. At last count, 90% of the units had been sold by mid-2015, generating sales of SGD$250 million since 2011 (Batamnewsasia, 2023).

(Source: Batamnewsasia, 2023)
Figure 2. Masterplan for the Development of Funtasy Island Private Island

In 2015, Funtasy Island began opening reservations for luxury villa units that were claimed to be environmentally friendly. With a focus on the international market, especially Singaporean tourists, the project was heavily promoted in the media as one of the main tourist destinations in Southeast Asia. However, several problems began to emerge, especially related to infrastructure and logistics. Although the official launch was scheduled for that year, many parts of the project were not yet ready to operate. With an area of around 328 hectares, Funtasy Island was planned to be a destination that offered ecotourism experiences, luxury resorts, private villas, and various recreational facilities. There are three main tourist attractions on Funtasy Island, namely the Eco Theme Park which is claimed to be the largest, Beach Club and Love Island. The island's eco theme park combines forest tourism, water tourism, adventure, mangrove tourism and diving tourism. Funtasy Island is not only equipped with villas, apartments, hotels and resorts, but also has a bird park, dolphin water reservation, mangrove, sea sport, monkey forest, underwater hotel, sea accommodation, underwater room, swimming with stingrays, and an underwater aquarium. Not to forget, a theme park was also built. The beauty of Funtasy Island is also unstoppable, especially since the distance from Harbourfront Port, Singapore is only 16 kilometers. Another advantage is the price, because the price offered at Funtasy Island is much cheaper than Singapore and Malaysia (Redaktur, 2017).

(Source: Google Images, 2024)
Figure 3. Private Island Funtasy Island

During the operational phase around 2016 to 2017, Funtasy Island faced various obstacles. One of them was the issue of permits and regulations from Indonesian authorities, especially in terms of land and environmental management. There were also concerns about the environmental impact of large-scale development on an ecologically sensitive island. Logistical constraints, such as transportation from Batam or Singapore, also slowed down the development and operational process. In 2016, the island experienced a dispute, where the Singapore Company stated that the island was in their waters. This caused the Indonesian government to demand clarity from the Singapore government because Indonesia was worried that the island would be claimed by Singapore. The Singapore government stated that they had never doubted the sovereignty of the island and had never claimed the island. Even so, local TNI and AL personnel have also traveled to the resort to raise a number of Indonesian Red and White flags. This shows Indonesia's commitment to the 2007 Coastal and Small Islands Management Act (Arshad, 2016).

(Source: Arshad, 2016)
Figure 4. Location of Batam, Funtasy Island and Singapore

In 2018, although some of the facilities had been built, Funtasy Island had difficulty in attracting the expected number of visitors. The infrastructure was not fully completed, and international promotion did not produce results as targeted. As a result, the project could not operate optimally. Due to financial problems and lack of market interest, Funtasy Island finally failed to operate fully and never reached its expected potential. Until now, most of the resort area is unused or neglected, and the project is considered an example of failure in tourism management and investment. Finally, Funtasy Island began to lose attention and was secretly auctioned online. PT Batam Island Marina, the manager of Funtasy Island, held an auction with a price of IDR 559.27 billion for an area of 272,509 square meters. This is a drastic decrease from the July 2020 auction price limit of IDR 950 billion. Interested bidders are required to deposit IDR 251.67 billion no later than June 22, 2023. The decrease in the auction price is likely to attract more potential buyers and rejuvenate this tourism project that was temporarily halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This resort has a target market in Singapore with villa prices reaching more than IDR 7 billion and plans to spend a development budget of up to trillions of rupiah. Recently, the Director General of State Assets has opened auction offers again for the luxury Funtasy Island resort area on Pulau Manis, Batam. It is not yet known what problems are involving the area's developers. However, some time ago there was a management conflict within the development company (Zuhri, 2023). However, one of the developers of this resort, PT. Batam Island Marina (BIM) has been dragged into several cases, including a land dispute, where one party submitted evidence of the authenticity of physical and legal data. This is stated in the Decision of PT PEKANBARU

Number 96/PID.B/2013/PTR in 2014. PT. BIM was reported for falsifying land documents where the reporter was the heir of the land that would later be built. Then there was also an alleged engineering of bank books handled by the Attorney General's Office (Firman, 2019) and the BTN gratification case, where BTN claimed that the provision of credit to BIM was in accordance with procedures (Dirhantoro, 2019). Then in 2020, Funtasy Island Resort was officially auctioned in July 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic that has hit the world since 2020 has worsened the situation for this project. The tourism sector has come to a standstill, and many investors and developers have been forced to postpone or stop their operations. In the case of Funtasy Island, the pandemic may be the final straw that destroys the chances of this project recovering.
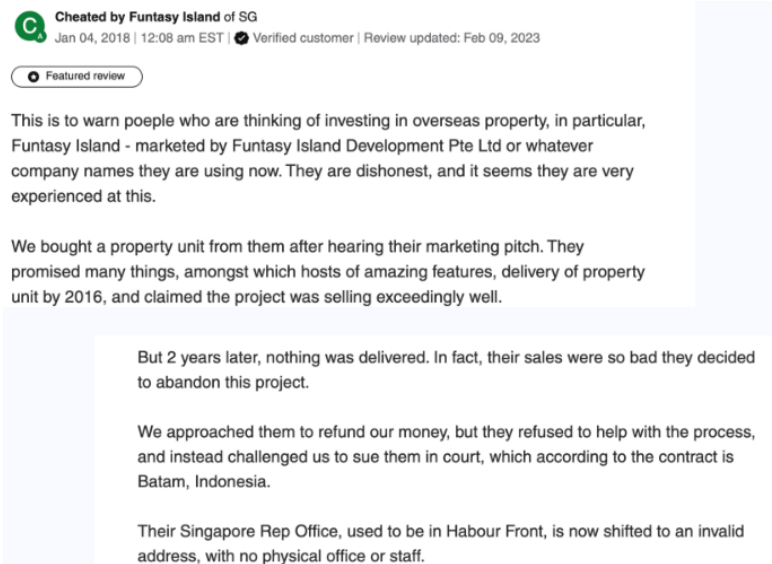
(Source: Batamnewsasia, 2023)
Figure 5. Comments from Funtasy Island Investment Victims

Several comments were also found on the website stating that the Funtasy Island developer company was a fraud in 2023. The following are the comments:

"This is to warn poeple who are thinking of investing in overseas property, in particular, Funtasy Island-marketed by Funtasy Island Development Pte Ltd or whatever company names they are using now. They are dishonest, and it seems they are very experienced at this. We bought a property unit from them after hearing their marketing pitch. They promised many things, amongst which hosts of amazing features, delivery of property unit by 2016, and claimed the project was selling exceedingly well. But 2 years later, nothing was delivered. In fact, their sales were so bad they decided to abandon this project. We approached them to refund our money, but they refused to help with the process, and instead challenged us to sue them in court, which according to the contract is Batam, Indonesia. Their Singapore Rep Office, used to be in Habour Front, is now shifted to an invalid address, with no physical office or staff."
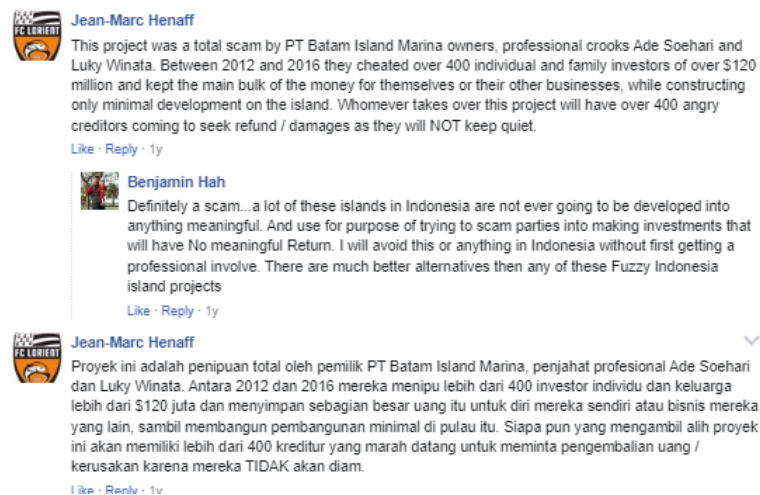
(Source: Zuhri, 2023)
Figure 6. Comments from Funtasy Island Investment Victims (Facebook)

Then, comments were also found from an article written by Zuhri (2023), this comment was written by a Facebook account named Jean-Marc Henaff and Benjamin Hah, the contents of the conversation are as follows:

Jean-Marc Henaff
"This project was a total scam by PT Batam Island Marina owners, professional crooks Ade Soehari and Luky Winata. Between 2012 and 2016 they cheated over 400 individual and family investors of over $120 million and kept the main bulk of the money for themselves or their other businesses, while constructing only minimal development on the island. Whomever takes over this project will have over 400 angry creditors coming to seek refund / damages as they will NOT keep quiet."

Benjamin Hah
"Definitely a scam...a lot of these islands in Indonesia are not ever going to be developed into anything meaningful. And use for purpose of trying to scam parties into making investments that will have No meaningful Return. I will avoid this or anything in Indonesia without first getting a professional involve. There are much better alternatives then any of these Fuzzy Indonesia island

The two comments above paint a very negative picture of the Fantasy Island project in Batam and the companies involved, especially PT Batam Island Marina. Both individuals claim that the project is a massive fraud that has harmed many investors. The Fantasy Island project is strongly suspected of being a fraudulent scheme designed to profit from investors. Sweet promises such as rapid construction, luxurious facilities, and high investment returns have not materialized. This case has the potential to damage Indonesia's reputation in the eyes of foreign investors, especially regarding property investment on islands. This case will further strengthen investors' distrust of property projects in Indonesia, especially those involving islands. This case should be a momentum for the government to strengthen regulations related to property investment, especially in tourist areas.

This aims to protect consumers and prevent similar cases from happening again in the future. One of the main factors in the failure of Fantasy Island was the lack of proper planning. Although the concept is interesting, the implementation of this project does not seem to consider important factors such as infrastructure, accessibility, and realistic market demand. Funtasy Island is located on a relatively remote island, and despite its proximity to Singapore, access to the island still requires special transportation, which is not easy for regular tourists. The project faced serious financial constraints. The huge development costs were not matched by stable funding. The initial investment may have been enough to get construction started, but continued funding seemed unattainable. Lack of financial support caused the project to stall, and many

facilities were never fully completed. Funtasy Island's target market was primarily international tourists, especially from Singapore. However, the tourism market in the region is highly competitive, with many other destinations that are more established and easily accessible. Funtasy Island's inability to differentiate itself from similar destinations and attract sufficient visitors also contributed to its failure.

Large projects such as Funtasy Island often require permits and approvals from various parties. Potential regulatory issues and unfulfilled permits could be another factor that caused the project to stall. Compliance with regulations related to land, environment, and investment may be obstacles that were not addressed properly.

The failure of management to oversee the construction and management of the project was also a major cause of the failure of Funtasy Island. Without competent management, the project could not develop according to the initial plan. Lack of supervision, unclear business strategy, and inability to face daily operational challenges also worsened the situation.

The failure of Funtasy Island had a significant impact on the local environment, investment and tourism sector in Batam. In addition to hampering the potential for developing eco-tourism, the abandoned project also left financial losses for investors and the surrounding community. The island is now in a state of disrepair, with many buildings half-finished or unused.

Comparison of Cempedak Private Island and Funtasy Island

This study analyzes two main case studies, namely Cempedak Private Island and Funtasy Island, to evaluate whether private island development can be considered as a future investment or an environmental threat. The results of this study are described based on several key indicators: environmental sustainability, project management and planning, and social and economic impacts.

Environmental Sustainability

Cempedak Private Island has successfully implemented ecotourism principles throughout its development and operations. The use of natural building materials such as bamboo and local wood, solar power systems, and efficient waste management initiatives demonstrate a real commitment to environmental conservation. The resort is also active in protecting the marine ecosystem, especially the surrounding coral reefs and wildlife. As a result, Cempedak has gained international recognition as a successful example of sustainable tourism development.

Funtasy Island, on the other hand, faces major issues related to environmental sustainability. This project, although initially promoted as the world's largest ecotourism, failed in its implementation. The infrastructure built was not environmentally friendly, and most of the island was degraded due to uncontrolled development activities. The results of this study indicate that Funtasy Island not only failed in terms of sustainability, but also left a significant negative impact on the local ecosystem.

Project Management and Planning

Cempedak Private Island demonstrates thorough planning and efficient project management. The island management prioritizes an approach that focuses on nature conservation and sustainable luxury experiences for tourists. The involvement of local communities in the operation and development of the resort also adds value to long-term development. As a result, Cempedak has achieved operational stability and gained sustainable economic benefits.

Funtasy Island experienced various management problems that ultimately led to the failure of the project. In addition to failing to complete the promised infrastructure, the project also faced legal and financial problems related to fraud against investors. The results of this case study show that poor planning and non-transparent management can cause an ambitious project to turn into a major failure.

Social and Economic Impacts

Cempedak Private Island has had a positive impact on the local community, especially by providing employment and encouraging their participation in conservation activities. The direct economic impact is seen from the high interest of tourists, especially from Singapore, who bring in foreign exchange and create economic stability for the surrounding area. As a result, Cempedak is considered an exclusive tourism model that not only benefits investors, but also the local community.

Funtasy Island, on the other hand, has had a significant negative impact. In addition to failing to provide the promised economic benefits, the project has also caused dissatisfaction among local communities because there were no real benefits from the investment that came in. The results of the study show that this project not only harmed investors, but also worsened relations with the local community that was originally expected to benefit from the development of the island.

Theoritical Implications

This study contributes to the theoretical discourse on sustainable tourism by applying and validating the ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) framework in the analysis of private island tourism development. It demonstrates that the ESG framework is an effective tool to assess sustainability performance in island-based tourism ventures, where ecological sensitivity and governance capacity are critical. The contrast between the success of Cempedak Private Island and the failure of Funtasy Island provides theoretical support for integrated development models that combine environmental conservation, social inclusion, and good governance. Specifically, the study shows how local community engagement, use of renewable resources, and long-term planning contribute to destination resilience and investment sustainability.

Moreover, this research extends the literature on small island tourism by positioning private islands not only as economic assets but also as socio-environmental systems that require adaptive governance strategies. It underlines that theoretical frameworks of sustainable tourism must be context-sensitive, especially in ecologically fragile and regulatory-complex environments. However, the implications of this study are bounded by its limited geographic scope and case selection. The findings are based on two islands in Indonesia and may not fully apply to other regions with different socio-political contexts or tourism markets. Therefore, broader comparative studies are needed to generalize the theoretical insights derived here and to refine the ESG framework for diverse island tourism contexts.

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Synergy of fun walk and culinary tourism in UNPAD tourism fest 2024: sustainable tourism perspective

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Abstract: This study investigates the strategic role of fun walking as a recreational sport in enhancing tourism events and its direct contribution to culinary bazaar visitation. While traditionally perceived as recreational and a healthy lifestyle, fun walks were integrated into the Unpad Tourism Festival 2024 to support its culinary bazaar activities, offering a novel approach to event management. The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining observations and literature studies with a survey of 47 fun walk participants, data were analyzed using descriptive statistic. Findings from this investigation reveal that fun walk participants significantly contributed to both the increase in visitor numbers and extended visit duration at the culinary bazaar. Furthermore, the innovative packaging of fun walk activities, particularly through the incorporation of tour guides, significantly enhanced the quality of the participant experience, leading to a measurable increase in overall event visitor satisfaction. This study confirms that an interactive experience, seamlessly blending sports, entertainment, and targeted tourism promotion, provides actionable insights for committee. The results underscore the critical importance of integrating recreational sports activities with the broader objective of promoting cultural, culinary, and urban tourism attractions, offering a powerful model for enhancing event success and visitor engagement in future tourism initiatives.

Keywords: Fun Walk, Recreational Sports, UNPAD Tourism Festival, Tour Guide, Sustainable Tourism

Introduction

The development of the tourism sector over the past six decades has had a real impact on the development of the world economy with more affordable transportation costs, the growth of the middle class globally, the development of types of tourist attractions, the growth of new tourism destinations that are environmentally friendly and provide jobs. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) established World Tourism Day in 1980, precisely on September 27, 2024 (United Nation, 2024). The tourism sector encourages people to enjoy the world's cultural and natural riches while strengthening human relations, highlighting the value of shared humanity.

Tourism not only plays a role in economic development, but also becomes an important instrument to promote peace. As a sector that connects different countries and cultures, tourism is a means to promote peace dialogue, strengthen tolerance and mutual understanding between nations. World Tourism Day in 2024 has the theme "Tourism and Peace" because this year there are many conflicts between countries such as between Russia and Ukraine and the conflict in Palestine. By preserving cultural and natural heritage, tourism can reduce tensions and promote peaceful coexistence in different communities. Every tourist can become an ambassador of peace by exploring the world responsibly, respecting local cultures, and promoting the human values that unite us all.

There are two types of event, traditional and niche event. The characteristic of a traditional event is that the activity is recognizable and time-honoured (Mallen & Adams, 2023). Traditional event may have adjustment for participant persona, technology implementation, but do not alter the core identity of the event. The Master of Sustainable Tourism at Graduate School of Universitas Padjadjaran has an annual agenda called Unpad Tourism Fest (UTF) to commemorate World Tourism Day, which this year has several events, namely tourism talk shows with the theme "Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Branding", video and photo competitions, magrove tree adoption actions, fun walks and culinary bazaars. This event is a commitment from the The Master of Sustainable Tourism in showing important actions and steps in promoting sustainable tourism and peace in Indonesia and the world. Tourism villages, as the embodiment of sustainable tourism, are the main focus of this series of activities. The festival is expected to encourage the sustainable development of tourism villages, raise public awareness about sustainable tourism, and contribute to global peace. The targets of UTF 2024 activities are tourism students in West Java, academics, tourism business stakeholders, practitioners and the public.

Events that are suitable for promoting tourism villages are cultural events that showcase local food, arts, and other niche segments such as nature, spirituality, and agriculture (Ernawati et al., 2022). UTF 2024 engages tourism villages to present local food, display MSME products, and perform traditional cultural arts. Local food, increasingly favored by both domestic and international tourists, has evolved from merely fulfilling basic needs to becoming a key element of destination identity, enhancing visitor experience and serving as a unique attraction in culinary-based cultural tourism (Rizkiyah & Faridi, 2022).

The walking activity, later named the Fun Walk, was conceptualized and implemented by the researchers to support and enhance the effectiveness of the UTF 2024 culinary bazaar event. UTF 2024 was held at Dipati Ukur campus of Universitas Padjadjaran (Bandung, West Java) on Sunday. This study aims to examine the role of fun walk as a strategic element in UTF 2024 event management and analyze the impact of fun walk activities on visits to culinary bazaars. The target of fun walk participants and visitors to the culinary bazaar are residents of Greater Bandung who are interested in outdoor activities and culinary specialties of West Java. This study highlights the novelty of integrating walking exercise with communication management of culinary bazaar events and sustainable tourism within a specific case study.

Engagement in outdoor physical activities contributes significantly to enhancing community resilience to environmental stressors, while simultaneously improving physical health outcomes and promoting mental well-being among adults. Physical activity contributes to physical and mental fitness, as well as increases people's life satisfaction, building social capital when the intensity of activities is carried out regularly (Jackson et al., 2021). The current outdoor sports trend is dominated by road running with the emergence of many running events throughout 2024. Other outdoor sports are cycling and walking. People carrying out healthy walking activities also come to locations where they are favorite locations for running such as the dago area, the city square (Alun-alun), around Riau street, Saparua field and Gasibu field.

Outdoor physical activities are a preferred choice for many individuals due to their accessibility and suitability for participation across age groups, including children and the elderly. Walking for health serves as a means for communities to foster family togetherness, adopt a healthy lifestyle, visit cultural heritage sites and urban parks at low cost, and enjoy the city atmosphere without driving. The city center, as the dynamic core of urban life and growth, holds historical, cultural, and economic value. Through urban heritage conservation, particularly the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, there is potential to not only improve spatial quality but also foster cultural appreciation and restore the city's character (Lokantara et al., 2021).

The concept of tourism events, including culinary bazaars, encourages research on the character of tourism related to special events and can increase public attention before, after and during the event (Skoultsos, 2014). Event campaign design according to (Ovalia & Wirasari, 2020) is the planning of communication actions that are informative and persuasive in nature to create a certain effect on a large audience in a certain time span. Communication is used to share information, knowledge (Mefalopulos, 2008) and provide education (Melkote & Steeves, 2015) in order to achieve the goal. Communication can influence and change the behavior of the target (Wardasari et al., 2021).

The event campaign utilized the fun walk activity to attract visitors to the culinary bazaar, encouraging their commitment to attend from the start of the event and to support transactions conducted by fun walk participants at the bazaar. Tourism events need to adjust the trend of the target participants, in this case residents in the Greater Bandung region so that it becomes the basis for designing communication strategies, proper scheduling, and effective promotion. The development of local marketing campaigns relies heavily on the creativity of the committee with limited human resources or funds, such as printing posters at home and utilizing email and social media for promotions (Panyik et al., 2011).

Local food culture is rapidly developing and becoming a characteristic of a region, reflecting the local cultural identity related to the environment and people's customs, describing traditions and also encompassing social, economic, and cultural values (Barriyah et al., 2020). Local food culture is promoted with the concept of non-formal education to deepen culinary technical knowledge and cultural heritage knowledge (Prahastiwi et al., 2022). In tourism, culinary is an ideal alternative attraction to a tourism event. The UTF 2024 culinary bazaar features culinary from tourist villages that are rich in local wisdom and trendy culinary trends in the city of Bandung as the selling power of the event.

Guided interpretation is to provide information through face-to-face contact and direct communication between visitors and tour guides using dialogue and tour guides (Beattie & Schneider, 2018). A tour guide is a person who guides visitors to a site and interprets its cultural and natural heritage environment (Chang, 2012). The role of the tour guide is to interpret, mediate, and navigate the traveler through an unfamiliar space and keep the group together (Farkić et al., 2020). Tour guides possess professional knowledge, strong communication skills, managerial abilities, and deep social competence to create a positive experience for Fun Walk participants. They are friendly and build deep social relationships, which are essential in group activities and enhance participants' understanding of the surrounding cultural landscape. Tour guides with an informal yet professional attitude create a comfortable environment that supports participants' psychological well-being.

The tourism sector must adopt the principles of sustainable tourism and support the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Sustainable tourism is not just a special product, but a key condition that must be applied in all tourism sectors. According to (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2013), sustainable tourism includes the optimal use of natural resources, the preservation of cultural heritage, and respect for the socio-cultural of local communities, as well as ensuring equitable long-term economic benefits for all parties. Tourism has a unique ability to connect economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects, as well as be a driver of overall sustainability improvement. Since tourism is highly dependent on the environment, culture, and intact local communities, the sector has a great responsibility to address the social, cultural, and environmental impacts of its development. Sustainability aspects in the tourism sector can be further developed and improved through various education, training, and continuous improvement of practices in the hospitality sector, collaboration between all stakeholders, and ongoing government support (Tahiri et al., 2022).

Building upon existing research in event management and culinary tourism, a notable gap persists in the empirical literature regarding the direct, strategic contribution of recreational sports activities, specifically fun walks, as drivers for co-located ancillary event components like culinary bazaars. While individual studies explore event success and visitor engagement or the dynamics of culinary tourism (Dillette et al., 2020), the integrated and quantifiable impact of a leisure-oriented sport designed (Pan et al., 2019) to directly boost visitation and economic activity within a specific, synergistic event element remains critically underexplored. This research addresses this gap by precisely examining this nuanced synergistic relationship, particularly within the context of urban tourism festivals in developing regions like West Java. The novelty of this study is multifaceted: it innovatively leverages a recreational fun walk not as a standalone activity, but as a deliberately integrated, strategic element of event design aimed at directly increasing engagement and economic activity within an adjacent culinary bazaar.

The benefit of the research is the development of literature on the integration of sports activities and culinary-based tourism events, especially in the context of sustainable tourism. Another benefit is to expand insight to culinary business actors regarding the market potential of

sports event participants. Or use sports as a tool for culinary promotion and local economic empowerment. This also opens up opportunities for exploration of sustainable tourism implementation in promoting healthy living activities for the community with fun walks or other sports.

Methodology

The research method uses a mixed method research approach, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore the role of the fun walk activity in influencing participant engagement with the culinary bazaar during Unpad Tourism Fest 2024. The qualitative component involved direct observations of the event setup and visitor behavior, and engagement at culinary booths. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire distributed to fun walk participants, collected via Google Forms on the same day of the event.

The sampling method used was purposive sampling, targeting participants who registered and completed the fun walk activity. A total of 47 valid responses were collected. Participant selection criteria included individuals aged 18 and above who completed the fun walk and were present during the culinary bazaar session. The questionnaire consisted of two main variable sets, experience of the fun walk (8 items), and perceived connection to the culinary bazaar (3 items), all measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", that can be seen in Table 1.

Prior to data collection, the instrument was reviewed by two tourism event experts and one communication lecturer to ensure content validity. A pilot test with 5 respondents was conducted to refine question clarity. For reliability, Cronbach's alpha was calculated, yielding a coefficient of 0.872.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to assess central tendency and frequency distributions of responses. The integration of mixed methods occurred at the interpretation stage, where observational insights were triangulated with survey results to provide a holistic understanding of how fun walk participation influenced engagement with the culinary event. Ethical considerations were addressed by ensuring respondent anonymity, obtaining verbal consent at the time of the event, and allowing participants to opt out at any time without consequence. No personal data beyond general demographics and opinions were collected.

Table 1. Fun walk trails and stopping points

No.	Variables	Indicators
1	Fun walk experience	The committee organized the event very well
2	Fun walk experience	The Fun Walk path chosen is very comfortable and interesting.
3	Fun walk experience	I felt safe and comfortable during the Fun Walk.
4	Fun walk experience	The timing of the Fun Walk was just right for me
5	Fun walk experience	I feel happy with the presence of the tour guide
6	Fun walk experience	The tour guide provided information that enriched my knowledge
7	Fun walk experience	The prizes offered on the spot were appealing and made me want to join
8	Fun walk experience	Fun Walk is a way for me to stay active and take care of my health
9	Relationship with culinary bazaar	This Fun Walk increased my interest in attending Magpar Ruang Rasa
10	Relationship with culinary bazaar	Fun Walk activities are suitable in combination with culinary bazaars
11	Relationship with culinary bazaar	Culinary options are suitable to eat after the Fun Walk

(Source: Research result, Bandung, 2024)

Results and Discussions
Results

This study reveals significant findings on how fun walk activities influence participant engagement with culinary tourism during the Unpad Tourism Fest 2024. The integration of sports tourism with cultural and culinary components demonstrates a practical model for sustainable tourism event design. The tourism industry requires multisectoral integration that involves

collaboration between organizations, stakeholders and the participation of local communities in the planning and development of sustainable tourism. The participation of local communities has local and cultural knowledge that can identify important issues and manage resources effectively and positively influence their attitudes towards tourism, which is key to the success of further tourism development (Panyik et al., 2011).

In supporting the effectiveness of the activity and helping to deliver the material, the fun walk is divided into 2 groups, each group will be led by a tour guide. Tour guides play a key role in this activity, as they manage the route and designated stops while sharing stories about the history or providing information to participants that can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Fun walk trails and stopping points

No	Stopping Points	Information
1	Dipati Ukur Campus	Warming up and stretching
2	St. Borromeus's Hospital	History of the hospital
3	Dago Street	History of Dago Street
4	ITB Campus	A brief history of ITB
5	Babakan Siliwangi City Forest	History and information
6	Cikapundung Terrace	Environmental education
7	Dipati Ukur Campus	Culinary bazaar

(Source: Research result, Bandung, 2024)

At 8 a.m. Fun walk opened with warming up activities and stretching, then continued with group division. Warm-up and stretching was carried out to prepare the physical condition of the participants. Physical condition in sport is all physical abilities that determine the achievements made by personal abilities (Jamaludin et al., 2023). Both groups followed the same route, so a 10-minute interval was given between their starting times to avoid crowding at the stopping points. 59% of participants who participated in this activity had never participated Fun Walk. The participants showed great interest in the tour guide's explanations at the historical locations. Some participants were also enthusiastic about asking questions and recording this activity. Fun walk covering a total distance of 6 kilometers with a travel time of almost 2 hours. All participants returned to the Dipati Ukur campus to take part in a series of culinary bazaar activities. It can be seen in Figure 1.

(Source: Personal documentation, 2024)
Figure 1. Fun walk activities & culinary bazaar

From the 47 valid fun walk participants, the distribution was nearly balanced between Universitas Padjadjaran affiliates (55%) and the general public (45%). Notably, 38% expressed a desire to bring family members, indicating potential for expanding audience reach in future editions. The majority learned about the event through word-of-mouth (59%), followed by social media (35%), and family referrals (6%), highlighting the strength of interpersonal communication and community-based promotion strategies.

Using an 11-item Likert-scale questionnaire, participants evaluated their experiences across two main variables: the fun walk activity and its relation to the culinary bazaar. The overall average score for the fun walk experience was 3.94, indicating a generally positive perception among participants. The highest-rated item was *"Fun Walk is a way for me to stay active and take care of my health"*, which received a score of 4.18. This finding aligns with (Wang et al., 2020), who emphasize the increasing importance of health-driven tourism activities as part of modern lifestyle choices.

Participant feedback on the role of tour guides also revealed a high level of satisfaction, with both relevant indicators averaging 4.06. This underscores the vital contribution of tour guides in shaping the quality of visitor experiences. Their presence and informative storytelling were well appreciated, supporting (Brochado et al., 2021), who argue that effective interpretation deepens emotional and cognitive engagement with tourism environments.

Meanwhile, the connection between the fun walk and the culinary bazaar was rated at an average of 3.84, suggesting that the physical activity successfully stimulated interest in the bazaar component. This is corroborated by observational findings, which showed that approximately 75% of culinary bazaar visitors were fun walk participants. These individuals remained at the event until at least 11 a.m., significantly contributing to foot traffic and food booth transactions, and indicating that the fun walk functioned as an effective funnel into the broader festival experience. It can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Fun walk participant experience assessment

No.	Indicators	Value
1	The committee organized the event very well	3.82
2	The Fun Walk path chosen is very comfortable and interesting.	3.82
3	I felt safe and comfortable during the Fun Walk.	3.94
4	The timing of the Fun Walk was just right for me	3.94
5	I feel happy with the presence of the tour guide	4.06
6	The tour guide provided information that enriched my knowledge	4.06
7	The prizes offered on the spot were appealing and made me want to join	3.71
8	Fun Walk is a way for me to stay active and take care of my health	4.18
9	This Fun Walk increased my interest in attending Magpar Ruang Rasa	3.76
10	Fun Walk activities are suitable in combination with culinary bazaars	3.94
11	Culinary options are suitable to eat after the Fun Walk	3.82

(Source: Research result, Bandung, 2024)

Qualitative observations during the event provided compelling contextual support for the survey results, revealing a high level of participant engagement throughout the fun walk experience. Along the route, participants showed particular interest at culturally significant landmarks such as Babakan Siliwangi and Jalan Dago, where storytelling by tour guides was met with visible attentiveness. Several individuals actively asked questions and recorded the sessions, reflecting not only cognitive engagement but also a genuine curiosity to learn, supporting the high satisfaction ratings related to the presence and role of tour guides. Upon completion of the walk, participants naturally transitioned into the culinary bazaar area, where they immediately engaged in social interactions and food consumption. This seamless shift from physical activity to culinary participation illustrates a well-integrated event design, where thematic continuity between tourism, health, and culture reinforced the overall visitor experience and contributed to the high level of engagement observed in both components of the festival.

The combination of walking activity, cultural storytelling, and environmental education through the fun walk created a holistic, low-barrier tourism experience. This aligns with sustainable tourism practices that integrate health, culture, environment, and economy. The dual function of the tour guide as both educator and facilitator, was central to this integration, acting as a bridge between physical activity and deeper destination meaning-making (Alazaizeh et al., 2019).

Statistically and behaviorally, the fun walk served as a catalyst for increasing the number and engagement level of culinary bazaar attendees. The survey results and qualitative feedback

both show that the activity design promoted physical well-being, cultural appreciation, and consumer participation, key indicators of quality and sustainable tourism experience.

Discussions

The findings of this study reinforce the evolving role of integrated tourism events—particularly those that combine recreation, culture, and culinary experiences—in advancing the principles of sustainable tourism. The Unpad Tourism Fest 2024, through its innovative fun walk initiative, effectively mobilized physical activity, cultural interpretation, and local economic participation into a unified visitor experience. This is strongly aligned with the framework of sustainable tourism outlined by the (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2013), which advocates for tourism that is environmentally responsible, culturally enriching, and economically beneficial to local communities.

The high ratings for the fun walk as a health-promoting activity (average score: 4.18) reflect a growing trend in health-oriented tourism that tourist increasingly seek wellness experiences that do not require formal medical intervention but offer physical and emotional benefits (Wang et al., 2020). The strong correlation between this physical engagement and participants' subsequent enthusiasm in the culinary bazaar suggests that outdoor, low-barrier activities can serve as effective catalysts for deeper engagement in tourism events. These results support the potential of festivals and events to extend visitor stay and spending, while enhancing cultural and social interaction (Skoultsos, 2014).

The pivotal role of tour guides in shaping positive experiences further validates the findings that guided interpretation not only enhances knowledge transfer (Brochado et al., 2021) but also fosters emotional attachment to place (Alazaizeh et al., 2019), an essential component of sustainable visitor behavior. In this study, tour guides acted as facilitators of informal education, and their strong ratings (average 4.06) indicate success in making cultural and environmental narratives more accessible and meaningful to participants. Their contribution supports one of the core elements of sustainable tourism: raising awareness and appreciation of local heritage.

Importantly, the fun walk's influence extended beyond education and exercise. The study's observational data and participant feedback demonstrate how structured physical activities can drive economic benefits for local communities. With approximately 75% of bazaar visitors originating from the fun walk, the linkage between physical engagement and local consumption was clearly evident. This validates findings how sustainable tourism models can strengthen rural economies through targeted cultural and culinary promotion (Tahiri et al., 2022).

These outcomes offer practical insights for event organizers, especially in university or community-based settings. First, designing tourism events with integrative elements of physical, cultural, and consumptive can increase both reach and impact. Second, involving local communities and MSMEs in content delivery (e.g., culinary vendors, heritage guides) ensures the circulation of economic and social value within the region. Third, the use of accessible physical activities like fun walks can serve as a gateway to wider sustainable tourism participation without requiring large infrastructure investments.

This research successfully addresses the main question of how the integration of recreational sports and culinary tourism offers a viable and replicable model for sustainable tourism. By applying an interdisciplinary lens from communication science, event management, and sustainable tourism theory, it proposes a replicable model for other educational institutions. Future research may explore long-term effects on consumption behavior, urban tourism, promoting tourism village and the development of sustainability indicators for campus-based tourism events.

Conclusions

This study concludes that trending recreational sports, such as fun walks, can serve as a powerful attractor and mobilizer of public engagement in tourism events, particularly those centered around culinary and cultural experiences. The findings demonstrate that sports-based activities can synergize effectively with culinary components, creating a holistic and accessible tourism experience that appeals to diverse visitor motivations. This supports the notion that

sustainable tourism can be enhanced not only through environmental and cultural elements but also by promoting health, well-being, and active lifestyles as part of the tourism offer.

The use of sports activities as a communication and engagement strategy highlights the potential of event design to bridge different audience segments who those motivated by wellness and those drawn to gastronomy through integrated programming. This insight has practical implications for event organizers, tourism planners, and academic institutions seeking to design inclusive, community-oriented tourism initiatives. Moreover, it contributes to the theoretical development of sustainable tourism by emphasizing interdisciplinary approaches that blend physical activity, cultural heritage, and local economic participation.

Further research is needed to examine the economic impacts of such integrative models, particularly in terms of transaction value, repeat visitation, and vendor outcomes. Future studies could also explore the effectiveness of different marketing channels and test other combinations of event formats to optimize reach, satisfaction, and sustainability outcomes. This research offers a foundation for rethinking campus-based and urban tourism events not only as cultural celebrations, but also as platforms for promoting healthier, more inclusive, and more resilient tourism ecosystems.

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Bali's cultural festivals: A visitor magnet supporting sustainable tourism

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Abstract: This study aims to further understand the perceptions of visitors to the Cultural Festival towards strengthening Balinese cultural identity. Cultural festivals in Bali are held with the aim of maintaining, preserving and as exposure of cultural values to the wider public. Cultural Festival activities in Bali organized by the government such as the Bali Arts Festival, Denpasar Festival and the latest is the Kesanga Festival. In organizing each festival, the principle of sustainability is one of the strong foundations for maintaining social, economic and environmental values without distorting local traditions and culture. This study uses quantitative data that is described descriptively. The unstructured interview was conducted during the data collection with informants from the representative of the festivals' social media associates. The data in this study were collected using a questionnaire distribution technique. The number of samples in this study was 100 respondents calculated using the Slovin formula with a 90% confidence level and a 10% error rate with no specific criteria yet mainly has experience in visiting (visitor) one of the cultural event used as research object. The results of the study showed that the variables of marketing strategy, cultural experience, cultural authenticity, and sustainability practices play an important role in creating strengthening cultural identity at cultural festivals in Bali.

Keywords: Authenticity, Cultural Experience, Cultural Festival, Marketing Strategy, Sustainability

Introduction

The event sector in the world has an important role as a tool to regenerate the cultural life order of society, as a stimulus for investment to boost equality of life and directly impact tourism (Rizzello, 2014). On the other hand, cultural events are also able to foster pride and community involvement by celebrating local culture and traditions, so that they can produce a stronger sense of identity and cohesion in society (Botti et al., 2018; Pernecky, 2015). Events like this often serve as a platform for cultural exchange, providing an enriching experience for locals and tourists (Kruger et al., 2014). Furthermore, events are often used as a medium to increase exposure to cultural existence to the general public. One of the most frequently used formats is the festival. The festival itself encourages a high level of visitor involvement and evokes joyful emotions that tend to have a more significant impact on post-festival cultural and social engagement. Engaged visitors, categorized as "Learners" and "Doers," tend to contribute to the legacy and sustainability of the festival (Koenig-Lewis et al., 2021). This offers a unique and authentic cultural experience that can increase visitor satisfaction and attract more tourists. While the event has positive impacts on cultural, economic and social existence, the industry is not free from challenges, especially in terms of sustainable tourism. Issues such as environmental degradation, inequality, and the need for fiscal reform are important areas that need to be addressed (Mohanty et al., 2022).

Bali, which is one of the cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia, is famous for its rich cultural heritage and lively festivals that attract domestic and international tourists. One of the

most important cultural events in Bali is the Bali Arts Festival (PKB). This annual festival is a colossal celebration of performing arts that aims to preserve and explore Balinese arts and culture. The festival features various programs, involving many artists and attracting many audiences. The management of public spaces at the Bali Arts Center is very important to ensure a high-quality festival experience for artists, entrepreneurs, and audiences (Mas Triadnyani et al., 2024). This public space is also intended as a space for holding cultural performances and performances, but over time it has changed its function to become an exhibition space for MSME products from Balinese craftsmen when PKB activities are carried out. In addition to being a cultural preservation activity, PKB is also a space to stimulate the local economy by utilizing community enthusiasm and providing space for economic actors. Wulandari et al., (2021) found that the implementation of the Bali Art Festival (PKB) had a positive impact not only on the local economy, but also on cultural preservation which indirectly had an impact on environmental sustainability.

In addition to the Bali Arts Festival, various cultural festivals are also held in Bali to preserve tangible and intangible culture in Bali. Kesanga Festival and Denpasar Festival are other forms of cultural festivals held annually in Bali. Denpasar Festival is a local product or tangible culture festival organized by the Denpasar City Government. This festival is held in December every year, in collaboration with culinary actors in all regencies/cities in Bali. This activity emphasizes the role and function of local business actors in the form of culinary, textile actors and other local cultural products. Denpasar Festival features various cultural performances and exhibitions, allowing local artists and creators to showcase their work. This inclusiveness encourages active participation from the community, making it a lively and interesting activity that becomes a strong magnet to attract tourist visits (Setianti et al., 2018). It is also held in the Titik 0 area of Denpasar City which is the philosophical axis and economic center of Denpasar City. This activity plays an important role in building the image of the city of Denpasar, helping to increase public knowledge and perception of the city as a creative and inclusive destination (Setianti et al., 2018). If the Denpasar Festival focuses on preserving local cuisine, then the Kesanga Festival has a different format. The Kesanga Festival is one of the Balinese Cultural Festivals held to welcome the holy day of Nyepi by the Balinese Hindu Community. This festival is a forum for youth creativity competitions in Bali that showcase the work of Ogoh-Ogoh or a replication of a giant or Butha that symbolizes negative energy in human life. This competition not only requires participants (groups of Banjar youth) to produce beautiful ogoh-ogoh works, but also beautiful and philosophical dance fragment performances. The Kesanga Festival attracts great enthusiasm from the community which can be seen from the large number of visits each year.

Through the implementation of these three cultural festivals, it indicates the potency to be a catalyst to attract more visitors to come to Bali and enjoying the cultural vibrant aside from the one provided in the community daily life. It is due to the uniqueness and event-scape created specifically according to the theme of the festival itself. this study seeks to understand the factors in cultural festivals that influence the increase in the number of tourist visits and how these festivals can contribute to the implementation of sustainable tourism from a cultural perspective in the area. By exploring aspects such as marketing strategy, cultural experience, cultural authenticity, and sustainability practices, this study will also examine the economic and social impacts generated by these cultural festivals. In addition, this study will highlight how cultural festivals can be a means of education for tourists and local communities in understanding the values of local wisdom, as well as how environmentally friendly practices are applied in their implementation to support the principle of sustainability.

Economic, socio-cultural and environmental festivals are all affected by cultural festivals, which have a significant impact on the development of local communities (Negruşa et al., 2016). Festivals attract tourists, extend the holiday season, boost the local economy, and create new job opportunities and encourage local businesses (Botti et al., 2018; Mxunyelwa & Tshetu, 2018). Festivals such as Lucca Comics & Games in Italy attract large crowds, boosting tourism and the local economy (Uriarte et al., 2019). Festivals foster a sense of community bonding and belonging(Phipps, 2010). As seen in traditional festivals, such as Merrie Monarch in Hawaii and Garma in Australia, festivals facilitate cultural expression and intercultural exchange (Phipps, 2010). They are events that help maintain and promote cultural heritage and strengthen local and national identities (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards, 2007). Festivals enhance the cultural and

educational level of communities through a variety of activities that engage and educate participants (Herman, 2023). While festivals can have positive economic and social impacts, they also raise environmental questions toward tourist which lead them to implement the sustainable practices in their daily (Negruşa et al., 2016). To reduce their negative impacts, such as increased traffic and loss of resources, it is essential to manage festivals sustainably.

The number of people attending cultural events is largely influenced by the marketing strategy used. A positive attitude towards brand involvement significantly increases the number of people attending the event and their level of participation. Although most cultural festivals in Bali have a free entry system, this is not only an effective way to attract visitors. However, as an event organizer, the government often does not use effective marketing strategies. However, effortless marketing on social media and E-WOM can significantly influence tourist visits (Huh, 2018). Local events can improve the image of a destination, increase the desire to visit and help tourism recovery (Abou-Shouk, et al., 2024). While destination marketing tactics that improve the image of a destination can attract more visitors, experiential marketing tactics that create memorable and emotional experiences can have a big impact on visitor engagement and loyalty (Vila-Lopez et al., 2022). For example, events that incorporate experiential elements can make visitors feel closer to the brand, resulting in increased attendance and positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Gómez-Suárez & Yagüe, 2021). Events that incorporate unique cultural experiences, for example, can build customer loyalty and attract repeat visitors. Experiential marketing strategies that focus on creating valuable experiences are strategies that can increase visitor engagement and increase customer loyalty (Y. C. Lee et al., 2021).

Understanding visitor motivations and segmenting the market accordingly can help in developing effective marketing strategies (Meeprom, 2022). Different visitor segments, such as mass visitors, enthusiast visitors, and active visitors, have different motivations that can be targeted to increase attendance. Marketing strategies that focus on retaining repeat visitors can be more effective, as repeat visitors tend to have higher spending, longer stays, and stronger behavioral intentions than new visitors (Shani et al., 2009). Festivals and cultural events can enhance regional revitalization by engaging tourists and encouraging community participation (Chang & Ku, 2023). Marketing strategies that highlight community-related benefits and socio-cultural exchanges can attract more visitors. The market appeal of festivals can be leveraged in marketing strategies to enhance destination image and attract tourists, contributing to regional revitalization (Chang & Ku, 2023). Developing an effective marketing strategy can include understanding visitor motivations and segmenting the market accordingly. There are different motivations for increasing visitor attendance, including mass visitors, enthusiast visitors, and active visitors. Repeat visitors tend to spend more, stay longer, and have stronger behavioral intentions than new visitors, so marketing strategies that focus on retaining repeat visitors can be more effective. By engaging tourists and increasing community participation, festivals and cultural events can enhance a region's revitalization and draw more people. Marketing strategies that emphasize community benefits and socio-cultural exchanges can attract more visitors. In marketing strategies, the appeal of festival markets can be used to enhance the image of a destination and attract tourists.

Richards & King, (2022) found that tourists' experiences, satisfaction, and intention to re-recommend the festival were influenced by the cultural festival. This can cause visitors to want to do voluntary E-WoM during the festival. The emotional and authentic experience of the cultural festival shapes the festival's identity and drives tourism growth (Lee et al., 2015). Koenig-Lewis et al. (2021) found that the cultural and social legacy generated after the festival was significantly influenced by the level of visitor engagement during the festival. Festival identity was directly influenced by the authentic experience and support of visitors for tourism growth in traditional religious festivals (T. H. Lee et al., 2015). The perception and success of the cultural festival were influenced by its authenticity from the perspective of the host community. Satisfaction through the image and value of the festival was influenced by direct experiences, which strengthened the understanding of the festival's identity and place (Lin & Lee, 2020). By attracting tourists, extending the tourist season, and increasing the vitality of the city, cultural festivals greatly affect the local economy (Herman, 2023).

The experiences provided to visitors during cultural festivals enhance the location's image and behavioral outcomes, which in turn have a positive impact on the economy (Richards & King, 2022). Understanding what visitors spend at cultural festivals can help events survive and continue. Moreover, the goals of this festival could be achieved through a legacy of continued engagement with the culture and communities (Báez-Montenegro & Devesa, 2020). Cultural events such as festivals influence local communities and tourism, preserving local traditions, and promoting destinations (Correia et al., 2022).To understand the sociological factors that influence visitor numbers, it is important to understand how cultural festivals impact local communities and tourism (Correia et al., 2022). The psychological effects of cultural experiences on visitor behavior are demonstrated through positive impacts on tourist experience, satisfaction, and willingness to recommend and return. In addition, the quality of cultural festivals significantly influences visitor attendance and experience, as well as ecosystem impacts.

Methodology

Descriptive quantitative method was used in this study. Quantitative data, which is the main source of this study, was collected through the method of distributing online questionnaires to visitors of the Cultural Festival in Bali In this study, 100 samples were selected using the Slovin formula. The respondents were from tourist (mainly domestics tourist with length of stay minimum 1 night stay) and visitor (mainly local community or people domicilied in Bali). These data was questionned in the beginning of the questionnaires. Therefore, the unstructured interview was conducted during the data collection with informants from the representative of the festivals management. There are three respresentatives from these three festivals were interviewed, mainly from its social media associates. It was under consideration that they have observed their visitors through their account insight over the years. The data were then analyzed using SPSS tools, including instrument tests, classical assumption tests, simple linear regression analysis, and hypothesis tests. After that, the results found were explained and presented in tabular form. Cronbach's Alpha test was used to measure internal consistency, and factor analysis was used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. To ensure that the data met the required statistical assumptions, the classical assumption test involved normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity tests. The effect of independent variables on the dependent variables was determined by simple linear regression analysis; to measure statistical significance, the hypothesis was tested using the t-test and F-test. After that, the findings were interpreted by considering previous research and existing theoretical frameworks. This provides an overview of how cultural festivals contribute to attracting visitors and supporting sustainable tourism in Bali.

Results and Discussions
Results

Cultural Festival in Bali has an important role in maintaining and preserving Balinese culture to the general public, both local communities and other visitors. Furthermore, this festival can also function as a medium for cultural promotion and tourist attraction. This can be seen from the high enthusiasm of visitors every time this Cultural Festival is held. Bali Arts Festival, Denpasar Festival and Kesanga Festival are a forum for not only visitors but also directly provide economic impacts to MSME business actors who are partners in organizing the event. This certainly indicates the creation of inclusive sustainable tourism in Bali where the benefits can be obtained by various parties including visitors, business actors, government and tourists.

Respondents Characteristics

Based on the results of distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, a picture of respondents was obtained which was divided based on gender and age. The characteristics of respondents regarding the implementation of the 2024 Bali Cultural Festival are as follows:
a. Respondent Characteristics Based on Gender
    Respondent characteristics based on gender can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Gender Based

No	Sex	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Male	62	62.0
2	Female	38	38.0
	Total	100	100.0

b. Respondent Characteristics based on Age
Respondents consist of various ages. In this research questionnaire, it is divided into 3 age ranges which can be seen in the following Table 2

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics Based on Age

No.	Age	Number	Percentage (%)
1	< 20 years old	13	13.0
2	21-30 years old	56	56.0
3	31-40 years old	10	10.0
4	41-45 years old	16	16.0
5	> 50 years old	5	5.0
	Total	100	100.0

c. Respondents' Travel Duration Data
According to the Glosarium of UNWTO, that tourist are defined from their length of stay with minimum one night and maximum one year. However, this study is not limited to only from tourist point of view yet also from the excursionist who mainly from the surrounding area of the venue or at least could reach the venue within 24 hours vice versa. The following table show the data of respondents' travel duration.

Table 3. Respondents Travel Duration

No.	Age	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 24 hours	32	32.0
2	More than 24 hours	68	68.0
	Total	100	100.0

Data Analysis
Validity Outcome

The collected data was tested in Validity test and found that overall questionare items was valid to support the research hypothesis. The validity outcome was shown in Table 3 below.

Table 4. Validity Outcome

	Variables	Q. Item	r-count	Validity Standard	Outcome
X1.1	Marketing Strategy	X1.1.1	0.485**	0.300	Valid
		X1.1.2	0.492**	0.300	Valid
		X1.1.3	0.528**	0.300	Valid
		X1.1.4	0.438**	0.300	Valid
X1.2	Cultural Experiences	X1.2.1	0.525**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.2	0.381**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.3	0.565**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.4	0.594**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.5	0.443**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.6	0.448**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.7	0.493**	0.300	Valid
		X1.2.8	0.427**	0.300	Valid

		X1.2.9	0.618**	0.300	Valid
X1.3	Cultural Authenticity	X1.3.1	0.485**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.2	0.377**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.3	0.476**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.4	0.619**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.5	0.573**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.6	0.534**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.7	0.526**	0.300	Valid
		X1.3.8	0.508**	0.300	Valid
X1.4	Sustainable Practices	X1.4.1	0.503**	0.300	Valid
		X1.4.2	0.486**	0.300	Valid
		X1.4.3	0.664**	0.300	Valid
		X1.4.4	0.472**	0.300	Valid
		X1.4.5	0.544**	0.300	Valid
Y	Visitor Attraction	Y.1	0.511**	0.300	Valid
		Y.2	0.644**	0.300	Valid
		Y.3	0.784**	0.300	Valid
		Y.4	0.727**	0.300	Valid
		Y.5	0.636**	0.300	Valid

Reliability Outcome

Reliability is the consistency of a series of measurements or a series of measuring instruments. This can be a measurement of the same measuring instrument (test with retest) will give the same results, or for more subjective measurements, whether two assessors give similar scores. The reliability test can be seen in Table 4.

Table 5. Reliability Outcome

	Variables	Cronbach's Apha	Req. Cronbach's Apha	Outcome
X	Event	0.924	0.600	Reliable
Y	Visitor Attraction	0.673	0.600	Reliable

The reliability test in Table 5 presents the Cronbach's Alpha value of each variable in the questionnaire greater than 0.6 so that it can be concluded that the questionnaire used is reliable. Because the questionnaire has been declared valid and reliable, the questionnaire can be used as a measuring tool and further analysis.

Recapitulation of Questionnaire Results

The data analysis technique in this study is to use a quantitative approach where the data collected as a questionnaire distribution will be analyzed descriptively. The questionnaire used to collect data is designed to explore visitors' perceptions of strengthening cultural identity. Visitor perceptions are converted into a "Likert Scale". Determine the highest and lowest values that can be achieved. In this case, the highest value is 5 and the lowest value is 1.
  a. Determine the size of the value area (score range) based on the difference between the highest value that can be achieved and the lowest value. In this case, the score range (R) is 5-1 = 4.
  b. Determine the size of the value interval based on the comparison between the value area and the number of assessment criteria required. In this case, the number of assessment criteria is 5, namely very often, often, quite often, ever and never.

c. Calculate the average value with the sum of the values of each case in the distribution and divide it by the total number of observations of the distribution.

d. Determine the range of values for each assessment criterion, in this case what is obtained is:

- o 1.0 – 1.7   = Very Bad
- o 1.8 – 2.5   = Bad
- o 2.6 – 3.3   = Sufficient
- o 3.4 - 4.1   = Good
- o 4.2 – 5.0   = Very Good

Dimension of Event

a. Marketing Strategy

Based on the criteria for the respondent assessment score above, the results of distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, it can be concluded that the Marketing Strategy variable has a total score of 1615, with an average score of 4.04 so that the marketing variable has good research criteria. The following are the results of distributing questionnaires with the Marketing Strategy variable:

Table 6. Marketing Strategy

Indicator		Score					Total	Ave	Outcome
		1	2	3	4	5			
Marketing Strategy	X1.1.1	0	0	7	70	23	416	4.16	Good
	X1.1.2	0	1	21	58	20	397	3.97	Good
	X1.1.3	0	0	14	65	21	407	4.07	Good
	X1.1.4	0	3	13	70	14	395	3.95	Good
Average							1615	4.04	Good

According to Table 6, the following are the respondent assessment criteria based on the indicators used:

1. The location for the implementation of this cultural festival received an average value of 4.16 so that it falls into the good category.
2. The promotion through E-WoM social media in attracting visitors to watch the 2024 Bali Cultural Festival has an average value of 3.97 so that it falls into the good category.
3. There is interesting and relevant content used to attract visitors to come to the festival has an average value of 4.07 so that it falls into the good category.
4. The availability of complete and clear information regarding the implementation of the 2024 Bali Cultural Festival has an average value of 3.95 so that it falls into the good category.

b. Cultural Experiences

Based on the criteria for the respondent assessment score from the distribution of questionnaires to 100 respondents, it can be concluded that the Cultural Experiences variable has a total score of 3583, with an average score of 3.98 so that this variable has good criteria. The following are the results of the distribution of questionnaires with the variable:

Table 7. Cultural Experiences

Indicator		Score					Total	Ave	Outcome
		1	2	3	4	5			
Cultural Experiences	X1.2.1	0	4	16	58	22	398	3.98	Good
	X1.2.2	0	2	13	66	19	402	4.02	Good
	X1.2.3	0	4	13	65	18	397	3.97	Good
	X1.2.4	0	0	18	66	16	398	3.98	Good

X1.2.5	0	0	13	75	12	399	3.99	Good
X1.2.6	0	0	16	64	20	404	4.04	Good
X1.2.7	0	0	13	71	16	403	4.03	Good
X1.2.8	0	0	27	56	17	390	3.90	Good
X1.2.9	0	0	27	54	19	392	3.92	Good
Average						3583	3.98	Good

Based on Table 7, here are the respondent assessment criteria based on the indicators used:

1. Tourists feel they get an authentic cultural experience with an average value of 3.98, making it a good category.
2. Interaction with local communities increases tourists' cultural understanding with an average value of 4.02, making it a good category.
3. Visitors feel actively involved in the festival, not just passive spectators with an average value of 3.97, making it a good category.
4. Tourists feel inspired or emotionally touched by cultural performances with an average value of 3.98, making it a good category.
5. Visual and artistic elements in the festival provide an impressive experience with an average value of 3.99, making it a good category.
6. Cultural exchange between domestic, international, and local tourists and the local community with an average value of 4.04, making it a good category.
7. Tourists gain new insights into Balinese history and culture through the festival with an average value of 4.03, making it a good category.
8. Tourists feel more appreciative of Balinese culture after attending the festival has an average value of 3.90 so it is included in the good category.
9. The cultural experience gained makes tourists want to return to the festival in the future has an average value of 3.92 so it is included in the good category.

c. Cultural Authenticity

Based on the respondent assessment score criteria below the results of distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, it can be concluded that the Cultural Authenticity variable has a total score of 3246, with an average score of 4.06 so that this variable has good research criteria. The following are the results of distributing questionnaires with the Cultural Authenticity variable:

Table 8. Cultural Authenticity

Indicator		Score					Total	Ave	Outcome
		1	2	3	4	5			
Cultural Authenticity	X1.3.1	0	0	11	72	17	406	4.06	Good
	X1.3.2	0	0	12	66	22	410	4.10	Good
	X1.3.3	0	0	25	49	26	401	4.01	Good
	X1.3.4	0	1	19	56	24	403	4.03	Good
	X1.3.5	0	0	19	54	27	408	4.08	Good
	X1.3.6	0	0	13	65	22	409	4.09	Good
	X1.3.7	0	0	19	59	22	403	4.03	Good
	X1.3.8	0	0	15	64	21	406	4.06	Good
Average							3246	4.06	Good

Based on Table 8, here are the respondent assessment criteria based on the indicators used:
1. The festival maintains original and undistorted traditional cultural elements with an average value of 4.06, making it a good category.
2. Cultural products such as food, clothing, and crafts sold come from local sources and are made traditionally with an average value of 4.10, making it a good category.
3. Tourists consider the festival as a legitimate cultural representation even though it has undergone several modern adaptations with an average value of 4.01, making it a good category.
4. Tourists feel they have a deep and meaningful experience while attending the festival with an average value of 4.03, making it a good category.
5. Interaction with the local community makes tourists feel emotionally connected to Balinese culture with an average value of 4.08, making it a good category.
6. Local people play an active role in organizing the festival, both as participants and organizers with an average value of 4.09, making it a good category.
7. Tourists feel the presence of the local community as an integral part of the festival experience has an average value of 4.03 so it is included in the good category.
8. The festival functions as an educational tool that helps tourists understand Balinese culture more deeply has an average value of 4.06 so it is included in the good category.

d. Sustainable Practices
Based on the respondent assessment score criteria above, the results of distributing questionnaires to 100 respondents, it can be concluded that the Sustainable Practices variable has a total score of 1425, with an average score of 3.07 so that this variable has quite good research criteria.

Table 9. Sustainable Practices

Indicator		Score					Total	Ave	Outcome
		1	2	3	4	5			
Sustainable Practices	X1.4.1	0	6	18	56	20	390	3.90	Good
	X1.4.2	0	1	6	69	24	416	4.16	Good
	X1.4.3	0	1	12	63	24	410	4.10	Good
	X1.4.4	0	0	13	74	13	400	4.00	Good
	X1.4.5	0	1	8	77	14	404	4.04	Good
Average							2020	4.04	Good

Based on Table 9, here are the respondent assessment criteria based on the indicators used:
1. There is a reduction in the use of single-use plastic in the festival area with an average value of 3.90 so it is included in the good category.
2. The implementation of the festival in accordance with local values and norms (not exploitative) has an average value of 4.16 so it is included in the good category.
3. Support for local MSMEs and local producers (ex. crafts, culinary) has an average value of 4.10 so it is included in the good category.
4. Cross-sector collaboration: government, community, private sector, and NGOs has an average value of 4.00 so it is included in the good category.
5. Open communication of sustainability to the public and visitors has an average value of 4.04 so it is included in the good category.

Overall Results of Respondents' Perceptions of Strengthening Cultural Identity

Table 10. Overall Average Value of Variables

No	Variables	Ave	Outcome
1	Marketing Strategy	4.04	Good
2	Cultural Experiences	3.98	Good
3	Cultural Authenticity	4.06	Good
4	Sustainable Practices	4.04	Good
	Total	4.03	Good

Based on the table above, it is known that visitor perceptions related to the dimensions of the 2024 Bali Cultural Festival event are good with an average score of 4.03 which is in the good category. This shows that the strengthening of cultural identity has gone well and received a good response from visitors.

Discussions

Marketing strategy in increasing visitor visit in Bali Cultural Festival

Cultural Festival is a medium used to display cultural products for the purpose of preserving and exposing the local culture itself. However, not all people and tourists have great motivation to participate in the activity. (Ramukumba, 2017) in his research stated that it is important to understand and consider the differences in motivation for visits and tourist interest in this festival. This motivation can greatly depend on the age of tourists, significant differences in motivation between tourists who have visited before and tourists who are visiting for the first time and the purchasing patterns of these tourists. Moreover, understanding the motivation and preferences of tourists will make it easier to develop innovative and effective strategies to attract tourist visits to the Cultural Festival (Amorim et al., 2019). The results of this analysis show that the selection of the location for the festival has an effect on motivating tourist visits. If we look at the pattern of choosing the location for the festival, two of the three festivals are held in the cultural and economic center of the city, namely Titik 0, Denpasar City. This area makes it easy for anyone to come because it is located in the heart of Denpasar. In addition, the Bali Arts Festival is also held in a cultural conservation area, namely the Taman Budaya Art Center, which is also an artistic place for cultural exhibitions and has easy access for tourists. Kourkouridis & Salepaki (2024) also found that the characteristics of the venue including accessibility and infrastructure have a significant role in increasing tourist visits. One of the elements is the availability of well-optimized indoor space, the availability of convenient event settings that can enhance the visitor experience when coming to the festival. In addition, the selection of a location that has a cultural history can also significantly attract the number of tourist visits because of the strong elaboration between the products displayed, both exhibitions and performing arts, and the atmosphere built through the unique values of the surrounding historical buildings (Barrera-Fernández & Hernández-Escampa, 2017). (Tanford & Jung, 2017) stated that ensuring high levels of visitor satisfaction is essential to increasing visits and word-of-mouth promotion. Factors such as the quality of the festival program, the comfort of the facilities, and the overall atmosphere are important determinants of visitor satisfaction and loyalty. (Ahn et al., 2020) stated that the Festival relies heavily on recommendations from previous attendees. eWOM serves as a powerful promotional tool, helping to spread the word about the festival and attract new visitors. Moreover, E-WOM, both through social media and messaging applications, can play an important role in boosting tourist visits. This is because this strategy can influence tourists' decision-making to visit or not (Yanti et al., 2024). This study found that tourists or visitors gave representative results to the promotional strategy using E-WOM on social media. The government as the organizer uses this strategy from year to year to build an image and increase visitor excitement every year. In fact, the strategy of managing content that is relevant to exhibition products and cultural performances also contributes to increasing tourists' curiosity about the holding of the festival every year. In addition, especially for cultural performances at the Bali Arts Festival which tend to be crowded, it requires a clear and structured information delivery strategy so that it is easy for visitors to

understand. This is supported by research from (Semrad & Rivera, 2018) which states that utilizing social media platforms effectively can strengthen eWOM. This interaction encourages them to share experiences can help build a positive online reputation. When tourists are satisfied, cultural festivals will attract more visitors in the following year. This is influenced by not only cultural content but also marketing tactics such as location selection, infrastructure that supports culture, and the motivation of tourists to come. More attractive and accessible events can be created by understanding the behavior and psychological patterns of visitors, such as push factors, pull factors, and the openness of festival organizers to the public. Digital marketing through eWOM and social media is essential to attract customers, especially the younger generation. To increase visitor appeal and ensure the sustainable growth of cultural tourism in Bali, careful selection of venues, original cultural programs, and dynamic promotional approaches will be essential.

Cultural Experience as a Driving Force of Tourist Visit in Cultural Festival

One of the important elements found and influencing tourists' choice to visit cultural festivals, including Bali, is cultural experience. Bali as a cultural destination certainly has a big role in providing memorable cultural experiences to tourists. The results of data processing show that the overall perception of visitors' cultural experiences is in the "good" category, with an average score for all indicators between 3.90 and 4.04. These results indicate that cultural engagement is very important to make cultural festivals attractive to domestic and international visitors. The cultural festival was found to be able to provide an authentic Balinese experience without modernization that changes the uniqueness value (M = 3.98). This shows significant engagement with local cultural heritage and enhances tourists' knowledge and experience. This supports Pine and Gilmore's (1999) theory of the experience economy, which emphasizes that customers, including visitors, want personal, memorable, and emotionally satisfying experiences. In addition, the study found that cultural elements and artistic festivals created an immersive and memorable environment (M = 3.99), while cultural performances succeeded in inspiring or touching visitors' emotions (M = 3.98). The results indicate that the aesthetic and psychological aspects of the cultural experience were revived, which in turn increased visitor satisfaction. In addition to these attractions, it is evident that tourists understand Balinese culture better due to cultural exchanges between different groups of tourists and local residents (M = 4.02) and interactions with local communities (M = 4.02). Both of these findings are in line with Reisinger's (2013) theory that transformative tourism, which allows tourists to learn more about other cultures, can produce more appreciative and responsible tourists. Visitors are not just passive spectators, but also participate in the formation of shared cultural experiences, as demonstrated by the opportunity to actively participate in festival activities (M = 3.97). This is in line with the co-creation theory proposed by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), which states that interactions between service providers and customers create value. The data also showed that cultural festivals have an educational purpose. Visitors said they gained new insights into Balinese history and culture after attending the event (M = 4.03). They also said they appreciated Balinese culture more after attending the event (M = 3.90). These affective and cognitive engagements are crucial to fostering long-term interest and respect for the culture. Most importantly, the experience influences future behavioral intentions, as indicated by visitors' mean score (M = 3.92) to return. This is in line with research conducted by Richards (2011) and Moscardo (2008), which emphasize that tangible and significant cultural experiences increase location loyalty and repeat visits. Cultural experience is the main factor that attracts tourists to cultural festivals, according to the research. Sustainable tourism is driven by authenticity, educational value, enjoyable experiences, and emotional resonance. It also increases visitor satisfaction and fosters cultural connections and repeat visits. Therefore, cultural festivals in Bali not only serve as a means to entertain or preserve, but also serve as a powerful means to build sustainable cultural tourism.

Cultural Authenticity as the Identity and Unique Value

Cultural authenticity plays a vital role in the success of cultural festivals, especially in places with a strong cultural heritage such as Bali. The study shows that Bali visitors rated the authenticity of the festivals well, with an average score of 4.01–4.10 for all indicators. The results suggest that maintaining authenticity enhances the visitor experience and strengthens tourism identity in addition to being essential for cultural preservation. It was also supported by the previous study which stated that a place's authenticity and socio-culture play a pivotal role as a place's identity and becoming its unique selling point among the similar destination (Yanti, 2024). By maintaining undistorted traditional cultural components (M = 4.06), festivals emphasize their commitment to presenting culture in its original form. According to Taylor (2001), authenticity is essential in cultural tourism as visitors seek experiences that reflect the "true essence" of local culture. The authenticity of local products is further supported by the use of traditionally made local products such as clothing, food, and crafts (M = 4.10), which help create an immersive cultural environment and foster the local creative economy (Cohen, 1988; Chhabra et al., 2003). Interestingly, tourists still considered the festival as a valid cultural representation even though contemporary modifications were incorporated into the festival components (M = 4.01). This is in line with Wang's (1999) notion of constructive authenticity, meaning that visitors accept modified cultural forms as valid as long as they produce significant experiences. This notion is supported by the emotional and meaningful connections tourists felt during the festival (M = 4.03)—authenticity is cultural relevance and emotional resonance, not static preservation. In addition, festivals become more authentic due to the active involvement of local people as organizers and performers (M = 4.09). When local people participate directly in cultural expressions, the event becomes a shared place that reflects lived traditions rather than just an event for commercial gain (McKercher & du Cros, 2002). The value of community-based cultural tourism is further strengthened by tourists' sense of emotional connection with the local community (M = 4.08) and their presence as an essential component of the experience (M = 4.03). In addition, the festival provides an opportunity for tourists to learn about Balinese traditions (M = 4.06). The educational dimension of authenticity encourages greater cultural appreciation, according to Reisinger & Steiner (2006). This makes travel more transformative than consumptive. This educational role enhances the tourist experience and helps spread culture across generations and visitor groups.

Sustainable Practice to Promote Sustainability

To support sustainable tourism, cultural festivals must follow the principle of desire. The results of the study showed that Balinese cultural festivals have utilized various demands and received good ratings from visitors, with an average score of 3.90–4.16. Reducing the use of single-use plastics was a significant finding (M = 3.90). This shows awareness of environmental impacts and a real effort to reduce waste. This program is in line with research by Mair & Laing (2013), which found that the sustainable image of festivals that implement environmentally friendly practices such as reusing cutlery and providing recycling bins can be strengthened. In addition, conducting a non-exploitation festival that follows local values and practices (M = 4.16) shows respect for local culture. This practice is very important for cultural tourism because it ensures that culture is not overly commercialized, but is presented in an authentic and dignified manner (Richards, 2011). This method also helps maintain the cultural identity of local communities. Economic sustainability is highly dependent on supporting local MSMEs and producers (M = 4.10). Involving local actors in festivals boosts the local economy and provides tourists with an authentic experience. Previous studies (Getz & Page, 2016) have shown that festivals with local vendors increase a sense of community ownership and distribute economic benefits equitably. Furthermore, cross-sector collaboration between NGOs, the private sector, communities, and government (M = 4.00) shows good synergy in supporting sustainability goals. According to Jones (2014), this collaboration is very important to unite various resources, knowledge, and interests to create a sustainable festival. In addition, this form of cooperation

enhances participatory and responsible governance. Finally, effective transparency and education are indicated by open communication regarding sustainability practices to the public and visitors (M = 4.04). Visitors who are informed about sustainability efforts tend to be more involved and supportive of initiatives (Laing & Frost, 2010). During the festival, getting information about recycling systems, local support, and environmental impacts can increase awareness and responsible behavior. Furthermore, these actions not only help develop environmentally, socially and economically sustainable tourism, but also build a long-term foundation for sustainable cultural festivals, which are an important part of developing ethical and inclusive tourism in Bali.

Conclusions

Balinese cultural festivals attract tourists through four main factors: sustainability practices, cultural authenticity, cultural experiences, and marketing strategies. Marketing through e-WOM on social media increases festival visits, while cultural experiences foster active participation and knowledge exchange. Cultural authenticity, maintained through traditional elements and local products, provides a meaningful experience. Sustainability practices, such as reducing single-use plastic and supporting MSMEs, promote sustainable tourism. Strengthening these factors will improve festival quality and strengthen Bali's position as a sustainable cultural destination.

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Sustainable tour operator practices: A case study of PT Destination Asia

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the implementation of sustainable tour operator principles based on Travelife criteria in enhancing the competitive advantage of PT Destination Asia, a tour operator company based in Bali. Although existing literature highlights the benefits of sustainability practices, there remains a research gap in understanding their practical application and impact at the tour operator level in Indonesia. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study method, with data collected through in-depth interviews and documentation. Key informants, including managers and relevant staff, were selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that PT Destination Asia has successfully integrated the four main dimensions of sustainability—management, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental—into its operations. The company demonstrates a strong commitment to transparency through its annual reports, offers authentic tourism products that promote local culture, establishes partnerships with local communities and sustainable business partners, and applies environmentally friendly transportation and accommodation practices. Theoretically, this study strengthens the existing literature on the importance of applying sustainability principles to build competitive advantage in the tourism industry. Practically, it provides a valuable reference for other tour operators and policymakers to encourage the adoption of sustainability in the travel sector. Furthermore, this research opens up opportunities for future studies to explore consumer perspectives in evaluating the effectiveness of sustainability implementation.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage, Travel Industry, Travelife Criteria, Sustainable Tour Operator, Sustainable Tourism

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Introduction

In the current era of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), adherence to health protocols, discipline, and enhanced collaboration are crucial. The Ministry of Tourism is promoting sustainable tourism to foster robust and resilient growth in Indonesia's tourism sector, while simultaneously generating value through the creative economy. This initiative aligns with the Ministry's 2020–2024 Strategic Plan. The Ministry has identified sustainability, competitiveness, value creation, digitalization, and productivity as the five key strategic issues for sustainable tourism development in Indonesia, which are reflected in its policy directions. In line with the Ministry of Tourism Regulation No. 14 of 2016, which is based on the UNWTO's sustainable tourism concept, tour companies must adopt sustainability principles. Travelife, a global organization accredited by the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), provides Travelife Partner Criteria to help tour operators implement these principles and align with the ministerial regulation's sustainability standards. Tour operators committed to these guidelines must also be ready for regular audits as part of their ongoing evaluation and improvement.

Tour operators play a pivotal role in the tourism industry, particularly in shaping tourist behavior, thereby necessitating the implementation of sustainability principles (Penz et al., 2017). One viable approach is the adoption of the Travelife Partner Criteria as a framework for assessing

sustainability within tour operator operations, in support of sustainable tourism implementation. The adoption of sustainable tourism practices not only enhances business opportunities and fosters market innovation and design, but also improves operational efficiency, strengthens business resilience amidst growing sustainability trends, enhances competitive advantage, fulfills customer satisfaction, and elevates corporate sustainability reputation (Alsheref et al., 2024; Azmi et al., 2023; Bressan & Pedrini, 2020; Damiasih, 2025; Kholijah, 2024; Mykola et al., 2020; Streimikiene et al., 2021). However, despite the growing body of literature highlighting the benefits of sustainability implementation, challenges persist in the adoption of these principles among various tour operators operating in Indonesia. Accordingly, further research is warranted to explore the critical factors influencing the successful implementation of sustainability principles within the tour operator industry, particularly in the context of Indonesia's national travel sector.

PT Destination Asia Bali is the Indonesian branch of Destination Asia Group, a premier destination management company (DMC) established in 1996 (Destination Asia, 2025). Situated in Sanur, Denpasar Bali, the office serves as a central hub for delivering bespoke travel experiences across's diverse archipelago. Specializing in leisure travel, meeting and incentives, and cruise services, PT Destination Asia Bali offers tailor-made programs that highlight Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. Their dedicated team of guides, drivers, and reservation staff ensures high-quality service and authentic experiences for travelers. The company committed to sustainable tourism. The company integrates responsible travel practices into its operations, aiming to minimize environmental impact and sup-port local communities. The company creates product which can give authentic experience about culture and local heritage to the tourists. This company has adopted the Travelife Partner Criteria as a comprehensive framework for integrating sustainability principles into its operational practices across all branches, both locally and globally. This strategic move reflects the company's deep-rooted commitment to sustainability and its ongoing efforts to mitigate negative environmental impacts while enhancing social and economic well-being. Through this policy, the company transcends a profit-centered approach by actively engaging in ecological impact reduction and contributing to the development of surrounding communities. The successful implementation of sustainability principles at PT Destination Asia serves as an exemplary model for other tourism enterprises seeking to transition toward more sustainable business practices within the industry.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that, despite the substantial initiatives undertaken by the company, the challenges confronting the tourism industry are continually evolving. Therefore, systematic and periodic evaluations of the implementation of sustainability principles are essential. In this regard, the company should serve as a subject of further evaluative inquiry to ensure that its sustainability policies remain adaptive to industry dynamics and capable of generating long-term positive impacts. Moreover, further scholarly investigation into the implementation and outcomes of these policies may yield critical insights that can inform the formulation and refinement of sustainability strategies across the broader tourism sector.

Literature Review
Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)

A pivotal milestone in the formal adoption of sustainable tourism as a conceptual framework emerged in the early 1980s, marked by the publication of the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This initiative laid the foundational principles for integrating conservation and development. The subsequent release of the seminal report Our Common Future in 1987 significantly influenced the advancement of sustainable approaches across multiple sectors, including tourism. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has since played a critical role in formulating standards and guidelines aimed at fostering sustainable tourism practices, including those directed at sustainable tour operators. Over time, the concept of sustainable tourism has continued to evolve, enriched by the contributions of diverse stakeholders from various disciplines and sectors.

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) is a multi-stakeholder organization dedicated to establishing global criteria for sustainable tourism. Formed in 2007 as a coalition of

32 partners, its founding was spearheaded by the Rainforest Alliance, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Foundation (UN Foundation), and the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). During the 2014–2019 ministerial term, the Minister of Tourism cited the UNWTO and the GSTC as international benchmarks for the development of sustainable tourism. The GSTC was conceived to define a set of minimum standards that all tourism enterprises must meet in order to protect and preserve the world's natural and cultural resources (Bricker & Schultz, 2011). These criteria were developed with the overarching aim of ensuring that tourism not only generates economic benefits but also serves as a vehicle for environmental conservation and poverty alleviation. The Council identifies four core pillars as the foundation of its criteria: effective sustainability planning; maximizing social and economic benefits for local communities; minimizing negative impacts on cultural heritage; and reducing adverse effects on environmental heritage.

The implementation of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) criteria within the tourism industry is of paramount importance in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the natural and cultural resources upon which the sector depends (Hamid & Isa, 2017). These criteria provide a foundational framework for tourism enterprises to adopt environmentally and socially responsible practices, thereby enhancing corporate reputation and fostering consumer trust. Such implementation extends beyond environmental management—such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving water resource management—to encompass critical social dimensions, including the empowerment of local communities and the safeguarding of cultural heritage. For industry stakeholders, adherence to GSTC standards presents strategic opportunities to tap into an increasingly sustainability-conscious tourism market. However, it simultaneously demands substantial investment in education, capacity-building, and resource allocation to effectively meet the rigorous benchmarks established by the GSTC.

Tourism sustainability within the travel industry centers on achieving a harmonious balance between economic growth, environmental preservation, and social well-being (Shekhar, 2024). At its core, the principle of sustainable tourism entails minimizing adverse environmental impacts—such as greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and air pollution—while maximizing the economic and social benefits for local communities. The development of sustainable tourism necessitates prudent management across key sectors including transportation, accommodation, and food and beverage services, all of which must be regulated to mitigate their ecological footprint (Khan et al., 2023). These sectors constitute integral components of the travel industry and play a pivotal role in shaping tourist experiences. As such, embedding sustainability principles into every facet of the industry is essential to fostering responsible tourism products that can be preserved and enjoyed by future generations.

Nagendrakumar et al. (2022) articulate that the concept of sustainability in the travel industry encompasses three fundamental dimensions: environmental, economic, and social sustainability. These dimensions are vital for ensuring the long-term viability of tourism enterprises. Their findings suggest that the adoption of sustainable practices significantly influences the going concern of tourism businesses in both developed and developing countries. In particular, environmental sustainability indicators exhibit a strong positive correlation with financial stability, whereas the economic and social dimensions demonstrate variable impacts depending on the specific indicators employed. Consequently, sustainability within the travel and tourism sector has emerged as a critical discourse that interlinks economic expansion, carbon emissions, and sustainable development objectives.

According to Lee & Kwag (2013) the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly in the context of travel, makes a significant contribution to economic growth, but at the same time, it also leads to increased CO2 emissions. Their study demonstrates that although this industry can stimulate economic development, it is also a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions due to its high energy consumption, especially within the transportation and accommodation sectors. Nevertheless, effective management of this sector can result in sustainable economic growth and a reduction in CO2 emissions. Lee & Kwag (2013) further emphasize the importance of developing green infrastructure to support the sustainability of the tourism and hospitality sector, thereby creating a balance between economic growth and environmental protection. Therefore, the concept of sustainability in the travel industry should not only focus on economic aspects, but

must also take into account the overall environmental impact, with policies that promote more efficient and environmentally friendly resource utilization.

Sustainable Tour Operator

The fundamental concept of sustainable tourism is based on four key aspects: management, environmental, socio-cultural, and economic dimensions (Amerta et al., 2018; Kadi et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2021). Management refers to the approach of organizing, operating, or utilizing resources while considering their long-term impacts on social, environmental, and economic factors. In terms of the environmental aspect, it is crucial to manage natural resources responsibly to minimize the negative effects of tourism on ecosystems, such as pollution, habitat degradation, and other forms of environmental damage. The socio-cultural aspect is equally important, as tourism can influence local values and traditions (Zunaidi et al., 2022). Therefore, involving local communities in tourism planning and management is essential to ensure that local culture is preserved and not eroded by modernization. Furthermore, sustainable tourism must also provide equitable economic benefits, enhance local community income, and create employment opportunities without compromising social welfare or environmental sustainability (Xing, 2024).

Based on the study by Ariya et al. (2021), Travelife, as an international certification scheme, establishes four principal dimensions as criteria for assessing the sustainability of tour operators: management, environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects. From a management perspective, the criteria emphasize the implementation of a comprehensive sustainability management system, encompassing staff training, risk management, as well as systematic documentation and reporting of sustainability practices. The environmental dimension entails tangible measures such as energy conservation, waste management, water conservation, and the provision of environmental education to travelers. Meanwhile, the socio-cultural criteria underscore respect for local cultures, engagement of local communities, safeguarding of cultural heritage, and the promotion of inclusive social values. Conversely, the economic dimension advances sustainability by supporting local economies, ensuring fair business practices, and fostering ethical partnerships throughout the supply chain (Fernando et al., 2022). All these indicators are reinforced through a rigorous, tiered independent audit process—progressing from Travelife Engaged, to Partner, and ultimately to Certified status—to ensure that sustainability commitments are genuinely integrated across all corporate operations (Ariya et al., 2021)

In the discourse on sustainable management from the perspective of tour operators, the literature presents a range of viewpoints that, while diverse, are mutually reinforcing. Hamid et al. (2021) assert that sustainability in tourism requires the implementation of both Sustainable Business Management (SBM) and Sustainable Destination Management (SDM) practices, which have a direct impact on the business performance of tour operators. They emphasize that operators who adopt these practices not only contribute to environmental preservation but also gain additional business benefits, indicating that sustainability enhances both ecological stewardship and profitability. Conversely, Ariya et al. (2021) place greater emphasis on the role of tour operators as key drivers of sustainability agendas within the tourism value chain, particularly in developing countries such as Kenya. They highlight the capacity of tour operators to influence both suppliers and tourists by fostering ongoing communication and promoting the selection of environmentally responsible tourism products. Despite the considerable advantages discussed, several studies point to persistent challenges, such as intense price competition and limited resources among certain operators, which may hinder the full implementation of sustainability certification. In this context, the integration of sustainable supply chain management with strong business performance is deemed essential, with a focus on meeting long-term needs without compromising the sustainability of destinations (Abrate et al., 2020). Therefore, while real challenges in adopting sustainable practices remain, sustainability should be viewed not only as a moral obligation but also as a strategic business approach that can enhance the competitiveness of tour operators in an increasingly environmentally conscious global market (Abrate et al., 2020; Hamid et al., 2021).

The sustainable economic aspect within the practices of tour operators is closely linked to the implementation of policies and practices that not only promote economic growth but also consider their impacts on local communities and the environment. Tour operators possess significant potential to contribute to the local economy by promoting tourism destinations that prioritize sustainability, such as supporting local products and utilizing environmentally friendly infrastructure (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies indicate that economic sustainability in this sector can also be achieved through efficient management and the establishment of management systems that facilitate collaboration among tour operators, suppliers, and tourism destinations (Khan et al., 2023). These practices focus not only on the stewardship of natural and cultural resources but also on empowering local communities through their participation in tourism-related decision-making (Ariya et al. (2021).

However, there are divergent perspectives regarding the level of commitment tour operators exhibit in implementing sustainable economic practices. Some studies suggest that although tour operators acknowledge the importance of social and environmental sustainability, the primary drivers of their business decisions remain financial profit and market demand (Ullah et al., 2021). This contrast highlights the challenges faced in integrating sustainable economic priorities as a central focus, despite the substantial potential for the sector to contribute meaningfully to more equitable and sustainable economic development (Turturica & Pauna, 2023) . While differences exist in the extent to which sustainable economic practices are adopted by tour operators, a growing consensus suggests that there are long-term economic benefits associated with embracing more integrative sustainability practices.

The environmental sustainability aspect in the practices of tour operators plays a crucial role in minimizing the negative environmental impacts that tourism activities may generate. Tour operators have significant opportunities to implement environmentally friendly practices, such as reducing carbon emissions, prudent management of natural resources, and decreasing the use of non-renewable energy sources in their operations (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). Ecotourism certification programs, exemplified by those implemented in Costa Rica, demonstrate that effective management can reduce pollution, conserve nature, and promote the use of renewable energy (Ullah et al., 2021). Additionally, tour operators also bear responsibility for educating tourists about the importance of responsible natural resource management and encouraging them to reduce their ecological footprint by adopting practices such as using public transportation or bicycles during their travels (Turturica & Pauna, 2023). However, despite growing awareness among many tour operators regarding the importance of environmental sustainability, a primary challenge lies in the lack of incentives to promote the adoption of stronger environmental policies within their practices (Khan et al., 2023). Several studies indicate that decisions made by tour operators are often influenced more by short-term financial gains than by long-term considerations of environmental conservation Ariya et al. (2021). Conversely, some larger tour operators demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental management by implementing guidelines that support energy conservation, waste management, and resource use efficiency (Saidmamatov et al., 2020). Although challenges persist in the full implementation of environmental sustainability practices, the growing awareness signals that tour operators play a key role in advancing more environmentally friendly and sustainable tourism (Khan et al., 2023).

Guidelines or criteria for sustainable tour operators are essential tools that enable tour operators to enhance their business competitiveness, attract new potential customers, increase social benefits, and fulfill their responsibilities as sustainable tour operators (Elizabeth, 2021). According to the official GSTC platform, certification as a Sustainable Tour Operator signifies that a product, journey, or tourism activity complies with prevailing social and environmental standards in the marketplace. The Travelife award and certification as a tour operator can be attained by registering as a Travelife member and successfully implementing the ten assessment themes established by Travelife.
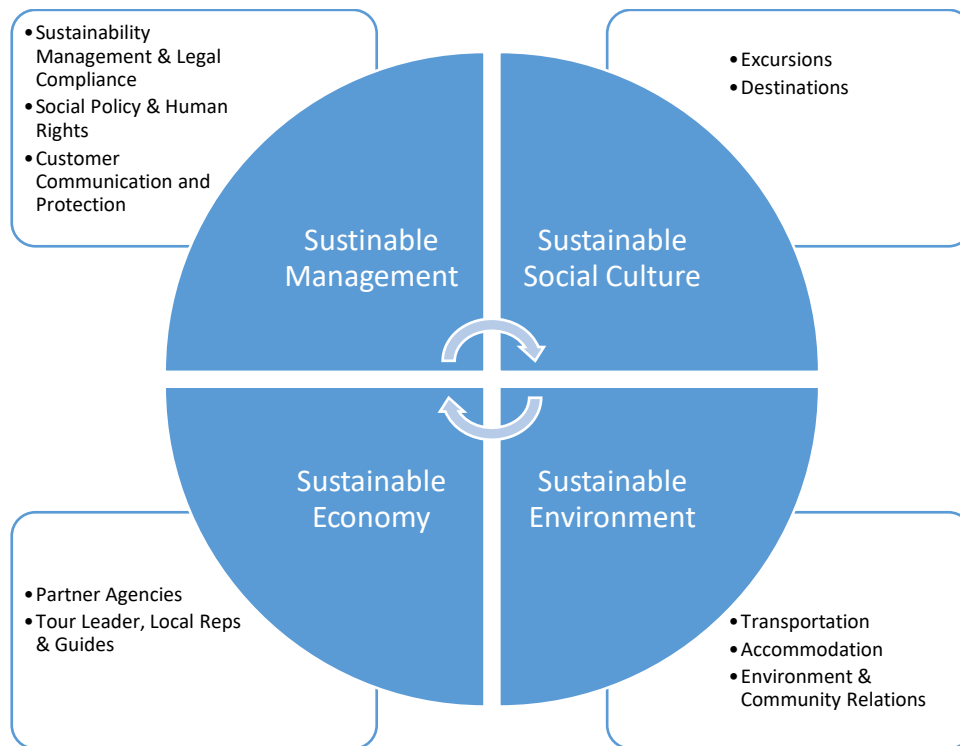
(Source: Adapted from Travelife, 2022 and GSTC, 2016)

Figure 1. Mapping of Travelife Certification Criteria onto the GSTC Sustainable Tour Operator Aspects

The discourse surrounding tourism sustainability and the role of sustainable tour operators has increasingly faced critiques—especially in contexts lacking robust third-party oversight. Liu emphasizes the challenge of applying sustainable tourism principles within mainstream mass tourism, urging that a focus on clear standards and accreditation is crucial for actualizing sustainability (Liu, 2003). In contrast, Jamal et al. argue that existing sustainable tourism frameworks often ignore the influence of broader socio-economic factors, advocating for a re-examination of the principles underlying sustainable tourism through a critical lens (Jamal et al., 2013). Similarly, Saarinen (2013) discusses the frustrations scholars have with tourism as a predominantly profit-driven enterprise, suggesting that the inherent tensions between economic growth and sustainability principles result in superficial implementations of sustainability practices among tour operators. Moreover, Budeanu (2005) highlights the significant impact of tour operators on sustainable tourism trajectories and critiques their often inadequate accountability, particularly when the operators act as intermediaries lacking direct engagement with local sustainability efforts. This concern is echoed by Tolba (2014) who identifies a disconnection in mass tourism's adoption of sustainability frameworks, indicating that many tour operators prioritize immediate economic gains over long-term sustainability goals. Lastly, the transparency called for in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, as indicated by Farrington et al. (2017), highlights that without robust accountability mechanisms, the sustainability discourse risks becoming just another marketing strategy rather than an authentic commitment to ecological and social responsibility. Collectively, these critiques reveal a pressing need for scrutinizing the effectiveness and depth of sustainability efforts within the tourism industry, a situation compounded by insufficient oversight that can dilute the genuine implementation of sustainable practices.

Methodology

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of field phenomena, particularly the implementation of sustainable tour operator practices in

enhancing competitive advantage at PT Destination Asia, Bali. The descriptive qualitative method, as outlined by Moleong & Surjaman (2014) aims to explore phenomena within their natural context without manipulating variables. Additionally, this study adopts a case study approach, following (Yin, 2009), which is effective for investigating contemporary social or cultural phenomena through research questions that focus on "how" or "why" events occur, especially when the researcher has limited control over dynamic research objects. This methodology enables the researcher to gather diverse and in-depth information, providing a comprehensive understanding of the application of these concepts in real-world settings.

For data collection, the researcher utilized interviews and documentation to obtain necessary information, employing purposive sampling to select relevant informants, including the general manager, tour manager, and tour staff. The instruments used consisted of structured interview guidelines and documentation protocols to guide the data collection process systematically. The data collected pertained to the fundamental concepts of sustainable tourism, which encompass four aspects—management, environment, socio-culture, and economy—as well as the criteria established by Travelife. The data were categorized according to these aspects to assess their implementation at PT Destination Asia, Bali.

Data analysis was conducted through three main stages: first, data reduction to simplify information for easier comprehension; second, data presentation in a clear format to facilitate reader understanding; and third, drawing conclusions by organizing and synthesizing the data to produce clear and accountable findings. Specifically, the analysis focused on identifying which components were implemented and documented in operations, based on information derived from interviews and existing documents.

Results and Discussions
Results

Based on the findings derived from interviews and document analysis employed as data collection instruments, this study elucidates the dimensions of sustainability through the lens of the Travelife criteria. The research outcomes are presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Sustainable Management Aspect

No	Criteria	Implementation	Source of Data
1	Sustainability Management & Legal Compliance	PT Destination Asia publishes an Annual Report that outlines the company's performance, achievements, and financial condition over a specified fiscal year.	Document type: Annual Report https://www.destination-asia.com/downloads/PDF/DA_Sustainability_Report_2024.pdf
2	Social Policy & Human Rights	The company's management demonstrates a strong commitment to employing local community members while upholding non-discriminatory practices regardless of gender, background, or age (with a minimum employment age of 17 years).	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff
3	Customer Communications & Protection,	Information regarding sustainability programs and activities implemented at the business's operational sites is publicly accessible through the official website.	Document type: Digital document (website)

In relation to Sustainability Management and Legal Compliance, PT Destination Asia has demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability by publishing an annual report that provides a comprehensive overview of the company's performance and achievements. This publicly available document serves as a critical source of information for stakeholders, enabling them to assess the extent to which the company adheres to established sustainability standards.

With respect to the criterion of Social Policy and Human Rights, PT Destination Asia's dedication to equitable social policies—such as employing local community members without

discrimination—exemplifies the practical implementation of social sustainability principles as outlined by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). Insights gained through interviews with company representatives reveal that inclusivity and social equity are embedded in the company's operational ethos.

Under the criterion of Customer Communications and Protection, PT Destination Asia also underscores its commitment to transparency by disseminating information on its sustainability initiatives and programs through easily accessible digital platforms. By ensuring that this information is both clear and readily available, the company reinforces its dedication to consumer protection and the continuity of responsible communication with its clientele.

Table 2. Sustainable Social Culture Aspect

No	Criteria	Implementation	Source of Data
1	Excursions	In response to the evolving trends among travelers who increasingly seek tourism experiences that are mindful of their environmental and socio-cultural impact, PT Destination Asia offers a diverse portfolio of tourism products encompassing 11 distinct and authentic themes, allowing customers to select experiences aligned with their values	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff; product offering documents
2	Destinations	The company's collaboration with destinations that are managed in accordance with sustainable principles plays a crucial role in safeguarding biodiversity, preserving ecosystems, and protecting exceptional cultural heritage from the adverse effects of over tourism.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff

In this study, PT Destination Asia has demonstrated the integration of sustainability principles within the sociocultural dimension by offering tourism products that emphasize authenticity and partnerships with sustainably managed destinations. The findings highlight two primary aspects: excursions and destinations.

Firstly, in response to the growing awareness among travelers regarding the environmental and social impacts of tourism, PT Destination Asia provides a curated selection of eleven thematically diverse and authentic travel products. These products include art and culture, wellness, nature and adventure, beach, luxury, local life, culinary, family, classic, offbeat, and responsible travel.This variety enables customers to engage in experiences that are not only enriching and immersive but also aligned with sustainable values. Through such offerings, the company actively contributes to the preservation of local cultures while mitigating the adverse effects of mass tourism. Secondly, in terms of destination management, PT Destination Asia collaborates with sites that adhere to sustainable management practices, with a particular emphasis on the conservation of ecosystems and cultural heritage. This strategic alignment represents a significant step towards ensuring the long-term viability of tourist destinations and reflects the principles of the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), which underscore environmental stewardship and the minimization of tourism's negative impact on biodiversity and cultural assets. Through these collaborative efforts, PT Destination Asia seeks to foster a balanced relationship between tourism development and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, thereby promoting a more responsible and sustainable model of tourism.

Table 3. Sustainable Economy Aspect

No	Criteria	Implementation	Source of Data
1	Partner Agencies	Collaboration with local business partners who embrace the principles of sustainable tourism is a key strategic approach adopted by the company.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff.
2	Tour Leader, Local Reps & Guides	By engaging local guides and community representatives, the company fosters stronger relationships with the host communities and co-creates environmentally and socially responsible travel experiences. This collaborative model serves as a compelling exemplar of how visitors can meaningfully and respectfully engage with both the natural environment and local societies, thereby promoting mutual understanding and sustainable interaction.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff.

Based on the findings of this study, PT Destination Asia has implemented the principles of economic sustainability in its operations through two key elements: partner agencies and local tour leaders, representatives, and guides. These two components significantly contribute to the advancement of sustainable tourism, which extends beyond mere economic gains to encompass social and environmental considerations as well. Firstly, PT Destination Asia engages in strategic partnerships with local business entities that adhere to sustainable tourism principles. These collaborations not only facilitate the delivery of responsible travel services but also support local economic development and the preservation of natural resources. Secondly, the company fosters strong ties with local communities by collaborating with local guides and representatives. This initiative not only helps craft environmentally and socially responsible travel experiences but also serves as a model of how tourists can engage meaningfully with local people and environments. By directly involving the local population, PT Destination Asia ensures the equitable distribution of economic benefits while contributing to the preservation of cultural heritage.

Table 4. Sustainable Environment Aspect

No	Criteria	Implementation	Source of Data
1	Transportation	The utilization of efficient and environmentally friendly modes of transportation serves to mitigate negative impacts such as pollution and congestion in popular tourist destinations, in a manner that aligns with sustainable and responsible travel practices.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff.
2	Accommodation	The company prioritizes partnerships with local business entities that implement sustainable practices—such as minimizing the environmental impact of accommodation operations and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This commitment is further demonstrated by the promotion of sustainability certifications or awards received by these accommodations, which are prominently featured in marketing materials and on the company's official website.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff; Website

3	Environment & Community Relations,	The company actively collaborates with local social organizations to foster a holistic balance between economic growth, environmental conservation, and social empowerment.	Interviews with the General Manager, Tour Manager, and staff

Based on the research conducted on PT Destination Asia, the company demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental sustainability through three critical dimensions: transportation, accommodation, and environment & community relations. Environmental sustainability is a highly pertinent factor in the tourism industry, and PT Destination Asia has undertaken a range of strategic measures to advance this objective.

The company prioritizes the use of efficient and environmentally friendly transportation solutions. This approach aims to reduce pollution and traffic congestion in popular tourist areas, while simultaneously enhancing the cleanliness and comfort of the travel experience for visitors. The adoption of eco-friendly transportation—such as electric vehicles or renewable energy-based transit—not only minimizes the company's carbon footprint but also strengthens its brand image among environmentally conscious consumers.

Furthermore, PT Destination Asia gives precedence to partnering with local businesses that implement sustainable practices, particularly those that reduce the environmental impact of accommodation operations. This includes energy management, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and eco-friendly waste management. Sustainability certifications or awards earned by such accommodations are prominently featured in the company's promotional materials and on its website, thereby encouraging more accommodation providers to adopt environmentally responsible practices.

In terms of community and environmental relations, the company collaborates with local social organizations to establish a balanced integration of economic growth, environmental preservation, and social empowerment. These partnerships not only contribute to environmental conservation but also enhance the quality of life for local communities through a variety of development programs that support long-term sustainability.

Discussions

In the discourse on sustainable tourism, four principal dimensions merit thorough consideration: managerial, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. These facets are integrally interconnected within the broader framework of ensuring tourism generates equitable benefits for all stakeholders, including local communities, tourists, and the natural environment. The implementation of managerial, socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects at PT Destination Asia, when mapped with the indicators for each aspect, has been fulfilled by the company, as shown in Figure 2 below. This reflects that the company has recognized the importance of sustainable tourism practices, both for the continuity of their business and the well-being of local communities and tourism destinations.

The dimension of Sustainable Management within sustainable tourism, as articulated by Bricker & Schultz (2011), underscores the paramount importance of transparency and accountability in the governance of tourism enterprises. The implementation of Sustainability Management & Legal Compliance by PT Destination Asia epitomizes a tangible commitment to the principles of sustainable management. It is manifested through the publication of annual reports delineating the company's performance, achievements, and financial standing. This aligns closely with the GSTC which mandates that every tour operator must establish not only an effective practice but also a transparent managerial system to oversee its operations. The adoption of an open and accountable governance framework enables stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the enterprise's sustainability performance, thereby facilitating the identification of areas in need of improvement and fostering long-term sustainability (Ariya et al., 2021; Bricker & Schultz, 2011).
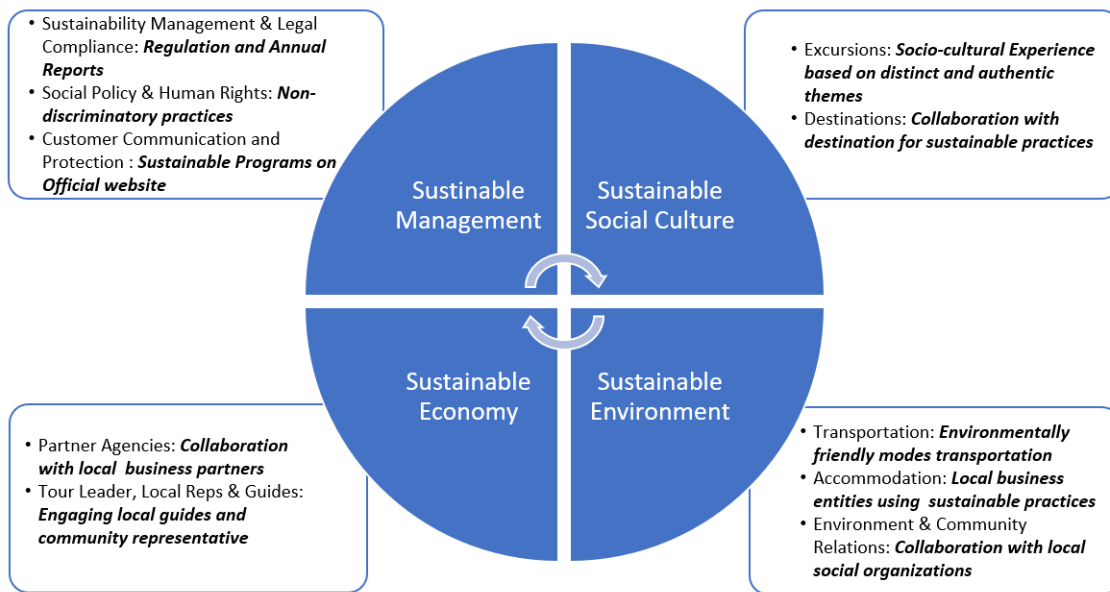
Figure 2. The Implementation of Sustainable Tour Operator in PT Destination Asia

Furthermore, the Sustainable Social Culture component represents an indispensable pillar of sustainable tourism. This extends beyond the preservation of indigenous cultural expressions to encompass the empowerment of local communities, enabling their active participation in destination governance. Within the literature, Zunaidi et al. (2022) accentuate that social sustainability in the tourism sector is profoundly contingent upon equitable community management and the recognition of cultural rights. PT Destination Asia has operationalized this principle commendably by curating tourism products that emphasize cultural authenticity and collaborating with sustainably managed destinations. By offering tourism experiences that both respect and incorporate local cultural heritage, the company contributes to the preservation of social values while concurrently mitigating the adverse impacts of mass tourism. This approach coheres with the sustainable tourism framework advanced by Shekhar (2024), who posits that inclusive destination governance involving local populations and the promotion of inclusive socio-cultural values are foundational to achieving sustainability in tourism. Consequently, the integration of communities into the social sustainability agenda can enhance their quality of life while simultaneously enriching the authenticity and longevity of tourism experiences.

In parallel, the notion of a Sustainable Economy within sustainable tourism seeks to guarantee that the economic benefits derived from tourism activities are equitably distributed among all parties, including local residents and tour operators. The concept of economic sustainability emphasizes the prudent stewardship of natural resources and the equitable distribution of economic gains. According to Khan et al. (2023), a genuinely sustainable tourism sector must engender economic opportunities for local populations without compromising social welfare or ecological integrity. PT Destination Asia has exemplified best practices in this realm through its collaboration with local business partners who prioritize sustainability in tourism and foster robust linkages with local communities. This aligns with the assertions of Fernando et al. (2022), who argue that economic sustainability in tourism is inextricably linked to the efficient management of natural resources and the cultivation of ethical partnerships within the supply chain. In this regard, PT Destination Asia not only supports the local economy but also sustains an equilibrium between environmental stewardship and equitable economic development for surrounding communities.

The final dimension, Sustainable Environment, constitutes a foundational pillar in the sustainable tourism paradigm. Saidmamatov et al. (2020) emphasize the critical importance of environmental stewardship within the tourism sector to mitigate adverse ecological impacts, such as pollution, ecosystem degradation, and elevated greenhouse gas emissions. PT

Destination Asia has demonstrated a robust commitment to environmental sustainability by employing energy-efficient and environmentally conscious modes of transportation, as well as selecting business partners whose accommodation practices align with sustainability principles. This evidences the company's orientation beyond mere economic profitability toward the minimization of tourism-induced environmental degradation. Ullah et al. (2021) reinforce the imperative for tour operators to reduce their ecological footprints through waste management, energy conservation, and carbon emission reduction. PT Destination Asia actively pursues these objectives by incorporating renewable energy-based transportation and partnering with sustainability-certified accommodation providers. Thus, the company significantly contributes to the preservation of natural ecosystems and the mitigation of tourism's environmental impact, in accordance with the tenets of green tourism, which advocate for the efficient and environmentally conscious utilization of resources.

PT Destination Asia has successfully operationalized an integrated sustainability framework across its business model. Through the implementation of Sustainable Management practices, the company ensures that all operational processes are conducted with a high degree of transparency and accountability. In the realm of Sustainable Social Culture, the company has effectively engaged local communities in destination governance while safeguarding socio-cultural diversity. With regard to Sustainable Economy, PT Destination Asia bolsters the local economy by partnering with stakeholders who prioritize sustainable tourism and foster equitable benefits for local populations. Lastly, in the domain of Sustainable Environment, the company evidences a strong environmental ethic by prioritizing eco-friendly transportation and accommodation solutions. These four interdependent sustainability pillars not only enhance the operational sustainability of the enterprise but also reinforce its reputation as a tour operator that is ethically accountable to environmental, societal, and economic dimensions. The holistic implementation of sustainability principles by PT Destination Asia serves as a paradigmatic exemplar for other tourism operators in cultivating environmentally, socially, and economically responsible tourism.

The examination of PT Destination Asia's operational adherence to sustainability principles reveals substantial alignment with established frameworks such as Travelife and the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) across managerial transparency, equitable socio-cultural engagement, economic benefit distribution, and environmental stewardship. This congruence is evident in the company's robust reporting, non-discriminatory local employment practices, culturally authentic product offerings, strategic collaborations with sustainable partners, and the prioritization of eco-friendly transport and accommodation. Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of sustainability implementation necessitates a critical reflection on the inherent practical complexities and limitations often unaddressed in such assessments. Significant hurdles include resource constraints, both financial and human, which can impede rigorous verification of partner sustainability claims or the widespread adoption of high-capital eco-friendly technologies. Furthermore, persistent cost pressures within competitive market environments may necessitate operational compromises, thereby creating a discernible gap between aspirational policy standards and their pragmatic execution. The heterogeneous capacities among partner entities, where some stakeholders may lack the requisite resources or expertise to fully embrace sustainable practices, present a continuous challenge to upholding a uniform and elevated standard of sustainability across the entire value chain. Acknowledging these nuanced practicalities is crucial for a balanced and realistic portrayal of the sustainability landscape in the tourism sector, underscoring the continuous and multifaceted efforts required to bridge the divide between theoretical frameworks and real-world applications.

Conclusions

This study provides a comprehensive overview of the implementation of sustainability principles within the tourism industry, focusing on PT Destination Asia as a case study. The findings indicate that the company has successfully integrated sustainability principles across all operational dimensions, including Sustainable Management, Sustainable Social Culture, Sustainable Economy, and Sustainable Environment as pointed out by several scholars such as Kadi et al. (2015), Amerta et al. (2018) and Khan et al. (2021), Zunaidi et al. (2022), Xing (2024),

Ariya et al. (2021), Fernando et al. (2022) and Ariya et al. (2021). The application of these principles aligns with the guidelines established by the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) and Travelife, which emphasize transparent management, local community empowerment, equitable economic management, and environmental protection. In terms of management, PT Destination Asia demonstrates accountability and transparency by publishing annual reports that detail the company's sustainable operations. The social-cultural dimension is reflected in the active involvement of local communities in the planning and management of tourism destinations, respecting local cultures and mitigating the negative impacts of mass tourism. Economically, the company prioritizes local economic empowerment through partnerships with business associates who uphold sustainability principles, thereby ensuring equitable economic benefits. Environmentally, PT Destination Asia is committed to minimizing negative environmental impacts by utilizing environmentally friendly transportation and collaborating with accommodations that prioritize sustainability.

Theoretically, this research reinforces the existing literature on sustainability in the tourism industry as argued by Kadi et al. (2015), Amerta et al. (2018), and Khan et al. (2021), particularly regarding the implementation of Sustainable Tourism principles developed by GSTC (2016) and Travelife (2022). The findings also offer insights into the importance of transparency, inclusive management, and collaboration with local communities as key elements in fostering sustainable tourism. Moreover, this study expands the understanding of the interrelationship between social, economic, and environmental sustainability within the tourism context, illustrating how these three dimensions are interconnected in shaping a responsible and sustainable tourism industry. Practically, the results of this study provide guidance for tour operators to integrate sustainability principles into all aspects of their business. Tour operators are encouraged to adopt best practices exemplified by PT Destination Asia, such as transparent management, local community involvement in destination management, and the creation of equitable economic benefits through partnerships with local business partners committed to sustainability. Furthermore, it is important for policymakers in tourist destinations to develop policies that support sustainable tourism, including facilitating cooperation between tour operators and local communities and promoting environmentally friendly destination management. Such policies not only enhance the attractiveness of destinations but also strengthen the image of the region as a socially and environmentally responsible tourism destination.

The limitations of this study lie in its reliance on interviews and documentation, which do not fully capture consumer perceptions of the sustainability practices implemented by PT Destination Asia. Therefore, further research employing quantitative approach is necessary to measure the depth of sustainability implementation and to develop more precise standards for assessing the success of sustainability programs within the tourism industry. Furthermore, another limitation of this study is its singular focus on internal perspectives, overlooking crucial external viewpoints from stakeholders such as customers, business partners, and local communities, whose voices would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the actual outcomes and perceived value of the sustainability initiatives, a scope that future research could broaden to enhance relevance and practical applicability.

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Commitment to environmental preservation in The Nglanggeran ancient volcano ecotourism area

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Abstract: This study investigates the commitment to environmental preservation in the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area, located in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. As a community-managed ecotourism destination experiencing rapid visitor growth, Nglanggeran presents a valuable case for examining the implementation of sustainable tourism principles in practice. The research aims to identify the extent to which environmental conservation strategies adopted by local management align with the core tenets of sustainable tourism. Using a qualitative descriptive method, data were collected through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, direct field observations, and analysis of supporting documents. A purposive sampling approach was applied to select 12 participants actively involved in ecotourism and environmental management. Data were analyzed thematically to uncover patterns related to planning, biodiversity protection, waste management, and environmental education. Findings indicate that Nglanggeran's management demonstrates a strong environmental ethic through practices such as ecological zoning, reforestation, collaborative conservation efforts, and the integration of education into tourism experiences. These initiatives reflect a practical application of sustainable tourism at the grassroots level. However, challenges remain in areas such as waste reuse and recycling, which require further community engagement and institutional support. This study contributes theoretically by contextualizing sustainable tourism in a localized, community-driven setting, and offers practical insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders aiming to replicate such models in other destinations.

Keywords: Community-Based Tourism, Conservation Practices, Ecotourism, Environmental Preservation, Sustainable Tourism, Tourism Planning

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Introduction

Tourism is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon that significantly influences economic, social, cultural, and environmental systems worldwide (Gössling & Hall, 2019). Tourism, while contributing significantly to economic development, has increasingly come under scrutiny for its environmental impact. In particular, the tension between tourism expansion and environmental degradation highlights the urgent need for sustainable practices. In response, tourism scholars and practitioners have turned their attention to more responsible models namely, ecotourism and sustainable tourism that aim to harmonize tourism growth with environmental protection and community empowerment (Fennell, 2021; Salazar, 2020). It has the potential to foster environmental conservation while delivering community-based economic benefits. However, the reality is more complex poorly managed ecotourism can degrade the very natural resources it aims to protect (Baloch et al., 2023; Das & Chatterjee, 2015).

Ecotourism, broadly defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people, is grounded in three interrelated principles: conservation, education, and community empowerment (TIES, 2015). While theoretically appealing, empirical studies suggest that ecotourism's promises are not always realized in practice. Several studies have shown that ecotourism initiatives often fall short due to commercialization, limited local participation, and inadequate environmental monitoring

(Salazar, 2020; Tosun, 2021; Stone & Nyaupane, 2018). These contradictions have generated debates about whether ecotourism, in its current practice, truly delivers on its sustainability promises (Fletcher et al., 2019; Fennell, 2021). It points to a broader challenge in aligning ecotourism ideals with on-the-ground realities, especially in developing contexts.

Ecotourism presents a paradox. On the one hand, it is seen as a tool for sustainable development, particularly in rural and ecologically sensitive areas. On the other hand, if implemented without a strong environmental commitment, it risks becoming another vector for environmental degradation. Damage from tourism activities may not be immediately visible, but cumulative impacts over time such as deforestation, water pollution, and loss of biodiversity can be significant and, in some cases, irreversible. Therefore, a proactive and sustained commitment to environmental preservation is essential for long-term ecotourism sustainability.

To address this, the broader framework of sustainable tourism offers an integrative model that emphasizes the long-term viability of tourism destinations through environmental integrity, social equity, and economic feasibility (UNWTO, 2019). Sustainable tourism underscores key principles such as stakeholder participation, environmental monitoring, equitable benefit-sharing, resource conservation, cultural sensitivity, and long-term destination viability (Jamal & Higham, 2021; Dodds & Butler, 2019). Despite its wide acceptance, the concept remains contested. Some argue that it has become a vague policy slogan rather than a rigorous operational model (Butler, 2018; Saarinen, 2021). Others note that efforts to make tourism sustainable often fail to address deeper systemic issues such as tourism's dependence on carbon-intensive travel and global inequities (Gössling, Scott, & Hall, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

In light of these conceptual tensions, community-based ecotourism offers a practical and locally grounded model for sustainability. By embedding tourism development within local governance structures and cultural values, such initiatives have the potential to promote long-term environmental stewardship (Stone & Nyaupane, 2018; Chan, Marzuki, & Mohtar, 2021). In Indonesia, where rural communities are often custodians of biodiversity-rich landscapes, community-managed tourism can play a vital role in aligning environmental protection with economic opportunity (Budiarti, 2020; Nurhidayati, 2021). One such case is the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area in Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Since its grassroots development in 2007, the site has transformed from a degraded landscape into a nationally recognized tourism village, attracting over 150,000 visitors annually. While the destination's popularity suggests successful development, it also raises questions about the extent to which environmental conservation is prioritized amid growing tourism activity.

While ecotourism in Indonesia has been widely studied from the perspectives of development planning, tourist satisfaction, and community participation (Afriasih & Watye, 2023; Baloch et al., 2023; Budiarti, 2020), empirical studies focusing specifically on research focusing on actual conservation commitment and practices at the site level, particularly in community-managed ecotourism destinations remain limited (Butler, 2018; Tsaur, Lin, & Lin, 2006). This study addresses that gap by exploring how the Nglanggeran Ecotourism Management demonstrates its environmental conservation efforts in line with sustainable tourism principles. It specifically aims to identify the extent to which the principles of sustainable tourism are implemented in environmental management practices within the Nglanggeran area. Furthermore, the study analyzes the concrete mechanisms and strategies adopted to ensure environmental protection, and explores the roles played by local stakeholders, including the community and management staff, in maintaining ecological sustainability. By investigating these aspects, the study provides a deeper understanding of how environmental stewardship is operationalized in a real-world, community-driven ecotourism setting.

The significance of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it contributes to ecotourism and sustainability scholarship by offering empirical insights into how grassroots environmental governance is enacted within a tourism context. Practically, it provides lessons for destination managers, policymakers, and development organizations seeking to replicate sustainable, community-led tourism models. By focusing on Nglanggeran, this study illustrates how environmental preservation can be rooted in local knowledge and collective action, offering an alternative to top-down sustainability frameworks. This study is scoped as a single-site case study and does not attempt to generalize findings to all ecotourism contexts in Indonesia. However, it

provides a grounded example of how sustainability practices are negotiated in real-world settings. Limitations related to scale, subjectivity, and site-specific variables are addressed through triangulation of data sources, reflexive analysis, and recognition of contextual factors that shape environmental decision-making.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore and interpret the environmental preservation efforts within the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area. The qualitative method was chosen because it enables a detailed investigation of complex, context-specific phenomena such as community-based conservation practices that cannot be easily quantified. In particular, it allows for a deeper understanding of the values, motivations, and institutional commitments that underpin ecotourism management. This approach is appropriate for addressing the research objective, which seeks to understand how sustainable tourism principles are operationalized at the grassroots level.

A purposive sampling technique was used to identify key informants with direct involvement in environmental management and ecotourism activities. Participants were selected based on their roles in planning, implementing, or overseeing tourism-related environmental programs in Nglanggeran. These included community leaders, local tourism organizers, and government tourism officials. A total of 12 participants were selected, and this sample size was considered adequate based on the principle of data saturation, where no new information emerges from additional interviews (Guest et al., 2006).

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted in person and followed a flexible guide focusing on environmental initiatives, perceptions of sustainability, and stakeholder participation. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent. Observational data were gathered during field visits to key zones of the ecotourism site, such as hiking trails, conservation areas, and community waste management sites. These observations provided contextual understanding and helped validate claims made during interviews. In addition, documents such as local tourism guidelines, management reports, and conservation plans were reviewed to triangulate findings and verify consistency.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, and grouped similar codes into broader themes. These themes were refined through iterative reading and were interpreted in relation to the sustainable tourism framework, particularly the environmental dimension. While coding was conducted manually due to the manageable size of the dataset, the rigor of the process was maintained through systematic comparison and memo writing. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted with several participants, allowing them to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations.

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. All participants gave written informed consent and were assured of confidentiality. While this study focused on a single case, which may limit generalizability, this limitation was addressed through in-depth contextual analysis and triangulation. Potential biases in self-reported data were mitigated by validating interview findings with direct observation and supporting documentation.

Results and Discussions

Results

The beginning of the development of tourism in Nglanggeran was inspired by the awareness of several communities to turn deforested forests and arid mountains green so that they can hold a lot of water that can give rise to springs that can be used for clean water consumption and agricultural irrigation. Since the early 90s residents have been committed to reforesting forests and mountains and also not cutting down trees massively. This awareness

inspired the members of the youth organization to turn the Nglanggeran area into a nature tourism destination that offers the beauty and authenticity of mountain nature in the countryside.

The development of the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area was initiated by the Nglanggeran Village Youth Organization group since 1999. An area of 48 hectares began to be greened with cooperation between the youth organization and the community. After the natural conditions at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano began to show positive results, namely that what was previously arid began to be covered by trees, the Gunungkidul Budpar Office provided support through promotion (FAM Tour) in 2007.

Prior to 2007 there was a vacuum of management activity right after the earthquake on May 26, 2006. After receiving support from the Budpar Gunungkidul Office, tourism activities began to be intensified again with the creation of a BPDW (Tourism Village Management Agency) that involved almost all components of the community. PKK women, farmer groups, village government and youth organizations united and together revived tourism at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano.

From the formation of BPDW, it was agreed that the technical management of the field was handed over to the youth of the youth organization as the management of the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area. The Gunungkidul Budpar Office and the DIY Tourism Office provide training to the managements plus some administrators who also get knowledge from universities, causing the development of tourism in this area to develop with a positive trend.

Decades since the pioneering of tourism activities at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano, the commitment to preserve nature on the basis of reforestation remains a guide for Nglanggeran managements to maintain the sustainability of their area. One of the most frequent activities carried out until now to preserve nature is still the same as in the past, namely planting trees. Usually at the beginning of the rainy season, Management and Nglanggeran villagers plant trees together. This tree planting is not only in areas that are tourism attractions but also on lands owned by the residents themselves. For some residents who own land in the forest, they also do not cut down on a large scale. They themselves have realized to plant one new tree for one tree that was cut down. Actually, selling forest products used to be a means for people to get money quickly, but along with the development of tourism and the concept of Ecotourism offered by the Management, the community was gradually given direction not to cut down trees continuously and fortunately the community itself agreed with the Management so that nature in the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano area is still maintained in its beauty today.

In addition, there is also a positive impact of tourism development in Nglanggeran on environmental management, namely the awareness of the Nglanggeran community to actively participate in maintaining the quality of their environment. This is indicated by their participation in keeping their home environment and farmland green and clean. The residents themselves realize that if their environment is dirty and the trees growing on their lands are cut down en masse, the beautiful natural conditions of the countryside will be damaged and of course can damage the image of rural nature that most tourists are looking for. To be able to maintain the quality of their nature so that tourists still come and enjoy the unspoiled nature of the countryside, residents in Nglanggeran village together with the Management are committed to maintaining the beauty, authenticity and cleanliness of their environment. This commitment will have a huge impact on the sustainability of tourism there, the adverse impact on the environment with tourism is expected to be minimized as much as possible with this collective awareness.

Discussions

This study set out to explore the extent of environmental conservation commitment in the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area, assessing how closely the management's practices align with the principles of sustainable tourism. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews and observations, the findings reveal a multifaceted approach to sustainability that encompasses environmental planning, biodiversity preservation, waste management, and education. The following discussion interprets these findings in relation to the research questions, evaluates them against relevant theoretical frameworks, and compares them with previous studies in the fields of ecotourism and sustainable tourism. In doing so, it identifies both the

strengths and limitations of Nglanggeran's ecotourism model, offering insight into its broader implications for sustainable destination management.

Environmental Planning of the Management

The current planning for preserving the tourism environment in Nglanggeran is based on zoning. This zoning aims to limit which areas can be explored by tourists, so that the monitoring system for environmental quality can be more efficient. In addition, zoning can also be a way to maintain areas that are prone to natural damage so that they can still be sustainable. Zoning at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano consists of areas that are allowed and intended for general tourists to trek from the bottom to the top. There are also zones that are not open to the public and are just left alone and the plan is not to be opened by the public but can be researched if there are parties from outside who want to do research there. There is also a zoning that is prepared to be an educational tourist attraction for students. This zoning will be shaped like a botanical garden. From these zones, the management hopes that environmental sustainability can be maintained because negative impacts on the environment can be minimized.

Habitat/Ecosystem/Wildlife Maintenance and Enhancement

Management' efforts to maintain and improve the quality of habitats or ecosystems is to condition the mountains and forests as they are. In the past, the focus of Management was on forest plants or perennials, but now because there are also animals such as monkeys, birds and so on, Management finally planted fruit trees. The purpose of planting these trees is to provide food for wild animals so that wild animals will not come down the mountain to look for food anymore. It also prevents wild animals from destroying people's crops.

Furthermore, the effort to maintain ecosystems in forests and mountains is to prohibit residents from cutting down trees carelessly in these areas. Even at the beginning of the development of tourism in Nglanggeran, the Management used income from tourists to buy plots of land from residents along with the trees contained therein so that they would not be cut down. The management' goal was to keep the land as forest. Since then, the community has realized not to cultivate areas in the forest and mountain because most of the land at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano is Sultan Ground so that after being managed by Management, the community can no longer carelessly cut down the forest.

In addition, the Management also holds a mountain sweeping program which is held every 2 weeks every Wednesday and Saturday. This program aims to clean up garbage from the summit to the entrance and also check if there is damage or conditions that could endanger habitat or flora and fauna. From mountain sweeping activities, various kinds of data can be obtained. Such as data on the volume of garbage each week, data on damage or vandalism in the Ecotourism area, the existence of protected plants, and others.

Land use that is used to build amenity also does not harm or sacrifice the environment. Like the parking lot, which is now increasingly full, but the management deliberately did not change some agricultural land to be used as parking lots. One of the methods used if the parking lot is full is to move the car or tour bus to the yard or yard of a large resident. The management will rent the land used as a parking lot so that this is also good for leveling the income from tourism activities. From all these types of maintenance, it can be seen that the Management has worked hard to keep the Ancient Volcano area from damage.

Biodiversity Conservation Efforts by Managements

Efforts made by the Management to conserve biodiversity include collaborating with academics and NGOs to conduct research at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano. Some of the research that has been conducted aims to map the diversity of flora and fauna in Nglanggeran. For example, research from UIN Biology mapped rare plants and herbarium efforts while UGM Biology conducted research and mapping on Orchids. During this research and mapping, the Management accompanied the researchers so that the Management could directly receive education from the researchers.

One of the results of the academics' research is the provision of Latin names from the academics to the management. The management then follows up by labeling the rare plants that have been identified. This step is taken so that the plants are not damaged or accidentally cut down.

Efforts to Reduce Waste

So far, the efforts made by the Management in reducing the volume of waste generated from tourism activities at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano are to provide guidance and install warning boards along the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano hiking trail. One of the interviewees said that there was an incident that inspired them to further improve nature conservation and reduce the volume of waste. The incident happened when two foreign tourists from Japan visited Nglanggeran. At that time, the two tourists asked to be accompanied to climb to the top of Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano. On the way up, the two visitors walked slowly while picking up cigarette butts that were scattered along the hiking trail. The Management was embarrassed when foreign tourists went to such lengths to keep the environment of Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano clean from litter. Since the incident, the Management has committed to educating tourists as much as possible not to litter. The efforts of the Management have now paid off because in 2013, the number of trash bags that had to be brought down when sweeping the mountain could be as many as 16 pieces, but now it has decreased a lot to only about 4 pieces.

One of the reasons for the decline in the volume of waste, apart from educating tourists and increasing the number of prohibition boards, is also due to the decline in the number of tourists visiting Nglanggeran. The decrease in the number of tourists visiting Nglanggeran is not good news in terms of income, but of course it is good news for the environmental conditions in Nglanggeran, especially in terms of waste generated. The management itself is also not worried about the reduction in regular tourists. This is because the management no longer targets regular tourists who only come to visit and then go home, but the management focuses on bringing in tourists who take live-in packages. From this package, the income earned by the management and the community will be much more than regular visitors.

Application of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Principles

The 3 R's principle has begun to be implemented by managements as evidenced by efforts to reduce the volume of waste and also the utilization of waste for resale. However, waste reuse and recycling are not yet practiced in Nglanggeran. In addition, the 3 R's principle is also not yet visible among the local population. They still use the traditional management method of burning waste in their yards which is commonly called Jugangan in Javanese. This private landfill usually takes the form of a large hole in the ground in their backyard. If the garbage collected is already quite a lot, they will burn the garbage.

Waste Management Mechanism

Waste management in Nglanggeran is advanced because they have their own waste management site. This site was only built in 2015 but previously all plastic bottle waste from 2013 was collected in one of the residents' yards. And when the site was completed, the plastic bottles were moved to this facility.

For the collection process, first the waste that has been brought down from the top to the bottom is collected at the TPS. Then the waste management officers sort the waste according to its type, namely organic and non-organic. For organic waste, if it can be used, it will be processed into fertilizer while the non-organic type, which mostly consists of used water bottles, is planned to be used as handicrafts but until now this has not been realized due to the constraints of the absence of people who are willing and able to make it as handicrafts. In the future, the Management plans to organize training so that residents can be taught to make handicrafts. Currently, all plastic bottle waste is still sold to collectors.

Materials Used to Build Facilities and Amenities

So far, there has been an effort from the management to build facilities using natural materials. Gazebos and seats around the area are made of used and new wood. The utilization of used wood to become this facility shows that the management already understands the principle of sustainability. Materials that can still be reused are not thrown away or burned but instead creatively utilized into facilities. The gazebo is also built using materials that are all made of wood. Managements build facilities for tourists by prioritizing the principle of sustainability and almost all of them are made from natural materials. Materials that are not environmentally friendly or unnatural are deliberately avoided so that the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano area still looks natural.

Education for Visitors About Environmental Sustainability

Education for visitors is something that managements find quite difficult to do. Various ways are done to foster awareness of environmental love to tourists but until now there are still tourists who ignore it. Although the efforts made by the management to raise awareness of tourists can already be felt, especially in the amount of garbage volume, until the time this research was conducted there were still tourists who deliberately threw garbage in areas that were not visible and sometimes unreachable.

Education that has been given by the management to tourists can be in the form of oral or written appeals. Due to the limitations of the management, oral appeals cannot be delivered one by one to tourists, therefore they put up warning boards in the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano area. These warning boards contain messages for visitors not to litter, damage nature or commit acts of vandalism. If the above prohibitions are not heeded, tourists are obliged to pay a fine as well as restore the damaged infrastructure back to its original state.

By far the most severe incident was the burning of one of the gazebos by tourists. At the time of the incident, local residents saw two young men burning the gazebo near the exit zone of the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano area. The residents immediately secured the perpetrators of the vandalism and handed them over to the management. Firm action was taken by imposing a fine of Rp. 2 million and requiring the perpetrators to replace the Gazebo that they had burned to its original condition.

The same thing is also applied to vandalism perpetrators who scribble on rocks and gazebos. One of the perpetrators who was caught crossing out rocks in the Ancient Volcano area was required to clean the stone until it returned to its original state. These strict actions from the management are expected to provide a deterrent effect for the perpetrators and also a strong warning to other tourists not to carry out activities that can damage infrastructure and nature.

Especially for tourists who take the live-in education package can be delivered directly. Usually before carrying out activities in nature, the management will first provide directions so that nothing untoward happens. This verbal direction will further emphasize for visitors that the management is really serious in trying to create an environment that is free from damage or disturbance. Oral and written directions must be used together so that tourists will increasingly understand and obey the appeal.

Education for staff/workers about environmental aspects.

There are several collaborations between managements and government agencies, academics and private institutions in relation to training and seminars on increasing the capacity of managements in environmental aspects.

Some cooperation is as follows:
1. UGM Forestry Community Forest research team 2006-present.
2. Team PKMM UAD "Green Culture Team" in 2009 on Capacity Building for Tourism Management, PKK and Farmer Groups.
3. UGM Asia-Pacific Research Team with ex-Korean workers.
4. UIN Sunan Kalijaga Research Team majoring in Biology on the identification of Flora and Fauna of Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano in 2009.

5. UPN research team (Geology) on Flora and Fauna Identification of Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano.
6. Cooperation with IOM Yogyakarta in cocoa management capacity building and disaster response 2010-present.
7. Certification of Ecotourism Guiding in Jomblang Cave.

In addition to the trainings mentioned above, the management also relies on the collective awareness of all staff to be a role model for tourists. With their position as responsible for maintaining the area, it would be ironic if they themselves carried out activities that were detrimental to nature. With their position, they will inevitably have the awareness to preserve nature.

Many staff not only rely on tourism activities at Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano as a side job, but as one of their main sources of income. From this fact, they will automatically try to maintain the image of the area with a positive image, such as clean, green, and beautiful so that tourists get a satisfying experience. The two factors above are the driving force for staff to maintain their area so that it remains a tourist destination that does not diminish its environmental quality.

The findings from this study confirm a strong alignment between the environmental management practices in the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area and the principles of sustainable tourism. In relation to the research question whether the area demonstrates a genuine commitment to environmental conservation in accordance with sustainable tourism principles the results offer compelling evidence of such commitment. The use of environmental zoning, reforestation initiatives, biodiversity conservation, and community-based environmental education all point to a deeply rooted environmental ethic within the community and management.

The implementation of zoning systems represents a strategic environmental planning tool that mirrors recommendations from the World Tourism Organization (2004), which advocates for minimizing ecological impact while promoting educational and cultural engagement. In this context, the division of land into general tourism, restricted, and educational zones reflects a deliberate effort to balance environmental integrity with visitor engagement. This approach echoes previous studies emphasizing the importance of spatial planning in ecotourism (Baloch et al., 2023; Das & Chatterjee, 2015).

One of the unique contributions of this study lies in its identification of grassroots environmental stewardship, particularly the long-standing tradition of tree planting and forest preservation initiated by local residents. Unlike many top-down ecotourism initiatives, the Nglanggeran case illustrates a bottom-up commitment that began even before formal tourism structures were established. This local ownership and active participation resonate with the populist and educational dimensions of ecotourism outlined by Afriasih and Watye (2023) and support the Quebec Declaration's emphasis on community involvement and heritage transmission.

An unexpected but enlightening finding was the degree to which foreign tourists influenced local management practices specifically the incident involving Japanese visitors collecting litter, which catalyzed stronger waste education campaigns. This points to a dynamic feedback loop between tourists and hosts, suggesting that environmental awareness is not only top-down or bottom-up, but can be externally triggered and locally internalized. This nuance adds depth to existing literature on visitor impact, often focused on negative environmental footprints rather than positive behavioral contagion.

In contrast to other ecotourism areas where economic pressures have led to environmental compromise (Butler, 2018; Tsaur et al., 2006), Nglanggeran shows a prioritization of sustainability even when faced with decreased tourist numbers. While a drop in visitors might be seen as economically detrimental, the management's pivot toward live-in educational tourism over mass visitation exemplifies adaptive, sustainability-oriented thinking. This aligns with the findings of Chan, Marzuki, and Mohtar (2021), who emphasize that small-scale ecotourism initiatives with active local community participation are more effective in achieving sustainable tourism outcomes than larger, externally driven projects.

However, some contradictions emerge. While the management practices incorporate waste collection and reduction strategies, the principles of reuse and recycling (3Rs) remain

underdeveloped, especially among residents who still rely on traditional waste-burning methods. This gap suggests a partial, rather than full, implementation of sustainable waste practices. It highlights a critical area for future intervention, particularly in community-based waste innovation and education.

Similarly, while the commitment to biodiversity conservation is commendable evidenced by collaborations with academic institutions such efforts appear to rely heavily on external actors. A more internally-driven scientific monitoring system could enhance resilience and ensure continuous biodiversity management, particularly in the face of fluctuating institutional support.

Overall, this study contributes to the tourism and ecotourism literature by offering an in-depth, community-centric case that exemplifies how sustainable tourism principles can be operationalized at a local level. It showcases how grassroots commitment, adaptive management, and education both for locals and visitors can work synergistically to promote environmental sustainability. It also provides a practical reference for ecotourism areas navigating the balance between environmental conservation and tourism growth, while highlighting areas that require continued development to ensure holistic sustainability.

Conclusions

This study set out to assess the extent to which the management of the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area demonstrates a commitment to environmental conservation aligned with the principles of sustainable tourism. The findings confirm that the area has consistently integrated key sustainability practices such as zoning for environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, community-based waste management, and environmental education for tourists and staff into its operational framework. These practices reflect a strong alignment with sustainable tourism indicators as outlined by the World Tourism Organization (2004).

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that emphasizes the importance of community-driven ecotourism. Unlike many ecotourism models which rely heavily on external regulation or top-down interventions, Nglanggeran represents a successful grassroots initiative where environmental stewardship emerges from collective community consciousness. This aligns with and extends the frameworks proposed by Das and Chatterjee (2015) and Afriasih and Watye (2023), offering a grounded example of how local values and socio-environmental awareness can drive long-term sustainability.

From a practical standpoint, this case provides valuable lessons for tourism planners, local governments, and ecotourism operators. First, it illustrates that environmental sustainability can coexist with economic development when local communities are empowered and involved in tourism governance. Second, it highlights the potential of targeted educational initiatives and adaptive management to maintain environmental quality even in the face of tourism growth or decline. Tourism stakeholders should consider adopting zoning policies, reforestation programs, and proactive community education as core strategies in ecotourism management.

Future research should explore the long-term ecological outcomes of these practices, particularly how biodiversity and habitat quality change over time in community-managed ecotourism areas. It would also be beneficial to investigate the scalability of Nglanggeran's model in other regions with different socio-political and ecological contexts. In addition, further studies could examine the role of visitor feedback especially from international tourists as a catalyst for improving environmental standards and management behaviors.

In conclusion, the Nglanggeran Ancient Volcano Ecotourism Area serves as a compelling example of how ecotourism, when rooted in strong local commitment and adaptive management, can advance the goals of sustainable tourism. Its success offers both theoretical insight and practical inspiration for future efforts to balance tourism development with environmental preservation in similar contexts across the globe.

Acknowledgment

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The use of film tourism as a marketing strategy for post-pandemic tourism in The UK

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Abstract: Tourism is an important sector that contributes to the country's annual income. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has restricted tourist mobility, has decreased the number of visits to tourist destinations in various countries. Literature on the role of film and its involvement in post-pandemic tourism recovery strategies as a destination marketing tool is still limited. This study aims to analyze the strategy implemented by the United Kingdom in promoting tourist destinations by utilizing the potential of film tourism. This research was conducted using qualitative research methods with thematic analysis of secondary data in the form of policy documents, promotional activities, and case studies in the United Kingdom. The film tourism theory was used as a theoretical framework to understand the role of films in shaping destination branding and influencing visitation motivation. The results of this study indicate that the UK's efforts to promote film tourism destinations are driven by government policies that support film production processes, the availability of websites related to film tourism, and collaboration with various stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. However, film tourism destinations in the UK receive insufficient promotion from film studios and actors, making further collaboration in destination marketing crucial.

Keywords: Film Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Tourism Destination Promotion Strategy, Tourism Recovery

Introduction

Tourism is an essential sector for most countries in the world. Tourism involves activities or individual domestic and international trips that contribute to a country's economy. Tourism is one of the sectors that has a significant impact on increasing the country's foreign exchange. Various countries often compete to promote their tourism globally (VisitBritain, 2025). The UK has various tourist destinations that are well-known to foreign tourists. The UK tourism sector can contribute around £106 billion to the country's GDP and successfully support 2.6 million jobs directly or indirectly. In 2019, domestic tourist arrivals provided 19.5 billion GBP, and international tourists provided 24.8 billion GBP to the UK economy (Department for Culture, Media and Sport & Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2021).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and caused a decline in global tourist arrivals. The pandemic has also caused a significant decline in UK tourism revenues. Nine out of 10 tourism-related service sectors experienced the greatest economic losses during 2020. The tour operator sector declined by 87%, the residential accommodation sector fell by 80%, and 83% of employees in the accommodation sector had to take leave. The decline prompted the UK to develop a tourism recovery strategy to restore tourist arrivals and tourism sector revenues. The UK has sought to collaborate with other parties and sectors to promote tourism, one of which is by using popular culture, such as films (Department for Culture, Media and Sport & Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2021).

The high interest of the international community in films set in a country can be used as a driver for international tourist visits. The use of cinema as a medium for promoting tourism or film tourism has become a tourism promotion tool that is often used by film production houses in a country since the 21st century. The strategy of combining film and tourism can attract tourists by providing a unique tourism experience and shaping tourist sentiment by making them directly

connected to films that were previously only watched on the screen (Velasco-Ferreiro et al., 2021). The UK is one of the world's leading film and television destinations. This allows the UK to offer a wide selection of iconic film tourism locations across the UK. According to a survey conducted by VisitBritain in 2023, at least 7 out of 10 leisure tourists have visited a location associated with a film or television series in the UK. Tourists from Turkey, Argentina and China dominate the number of film tourism visitors (VisitBritain, 2024).

Film tourism is a concept that highlights the role of movies in promoting tourist destinations in the country where the movie was produced. As the film industry grows, more people are discovering distractions from real life in the cinematic world and filming locations. These locations allow tourists to immerse themselves directly in a world of imagination (Zimmermann & Reeves, 2009). Generally, the target market for film tourism comprises tourists who select a destination due to their attachment to a movie or series. The size and number of the film tourism target market depend on a movie's success. Travelers with curiosity and a desire to experience what they enjoy about a film represent the ideal target market for film tourism (Zimmermann, 2003).

Tourism through film media is currently widely utilized by various countries involved in the filmmaking process. The Dallas drama series, which has been broadcast in numerous countries, has successfully influenced international audiences to visit the United States. Although the area does not attract much attention from domestic tourists, foreign visitors are keen to explore the location to experience the authentic American culture as depicted in the Dallas drama series (Iwashita, 2008). The high level of interest in film tourism has led to the development of movie set guides, providing insights into the fame of the location and how iconic scenes from the show were filmed, as well as vacation packages that include destinations featuring movie settings within the same country. Currently, the government also encourages the promotion of film tourism, which positively impacts the increase in visits to these film tourism destinations (Tamala & Faber, 2011).

From the perspective of tourist destination managers, films as tourism products involve attracting audiences, intentional promotion, and shaping destination images by leveraging film popularity (Araújo-Vila et al., 2024). Consequently, the process of film tourism can occur through the interaction of various actors, including organizations, individuals, and regulations (Nakayama, 2024). Noelle O'Connor, Sheila Flanagan, and David Gilbert state that film-driven tourism has a significant impact on destination branding, offering great opportunities but also weaknesses if it does not receive sufficient support from stakeholders (O'Connor et al., 2008). Destination management organizations and film commissions should work to ensure that the television series highlights the appealing aspects of the location (Vila et al., 2021). The offerings of film tourism comprise diverse production locations, attractions, and the engagement of stakeholders in regional marketing (Ágnes et al., 2018). Therefore, governments and authorities can support film tourism by providing incentives to directors and filmmaking companies to produce films within the country (Alhadder, 2023). Increasing government support for films that showcase attractive destinations is also essential for developing and managing film tourism destinations (Kusumawardhana & Imanjaya, 2018). Based on the background and literature review, this study will focus on the United Kingdom and the destination marketing strategies implemented to promote tourist destinations and attract tourists, whose numbers had declined due to COVID-19, through the film industry.

Methodology

Data collection in this research will be obtained using secondary data collection techniques that take sources from official websites published by the government and institutions or organizations related to film tourism, related journals, scientific articles, previous research, and reports. The data obtained will be analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques. Qualitative research is research that aims to understand phenomena in depth, focusing on descriptive data in the form of words, narratives, or texts to uncover the meaning behind the phenomena being studied (Miles et al., 2014). Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns of meaning in the interpreted data that explain how film is used as a strategic tool for tourism recovery.

The theory used in this research is the film tourism strategy by (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). According to Hudson & Ritchie (2006), the success factor of the influence of film tourism as a promotional tool for tourist destinations depends on five factors, namely destination marketing activities, destination attributes, film-specific factors, film commission and government efforts, and location (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). Destination marketing activities consist of marketing activities before the movie release and marketing activities after the movie release. The next factor is destination attributes related to scenery, sets, backdrops, icons, awareness, and brand. Elements in this factor have a role in how tourists perceive tourist destinations. After that, there is a specific factor of a movie that can draw the audience's attention to the location of the movie. The efforts of film commissions and governments through cooperation and policies can support the sustainability of film tourism in a country. Finally, the location factor or location feasibility can be seen through the readiness of the supporting aspects of film tourism in the country.

This study will focus on the UK's promotional activities for film tourism between 2020 and 2024. The study period focuses on the impact of COVID-19 on UK tourism, with film tourism becoming one of the strategies for tourism recovery outlined in the UK Tourism Recovery Plan. The selected time frame of 2020–2024 is based on its relevance as a transition period from crisis to recovery. This time frame allows researchers to understand policy dynamics and the increasing role of film in shaping tourists' perceptions of tourist destinations.

Results

Destination Marketing Activities Before Release

Marketing activities before the release of a film may include activities such as appointing a public relations executive or specialist to deal directly with film studios, actively promoting the destination to film studios, offering assistance and tax credits to encourage studio use of the location, actively engaging in location scouting; carefully planning to maximize the impact of post-production exposure; carefully assessing the benefits of the film in terms of its promotional value; negotiating final credits for the destination; negotiating and/or producing the "making of the film"; engaging movie stars to promote the location; providing images for use by the media or tour operators in promotions; ensuring media coverage of the film mentions the location; inviting the press to tour the location; directly sponsoring the film; and planning activities to promote other tourism sectors such as arts, crafts, food, wine, music, and clothing (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

The UK has undertaken several activities as an initial effort to market production locations to film or series productions. The UK, through The British Film Commission (BFC) as the national agency supporting the production of international films and television series in the UK, is working to provide support and assistance to production parties who wish to carry out their production activities within the UK (British Film Commission, 2025). The BFC also plays a role in organizing trips for overseas executives. The primary purpose of these trips is for decision-makers from international film and television companies to get to know and learn about the film and television industry in the UK. Overseas executives will be guided through UK locations and facilities, meet crew members and practitioners in film and television production, and gain information on production-related matters such as tax breaks, funding, and legislation (British Film Commission, 2022).

Furthermore, to overcome the funding problems hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the British government plans to provide tax breaks for independent British film actors. The UK Culture Secretary intends to utilize the tax breaks as a driver of growth, investment, and increased employment in the UK. In response to these plans, Pinewood Studios announced a new Independent Film Centre at one of its renowned studios in Buckinghamshire. The studio will provide support services, including tax breaks and access to workshop space and sound stages (Department for Culture, Media and Sport & Nandy, 2024). The UK also provides the UK Global Screen Fund (UKGSF) program to provide grants to film productions in the UK. The UKGSF offers funding assistance in four areas: global distribution, international business development, international co-production, and Prints and Advertising (P&A) (Chianese, 2022). The UK Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced the launch of a GBP 500 million aid

package as government support for UK film and series productions struggling to get insurance for COVID-19-related costs. The Film and TV Production Restart Scheme is also expected to boost confidence in production houses, as they will be supported even if there are unexpected losses due to COVID-19 (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, HM Treasury & Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2020).

To increase the motivation of production houses to produce shows in the UK, the UK Government provides tax relief for production houses. The Independent Film Tax Credit (IFTC) states that independent production houses with production costs of up to 15 million will be eligible to benefit from tax relief of approximately 53%. In 2007, tax incentives for film production were first introduced. This contributed to the popularity of film production in the UK and encouraged the government to be more motivated in its development. However, the development felt by the large production sector has not been felt by the independent film sector (Department for Culture, Media and Sport & Nandy, 2024).

Destination Marketing Activities After Release

In marketing activities after the release of a film or series, there are several activities that can be carried out, such as inviting the tourist media to a special film release event; placing signs or signs at the location; selling film souvenirs; replicating or preserving film icons/sites/scenes/settings to maintain authenticity; organizing events to continue the appeal of the film beyond the natural audience; developing a unique website for potential tourists; posting links on the website for film tours run by local tour operators; engaging in joint promotional activities with domestic tour operators; offering additional attraction packages to extend tourists' stay; working collectively with public and tourism organizations to promote film locations; promoting hotels and guest houses used in films; engaging in joint promotional activities with film companies; creating electronic links to destinations on film websites; having guided tours and/or film walks; producing maps of films and locations for tourists; creating exhibitions or displaying mementos from films; and drawing continuous media attention to locations in each release window (DVD, etc.) (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

As a form of marketing, after the release of a movie or series, some studios or even production sites sell souvenirs or memorabilia related to the film or series they have released. The production house of the popular movies Harry Potter and Fantastic Beasts, Warner Bros Studio London offers a variety of products, such as collectable items, seasonal items, apparel, and other trinkets, with the theme of Harry Potter and Fantastic Beasts, that movie fans can obtain if they visit and buy studio tickets (Warner Bros Studio Tour London, 2025). Not only Warner Bros Studio London, Bath's Royal Crescent Museum, which is the production area of royal-themed films and series, such as Bridgeton and several film adaptations of Jane Austen novels, but also offers themed souvenirs that can only be obtained when visiting the place (No. 1 Royal Crescent, 2025). In addition to selling merchandise, themed events or festivals can also be an effort to attract tourists to visit the production location. The Jane Austen Festival is one of the regency or period-themed festivals held annually in Bath, England. The festival is based on the popularity of Jane Austen's novels and film adaptations, which have production locations in Bath. At the festival, visitors can dress up in regency-themed costumes and experience the era in which Jane Austen's works are set (Jane Austen Centre Bath, 2025). Merchandise sales and events such as festivals are additional attractions that some destinations in the UK have as a continuous promotional effort. This is because continuous promotional efforts are needed to maintain tourist interest in the destination (Araújo-Vila et al., 2024).

With the high level of popularity of a movie or series, interest in tourist visits to the production locations, that is shown in the film and television series, will also increase. Therefore, there is a need for guiding information for prospective tourists who intend to visit the production locations of their favorite shows. For this reason, Bath, as a city that is the production location of various shows set in the period or regency, such as Bridgerton, seeks to provide a special page as a guide for prospective tourists. On the Visit Bath page, there is some information related to Bridgerton in the city of Bath, such as locations used in the series, accommodation available around the location, tour packages around the production locations accompanied by a tour guide,

and special offers that provide a memorable experience to visitors. The destination also provides several offerings related to the Bridgerton series, such as, afternoon tea, clothing rental, and regency-themed lodging (Visit Bath, 2024). By offering additional activities, tourists will feel closer to their favorite shows and have more reason to extend their stay. Additional activities will also make tourists willing to pay more to experience the unique experiences shown in the movies.

Destination Attributes

Another factor that influences the interest in visiting a movie or series is destination attributes. These include scenery, sets, backdrops, icons, awareness and brand. Elements of this factor have a role in how tourists perceive tourist destinations. Tourist destinations must be able to maintain the attributes of the destination to give the impression and image according to what is shown in a movie, to keep the interest of the audience visiting (Vila et al., 2021).

One of the iconic views and scenery often seen in British films and series is the period and kingdom setting. Therefore, various ancient royal-era buildings are frequently used as production locations for multiple shows. Several locations in England are also often used as production settings for different films or series, such as the iconic locations listed on the VisitBritain period filming locations page. One iconic location that the audience can easily recognize is Ranger's House, London. The audience can identify this location as the location of the Bridgerton family home from the popular series Bridgerton. Belvoir Castle, the production setting for The Crown and The Da Vinci Code. There is also The Royal Crescent, Bath, which is the production setting for various period films and series such as Persuasion, The Duchess, Bridgerton, and several other titles (VisitBritain, 2025).

Film-Specific Factors

The specific film factors that can be considered are the success of the film, recognizable and accessible locations, a clear connection between the area and the story, the number of exposures/length of duration on screen, images that tourists want to find or explore, film locations with emotional attachment, unpolluted environments, and locations with physical icons that the audience can recognize (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006).

The popularity of a film or television series has a significant impact on audience motivation to visit. This popularity also affects how prepared a location is to become a tourist destination, as well as the amount of support provided by stakeholders to that destination. From 2020 to 2024, the UK managed to have various films and series successfully gain international popularity. Some titles that managed to attract global attention were the series Bridgerton, Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story, and Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore. Bridgerton, which released its third season in 2024, became one of the best-selling series and is on Netflix's All-Time Most Popular TV Shows chart. Season one of the series was ranked 4th on Netflix with 113.3 million viewers. In the second season, Bridgerton ranked 10th with 93.8 million viewers. In its latest season, the third season, it ranked 6th with 106 million viewers and reached first place on the Netflix global TV chart just one day after its release (Lammers, 2024). Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story, a prequel to the Bridgerton series, also managed to gain popularity with the number of viewers it received. The series ranked 5th on Netflix's Top 10 Most Popular TV 91 days after its release on Netflix (VanAcker, 2023). Furthermore, the prequel to the popular Harry Potter film, Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore, earned more than 400 million USD at the global box office in June 2022. Although this figure is a decrease from the previous prequel, which earned 695 million USD, it is not disappointing. Streaming Service Vudu reported that the film was the highest-grossing film on the VOD platform (Mendelson, 2022). With the popularity of various films and series, VisitBritain has launched a special page that provides information about the production locations of popular films and series. The page is also equipped with an explanation of each destination found in famous movies and series. The page also provides an explanation of the scenes performed by the actors in the film or series and what activities can be done by tourists in each destination listed (VisitBritain, 2024).

Accessibility is one of the considerations for tourists who want to visit destinations according to popular films and series. The Royal Crescent, which has been the setting for many

popular period-themed movies and series, is one of the most visited destinations by tourists in Bath. The Royal Crescent website provides information on how to see the location using public transportation. The site also includes information on the nearest parking lot, contacts for visitors who need special access, facilities for visitors who bring babies or small children to the Royal Crescent area, and other significant information (No.1 Royal Crescent, 2025). Warner Bros Studio London also provides clear information for prospective tourists on its website. Instructions on access, information on the use of public transportation, directions for tourists using private vehicles, and offers on the availability of shuttle buses that will take tourists from specific meeting points (Warner Bros Studio Tour London, 2025). Some tourists prefer destinations that are accessible by various modes of transportation and destinations that are disability-friendly. A destination's accessibility can increase the motivation to visit, as it can be enjoyed by a wide range of people without barriers.

Film Commissions and Government Efforts

Film commissions and governments can exert efforts through lobbying, providing tax breaks, search services, dedicated websites, and active promotion. Support from authorities is essential for film tourism to ensure that the destination can be developed and managed sustainably and responsibly, which is profitable (Alhadder, 2023).

As a form of support for film tourism, the British government has done various things to support and promote destinations that are the settings for producing various popular films and series from the UK. The UK uses cooperation to build connections and promote the appeal of British film tourism to other countries. The British government has established three types of partnerships in implementing its film tourism marketing strategy: internal partnerships with British tourism authorities, commercial partnerships with British Airways, and trade sector partnerships through the Showcase Britain program.

There is a collaboration between British Airways and VisitBritain, which is also supported by BAFTA-nominated director Charlotte Regan, to launch a digital campaign that will show iconic production locations in the UK. This program will be implemented under the direction of Charlotte Regan, one of the British film directors. This aims to encourage the desire of tourists from the United States to visit and vacation in the UK using British Airways. This program will be showing the UK's diversity, unique characters, and iconic locations with an authentic side (VisitBritain, 2024). VisitBritain also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with British Film Commission (BFC) to encourage film tourism throughout the UK. the MoU is expected to help increase economic growth, motivate domestic investment, and build a positive image of the UK as a tourist destination (VisitBritain, 2023).

As a national tourism agency, VisitBritain has tried to promote film tourism destinations internationally by showing British film tourism to international media through Showcase Britain. VisitBritain invited several international media crews to Birmingham, Bath, and London to explain film and television series-themed tourism by showing iconic locations that are the settings for the production of various shows in the UK. In implementing this, VisitBritain collaborated with Visit West, West Midlands Growth Company, and London & Partners to explore the British film tourism experience by inviting media from various countries such as Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Norway, South Korea, Spain, and Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries. The media were invited to visit popular film and series production locations and this visit became the starting point for the Starring GREAT Britain campaign program, which will be launched in 2025 (VisitBritain, 2024).

Starring GREAT Britain is a campaign program that was formed by utilizing the popularity of films and television series to encourage tourists from various countries to visit the UK for tourism visits. The program starts in January 2025 by highlighting popular films that feature Britain as the central star. The program will also include educational visits related to international trade and media. Top travel trade from key markets visited film locations in England, Scotland, and Wales to explore the products and experiences that will be offered to international markets (VisitBritain, 2025).

Locations

The location factor or location suitability can be seen through several things, such as resources, costs, taxes, labor, and experts. Film producers consider several things, such as the destination's uniqueness, subsidies, and infrastructure, including the resources owned by a destination, before choosing a production location. Therefore, these aspects are also essential to consider in supporting film tourism (Ágnes et al., 2018).

The British Council, the UK's international organization for cultural and educational opportunities, is trying to support film industry players by providing several resources. Through the British Council website, there are several resources such as short film toolkits, UK film catalogs, support organizations, UK shorts portal, British Council film archive, how-to guides, industry insights, and opportunities that can be accessed by filmmakers, festival programmers, actors, and film enthusiasts (British Council Film, 2025).

For further support, the UK government has launched the UK Global Screen Fund to support film sales in the UK, as well as promotion and international distribution. The support also includes creating marketing materials that UK sales agents and global distributors of British films can use. (GOV.UK, 2023). In addition, several funding assistance programs are still available to filmmakers in the UK. On the British Film Institute website, there is a page that explains information related to sources of funding assistance that can be accessed. This assistance is divided into national and regional agencies, development and production funding, UK tax relief, and regional investment funds (BFI, 2020). The UK government provides financial assistance and Film Tax Relief (FTR) as a tax relief incentive for creative industry players. Film Tax Relief will support film production companies by offering tax breaks on costs incurred by the company in a film's pre-production, principal photography, and post-production processes. Film production companies can claim up to 20% of the core production costs of the film (Myriad, 2024).

To increase the number of experts in film industry, the British Film Institute announced that the UK will seek to increase the number and quality of film and television industry players by establishing a program to support education in film and television. The Government will encourage learning about film and moving images and support using film as an educational tool. The BFI welcomes around 10,000 young people each year to participate in academic events across various curricula, including film and media (BFI, 2025).

Discussions

The policies issued by the British government show that the film industry are supported by the government and the policies are one of the key factors in the success of British film tourism. Through policies established for the film industry, the film production process has become easier and more efficient, motivating filmmakers to produce global films in the UK. Compared to the US, the UK has lower production costs, making it a more advantageous location for many filmmakers (Taylor & Rufo, 2025).

The effective promotion of destinations after the release of a film and series has had a significant impact on tourist visits, as seen in the case of the release of the Bridgerton series. According to data from Visa, the number of tourist visits to Bath and North East Somerset saw a decline during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, before experiencing an increase in 2021. According to Visa, this increase in visitor numbers was likely influenced by the release of the Bridgerton series in December 2020. By the first quarter of 2021, Bath and North East Somerset had recovered 8.3 percent of the tourist numbers from the first quarter of 2019 (VISA, 2022).

The popularity of film tourism destinations among tourists has led to the development of tour packages that offer visits to several destinations and activities related to the films and series. The availability of tour packages at film tourism destinations has a positive impact on the income of local communities in the areas surrounding these destinations. Visit Bath reported that the Bridgerton series contributed £1.5 million to Bath's local economy in the first year of the series' release. The hotel industry in Bath experienced an increase in visits from international tourists who visited destinations related to the series. As a result, local communities have the opportunity to develop various businesses related to the Bridgerton series theme (Rowlett, 2021). Following

the release of the second season of Bridgerton in 2022, the series contributed over 5 million GBP to the local economy, derived from domestic and international tourist visits. The series' popularity continues to support the development of the tourism industry in Bath, with an increasing number of tourists visiting historical tourist destinations. This has led to the creation of new tourist activities and packages in Bath (Visit West, 2024). The popularity of the Peaky Blinders series has also contributed to the development of attractions and tour packages in the West Midlands region of England. The high number of tourist visits has led the West Midlands to develop walking tours, street murals, and themed pubs around the region (Godfrey, 2024).

To maintain visitors' interest in visiting, film tourism destinations provide additional attractions or activities that can keep visitors enthusiastic. Collaborating with local tour operators is an effective way to encourage tourist visits, as local tour operators offer exciting experiences that bring tourists closer to films and television series. The experiences and attractions provided at tourist destinations significantly impact tourists' motivation to revisit a destination (Masriah, Ingkadijaya, & Mumin, 2024). For example, festivals and celebrations provide visitors with the opportunity to participate in events similar to those featured in films and television series. This is proven by the Jane Austen Festival from the movies Pride and Prejudice, that held the festival in the city of Bath, which attracted approximately 3,000 tourists in 2023 and 2024 (Jane Austen Center, 2024).

Another effort to maintain interest in film tourism destinations is done by the government through cooperation with foreign parties. Such as, inviting international tourism media to film tourism destinations to maintain international public attention on film tourism destinations. Such attention can be sustained through coverage and discussions in various media outlets. As the result, public interest can be maintained even after the films and TV series have been released for a long time, as seen with the Harry Potter films and Pride and Prejudice, which continue to attract tourists years after their release. News coverage, articles, and social media discourse regarding a film or series featuring locations in the UK significantly boosts the global profile of those locations (VisitBritain, 2024).

To maintain its position as a popular film tourism destination, the UK must ensure that its regions and countries remain a choice for film studies as production locations. The production of global films and series not only contribute to film tourism, but also contribute to national income. By providing various resources, incentives, and adequate production properties, the UK has become a production location for global studios. In 2022, the production of high-end films and television series spent approximately £6.27 billion across the UK. The popularity of the UK as a global production location has encouraged the construction of new studios in various locations across the UK, such as Sunderland, Hull, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Hartlepool (Tait, 2024).

Various efforts made by the UK in relation to film destination marketing have been effective in encouraging tourist visits and boosting the country's revenue. However, most of the UK's efforts are made after the film or series has been released and become popular, meaning that the UK is not maximizing destination marketing before the film or series is released. Although the UK has provided incentives for film studios to produce in the UK, it has not made additional efforts to market destinations within the films and series themselves. Discussions regarding location credits and the involvement of film stars should be considered. Therefore, movie stars and celebrities have an influence on the image of a destination and a person's motivation to visit a movie destination (Sinambela, Shelvina, & Fahlevi, 2024).

Conclusions

Film tourism is one of the tourist destinations with high interest in the UK. Knowing this, the UK utilizes the high tourist interest in film tourism as an attraction to promote UK tourism, which has declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The UK's strategy in promoting film tourism in 2020-2024 can be seen through five destination marketing strategy factors: destination marketing activities consisting of before the release of a film and after the release of a film, destination attributes, film-specific factors, film commission and government efforts, and location.

The results of this study indicate that the financial assistance and availability of resources for film production provided by the UK for the film production process have led various global film studios to choose to carry out their production processes in the UK. This has resulted in a large

number of popular films and television series being produced in the UK and has encouraged the emergence of film tourism destinations in the UK. The popularity of these films and television series is supported by extensive promotional activities from the government, which in turn drives high visitor numbers. Through collaboration with local tour operators to provide activities and annual festivals, visitor numbers can be sustained. Stable visitor numbers contribute to the income of the local tourism sector and have a positive impact in the form of job opportunities and business prospects for the local community around the destination. Moreover, media coverage of popular films and TV series helps maintain the interest of potential tourists in visiting these destinations. However, the British government has not done very well in collaborating with actors and actresses from popular films or series to promote the destination, such as by making behind-the-scenes videos or separate promotional videos to promote the production locations used. This is because actors and actresses have a significant influence on motivating fans to visit.

This research contributes to strengthening the position of film tourism, not only as a tool for promoting destinations, but also as an instrument for crisis recovery. Despite that, this research has limitations in terms of research data, which only uses information available on government websites and several British organizations. In addition, the use of qualitative research methods is insufficient to describe data related to the specific effects of the strategy. Therefore, future research could collect data through interviews or questionnaires with destination operators and visitors, and process the data using quantitative methods to obtain a broader range of information and describe the impact in greater detail.

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A systematic review of safety issues in tourism: Identifying emerging threats and proactive responses

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Abstract: The study conducted a systematic review of seven scientific articles published between 2014 and 2024 to uncover emerging safety concerns in the tourism industry and suggest preventive measures. The identified safety threats in the sector include environmental risks, health issues, crime, terrorism, and digital dangers. Solutions like mobile safety apps and smart devices are being utilized to address these risks. The research aligns tourism safety strategies with Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) and proposes a multi-level intervention framework encompassing individual, organizational, and government actions. The study aims to contribute both theoretically by linking safety strategies with PMT and practically through the development of a comprehensive safety planning approach for sustainable tourism.

Keywords: Prevention, Protection Motivation Theory, Safety threats, Systematic review, Tourism destinations, Tourism safety

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Introduction

Tourism represents one of the most rapidly expanding sectors of the global economy, playing a pivotal role in contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP) of numerous nations (Pedak & Mellander, 2018). As reported by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), in 2019, the tourism industry contributed approximately 10.4% to the global GDP and supported the creation of more than 300 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2023). However, despite this vast economic potential, the growth of tourism is also accompanied by increased risks and threats to tourist safety (Khan et al., 2021). These threats can stem from various factors, including natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, crimes such as theft and fraud, health issues such as the spread of infectious diseases, and transportation risks that can negatively impact the travel experience (Jiang & Ritchie, 2017).

Although many studies have highlighted the importance of safety in tourism, there remains a gap in the literature that comprehensively explores how various types of threats affect tourists (Pickering et al., 2018). Many existing theories and approaches have yet to provide a holistic solution to this issue. For instance, previous studies have primarily focused on specific aspects of tourism safety, such as transportation crises or natural disasters, without considering a broader approach to identifying various types of threats and the preventive measures that can be effectively implemented (Rosselló et al., 2020).

This study aims to address this gap by adopting Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) as a theoretical foundation in analyzing how tourists and stakeholders assess and respond to threats to safety. PMT highlights protective behavior through four main components, namely perceived severity, vulnerability, action effectiveness, and self-efficacy, which together can serve as a basis for developing safety intervention strategies (Wang et al., 2019).

The significance of this research is based on the fact that tourist safety threats not only impact individuals but can also damage the image of tourism destinations and hinder the economic growth of the country. Many global tourist destinations still face serious challenges in

ensuring the safety of tourists (Yin et al., 2024). Furthermore, the anticipated growth of international tourist arrivals reaching 1.8 billion by 2030, as projected by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), underscores the increasing importance of addressing safety-related concerns. (UNWTO, 2019). This study is expected to make a significant contribution to policymakers, tour operators, and tourists in understanding the existing risks and how to address them. Therefore, the results of this research can serve as a foundation for the development of better-integrated tourism safety policies and raise awareness of the importance of safety in the rapidly growing tourism sector.

This research seeks to answer two main questions. First, what types of safety threats are identified in the recent tourism literature? Second, what forms of preventive measures have been proposed, and how do they relate to intervention strategies implemented at various levels, whether individual, organizational or governmental? Understanding these two aspects is important for building a comprehensive approach to improving traveler safety.

Methodology

This research utilizes a systematic review method to identify and analyze safety issues faced by tourists in various tourism destinations. The systematic review method was chosen because it allows researchers to collect, evaluate, and synthesize related studies in a structured and transparent manner, providing a comprehensive overview of safety threats and preventive measures that can be applied (Khizar et al., 2023). This systematic review adhered to the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to maintain methodological rigor and ensure the reliability of the research findings (Page et al., 2021).

The entire review process, including article identification, screening, eligibility checks, and synthesis, was conducted over a period of three months, from September to November 2024. This duration ensures sufficient time for comprehensive evaluation and selection of relevant studies according to pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria.
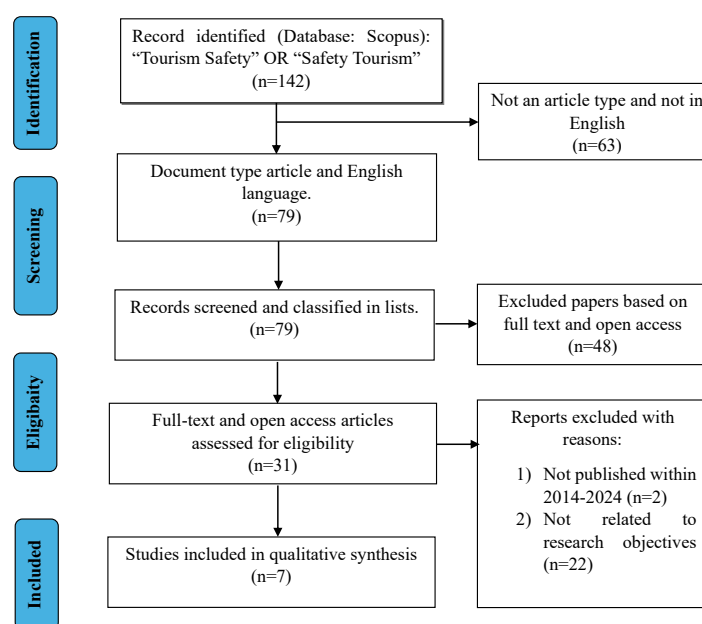
Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart process of article selection (adapted from (Page et al., 2021)

The study screening process was conducted systematically, following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow. In the initial stage, identification was carried out, resulting in 142 articles from the Scopus database using the keywords "Tourism Safety" OR "Safety Tourism." After further screening, only 79 articles met the criteria of being scientific articles in English. In the next filtering stage, 63 articles were eliminated due to not meeting the specified type or language criteria. During the eligibility phase, 31 open-access

articles were reviewed in depth. Of these, 22 articles were excluded for being irrelevant to the research objectives, and 2 others were excluded because they were not published within the period 2014-2024. As a result, 7 articles met the requirements to be included in the qualitative synthesis, as illustrated in

Results and Discussions

The systematic review of the literature identified key findings on traveler safety across different contexts and destinations. Based on PRISMA's thematic analysis of the selected studies, four main categories of safety threats and relevant prevention strategies were identified, as shown in **Table 1.**

Table 1. Intervention Levels for Various Safety Threats in the Tourism Sector

Threat Category	Individual Interventions	Organizational Interventions	Governmental Interventions
Environmental Risks	Use of mobile weather alerts	Climate-adapted infrastructure	Early warning systems, zoning laws
Health Hazards	Wearables for health monitoring	Sanitization protocols, first aid points	Disease surveillance, public health systems
Crime & Terrorism	Personal safety apps	Security staff, CCTV	National security strategies, crisis plans
Digital/Cyber Threats	Data privacy awareness	Encrypted booking platforms	Cyber law enforcement, digital literacy campaigns

An analysis of the seven studies reviewed reveals the frequency of occurrence of each safety threat category:
1. Environmental Risks: appeared in 6 out of 7 studies, reflecting a strong focus on natural hazards such as extreme weather events, floods or earthquakes.
2. Health Risks: addressed in 5 out of 7 studies, mainly related to infectious diseases and health challenges in tropical destinations.
3. Crime & Terrorism: also found in 5 out of 7 studies, indicating concerns over physical and social security in tourist destinations.
4. Digital Threats: mentioned in 4 out of 7 studies, reflecting the increasing attention to personal data security issues and cyber risks in modern tourism.

The tourism industry faces various safety challenges, and recent research highlights the importance of comprehensive strategies to address these issues. From the literature review, three main emerging safety threats in tourism have been identified: environmental risks, health issues, and human-caused incidents such as crime and terrorism. Additionally, the emergence of new threats, such as cybersecurity, underscores the continuously evolving risk landscape in tourism.

Environmental Risks

The threats posed by natural disasters are substantial, particularly in popular tourist destinations that are vulnerable to extreme weather conditions such as storms, floods, and earthquakes. Research, such as the study by Zhong et al (2023) on tourism safety early warning systems, emphasizes the importance of systematic environmental monitoring to predict natural disasters and their impact on tourists. Furthermore, studies indicate that destinations with high environmental risks should develop strategies focused on the real-time collection and dissemination of data, providing accurate and timely information to tourists. In destinations prone to heat-related illnesses, mobile solutions with integrated safety systems are becoming increasingly essential (Dinkoksung et al., 2023).

Health-Related Risks

Health and safety have now become top priorities, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, with increasing concerns among tourists about the risk of disease transmission (WHO, 2020). Destinations in hot and humid climates face risks from diseases such as malaria and dengue fever. The surge in zoonotic diseases, as recorded in studies from China, has drawn attention to health

risks in tourism, with some experts proposing frameworks to monitor and control the spread of diseases among tourists (Rizzolo et al., 2023).

Research on health indicates that technologies such as smartwatches and mobile health-monitoring applications play a significant role in maintaining tourists' health (King & Sarrafzadeh, 2018). These applications provide real-time health data and can connect tourists with nearby medical services during emergencies (El-Sherif & Abouzid, 2022).

Crime and Terrorism

Tourism safety is also threatened by crime and terrorism, particularly in high-profile destinations or major events such as the Summer Olympics. Research Szabolcs et al, (2022) indicates that risks are higher in such settings due to large crowds. The relationship between tourism safety and crime rates has been extensively studied, especially concerning the increased perception of risk and its impact on tourism demand. Countries hosting major international sporting events are highly vulnerable to terrorism threats, necessitating significant investments in both physical and cybersecurity (Mataković & Cunjak Mataković, 2019).

Despite substantial investments in policing and security for these events, research questions whether such expenditures directly correlate with a reduction in crime during the events. Instead, the overall security environment in a country appears to play a more significant role. Studies on sports policing and safety during the Summer Olympics highlight the importance of preparedness and collaboration between local law enforcement and international security agencies.

Cybersecurity and Digital Threats

As more aspects of tourism move online, the risk of cyberattacks has increased significantly (Briguest, 2024). Research highlights the importance of protecting tourists' personal data, as platforms for booking accommodations, flights, and other services have become prime targets for hackers (Florido-Benítez, 2024). The increasing digitalization of the industry, along with the use of mobile applications, makes tourists vulnerable to identity theft and financial fraud (Zeng et al., 2023). Strong cybersecurity measures and public education campaigns on related risks are crucial in creating a safer digital environment.

Theoretical Implication

This research extends the application of Protection Motivation Theory in the context of tourism safety. Travelers assess risk and take protective actions based on perceptions of threats and the effectiveness of available responses. The synthesis shows that interventions at multiple levels are needed to influence tourists' protective motivation and behavior. Perceptions of safety are not only determined by actual risk, but also by the existence of real and trustworthy safety mechanisms.

The implementation of technology, including mobile applications and smart devices capable of providing real-time weather alerts and emergency assistance, has proven effective in reducing risks in high-risk tourist destinations. The importance of secure infrastructure, such as adequate transportation and quick access to emergency healthcare services, is also a key factor in ensuring tourists' safety. Tourists' perceptions of safety greatly influence their decisions to visit or return to a destination, making it essential for tourism destinations to continually enhance their safety image.

Success in ensuring tourist safety relies on technology, infrastructure, and strong collaboration between governments, tourism service providers, and technology developers. Comprehensive and integrated safety policies are crucial to supporting tourism sustainability and maintaining the reputation of tourist destinations as safe places to visit.

Conclusions

This study conducts a systematic review of various safety threats faced by tourists, as well as preventive efforts that can be undertaken to minimize risks. The review found that tourist safety is influenced by several key factors, including environmental risks, health threats, and

human-made threats such as crime and terrorism. Additionally, emerging threats like cyberattacks have become increasingly relevant with the growing digitalization in tourism.

The limitations of this study are limited to the small number of articles (n=7), language limitations (only English articles), and not including primary data. Future research directions should empirically test the proposed framework with a mixed-methods approach, extend the coverage to non-English literature, and conduct primary data collection across different geographical contexts as shown in Figure 1.

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