

STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE BALE TEPAK SAVANNA OF BATUJAI DAM, CENTRAL LOMBOK

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Abstract

This study looks at ways to develop tourism in a sustainable way for the Bale Tepak Savanna, which is close to the Batujai Dam in Central Lombok Regency, Indonesia. The area is well suited for ecotourism because of its special savanna scenery and the community's active involvement. But there are still problems, such as not enough infrastructure, floods that happen at certain times of the year, and a lack of understanding about the environment. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach and SWOT analysis to find the good things and opportunities inside the area, as well as the bad things and threats. It's worth noting that the number of tourists visiting Central Lombok rose from 506,557 in 2022 to over 1.5 million in 2024, showing that interest is growing and there is potential for tourism to develop. The study stresses that the local government, communities, and private businesses need to work together to improve eco friendly infrastructure, help local people gain skills, and make the most of digital promotion. If planned and managed well, Bale Tepak Savanna could become a great example of sustainable ecotourism that combines protecting the environment with providing economic benefits for local communities. However, the study has limitations because it relies on qualitative data, a short period of field observation, and limited access to current tourism policy documents.

Kata kunci:

Pariwisata
Berkelanjutan,
Savana Bale
Tepak,
Pengembangan
Ekowisata,
Analisis SWOT,
Pemberdayaan
Masyarakat.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji cara-cara untuk mengembangkan pariwisata yang berkelanjutan di daerah Savana Bale Tepak, yang berlokasi di dekat Bendungan Batujai, Kabupaten Lombok Tengah, Indonesia. Area ini dianggap memiliki potensi tinggi untuk dijadikan sebagai tujuan ekowisata karena keistimewaan lanskap savana dan partisipasi aktif masyarakat lokal. Namun, terdapat beberapa tantangan yang masih dihadapi, seperti infrastruktur yang kurang memadai, banjir musiman, serta rendahnya tingkat kesadaran lingkungan. Penelitian ini menerapkan metode deskriptif kualitatif dan analisis SWOT guna mengenali kekuatan dan peluang internal, serta kelemahan dan ancaman di wilayah tersebut. Penting untuk dicatat bahwa angka kunjungan wisatawan ke Lombok Tengah menunjukkan kenaikan

signifikan, dari 506.557 pengunjung pada tahun 2022 menjadi lebih dari 1,5 juta pada tahun 2024, yang menandakan adanya peningkatan minat dan potensi pengembangan pariwisata di daerah ini. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya kerjasama antara pemerintah setempat, masyarakat, dan pelaku usaha untuk meningkatkan infrastruktur yang ramah lingkungan, meningkatkan kapasitas sumber daya manusia lokal, dan memanfaatkan platform digital untuk promosi. Jika direncanakan dan dikelola dengan baik, Savana Bale Tepak memiliki potensi untuk menjadi contoh praktik ekowisata berkelanjutan yang dapat menghubungkan pelestarian lingkungan dan peningkatan ekonomi masyarakat setempat. Meskipun demikian, penelitian ini memiliki beberapa keterbatasan, termasuk penggunaan data kualitatif, lamanya observasi lapangan yang terbatas, serta sulitnya akses terhadap dokumen kebijakan pariwisata yang terbaru.

Introduction

Sustainable tourism is a key approach in regional development that integrates environmental, social, and economic aspects in a balanced manner (Nugroho et al., 2023). This approach aims not only to improve the well-being of local communities but also to preserve natural and cultural resources for future generations. The Bale Tepak Savanna holds significant potential to be developed as a nature-based sustainable tourism destination. The uniqueness of its vast savanna landscape makes the area attractive as a model for environmentally friendly tourism development (Zakiah et al., 2023).

However, the significant potential of the area has not been accompanied by optimal management. The lack of supporting tourism infrastructure and the low level of environmental awareness among both the local community and visitors remain major challenges (Sinaga et al., 2024). Tourism development must involve local governments and other relevant stakeholders to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the local context and conditions (Fatin et al., 2024). Therefore, it is necessary to formulate strategies aimed at improving the quality of sustainable tourism management, with a focus on environmental protection and local community empowerment (Wijaya et al., 2019).

The development of tourism in the Bale Tepak savanna continues to face various challenges that hinder the realization of sustainable management (Suryade et al., 2022). Research conducted by (Adriani et al., 2016) indicates that one of the most

significant challenges is the rainy season, as high rainfall can cause the savanna area to become inundated due to its location near the dry shoreline of the dam. As a result, during the rainy season, the increased water level affects tourism activities and leads to a decrease in the local community's economic income (Marzuqi et al., 2016).

Strengthening infrastructure is a fundamental step in developing sustainable tourism (Haque et al., 2020). According to (Sukaris et al., 2023), the development of tourism facilities in the Bale Tepak savanna area should adopt an environmentally friendly approach, such as installing floating docks for water-based activities like boating, allowing local residents to capitalize on business opportunities by renting out boats. Additionally, the provision of separated waste bins is essential to support an efficient waste management system. Furthermore, the use of energy sources that do not pollute water or soil is crucial to ensure that tourism activities do not disrupt environmental balance (Putri et al., 2021).

Local community participation is a key pillar in the development of empowerment-based sustainable tourism (Mudana, 2016). (Asy'ari et al., 2023) state that local residents must be empowered as primary actors in managing the area, including through training programs to become tour guides and artisans of marketable local products. Research by (Andiani et al., 2017) highlights that (Pokdarwis) *kelompok sadar wisata* or village-based community institutions can serve as collaborative platforms to organize, monitor, and develop tourism activities in a participatory manner, as well as provide continuous education on the importance of environmental conservation.

The use of information technology is an essential instrument for strengthening the promotion of sustainable tourism destinations (Jaelani et al., 2021). According to research by (Waruwu et al., 2024), promotional strategies for the Bale Tepak savanna can be optimized through social media by creating digital content that highlights the beauty of the savanna landscape, thereby reaching a wider audience of potential tourists. In addition, ensuring the safety and comfort of visitors must be a top priority (Utami et al., 2023). Collaboration among local tourism actors, regional governments, and digital communities is key to creating an effective and sustainable tourism promotion ecosystem.

The subject of this study is the Bale Tepak Savanna tourism site, located in the Batujai Dam area, Tepak Hamlet, Sesake, Central Lombok Regency, with a focus on strategies to enhance sustainable tourism by analyzing causal factors and implementation. This research employs a qualitative approach; therefore, qualitative analysis is used. Once the data are collected and deemed sufficient, they are processed and analyzed inductively meaning that specific observations and knowledge are used to investigate broader issues and generate conclusions.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to look at how to develop sustainable tourism in the Bale Tepak Savanna area, which is close to the Batujai Dam in Central Lombok. This method was chosen because it can explore the social, environmental, and management issues around the tourist spot in detail.

The research is in the Bale Tepak Savanna tourism area, near the Batujai Dam, in Batujai Village, Praya Barat District, Central Lombok Regency. This place was picked because it has good geographical and ecological features for ecotourism. Information was gathered by watching directly, talking to local people and those involved, and looking at important policy papers and background information.

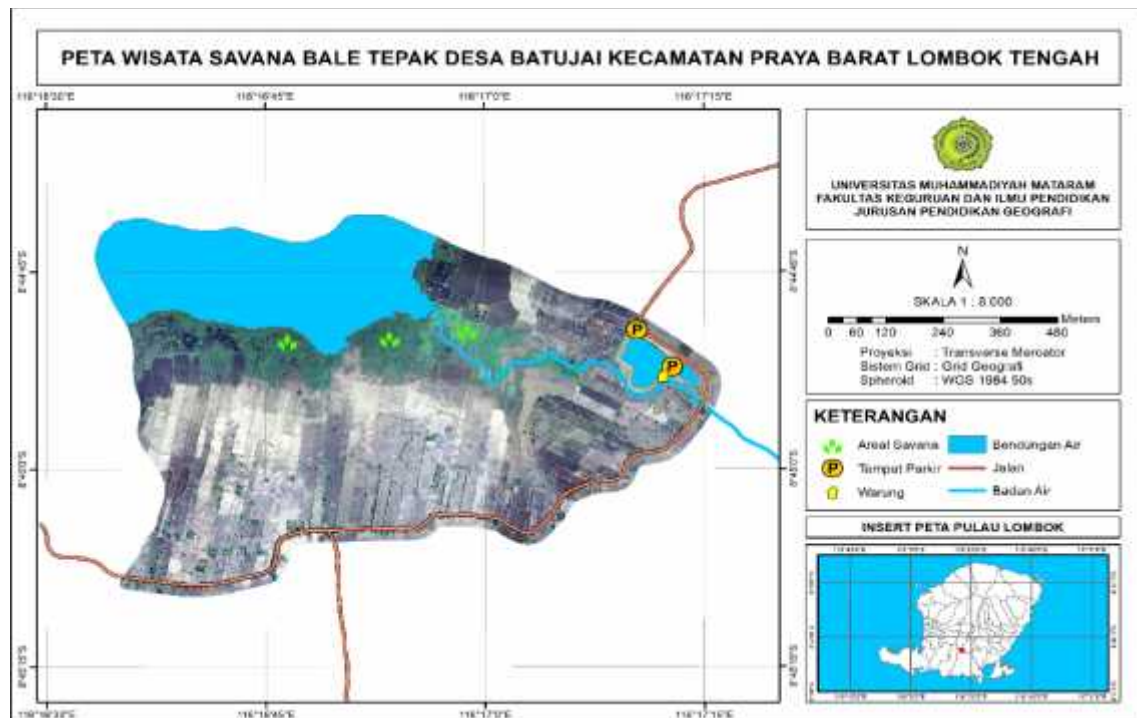


Figure 1. [The Bale Tepak Savanna Tourism Map]

Source: Author documentation (2024)

The information was analyzed using an inductive qualitative approach, which means looking at specific details to make general conclusions. SWOT analysis was used to find the most important things to consider when creating sustainable tourism plans. This analysis is based on trying to make the most of strengths and opportunities while reducing weaknesses and threats.

Findings and Discussion

1. Research result

Year	Number of Tourist Visits					
	West Nusa Tenggara			Visitors to Central Lombok		
	International Tourist	Domestic Tourist	Total	International Tourist	Domestic Tourist	Total
2020	39.982	3.372.698	3.412.680	8.807	377.684	386.491
2021	11.890	3.138.788	3.150.678	1.010	338.299	339.309
2022	126.539	4.091.259	4.091.924	23.535	483.022	506.557
2023	437.945	12.922.404	13.360.349	57.586	1.019.617	1.077.203
2024	883.344	13.769.746	14.653.090	87.973	1.490.740	1.578.713

Table 1. Tourist Visits to West Nusa Tenggara

Source: BPS West Nusa Tenggara Province in Figures 2020-2024, data.ntbprov.go.id

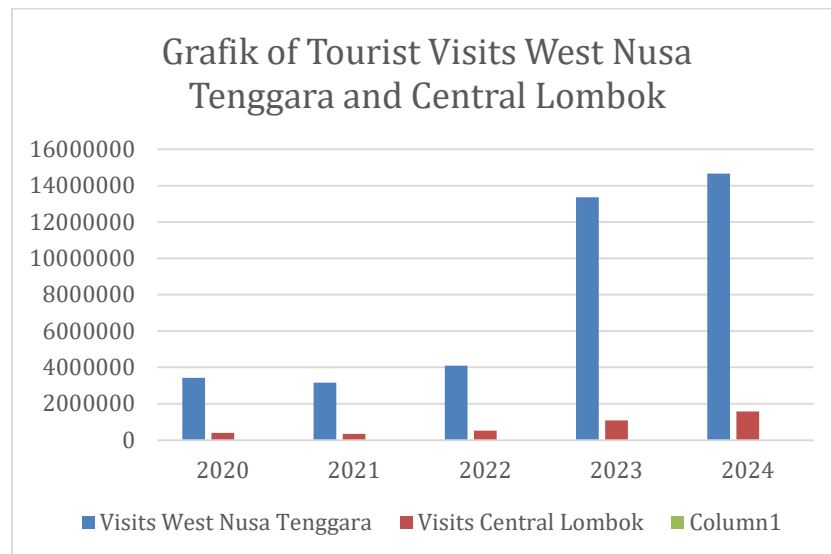


Table 2. Grafik of Tourist Visits



Figure 2. Result of Image Observations in the Bale Tepak Savanna

Data from the Central Statistics Agency (Badan Pusat Statistik) of West Nusa Tenggara Province (2020–2024) shows that more tourists are visiting NTB, especially Central Lombok Regency, after COVID-19. In 2020 and 2021, the number of tourists decreased a lot because people couldn't travel easily and health rules were in place. But from 2022 to 2024, there was a big increase in tourist arrivals (Subarkah et al., 2018). Across the province, total visits went up from 4.2 million in 2022 to 14.6 million in 2024. In Central Lombok Regency, the number of visitors increased from 506,000 in 2022 to over 1.5 million in 2024. This shows that more people are interested in visiting NTB, both from Indonesia and other countries. This increase offers a great chance to develop new places to visit, like the Bale Tepak Savanna, especially if there are good promotions, better infrastructure, and responsible management. Because more tourists are coming, Bale Tepak could become another option to take pressure off popular spots and spread the economic benefits of tourism to rural areas.

2. Discussion

This study aims to create a plan for developing sustainable tourism in the Bale Tepak Savanna, which is near the Batujai Dam in Batujai Village, Praya Barat Subdistrict, Central Lombok Regency. We identified and analyzed key factors by observing the area, interviewing local people and important stakeholders, and studying related documents. We used the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses,

Opportunities, Threats) framework to do this. This method helped us fully understand the area's potential, challenges, and the opportunities and risks that affect how the tourism site is managed in a sustainable way.

The Bale Tepak Savanna has several natural strengths that make it a good place for nature-based tourism. First, it has a unique and large savanna landscape that attracts tourists who want to experience the outdoors. Second, its environment is suitable for ecotourism, which focuses on protecting the environment. Third, its location is good and easy to reach from the city of Praya, which means more visitors can come. Fourth, the local community is excited about tourism development and actively participates in the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) (Zitri, 2022). Fifth, the local communities' strong culture helps develop tourism that is based on culture and local knowledge. Sixth, the area's environment is still in good condition because there are no factories. Seventh, there is a lot of potential for developing educational tourism (edutourism) and agricultural tourism (agrotourism). Eighth, there are local people, especially young people, who can be trained as local guides. Ninth, the beautiful savanna landscape is a great place for taking photos. Tenth, the changing seasons create different beautiful views that can be featured in a yearly tourism calendar.

However, there are some problems holding back the area's growth. One big problem is that there aren't enough basic things like restrooms, rest areas, lighting, and trash pickup. Also, the roads to get there aren't great, especially when it rains. People who live there and tourists don't know enough about protecting the environment, so there's a lot of trash. It's hard to find information for tourists, and there aren't enough signs. There's no system for tickets or entrance fees. You can't find good tourism services like guides or boat rentals. They don't do much to advertise or create a brand for the area. Local people haven't had enough training in how to manage tourism (Rini et al., 2022). (Salindri et al., 2022) say that they're still working on making local products that would make the area stand out. Also, tourism depends a lot on the weather, so things get interrupted when it rains.

On the other hand, the area has a lot of potential. Right now, nature-based and ecotourism are popular around the world, which fits Bale Tepak well. The local government is also trying to help villages develop their tourism. Using things like

social media can really help advertise the area (Smart et al., 2025). The site could be a good place for schools to do fieldwork. Working with businesses could help improve the facilities and hold events there (Djabbari et al., 2021). Numbers show that more and more domestic tourists are visiting NTB each year. Bale Tepak could be a place to hold cultural and environmental festivals. Companies nearby could use their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds to help build things there. The site could also be part of bigger tour packages in Central Lombok. Finally, because NTB hosts international events, there are more chances to promote the area.

However, there are also some dangers to watch out for. The biggest danger is that the environment could get damaged if things are overused or not managed well. Climate change and bad weather could also make it hard to get there and make visitors uncomfortable. Other places in NTB might be more interesting to tourists, which could take away from Bale Tepak. If people don't work together well, there could be conflicting rules. If more people visit without good management, there could be more pollution and trash (Ariyani et al., 2020). (Rosyidin et al., 2024) also said that some tourists damage things and destroy the environment, which is a problem. Not having enough health and safety facilities could also put visitors at risk. If things aren't managed well, overtourism could hurt the area's ecosystem. Also, if the rules at the regional and national levels aren't clear, it could be hard to plan for the long term.

Based on the SWOT analysis, the plan for developing the Bale Tepak Savanna should concentrate on making the most of what the area already offers, upgrading roads and facilities and how they are run, giving more power to people who live there, and using digital technology. To make tourism sustainable, inclusive, and flexible, local government, the community, businesses involved, and online communities must work together to manage it. If this is done, Bale Tepak could become a top ecotourism spot that not only helps the economy but also protects the environment and local traditions.

Conclusion

This study shows that Bale Tepak Savanna has a lot of potential for tourism that doesn't harm the environment, thanks to its savanna scenery, ecological importance, and community involvement. It's important to note that more and more tourists are visiting West Nusa Tenggara and Central Lombok, with numbers going from 506,557

in 2022 to over 1.5 million in 2024, which shows that people are becoming more interested in visiting this area and that there's a good chance to create new nature-based tourist spots.

Because of this, Bale Tepak Savanna can be another place for tourists to visit, which will help offer a wider variety of tourism options in the area and take some of the burden off of tourist spots that are already very crowded. However, there are still major issues, such as not enough infrastructure, a lack of understanding about environmental issues, and disruptions caused by the seasons. To make tourism sustainable, there needs to be careful planning, community involvement, and flexible management approaches that will help make the most of tourism while protecting the environment and culture.

1. To make sure that the Bale Tepak Savanna stays a good place for nature tourism in the long run, local governments, community groups, and private businesses should work together to invest in important tourism things like roads that don't hurt the environment, bathrooms, and trash systems. At the same time, we should help local people learn the skills they need by training them in how to manage tourism, protect the environment, and use online marketing. Also, using technology and social media wisely is important for promoting the area and reaching out to people. These actions need to be backed by rules, cooperation between everyone involved, and keeping a close watch to lower environmental risks and make sure the area benefits economically and socially for many years.

2. There are a few things this study can't do that we should talk about. First, the study mostly used information from interviews, watching what happened, and looking at documents. This kind of information can be affected by the researcher's own opinions, and it might not apply to other situations. We didn't have numbers on what tourists think, how tourism affects the environment, or how tourism helps the local economy. This makes it harder to fully understand how tourism can be measured. Second, we only did fieldwork for a short time. This might mean we missed some important changes that happen during different times of the year in the Bale Tepak Savanna, especially during the rainy season when tourism might be very different. Third, we couldn't get access to all the official tourism policies and the latest information about how the area is planned. This made it harder to get a complete

picture of how tourism is managed. Future studies should use a mix of information-gathering methods and involve more people to make the analysis better and give stronger advice to policymakers.

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