

Dynamics of Tourists' Experiences Visiting Sustainable Tourism Destinations: Issues and Cases in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

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ABSTRACT

Tourist experiences are highly dynamic when visiting sustainable tourism destinations. Their significance is the essence of the tourism product itself. Memorable experiences will make tourists feel happy, subsequently shaping the destination's image and encouraging repeat visits. This research aims to analyze tourist descriptors and typologies, tourist experiences, and formulate directions for the future development of sustainable tourism destination products. This study employs qualitative methods with a multiple case study approach and also hermeneutics in the study of tourism destinations. Findings from this research indicate that tourists visiting consist of various characteristics and are predominantly millennials and zillennials. Their visits are mostly of the allocentric and mid-centric typology, with the latter being very minimal. The experiences gained are very memorable and make tourists feel happy. However, product services need to be improved by managers as tourists still engage in minimal activity attractions. The formulation of supplementary tourism becomes a direction in the future development of spatially-based sustainable tourism destinations. The implications of this research are the development of tourism products that provide memorable experiences and happiness for allocentric tourists to shape the destination's image and also improve the local community's economy.

Keywords: *Experiences Of Tourists, Tourist Typology, Sustainable Tourism Products*

ABSTRAK

Pengalaman wisatawan sangat dinamis ketika mengunjungi destinasi wisata berkelanjutan. Maknanya adalah esensi dari produk wisata itu sendiri. Pengalaman yang berkesan akan membuat wisatawan merasa senang, selanjutnya membentuk citra destinasi dan mendorong kunjungan berulang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis deskriptor dan tipologi wisatawan, pengalaman wisatawan, dan merumuskan arahan untuk pengembangan produk destinasi wisata berkelanjutan di masa mendatang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus ganda dan juga hermeneutika dalam studi destinasi wisata. Temuan dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa wisatawan yang berkunjung terdiri dari berbagai karakteristik dan sebagian besar adalah generasi milenial dan zillennial. Kunjungan mereka sebagian besar bertipologi alokentrisk dan mid-sentris, dengan yang terakhir sangat minim. Pengalaman yang diperoleh sangat berkesan dan membuat wisatawan merasa senang. Namun, layanan produk perlu ditingkatkan oleh pengelola karena wisatawan masih terlibat dalam atraksi aktivitas yang minim. Perumusan wisata suplementer menjadi arahan dalam pengembangan destinasi wisata berkelanjutan berbasis spasial di masa mendatang. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah pengembangan produk pariwisata yang memberikan pengalaman berkesan dan kebahagiaan bagi wisatawan

alokentrik sehingga dapat membentuk citra destinasi wisata dan juga meningkatkan perekonomian masyarakat setempat.

Kata Kunci: Pengalaman Wisatawan, Tipologi Wisatawan, Produk Pariwisata Berkelanjutan

INTRODUCTION

The sustainable tourism paradigm in tourism product development emphasizes the creation of quality experiences for tourists. The direction of tourists' motivation and the meaning of their travel is to seek new things that contain educational elements in their trips. High-quality tourism experiences are the essence of sustainable tourism product development. Natural and cultural attractions are the main pillars in organizing tourism destinations. Social tourism practices show that tourism experiences are based on the emotions and behaviors of tourists towards the readiness of sustainable tourism destinations. Tourists' happiness is the benchmark in achieving authentic and quality travel experiences. Factors influencing tourists' happiness include hedonic, spiritual, social, cultural, psychological, economic, and eudaimonic values (Ariana, 2021). This is due to the authentic and quality experiences tourists have when visiting a tourism destination. Wang et al. (2020) state that these experiences form tourists' memories of visiting the destination. Experiences are seen as logical and affective reactions to tourist attractions that have a strong appeal to influence repeat visits (Suhartanto et al., 2020; Sawu and Ridla, 2024).

The contemporary trend of tourists returning to nature is highly significant and comprises various typologies. These tourists' tendency to visit natural and cultural attractions reflects diverse interests. This aligns with contemporary travel trends where tourists seek sustainability, serenity, and spirituality (Arida and Sunarta, 2017; Muga et al, 2024). According to social records, the high interest of tourists in nature and culture does not show a consistent behavior in engaging in rural tourism activities. Saatsakis (2018) states that tourism is not merely an industry but also an individual experience that influences attitudes, values, and actions such as environmental education, reinforcing behaviors and attitudes that contribute to preserving the natural environment and empowering communities. This creates a spectrum among tourists, resulting in a dichotomy of tourist experiences. This means that the happiness tourists derive from the same destination has different dimensions. Soft-type tourists tend to blend with nature and the local socio-cultural life. Meanwhile, hard-type tourists share the same interests but limit their proximity to nature and local culture. Hosseini and Almeida (2023) mention that destination managers can use tourism experiences as a managerial tool to assess the efficiency of tourism development and implement appropriate practices and strategies to enhance positive behavioral intentions.

The social dynamics of tourism experiences continue to evolve even though the tourism paradigm has shifted from mass tourism to sustainable tourism and finally to regenerative tourism. Understanding tourism experiences needs to be interpreted in the development of tourism destinations so as to direct products based

on existing market segment shares. This social text is also intended to make stakeholders aware of the need to develop quality tourism destination policies. Synchronization of sustainable tourism destination products and the typology of tourists visiting to obtain quality experiences needs to be implemented. Chen et al. (2020) stated that tourism experiences are a complex blend that shapes tourists' emotions and attitudes. Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018) mentioned that experiences encompass offerings of unique, memorable, and personal commodities, goods, and services. Zhang et al. (2018) and Chen et al. (2020) postulate that memorable tourism experiences are crucial in determining loyalty behavior and are also key factors in the competitiveness and sustainability of a destination.

The tourist destinations in Sikka Regency boast a massive diversity of natural and cultural wealth. This wealth includes vast rice fields, arid hills, beaches, maritime attractions, historic buildings, archaeological remains, as well as local customs and culture. These attractions have the potential to draw tourists' interest. However, the current condition of tourism development faces many obstacles. Previous research by Sawu (2024) indicates that among these are the limitations in tourism human resources, lack of connectivity to each destination, and limited budget for developing tourist destinations. These are fundamental issues in tourism development. The flow of visiting tourists is usually temporary due to the lack of attractive tourist activities within destination management. This affects the experience of visiting tourists. The interaction process between the travel needs of tourists and the supply of sustainable tourism products needs to be in harmony. Therefore, the researcher formulates the following research question.

- a. What is the typology of tourists visiting sustainable tourism destinations in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?
- b. How are tourists' experiences with the components of sustainable tourism destinations in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?
- c. What are the future directions for sustainable tourism products in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province?

This research focuses on the dynamics of the experiences of tourists who have visited. The scope of this study includes tourist typology, post-consumption experiences of tourists, and directions for the future development of rural tourism. This is considered crucial for guiding the future development of rural tourism products. A comprehensive understanding of tourist flows and their experiences will help stakeholders in creating future frameworks for rural tourism. Happy experiences of tourists can enhance the growth of tourism destinations in a better direction. Responses to these experiences can also be interpreted as a part of attracting quality tourists. The development of tourism destinations needs to emphasize the trilogy of development directions, namely quality tourists, quality tourism destinations, and quality communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Experience

Tourist experiences are subjective components that shape tourists' emotions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism destinations (Chen et al., 2020). Authentic tourist experiences are a primary consideration in making travel plans (Braun et al., 2006). Gohary et al. (2020) postulate that psychological and social responses to tourist attractions are very strong among tourists. Zhang et al. (2018) mention that tourist experiences and memorable experiences are two interrelated abstractions, but they differ in broader meaning. Providing memorable experiences for tourists is an important indicator for tourism industry practitioners (Wang et al., 2020). The elements that form the need to travel include travel motives and their significance (Staffieri, 2016). The three main elements that shape tourist experiences are the desire to travel, the experience itself, and the evaluation of that experience (Sawu and Ridla, 2024).

Tourist Typologies in Tourism

Tourist experience refers to the level of novelty and strangeness. This depends on individual preferences and the institutional arrangements of the trip. Types of tourists include organized mass tourists, individual mass tourists, explorers, and drifters. The first two and the last are further categorized into institutionalized and non-institutionalized tourists (Cohen, 1972; Mehmetoglu, 2014). Understanding tourists' activities and travel tendencies can provide strong marketing for tourism destinations. Additionally, it offers insight into the basis of authenticity for tourism destinations, which is a primary choice in travel. Tourist typology is a form of customization, and there is a conceptualization of three-dimensional tourist typology such as adventure, interactivity, and level of sensation seeking (Seery & Paris, 2014).

Sustainable Tourism Product

Tourism can be viewed as a series of travel activities and services, along with the implications resulting from interactions among stakeholders (Sawu, 2024). The tourism product can be seen from both the supply and demand perspectives. Theoretically, the tourism product can be described through the attitudes and behaviors of its users in a sustainable manner (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2008). The development of tourism products should be able to provide long-term benefits for local communities and other tourism stakeholders. Tourism products must be capable of meeting the demands of a dynamic market, produced effectively and efficiently, and based on the wise use of resources in tourist destinations (Adikampana et al., 2018). Rural tourism products consist of agritourism, ecotourism, and other nature-based tourism activities (Adikampana, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research with a multiple case study and hermeneutic approach. Research data were collected through triangulation to strengthen the research. The

researcher conducted participant observation to thoroughly understand the movement of tourists at several tourist attractions as part of their travel purposes. In-depth interviews were conducted with tourists and local tourist attraction managers. Additionally, the researcher conducted literature studies, abstracted the findings, and extrapolated between research themes. The aim is to examine the typology of tourists and their experiences to formulate directions for future rural tourism product development. The data analysis used in this research includes content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis is specifically used to address the first and second research problems by examining tourist reviews. Critical discourse analysis is intended to examine the third research problem to see how tourist reviews influence the future development of rural tourism products.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourist descriptor and typologies in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

The trend of sustainable tourism development drives motivation and meaning for travelers to undertake trips. Both millennial and zillennial travelers have a high tendency in the contemporary era to visit rural destinations. The search for sustainable tourism products is significant both before and upon arrival at tourist destinations. The underlying motive is the shift in traveler motivation in this transdisciplinary era towards sustainability, tranquility, and spirituality. The aim is to gain an authentic experience and learn about local socio-cultural values, as well as knowledge transfer in efforts to create sustainability for the tourism destination. Millennial and zillennial travelers play a major role in sustainable tourism practices. Their behavior in engaging in activities at tourism destinations is expected to foster positive interactions with the local tourism ecosystem. The characteristics of millennial and zillennial travelers visiting the sustainable tourism destinations in Sikka Regency can be outlined as follows.

Table 1. Tourist Descriptor in Visiting Sustainable Tourism Destination of Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province

Characteristics of Tourists	Subcategory	Frequency
Age	17-27	52
	28-38	28
	40-45	20
Jobs	Private sector employee	42
	Entrepreneur	28
	Student	27
	Digital nomad	3
Nationality	Europe	17
	America	13

	Australia	14
	Asia	56
Sex	Female	60
	Male	40
Purpose of visit	Holiday	100
Number of visits	First time	90
	Second time	10
Source of information	Media Social/Internet	47
	Travel agent	16
	Online Travel Agent	25
Type of journey	Individual	25
	Groups	75

Empirically, visitors have quite diverse characteristics. This diversity includes both internal factors of the tourists themselves and access to the visited tourism destinations. Tourist visits are not yet very massive because the existing sustainable tourism destinations are still in the growth stage. The predominant motivation for tourist visits is to seek new elements in destinations that have not been visited before. Repeat visits by tourists are still very low. This travel pattern needs to be taken seriously by stakeholders to advance the development of sustainable tourism destinations. The existing travel picture is expected to provide insight into the future development of sustainable tourism products. Interpreting opportunities and threats from the existing conditions is necessary to formulate travel patterns to each attraction more broadly and ensure destinations are prepared to respond to tourist movements in the regional area.

Based on social tourism recordings, the typology of tourists visiting includes both group and individual travelers. Tourists tend to seek out natural attractions as well as socio-cultural experiences. In the context of socio-cultural attractions, tourists visit local creative industries (such as ikat weaving and other crafts). Additionally, tourists are interested in experiencing living cultures within the community, such as local dances, music, and other forms of creativity. Essentially, tourists usually visit UmatUta Tourism Village as a cultural tourism incubator that revitalizes local culture which has previously faded with the passage of time. The 'invented tradition' enjoyed by tourists represents something new yet a revival of bygone culture. This includes local music variants, local dances, and local food, which serve as tourist attractions and as a local cultural identity that can enhance tourists' pride in their local cultural resources and contribute to local economic growth. Millennial and Zillennial tourists are particularly enthusiastic about this. Below is an interview excerpt that the author can include.

"Here, the culture is very beautiful. The locals are very friendly. We were indeed looking for a tourist experience like this. It is part of our travel needs. Extraordinary (Interview with a tourist, 2024)."

Tourists visiting individually seek to discover their new world. They have a high adventurous spirit and engage positively with the local community, wishing to integrate into local life. These tourists are individuals who organize their travels independently. They are strongly motivated by the local culture. This practice continues to this day. However, the flow of these tourists has not been significantly well-segmented. This is because the travel patterns have not been adequately mapped by the organizers. Revitalizing travel patterns is crucial for the sustainable development of tourism destinations in the future, as a response to development and the marketing of cultural tourism products. Tourist visit patterns also exist in small groups currently. The unique and authentic local cultural landscape is a very strong attraction. Interview results with small groups of tourists currently visiting to enjoy local cultural products can be attached as follows.

“We found it here as something new for us that is very delightful in this life. You know, it is a local way of life that is still authentic. We are truly very proud” (Interview with tourists, 2024).

The phenomenon of nature tourism also attracts considerable attention from visitors. Nature tourism characteristics are based on two types: marine and terrestrial. Terrestrial attractions include waterfalls, natural hot springs, hiking, trekking, camping, and birdwatching. Marine attractions include diving, snorkeling, coral reef transplantation, mangrove planting in coastal areas, and seaweed cultivation. Millennial and Gen Z tourists have varied interests. This special interest tourist group is segmented and motivated differently based on spatial factors. Currently, tourist visits are still limited when using spatial mapping for sustainable tourism destinations. However, this practice is evolving as part of the regional tourism life cycle. Understanding tourists' special interests has not been thoroughly examined, so management responses in developing tourism attractions remain ineffective and inefficient in product packaging.

Based on field findings, the group of tourists seeking birdwatching consists of entrepreneurial students who have a hobby for it. These tourists are nature enthusiasts who enjoy bird identification as part of their personal conservation values. This typology of tourists supports environmental conservation through the educational aspect of bird identification, which is widely disseminated to the public. Additionally, there is a certain prestige in their travel experience due to the unique characteristics of each destination and the presence of target bird species. Simultaneously, there is a smaller group engaging in other nature-based activities such as hiking, trekking Mount Egon, and visiting waterfalls and hot springs. The first category consists of special interest tourists focused on mountain climbing. This group is also small in scale and comprises nature lovers with a specific motivation for climbing. The second category includes a small group of tourists inclined to return to nature in a traditional context, meaning their travel patterns include common activities but are still minimal in number.

In the context of marine ecotourism, activities are centered around the Maumere Archipelago. The main motivation for tourists visiting this area is to enjoy the underwater beauty of Maumere. The diverse beauty and uniqueness of the coral reefs, which have recovered since the 1992 earthquake, provide a memorable experience for visitors. Tourists visit both individually and in small groups. Their motives include studying marine ecosystems as part of conservation efforts. One such activity involved coral transplantation with local communities in the archipelago. Tourists also come to engage in marine activities like snorkeling and diving. Other activities include educating local communities, such as planting mangroves to prevent coastal erosion. These regenerative efforts by small groups of tourists aim to restore and preserve the ecosystem's beauty for sustainability and benefit all stakeholders in tourism development. Interview results with tourist groups are provided as follows.

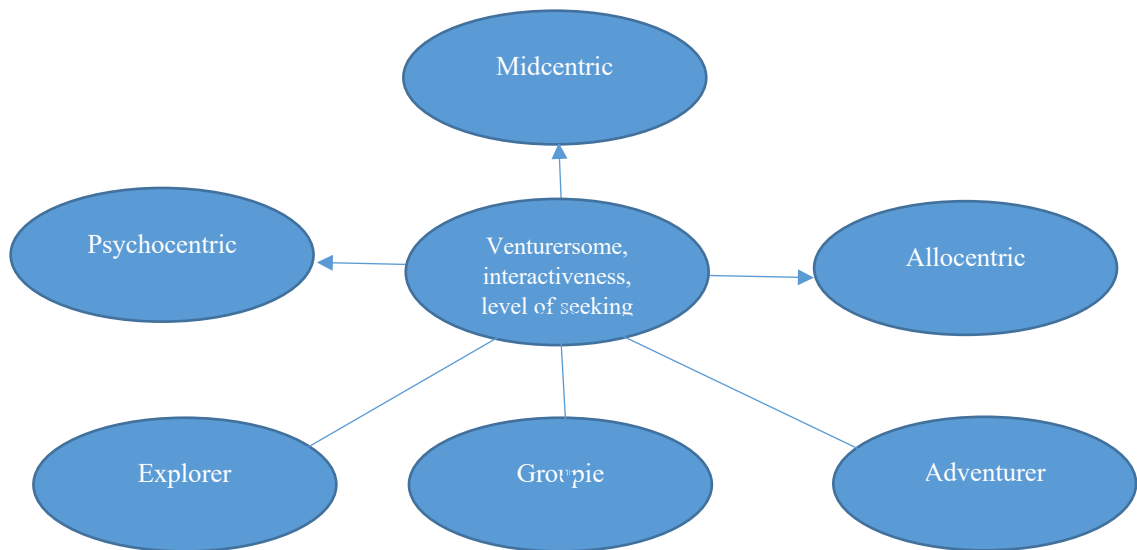
"The marine ecosystem here remains very pristine. The conditions are exceptionally beautiful, especially the coral reefs. There are also many species of very beautiful fish here (interview with a tourist, 2024)."

Tourists greatly appreciate the marine attractions in the Maumere Bay Islands region. However, the coastal beauty is considered problematic due to erosion. The coastal area has been reduced, especially during high tides. Tourist activities in this coastal area offer classic options such as relaxation spots. Given this situation, some small groups of tourists have paid special attention. Mangrove planting has been chosen to prevent coastal erosion. This activity involves local communities and is part of sustainable tourism destination management. Mangrove planting can enhance the natural charm of the local destination for visiting tourists. Attached are the results of interviews with tourist groups.

"This coastal area is crucial. Significant abrasion occurs here. However, its beauty is also extraordinary. Tourism development here should include environmental conservation. Mangrove planting is part of both conservation and tourism development (Interview with tourists, 2024)."

The local community has a great sense of euphoria regarding the visit of tourists to several attractions. Locals mingle with tourists at these destinations, and the interaction between them can create positive changes. These changes benefit both parties, not just one. This paradigm shift is essential for contemporary tourism development. Understanding tourist typologies is key to guiding future rural tourism products. While visiting tourists share similar typologies, their interests differ. The ability of managers to track tourist movements is crucial for fostering growth in new destinations. The author can describe the typologies of tourists visiting the sustainable tourism destinations in Sikka Regency as follows.

Figure 1. Typology Model of Tourists in Sustainable Tourism



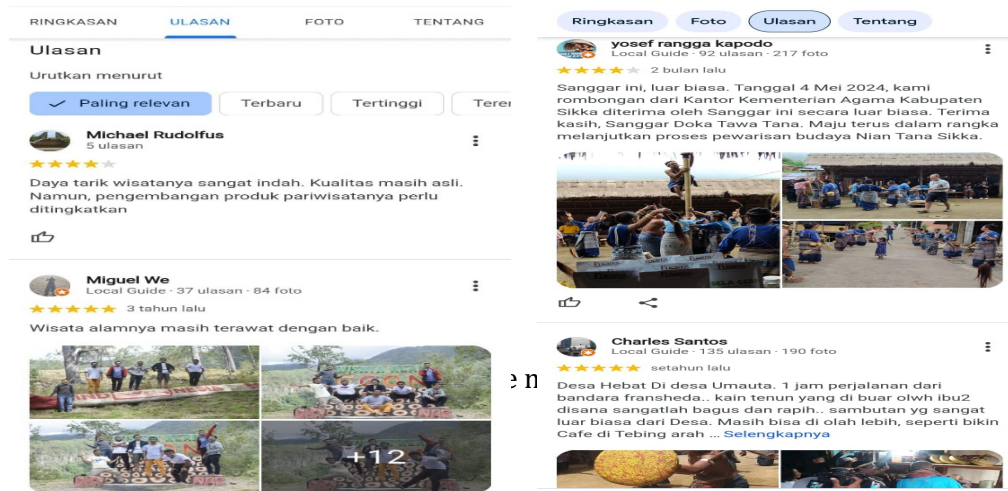
Sources: Research (2024)

Tourist experience towards sustainable tourism products in Sikka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara

Tourist experience is at the core of sustainable tourism products. Memorable experiences are desired by every traveler during their trips. Special interest tourism has become a contemporary choice for travelers seeking unique and beautiful attractions in new destinations. Presenting engaging destination products based on art will create memorable experiences and make tourists happy. Tourist happiness is a key measure of the success of sustainable tourism product development. Factors contributing to tourist happiness include hedonic, spiritual, social, cultural, psychological, economic, and eudaimonic values. Eudaimonic values are closely related to the quality of sustainable tourism services and impact tourist satisfaction, forming the basis of eudaimonia in the tourism experience.

The happiness experienced by tourists during their visit can be assessed through their reviews in various media. These reviews reflect whether tourists felt happy or unhappy after visiting the sustainable tourism destination. Empirically, the special interest attractions do indeed provide happiness to tourists through the experiences they gain. The authenticity of such attractions with local characteristics can have positive social implications for visiting tourists. The author can include tourist reviews from the media as follows.

Figure 2. Tourist Reviews on Digital Media



Based on media reviews, it is evident that most tourists have had memorable experiences. This is due to the uniqueness and natural beauty of the sustainable tourism destination. Additionally, the local people are very friendly, providing an authentic experience that brings joy both during and after the visit. However, some tourists desire improvements in tourism services, as they are not yet optimal. Innovation in tourism products, especially activity attractions, should be encouraged to offer eudaimonic benefits to visitors. The experiences and happiness gained can also shape the image of the sustainable tourism destination. These factors can act as triggers for enhancing the destination's competitiveness and, indirectly, boost the local economy.

Discussion

Directions for the future development of sustainable tourism products

The orientation of tourism product development has become a crucial element in the transition to sustainable tourism development. Tourism products are needed to satisfy tourists who constantly experience changing demands (Adikampana, 2018). Contemporary tourists tend to seek niche tourism products as part of their prestige in travelling. Muga et al. (2024) state that niche tourism products serve as a bridge to address the needs of each destination in responding to this phenomenon. Sawu et al. (2024) mention that mindset, perspective changes, millennial and zillennial behavior, and the creation of a sustainable tourist market through destination preparation and social media campaigns are essential. Destination managers need to adapt to market changes and are required to develop rural tourism as a complement rather than a total replacement. Supplementary tourism is a strategic approach in rural tourism development (Adikampana, 2024).

The direction of regional sustainable tourism development requires more than just a Regional Tourism Development Master Plan. Integrated tourism planning is essential (Sawu, 2024). Spatial models for tourism activities should be prepared to

address changes in tourism social dynamics. Space is associated with territorialization terminology (Vandergeest, 1996), and spatial strategies are crucial (Adikampana, 2021). Tourism products should include agro-tourism and eco-tourism, as rural destinations in Indonesia are closely linked to these development approaches (Adikampana, 2017). Haven and Jones (2012) note that rural tourism is a small-scale business based on agricultural activities and has a significant impact on local economic growth.

CONCLUSION

Millennial and Gen Z tourists visiting exhibit diverse characteristics. Their motivation is to enjoy and learn about the unique natural and socio-cultural aspects of the local community. Although their visits share similar typologies, their interests vary. There is a trend towards visiting cultural attractions, terrestrial natural attractions, and marine environments. While sustainable tourism product preparation is not yet optimal, its unique and massive beauty captures tourists' attention. Reviews from tourists about their experiences at sustainable tourism destinations generally highlight the extraordinary natural and cultural beauty. However, the packaging of activities remains limited, resulting in tourists mainly engaging in sightseeing. While tourists are happy with their visit, they desire improvements in sustainable tourism products. This has been seriously noted by destination managers and policymakers, who are responding to market behavior and demand. The strategic approach of developing supplemental tourism products is expected to enhance regional tourism development, provide memorable experiences, and foster a positive image of the destination, thus boosting economic growth.

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