

THE POTENTIAL OF SAMOSIR ISLAND AS ONE OF THE NATURAL ATTRACTIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF NORTH SUMATRA

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ABSTRACT

Samosir is the only island located in the middle of Lake Toba, one of the largest lakes in the province of North Sumatra. The purpose of this study was to determine the potential of Samosir Island as one of the natural attractions in the province of North Sumatra and know how management strategy that uses SWOT analysis techniques. The data used by the authors in this study a qualitative data. Data was collected by observation, interview and interview. From these data were then analyzed by qualitative descriptive way, the data that is formed into a description that describes a situation or event that are explained. Based on the results of the analysis of the strategic plan management strategies Samosir Island as one of the natural attractions in the province of North Sumatra can be explained as follows: Conducting training in the form of training or training in order to improve the quality of human resources and community knowledge about tourism, tourism promotion Improve both in print media and online media , in cooperation with the travel or travel agency, improve and increase the maintenance of facilities and infrastructure to boost tourist arrivals.

Keywords: Strategy, Management, Tourism, Potential, SWOT

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector in Indonesia plays a crucial role in the sustainability of the national economy. When managed effectively, the development of tourism as an industry can foster economic prosperity by driving growth in key areas such as transportation, accommodation, and communication, while also generating significant employment opportunities. Tourism, as a relatively new industry, has the potential to accelerate economic growth, provide jobs, increase income levels, raise living standards, and stimulate other productive sectors. Due to its complex nature, the tourism sector also supports traditional industries, such as the production of handicrafts and souvenirs, further broadening its economic impact. From an economic perspective, the tourism industry also incorporates accommodations and transportation, positioning them as integral elements of the wider industry.

North Sumatra, a province in Indonesia consisting of 25 regencies, is home to Samosir Regency, with its capital in Pangururan. Samosir is a renowned tourist destination, attracting both international and domestic visitors due to its stunning natural beauty, particularly Lake Toba, and the region's unique traditional Batak cultural sites. The regency's strategic location in the heart of Lake Toba, combined with its diverse natural and cultural attractions, enhances its appeal to tourists. Since being established as a separate administrative entity from Toba Samosir Regency in 2003 under Law No. 36 of 2003, which also established Serdang Bedagai Regency, Samosir has operated independently and developed its own management system for various sectors, with tourism being a key focus area (Samosir Regency Government, 2011). Recognizing the immense potential of the tourism industry, the author sees significant opportunities for the development of this sector within the region.

This study aims to address two central issues: first, identifying the specific natural attractions that make Samosir Regency a potential tourism hub in North Sumatra Province; and second, exploring effective management strategies that can enhance the region's appeal as a natural tourist destination. The research objectives include a comprehensive assessment of Samosir's

tourism potential, while also offering practical recommendations for improving management practices. From an academic standpoint, this research seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge for students and scholars studying regional tourism development. Moreover, the findings are expected to have practical applications for key stakeholders, such as the Department of Tourism, Arts, and Culture of Samosir Regency, by providing insights into how they can optimize the region's tourism potential and support sustainable development initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on management strategies was previously conducted by Slamet Santoso (2008) with a study titled "Management Strategy of Mendut Temple as a Tourist Attraction in Mungkid Subdistrict, Magelang Regency, Central Java." The similarity between this research and previous studies lies in the shared focus on management strategies. However, the difference is in the location and time of the research. The previous study was conducted at Mendut Temple, Mungkid Subdistrict, Magelang Regency, Central Java, while this study takes place in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. Another study titled "Analysis of Development Area Designation in Samosir Regency" by Renhard Gultom (2013) examined the economic base of Samosir Regency, identified the potential areas that could be developed in each subdistrict, determined the subdistricts that could serve as growth centers, assessed the strength of interactions between subdistricts, and identified the number of development areas and growth centers in Samosir Regency. The similarity between this research and the previous one is that both were conducted in Samosir Regency, North Sumatra. However, the difference lies in the focus of the research. This study focuses on tourism management strategies, while the previous one analyzed the designation of development areas in Samosir Regency.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Tourists

According to the World Tourism Organization (as cited in Marpaung, 2002), a tourist is any person residing in a country, regardless of nationality, who visits another location within the same country for more than 24 hours. The purpose of their travel can be classified into several categories, including leisure, holidays, health, education, religion, sports, business, or family visits.

Concept of Tourist Attractions

Based on the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 10 of 2009, a tourist attraction is defined as anything that has uniqueness, convenience, and value, including the diversity of natural resources, culture, and man-made creations that serve as the focus of tourist visits. According to Soewantoro (1997), several key points define a tourist attraction, such as the presence of resources that generate feelings of joy, beauty, comfort, and cleanliness; high accessibility for visitors; unique and rare features; supporting infrastructure and facilities; high attractiveness due to the inherent beauty of the location; and special values tied to arts, traditional ceremonies, or historical significance of past creations.

Concept of Tourism Potential

Tourism potential refers to the various resources available in a specific region that can be developed into tourist attractions (Pendit, 1999).

Concept of Strategy

A strategy is a process of determining value choices and making decisions on the utilization of resources, which leads to a commitment by an organization towards actions that are future-oriented (Marpaung, 2002:1996).

Concept of Management

In a broader sense, management can be defined as the process of administering, formulating policies, and setting organizational goals. It involves overseeing all activities and policies in order to achieve desired objectives (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia III, 2001:470).

Concept of Ecotourism

Ecotourism refers to forms of recreation and tourism that utilize natural resources and ecosystems, either in their original form or as a combination with human creativity (Fandeli, 2001).

METHODS

Research Methodology

Research Scope

To clarify the research problem and avoid misinterpretation, the scope of the research needs to be defined. The tourism potential referred to in this study includes all aspects found in Samosir Island that have the potential to be developed as natural tourist attractions. The management strategies discussed in this research involve all efforts aimed at enhancing, advancing, and improving the tourism potential and facilities to align with desired goals.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques employed in this study include observation, interviews, and document analysis. The researcher was directly involved in the data collection process. The selection of informants began by identifying primary and key informants. The primary informant chosen for this research was Drs. Kamintar Sinaga, Secretary of the Department of Tourism, Arts, and Culture of Samosir Regency. The primary informant then directed the researcher to key informants. The criteria for selecting key informants were: (1) individuals with in-depth knowledge and information about the management and development of Samosir Regency; and (2) individuals with strong connections to the local community. One key informant identified was Mrs. Lastri Beatriks Marpaung, an employee of the Department of Tourism, Arts, and Culture of Samosir Regency.

Data Analysis Techniques

In this research, a strategic planning approach was used. This approach is often used to assess various types of tourism by applying a SWOT matrix. The data analyzed in this research is typically presented in descriptive form, supplemented by tables or other supporting information to reinforce the research conclusions using the strategic planning approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Samosir Regency is rich in tourism potential, showcasing a variety of attractions. Among its highlights are Pusuk Buhit Mountain, the origin of the Batak tribe, and Aek Boras, a spring known as the source of Buru Tatea Bulan. Tourists can also explore Aek Sipitu Dai, a spring with seven distinct flavors, and Batu Sawan, a stone that emits a citrus scent. For breathtaking views, the Tele View Tower offers a panoramic perspective of Lake Toba from the heights of the Tele Mountains. Other notable attractions include Partuko Ginjang in Martahan Village, Janji Martahan, a landing site for paragliding, and the picturesque Sampurna Efrata Waterfall. Unique sites such as Pakki Tree Spring and the hot springs of Aek Rangat, rich in sulfur and located just 3 km from Pangururan, enhance the area's appeal.

uniqueness of Samosir is further highlighted by Sidhoni Lake, a lake situated on an island within Lake Toba, making it distinct for having a lake above a lake, alongside Aek Natonang in Simanindo. Additionally, the area features Aek Liang, a natural spring phenomenon in a cave, and the sacred Si Dam-dam Cave. The Simbolon Hot Springs offer a natural experience with hot springs among the rocky terrain, while Lagundi Sitamiang serves as a camping area equipped with youth cabins. Visitors can enjoy the refreshing waters at Tambun Surlan, marvel

at the natural phenomenon of Hariara na Bolon where banyan trees intertwine, and relax on the pristine Sukkean Free Beach, a white sandy beach frequented by international tourists. Maria Raja Beach, another scenic location with white sand and clear water, provides recreational opportunities. Other attractions include Marhosa Stone in Sigarantung, which is known for its unique breathing phenomenon, Marlakkop Cave in Tanjung Village, and Ambaritta Beach, suitable for swimming and fishing. Aek Natonang, located in Tanjungan Village, is recognized as a lake above a lake and is planned for forest tourism development. Tao Island offers dining and camping experiences at Simanindo Beach, while Tuktuk Siadong has emerged as a central tourist district filled with hotels, restaurants, artists, and carvers.

Tourism Management Strategies in Samosir Regency Based on SWOT Analysis

In managing tourism in Samosir Regency, a SWOT analysis has been conducted to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting the sector. The strengths of Samosir include its stunning natural scenery and cool climate, making it an attractive destination for tourists. The unique location of Samosir within Lake Toba offers great potential for tourism development. The local community, characterized by a strong kinship system (Dalihan Natolu), provides a resilient and productive resource for regional development. Furthermore, the presence of Pusuk Buhit Mountain, a site of significant cultural heritage, enhances the appeal of the region. However, weaknesses such as a lack of public interest in environmental preservation and inadequate hospitality towards foreign tourists pose challenges. The limited availability of skilled human resources in tourism management, insufficient promotion of events, and maintenance issues at tourist sites further hinder progress.

Opportunities for Samosir include leveraging its natural beauty and the unique formation of Lake Toba as a driver for tourism development. The establishment of Silangit Airport as an international gateway in 2012 and the expansion of ferry services for crossings present additional prospects for growth. Nonetheless, threats remain, including inadequate program alignment with tourism development goals, weak community engagement, and insufficient infrastructure to support tourism needs.

To address these challenges, several strategies have been proposed. The SO strategy emphasizes enhancing collaboration with government entities and airlines to promote Samosir as a premier tourist destination, offering affordable travel packages, and preserving local cultural heritage. The WO strategy focuses on improving recreational facilities and supporting community involvement in cultural events. The ST strategy aims to leverage national support to promote Samosir's historical and cultural significance while enhancing security for tourists. Finally, the WT strategy involves developing international-standard public facilities and fostering community engagement in preserving Batak culture. By implementing these strategies, Samosir can strengthen its position as a leading tourism destination.

CONCLUSION

The potential found on Samosir Island is diverse and consists of various destinations categorized into two main types: natural potential that can be developed into natural tourist attractions, including beaches, natural beauty, lakes, and environmental conditions. The tourism management strategy for Samosir has been organized into ST, SO, WT, and WO strategies.

There is a need to provide qualified and sufficient human resources in the tourism sector through education and training focused on tourism awareness. Recruitment of local workers in Samosir should prioritize the local community. Additionally, the role of the local community needs to be enhanced, involving them in every aspect of tourism development in Samosir. Local authorities should develop tourism by creating tour packages and improving public facilities that support tourism. The community should be encouraged to become more aware of tourism and engage in community-based tourism development. The Tourism and Culture Office

of Samosir Regency should strengthen cooperation and establish good relationships with the Tourism and Culture Office of North Sumatra Province and with tourism offices in other areas such as Bali and Lombok.

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