

SWOT ANALYSIS OF ECOTOURISM DESTINATION OF OESINA BEACH: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Muhamad Soimin

Department of Forestry, Faculty of Agriculture, Nusa Cendana University, Kupang-NTT

*Email Korespondensi: Muhammad.soimin01@gmail.com

Abstract

The abstract Natural heritages and cultural values possessed by the East Nusa Tenggara region have the potential to be developed towards the tourism industry based on sustainable tourism principles in the form of ecotourism. A potential ecotourism destination that occurs in the region is Oesina Beach, the 1 km white sandy beach with a huge marine potential. This ecotourism destination is situated in Lifuleo village. This research is an investigative-descriptive study with an approach of SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) combined with IFES (Internal Factor Analysis Strategy) and EFES (External Factor Analysis Strategy). The SWOT analysis reveals: 1) several strengths and opportunities that can be optimized; 2) several weaknesses and threats that can be mitigated by optimization strategies; and 3) several proposed optimization strategies based on S-O (strength to optimize opportunity), W-O (opportunity to minimize weakness), T-S (strength to mitigate threat), and T-W (effort to address threat and weakness). IFES and EFES analysis indicate that the Oesina ecotourism destination is located in Quadrant I, meaning that the ecotourism destination requires promotion through market development penetration, market penetration, and product development. Following this, all related stakeholders of governments, management, and local-dependent communities; need to build a strong collaboration towards a successful implementation of optimization strategies. The result of this study is expected to be used as a reference for related stakeholders to design and implement a robust strategy to develop the ecotourism destination in the form of a scientific-based policy. This, therefore, will promote more benefits as conservation tools as well as enable the dependent community to gain more socioeconomic advantages.

Keywords: *SWOT analysis, ecotourism destination, Oesina beach, development strategy*

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INTRODUCTION

The islands of East Nusa Tenggara region, one of the islands within the Indonesian archipelagos are considered as a highly rich biodiversity hotspot with pristine and natural beauty that attracts many tourists. One of the spots offering natural beauty occurs in the islands of East Nusa Tenggara Province.

Natural heritages and cultural values possessed by the region of East Nusa Tenggara are the potential that is being developed towards the tourism industry based on sustainable tourism principles. This is along with the definition of sustainable tourism that focuses on not only providing socio-economic benefits for communities but also maintaining ecosystem services provided by nature (Khan et al., 2020). Considering this, the definition and the implementation of sustainable tourism is in the form of ecotourism. This practice is considered a part of tourism that offers traveling attractions to embrace the natural pristine beauty. The attractions usually occur within conservation areas and therefore the tourism activity is expected to create benefits and support livelihood for indigenous dependent communities due to eco-and edu-tourism (Gunawan & Ortiz, 2012).

Among numerous tourism destinations with an ecotourism approach that have been officially established by the governments, one of them is the ecotourism destination of Oesina Beach. This ecotourism destination possesses an ambiance and a nuance of pristine environment and aesthetic values with a 1 km white sandy beach. As situated in Lifuleo village facing Semau channel and 30 km from the city of Kupang, this ecotourism destination has become an alternative tourism destination for locals and foreigners. Various tourism activities can be experienced in this place, such as enjoying the pristine beauty of the underwater environment through snorkeling or diving, enjoying fishing around the coast. The coral reefs and seagrass beds as a habitat for marine biota can also be one of the most attractive attractions. This place was officially established as the ecotourism destination in 2015 by BKKPN (Balai Kawasan Konservasi Perairan Nasional) Kupang in collaboration with TNC Savu Sea Project and local NGO of Bengkulu APPEK (BKKN Kupang, 2018). Currently, it is initiated as a marine ecotourism with an approach of community-based ecotourism.

Each established ecotourism destination has a great potential to grow and develop in the future time as well as to face numerous challenges to optimally develop those potentials. Within the context of an environmental perspective, both social and natural aspects, the development of tourism destinations is expected to face challenges from those two aspects (Rojab et al., 2020). Several important points should be considered to develop sustainable tourism, namely community engagement, economic aspects, socio-cultural aspects, and natural environments (GSTC, 2019).

This research, therefore, attempted to solve the following issues, namely the assessment of this ecotourism destination using the SWOT analysis SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat), and the identification of a suitable and robust strategy. Following this, the results of this assessment and development strategy identification can be used to optimally develop the ecotourism destination so that the community can earn benefits and at the same time, nature can be conserved. For related stakeholders, this study can be used as a reference to design and implement a development strategy for the Oesina ecotourism destination in the form of a scientific-based policy.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

An investigative-descriptive approach has been implemented in this study to identify certain phenomena. Following this, the phenomena then are explained descriptively. This study has been conducted in Oesina Beach situated in Lifuleo village, Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province (Figure 1).

A SWOT Analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) combined with IFES (Internal Factor Analysis Strategy) and EFES (External Factor Analysis Strategy) has been used to analyze the data. The data, firstly, is collected through a direct observation of the ecotourism destination. Following this, an interview with related stakeholders (the manager, the visitors, and the dependent community) using an open questionnaire has been done to explore 4 main variables consisting of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of the ecotourism destination.

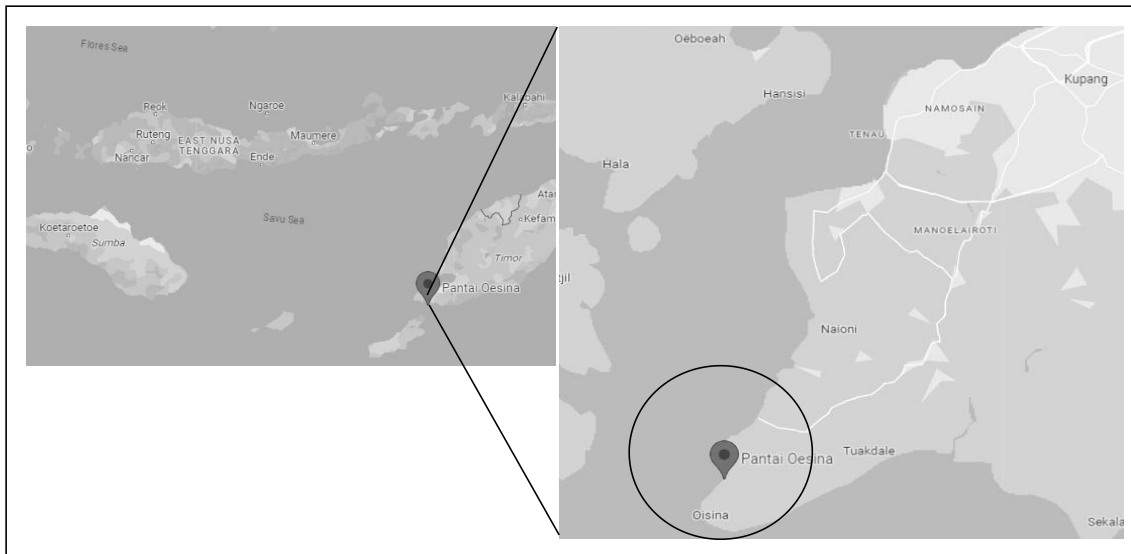


Figure 1. The map reveals the eco-tourism destination of Oesina beach located in Lifuleo village facing Semau Strait and about 30 km from the city center of Kupang.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As a newly established tourism destination, the potentials and challenges lay ahead to be mitigated and addressed toward sustainable ecotourism that benefits nature and the communities. Through a deep interview with related stakeholders, a SWOT analysis was conducted to assess this ecotourism destination to identify its strengths and weaknesses, together with its opportunities and threats that may harm it. After that, the mitigation strategy was proposed to optimize the strength and opportunity and at the same time mitigate the weakness and threat. The SWOT analysis results with possible optimization and mitigation strategies can be seen in Table 1.

a. Strength

The great potential as an ecotourism destination possessed by Oesina Beach was considered by BKKPN Kupang as the main reason to establish this destination as an ecotourism destination. In a wider perspective by looking at the Savu Sea region, the water area of this ecotourism destination is also a part of Savu Sea National Park.

Numerous tourist attractions are identified as the main potential internal factors that may attract tourists to come. The first is the natural environment of this ecotourism destination that offers aesthetic values. A pristine environment, both on land and underwater can make an optimum enjoyment for visitors. The first impression that comes to the visitor's mind is the beauty of a distinctive white and soft sandy beach and breathtaking sunset views. Following this, the underwater beauty of the coral reef ecosystem and the wide and long seagrass beds can be the next choice to enjoy.

Not only offering natural beauty, this ecotourism destination offers more valuable experiences, such as education. This is supported by the presence of an information center building with informative features that were built by the Donor Organization. To enjoy this valuable experience, the visitors only need to purchase an entrance ticket of Rp. 2,000.-. Inside the information center building, there is a skeleton of a whale and therefore this can be a source of educative information for students.

Table 1. A SWOT analysis table with proposed optimization strategy.

SWOT Analysis			
External	Internal	<p>Strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pristine environment with breathtaking sunset views • Underwater beauty of coral reef ecosystem • Distinctive white and soft sandy beach • Wide and long seagrass beds • Information center building with an informative features • Affordable entrance ticket 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of supporting facilities • Lack of professional security • An off-road access from the main street • No available accommodation around the village • Little training for the dependent communities to improve tourism skills and business • No available public transportation from the city or airport to the ecotourism destination of Oesina beach
	Opportunity	<p>S-O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use various special events of East Nusa Tenggara province to introduce the growing and developing ecotourism destination. Coordination with travel agencies and event organizers to arrange the tour • Close cooperation among related stakeholders, governments, communities, and business • Establish new snorkeling and diving operator businesses to accommodate visitors in enjoying underwater experiences 	<p>W-O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urged the governments to build supporting facilities and road for easing the access • Proposing a collaboration with tourism/travel business enterprise to build accommodation or collaboration with hotels • Urged the governments and public transportation business to provide a good and affordable transportation
	Threat	<p>T-S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing coral reef transplantation and restoration • Educating visitors to keep the environment clean • Collaboration between governments, ecotourism management, and local communities to conduct regular maintenance to keep the environment clean 	<p>T-W</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urged the governments to support coral reef transplantation and restoration • Proposing a collaboration among stakeholders, governments, management, and local communities to design a comprehensive strategy to mitigate climate change impacts • Urged the governments and donor organizations to provide waste processing facilities

b. Weakness

With numerous strengths possessed by the ecotourism destination, several important points require improvement. Supporting facilities, such as restaurants or small eating places need to be built. This can not only benefit the visitors but also the community because it can open new job opportunities and may create a new source of income.

To get into the tourist destination, it is easy because it is a close distance from the city center. However, the road from the main street is off-road and this can be stressful for visitors, especially during the dry season. Visitors cannot spend more time around the area because there is no available accommodation around the village. There is also no available public transportation from the city or airport to the ecotourism destination of Oesina Beach. Based on the interview with the manager, there is little training for the dependent communities to improve tourism skills and business.

c. Opportunity

Apart from the internal weakness factors, huge opportunities can be developed to benefit the local community and nature conservation through sustainable tourism. With the growing ecotourism industry, this destination has prospects because it is among the main tourist destinations in Kupang that visitors can easily reach. Because of already established management and high community engagement, this ecotourism can be a top destination. Future funding provided by governments and Donor Organizations, such as the World Bank, could be another positive aspect to consider in developing this destination in many areas, such as building the supporting facilities and conducting a capacity building for the local community. Lastly, promoting conservation of the marine ecosystem will be the ultimate destination because, by conserving the marine ecosystem, it will generate more economic benefits for the local community through underwater attractions.

d. Threat

Along with the emerging climate change phenomena affecting our world, this ecotourism destination also experiences a similar threat. This can be catastrophic for coral reef ecosystems and may create abrasion that can change the environment. The quality of the water area is unpolluted, but the beach requires an improvement in the cleanliness aspect because waste can be found due to irresponsible visitors.

e. Proposed Development Strategy

From the SWOT analysis, we designed four development strategies based on strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat of this ecotourism destination. This proposed strategy can be implemented to optimally develop the ecotourism destination towards economically benefit ecotourism for the community and sustainable nature conservation. These four strategies are designed to address weaknesses and threats coming from internal and external factors, namely S-O (strength to optimize opportunity), W-O (opportunity to minimize weakness), T-S (strength to mitigate threat), and T-W (effort to address threat and weakness).

To optimize strengths and opportunities, the S-O strategy needs to be implemented, namely using various special events of East Nusa Tenggara province to introduce the growing and developing ecotourism destination; coordinating with travel agencies and event organizers to arrange the tour; building a close cooperation among related stakeholders, governments, communities, and business; establishing new snorkeling and diving operator businesses to accommodate visitors in enjoying underwater experiences.

To optimize opportunities and address weaknesses, the W-O strategy needs to be implemented, namely urging the governments to build supporting facilities and roads for easing access; proposing a collaboration with tourism/travel business enterprise to build accommodation or collaboration with hotels; and urging governments and public transportation business to provide good and affordable transportation.

To optimize strengths and mitigate threats, the T-S needs to be implemented, namely implementing coral reef transplantation and restoration to maintain the health and balance condition of reefs; educating visitors to keep the environment clean to ensure cleanliness; and collaborating among stakeholders, such as governments, ecotourism management, and local communities to conduct regular maintenance to keep the environment clean.

Lastly, to mitigate threats and address weaknesses, the T-W strategy needs to be implemented, namely urging the governments to support coral reef transplantation and restoration; proposing a collaboration among stakeholders, governments, management, and local communities to design a comprehensive strategy to mitigate climate change impacts; and urging governments and donor organizations to provide waste processing facilities. Collaborative research with academia from

universities, such as Nusa Cendana University, is also important regarding the conservation of the ecosystem.

f. IFES and EFES Analysis Strategy

This analysis strategy matrix is divided into 4 quadrants. Each of the quadrants provides suggestions on how the strategy should be implemented by ecotourism management. The result of this analysis is presented in Figure 2.

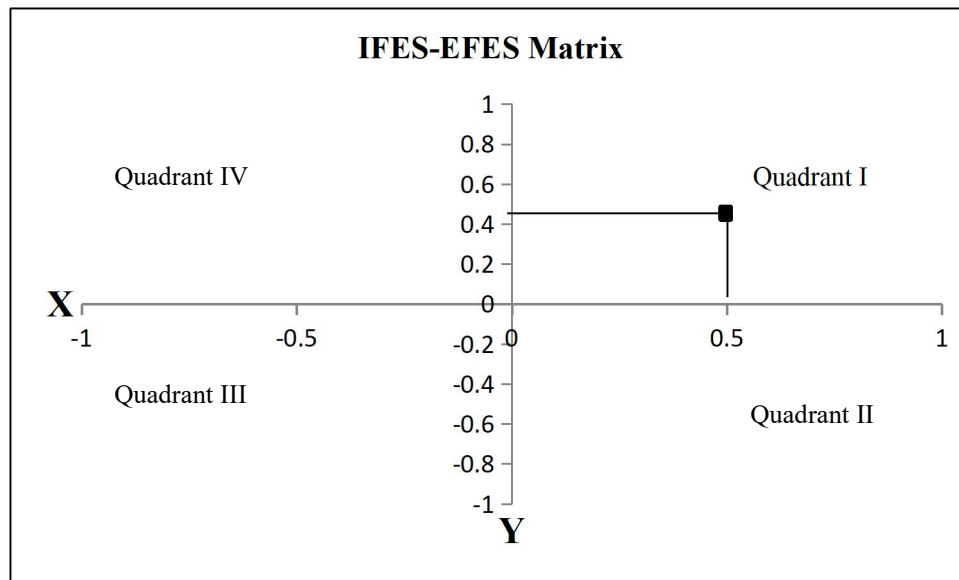


Figure 2. IFES and EFES analysis matrix shows that X.Y in Quadrant I.

Based on the results of the IFES and EFES, it can be seen that the Oesina ecotourism destination is located in Quadrant I. Therefore, several following strategies could be implemented that are related to tourism promotion (Indrawati et al., 2020). This strategy can be incorporated with the development strategy that was designed.

- Market development penetration: attempting to develop markets by looking for new markets by massive promotion through social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and other platforms. This can also be done in collaboration with governments and businesses.
- Market penetration: penetrating the already available markets by optimizing the existing markets, especially to attract local tourists, because not all Kupang people acknowledge this ecotourism destination.
- Product development: the ecotourism management and local community require developing new tourist attractions or products that can be sold to visitors. Apart from snorkeling and diving and Edu-tourism, some other attractions can be created, such as banana boats, jetski sports, or other souvenir products, such as t-shirts, hats, goody bags, tumblers, bracelets, etc.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, the ecotourism destination of Oesin Beach possesses some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis reveals: 1) several strengths and opportunities that can be optimized; 2) several weaknesses and threats that can be mitigated by optimization strategies; and 3) several proposed optimization strategies based on S-O (strength to optimize opportunity), W-O (opportunity to minimize weakness), T-S (strength to mitigate threat), and T-W (effort to address threat and weakness). IFES and EFES analysis indicate that Oesina ecotourism destination is located in Quadrant I, meaning that the ecotourism destination requires promotion through market development penetration, market penetration, and product development. Following this, all related stakeholders of governments, management, and local-dependent communities need to build a strong collaboration towards a successful implementation of optimization strategies.

RECOMMENDATION

The result of this study is also expected to be used as a reference for related stakeholders to design and implement a robust strategy to develop the ecotourism destination in the form of a scientific-based policy. This, therefore, will promote more benefits as conservation tools as well as enable the dependent community to gain more socioeconomic advantages.

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