



NICHE HERITAGE TOURISM IN STINGRAY ISLAND: THE CASE OF JAPANESE DEFENSE HERITAGE IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The purpose of this study is to analyze the competitiveness of Morotai Island, located in North Maluku, in terms of tourism development potential.

Theoretical Framework: Tourism, defined as the movement of people to increase employment opportunities, local community economies, international trade, export revenue, foreign exchange earnings and investment, is influenced by a variety of social, cultural, and economic variables. Therefore, heritage sites and historic monuments are critical to urban development because they promote a sense of community among citizens while also emphasizing local identity and location.

Method: Empirical research was carried out utilizing an inductive methodology using a variety of primary and secondary data sources.

Results and Discussion: Results indicate that to further strengthen the community and further its tourism and regeneration aims, it could be beneficial for the autonomous organization organizing and overseeing social and cultural events and activities. Furthermore, to develop a range of tourism supporting services, the inventiveness of the region's tourism entrepreneurs also require training in the early stages of region's development.

Research Implications: The study implicates an overall belief that improving Morotai's urban and economic landscape through tourism will either keep locals in the area or discourage them from leaving in pursuit of better opportunities and a higher standard of living.

Originality/Value: This study contributes to the community heritage-based tourism as a tool of diversifying its local economic structure. This research precisely to recognize historic-heritage area in as a strategic instrument to develop rural areas.

Keywords: Defense Heritage Tourism, Niche Market, Japanese Colonialism, Morotai Island.

TURISMO PATRIMÔNIO DE NICHÔ EM STINGRAY ISLAND: O CASO DO PATRIMÔNIO DE DEFESA JAPONÊS NA INDONÉSIA

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RESUMO

Objetivo: O objetivo deste estudo é analisar a competitividade da Ilha Morotai, localizada em Molucas do Norte, em termos de potencial de desenvolvimento turístico.

Estrutura teórica: O turismo, definido como o movimento de pessoas para aumentar as oportunidades de emprego, economias da comunidade local, comércio internacional, receita de exportação, receita cambial e investimento, é influenciado por uma variedade de variáveis sociais, culturais e econômicas. Por conseguinte, os sítios patrimoniais e os monumentos históricos são fundamentais para o desenvolvimento urbano, uma vez que promovem um sentimento de comunidade entre os cidadãos, ao mesmo tempo que realçam a identidade e a localização locais.

Método: A pesquisa empírica foi realizada utilizando uma metodologia indutiva utilizando uma variedade de fontes de dados primários e secundários.

Resultados e Discussão: Os resultados indicam que, para fortalecer ainda mais a comunidade e promover seus objetivos de turismo e regeneração, pode ser benéfico para a organização autônoma que organiza e supervisiona eventos e atividades sociais e culturais. Além disso, para desenvolver uma série de serviços de apoio ao turismo, a capacidade de criação dos empresários do setor do turismo da região também requer formação nas fases iniciais do desenvolvimento da região.

Implicações da pesquisa: O estudo implica uma crença geral de que a melhoria da paisagem urbana e econômica de Morotai através do turismo manterá os moradores locais na área ou desencorajá-los de sair em busca de melhores oportunidades e um padrão de vida mais elevado.

Originalidade/valor: Este estudo contribui para o turismo baseado no patrimônio da comunidade como uma ferramenta de diversificação de sua estrutura econômica local. Esta investigação visa precisamente reconhecer o patrimônio histórico como um instrumento estratégico para o desenvolvimento das zonas rurais.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de Patrimônio de Defesa, Mercado de Nicho, Colonialismo Japonês, Ilha Morotai.

TURISMO DE NICHOS PATRIMONIAIS EN LA ISLA DE STINGRAY: EL CASO DEL PATRIMONIO DE DEFENSA JAPONÉS EN INDONESIA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El propósito de este estudio es analizar la competitividad de la isla Morotai, ubicada en el norte de Maluku, en términos de potencial de desarrollo turístico.

Marco teórico: El turismo, definido como el movimiento de personas para aumentar las oportunidades de empleo, las economías de las comunidades locales, el comercio internacional, los ingresos por exportaciones, los ingresos por divisas y la inversión, está influenciado por una variedad de variables sociales, culturales y económicas. Por lo tanto, los sitios patrimoniales y los monumentos históricos son críticos para el desarrollo urbano porque promueven un sentido de comunidad entre los ciudadanos al tiempo que enfatizan la identidad y la ubicación locales.

Método: La investigación empírica se llevó a cabo utilizando una metodología inductiva utilizando una variedad de fuentes de datos primarios y secundarios.

Resultados y discusión: Los resultados indican que para fortalecer aún más la comunidad y promover sus objetivos de turismo y regeneración, podría ser beneficioso para la organización autónoma que organiza y supervisa eventos y actividades sociales y culturales. Además, para desarrollar una gama de servicios de apoyo al turismo, la inventiva de los empresarios turísticos de la región también requiere capacitación en las primeras etapas del desarrollo de la región.

Implicaciones de la investigación: El estudio implica una creencia general de que mejorar el paisaje urbano y económico de Morotai a través del turismo mantendrá a los lugareños en la zona o los desalentará de irse en busca de mejores oportunidades y un mayor nivel de vida.



Originalidad/Valor: Este estudio contribuye al turismo basado en el patrimonio comunitario como herramienta de diversificación de su estructura económica local. Esta investigación pretende precisamente reconocer el patrimonio histórico de la zona como un instrumento estratégico para el desarrollo de las zonas rurales.

Palabras clave: Turismo de Patrimonio de la Defensa, Mercado de Nicho, Colonialismo Japonés, Isla Morotai.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Heritage sites and historic monuments are essential to urban development because they foster a sense of community among residents and highlight the local identity and sense of place (Lak et al., 2020). Several research consider that heritage tourism is one of the most important aspects for stimulating the tourism destination, cultural attraction, as well as protects its nation heritage assets. In other words, the previous aspects could contribute in enhancing the economic nation as its competitive advantage for the tourism marketplace (Chen & Chen, 2010; Lak et al., 2020). A number of international trends such as Europe (Heidenreich & Plaza, 2015), Asian and Middle Eastern countries (Lai, 2020; Orbaşlı, 2018; Xu & Sofield, 2017) in heritage tourism for urban renewal have arisen (Lak et al., 2020). Administrators' attempts to implement economic restructuring demonstrate one trend: a growing interest from the government in historic tourism. Most developed cities see community heritage-based tourism as a tool of diversifying its economic structure, increase income, developing community's living standards, educational, and enhance its urban infrastructure (Chen & Chen, 2010; Lak et al., 2020).

Social, cultural, and economic factors all play a big part in the phenomena of tourism, which is the movement of people who improve employment possibilities, local community economies, international trade as well as export revenue, and foreign exchange earnings and investment. It is proved by the latest annual research of World and Travel Tourism Council, highlighted that Travel & Tourism (T&T) has risen its percentage of 22% from 2021 which participated 7.6% to global GDP and 22 million new jobs created, a rose of 7.9% on 2021. In Asia Pacific, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism it shows that the percentage has increased 7.5% or equal of 111 billion USD and 8.7 million new jobs opportunity (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2023). In other words, it is believed that tourism was able to enhance the economic sector and created a multiplier impact for enhancing related industries and destination. According to long-term United Nation World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)



estimates, tourism destinations in emerging economies will expand twice as quickly as those in developed economies (UNWTO, 2018).

Since the 19th century, the goal of urban regeneration has been to revitalize abandoned buildings and metropolitan districts. It is closely related to sustainability projects that seek to meet a city's needs on the social, environmental, and economic fronts. In recent year, Indonesia Morotai Island regency is still considered as an under-developed regency that has a various potential tourism attraction (natural and cultural) highlighting its World War II Asia Pacific heritage. The central government also decided the areas as a Special Economic Zones (SEZ) that expected to enhance the region's economic growth, enhance the prosperity of its community and the surrounding area by minimizing poverty, job creation in tourism industry as well as other associated sectors. In Radianto et al., (2019) study, the presence of National Tourism Development Strategies Areas (KSPN/*Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Nasional*) has been able to enhance the number of visitors in all North Maluku areas performed by central government that support tourism facilities and promotion, and it is quite influential.

The knowledge and understanding of heritage in Indonesia cities are also not being fully debated in the academic world with regard to how to interpret and recognize Indonesia's colonial heritage and the principles for conservation, in addition to these economic, political, and cultural constraints. The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (*Kemendparekraf*), who is responsible for planning publications and promotions and carrying out policy-making in the travel industry, comes next. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2013) designated a number of Indonesian cultural heritage sites as World Heritage, including the Sangiran site area, the Borobudur temple complex, the Prambanan temple complex, and the Bali cultural landscape associated with the *Subak* system. Depending too much on tourism to preserve urban heritage can have unfavorable effects like gentrification, the commoditization of culture, etc. This is the situation with the Morotai Island in this special issue.

The intent of this paper is to question the analysis of competitiveness of of Morotai Island, North Maluku, regarding the potential defense heritage sites as the tourism development. This research can provide several reasons to identify tourism potentials, challenges, and impacts by making use of its heritage-based and rich natural island resources. The competitiveness of the area also defined as a regular process and could affect the future manner for the development of regions. Thus, evaluating stakeholders' perspectives on Morotai Island regency can benefit academicians, investors, politicians, local communities, and other interested parties, as well as address a significant information gap in city tourism literature.



2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 HERITAGE TOURISM AS A NICHE MARKET

The notion of heritage has unavoidably expanded, leading to a significant expansion in the variety of buildings and locations that are recognized as heritage. In actuality, a wide range of typologies have emerged, encompassing cultural landscapes, urban centers, historical sites, industrial legacy, and heritage routes (UNESCO, 2013). However, more study is still required to fully comprehend heritage tourism as a niche tourism market, including their experiences and motives. Examining the market for cultural heritage from a different angle, one might consider the size of the resource being visited, its association with the tourists, and the degree of demand for it (Timothy, 1997). Globally appealing sites, many of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites (though some have not yet been designated as such), are concentrated on the biggest scale. Still, millions of tourists from all around the world visit these attractions each year because they are so well-known. In the work of Ardiwidjaja, (2018) and Surbakti, (2017), they mention Harrison (2012) who suggest that heritage studies need to address a wide range of issues in order to accomplish public or broad audience involvement. He also stated that global perspective on heritage studies that has been recognized and used in Indonesia. However, the supply and demand for cultural heritage are on various scales, which has an impact on the types of heritage consumers will visit and the levels of demand (Timothy, 1997). Lak et al., (2020) study on heritage tourism in South Khorasan, Iran, identified several potential aspects weaving in Brijand to become international attractions; Social practices, festival, events; heritage sites; cultural, traditional arts; geographical importance, natural resources; gastronomy; local product, handicrafts). Due to inadequate transportation facilities, have caused the sites to remain unrecognized for both domestic and foreign tourists. The heritage site in their location often appeals mostly to domestic tourist. However, research from Dinis and Krakover (2016) that talk about heritage tourism development in Belmonte, Portugal, found the total number foreign tourists are higher than domestic tourists. The growth of foreign tourists Belmonte does not rely primarily on its historical sites, but rather on a variety of products relating to the town's diverse cultural background. In this approach, niche of objects, resulting in a diverse set of attractions that provide more reasons to visit the area such as medieval fairs, exhibitions, gastronomy festivals, and small-scale musical events. It is also believed in Sandy and Lima (2024) research, the Museum of Tomorrow has a major economic influence on the Porto Maravilha



neighborhood in the heart of Rio de Janeiro. The museum has drawn a lot of tourists from both domestic and foreign countries since it opened in 2015, which has helped the local economy.

2.2 DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN A POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT

As one of the post-war areas during World War II Asia Pacific in Indonesia, Morotai's heritage tourist potential has not yet been known for public, especially still several Indonesia people that known the heritage history and sites. This kind of defense heritage tourism can be utilized as an instrument to develop a defense heritage tourism destination (Dissanayake & Samarathunga, 2021; Hall, 2003). Having said that, it is crucial to emphasize that, from a philosophical point of view, the ideas of history and heritage in the context of tourism must be similar. These phrases, however, are entirely different because history is still concerned with logical explanations, whereas history in this context employs the past for commercial gain (Seraphin et al., 2018). Similarly, Stonich (2000) noted that the monetization of heritage and history as tourism assets has increasingly led to doubts about the authenticity of Bay Island tourism. Thus, authenticity becomes a problem as it is considered as the most important factors for the development of heritage tourism. This legacy-based tourism is also referred to as "staged authenticity," despite the fact that authenticity is regarded as the most crucial criterion for the growth of heritage tourism. "Identity" is another important term related with "heritage". Heritage, in this case, allows a community to feel and remain connected to its ancestral roots (Seraphin et al., 2018). Pieris (2014) also identified language was considered as the most significant barrier to a successful relationship between visitors and hosts. While highlighting the importance of local communities enjoying tourism advantages, several research advised promoting "War Tourism" by storytelling about wartime experiences, survival, and aftermath (Dissanayake & Samarathunga, 2021; Kamble & Bouchon, 2014). As a result, post-war tourism must be managed to avoid hurting the sentiments of those who have been involved in a conflict, both hosts and guests (Dissanayake & Samarathunga, 2021). Nevertheless, numerous researchers have noted the tourism industry's distinct contribution to the environment, socio-culture, and economy in many ways (Amado & Rodrigues, 2019; Ardiwidjaja, 2018; Dinis & Krakover, 2016; Dissanayake & Samarathunga, 2021; Lak et al., 2020; Seraphin et al., 2018).



3 DATA AND METHODS

This research examined the potential and opportunities as the tourism development in Morotai Island Regency as the *case study* methods as its research strategy. This analysis, like previous case studies, draws from a variety of data sources, including fieldwork, observations, secondary sources, desk research, and interviews with experts. Regulations, yearbook provisions, research papers, scientific journals, theses, book, and other sources were the sources from which the secondary data and information were gathered. Case study are essential for imparting knowledge about important, representative, revolutionary, singular, or longitudinal real-world examples that highlight certain trends and challenges (Robert K Yin, 2014).

The data collection was conducted from 18th October until 23rd October 2023. The primary data were obtained by informal conversational interview with the following key informants: (1) Muhlis Eso, Chairman of the Morotai Curatorship and Founder of the self-help defense heritage museum. In an effort to show his concern for the history that had accumulated over 30 years, he also opened a museum showcasing World War II artifacts in his private residence. Apart from creating a self-help museum, he also provides anyone with information about the Allied struggle against Japan on the outer island. The next informants were (2) Tyo, the General Manager of D'Aloha Resort, with (3) Maikel, the Head of Morotai Diving Center. The unstructured interviews questions are rely on the spontaneous creation of questions during a natural interaction, usually one that takes place during continuing fieldwork for participant observation (Swain & King, 2022). The topics related to the history of defense heritage in Morotai, and its tourism value. In the midst of the interviews Muhlis give the researcher his book has not yet published and his media publication regarding Amerika and Japanese colonialism history and its mapping, artefact, and his findings about the heritage sites in Morotai Island regency.

By the second process of collecting data, the researchers adopted observation at the potential tourist destinations and sites that has a historic past in Morotai Island such as; Muhlis self-help museum, bones of former Japanese colonizers in the Sopi area, former Japanese Colonialism cave in Joabela, Nakamura village, and US bunker tank Amphibi site. Since the majority of visitors to Morotai visit neighboring places by D'Aloha Resort tour package, *three* additional surrounding sites (attraction) were chosen in order to obtain a comprehensive view of value additions to Morotai tourism as recommended by study of (Ardiwidjaja, 2018). The sites are; Dodola Island, Kolorai Island (Kolorai Village, Bahari Nusantara), and Kokoya Island which included in the package trip by D'Aloha resort.



To analyze the data, researcher utilize narratives discussion beside quantitative information from desk research as recommended by Robert K Yin (2014) study. The potential of the region's heritage sites as a historic tourism was evaluated using these data. Qualitative content analysis was an appropriate research method since it allowed the researchers to "observe," dissect visual texts and elements, and methodically identify and compare specific aspects.

4 CASE STUDY SETTING: MOROTAI ISLAND REGENCY

4.1 GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelago nation, ought to focus on its coastline economy. With 327 coastal and 187 non-coastal cities and regencies, Indonesia has more coastal cities and regencies than non-coastal cities and regencies (MMAF, 2017). The study site is located on Morotai Island Regency, situated geographically between Halmahera Island and the Pacific Ocean and considered as one of the northernmost island in Indonesia and is the result of expansion of North Halmahera Regency. Overall, the regency has a total area of 2,337.15 km² (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Pulau Morotai, 2020). This island is well-known for being the starting point of World War II. Tanks, ships, planes, bathing areas, and military buildings can be found strewn around the island from south to north, as well as on the seabed. However, this island is also one of the entry points to the world flow (Ocean Conveyor Belt) that runs through Indonesia. This island bends the direction of currents to the north and south, having a tremendous impact on the waterways surrounding it. The slowing of currents caused by basins and islands results in significant levels of nutrients from the Pacific being deposited south of the islands. The local people call the Morotai Island as stingray Island because the island has an end that resembles the tail of a ray.

In an economic regional scale, the Gross Domestic Regional Product (GRDP) of Morotai Island Regency at current market prices by industry for 2019 was Rp1,532.8925 billion. At 45.05 percent, the agricultural group held the biggest percentage distribution of GRDP. In contrast, the GDRP grew by 4.58 percent in 2019. The government administration, defense, and social security sectors had the highest growth rates, at 11.28 percent. A portion of the populace works as both a farmer and a fisherman. In Morotai Island Regency, formal sector employment is yet in its infancy. Despite having a lot of beautiful natural tourist spots and many potential heritage sites, Morotai Island Regency's tourism sector is still in its infancy. It is



believed that Morotai Island Regency's per capita income and economic growth rates showed a positive trend until 2019 and its regional income has increased dramatically despite the tourism growth. This indicates that the region's economy is growing well, although there is no specific tourism-related industry, but it is still growing at a slower rate than North Maluku Province, as evidenced by the average GDP development per capita and economic growth rate of Morotai Island Regency (Runtunuwu et al., 2021). It is hope that the structural economic of its regency look for alternative pathways to economic development by taking its advantage of heritage tourism potential assets.

4.2 MOROTAI'S DEFENSE HERITAGE HISTORY AND ITS TOURISM POTENTIALS

Morotai Island is renowned for being a military base used by Allied forces during World War II in an attempt to strike Japanese military troops in the Philippines. Almost the whole Asia-Pacific area was under Japanese military control during their invasion of the region on September 15, 1944, until General Douglas MacArthur's Allied Forces successfully landed and took Morotai Island from the Japanese. At this rate, the Allied Forces were able to establish Morotai as their primary base, which helped them maintain control over the Philippines. This success also marked the beginning of the Allied Forces' victory in World War II. This shows the geostrategic position of Morotai Island as an area directly next to the Philippines. Thus, it can be said that Morotai as an allied military base became an important point for the Allied Forces in winning World War II. This historical fact makes World War II relics on Morotai Island have high historical value. Muhlis Eso as the Founder of self-help defense heritage tourism mentioned that:

“World War II is a witness for history in Morotai. Since then, we have been looking, collecting, and finding one by one the remains of World War II relics and heritage sites. Up until now, what we found was a hiding place for allied and Japanese soldiers one after another (caves), as well as in the pile, which is combined goods and waste which is a dumping place for mixed goods that have been made from several country. We had the initiative to build a self-help museum observer of the relics of World War II. This museum is where we store, cultivate, and maintain defense heritage relics in Morotai as it is the identity of our nation. With the existence of these goods, we from a group of mini museums feel called to preserve the cultural assets that exist in Morotai.” (Extract from the interview).



Apart from creating a self-help museum, Muhlis also provides anyone with information about the Allied struggle against Japan on the outer island. Muhlis's collection was added to the Trikora and World War II Museum in Wawama Village, which was inaugurated by President Susilo Bambang Yudhono in the year of 2012. Quoted from Werdiono (2022), the museum that Muhlis himself founded in Joubela Village has endured to this day. A tiny room on the left side of the main house was constructed with assistance from the Morotai Island Regency government in 2018. Morotai holds particular significance for Muhlis. He views the 74,500-person island as the mother of World War II, whose artifacts must be conserved (Werdiono, 2022).

As the availability of attractions is the primary factor that determines a tourism destination's success, Morotai is blessed with various untouched defense heritage tourist attraction. Although studies to identify Morotai's popular marine tourism attractions have been conducted, the attractions themselves are still in the development phase as they are not gaining popularity towards tourists (Mouw et al., 2022; Radianto et al., 2019; Wijayanto, 2021). Figure 1. Exhibit the key attractions in Morotai.

Figure 1

Available attractions in Morotai Island Regency



Source: Developed by the authors using Google Maps (2023)

In the meantime, the Indonesian government have launched 'Morotai Festival' and '2012 Sail Morotai' to notice the significant role tourism has played in developing places in North Maluku that have much potential sites to promote and attract both foreign and domestic tourists. Morotai Island was chosen because of its geostrategic location and historical past, and it focuses on World War II area activities as a means to further boost tourism potential to be developed as a marine-industry area with combination of historical and marine tourism



(Kurniati, 2013; Singgalen & Kudubun, 2017). The events comprise seminars, edu-culture tourism, marine tourism as well as social and community involvement with strategy included action involving several stakeholders; government, academics, and local community. This makes it obvious that Indonesian government has its sights on accelerating the country's economic development through tourism. According to Muhlis Eso:

Actually, Sail & Festival Morotai is a great event, however there is no continuation event. Both the central and local governments should seriously examine defense heritage tourism and continue the event in the future, as it would be extremely beneficial to our regions. (Extract from the interview).

Unfortunately, the event itself not yet introduce heritage tourism to attract the tourists. Places such as Trikora Museum, Nakamura statue, and US Tank Amphibious sites **Figure 2**, are already visited by tourists, but there are many heritage sites attractions have not yet to be discovered fully by the government as the region has wide range of tourist attraction including Japanese colonial heritage sites. Several are still under-developed and some are neglected to reach its significant benefits from it. In the meantime, local community have brainstormed an idea to create continuation events for the attract more tourism, however, the region government have not yet taken the idea for further consideration. In our observation to Morotai Regency, Muhlis introduced several defense heritage sites as a tourism potential such as his self-help museum **Figure 3**, bones of former Japanese colonizers bones in the Sopi area, former Japanese Colonialism cave in Joabela, Nakamura village in **Figure 4**. In addition, due to transportation and accommodation limitations, it has yet to realize the tourism benefits. Authorities were unable to adequately identify archaeological, colonial, and religious assets, and as a result, Muhlis and his co-workers are mainly dedicated to search more and maximize its heritage tourism potential.



Figure 2

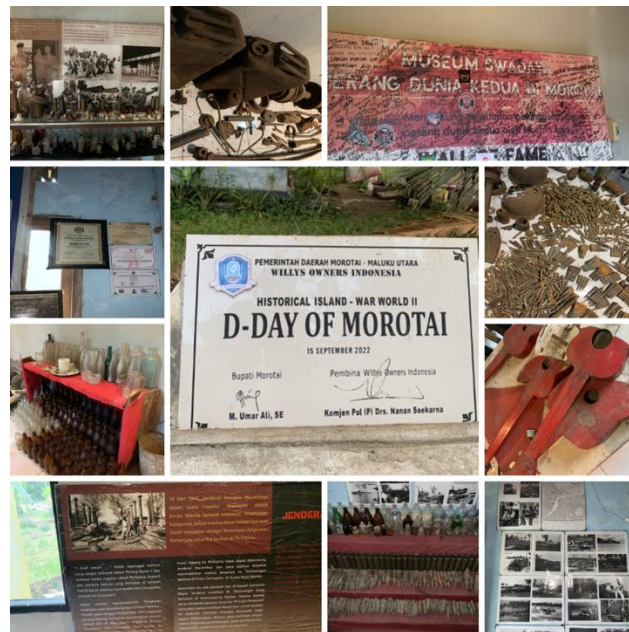
US Tank Amphibious sites



Source: Authors, 2023

Figure 3

Muhlis Eso self-help museum

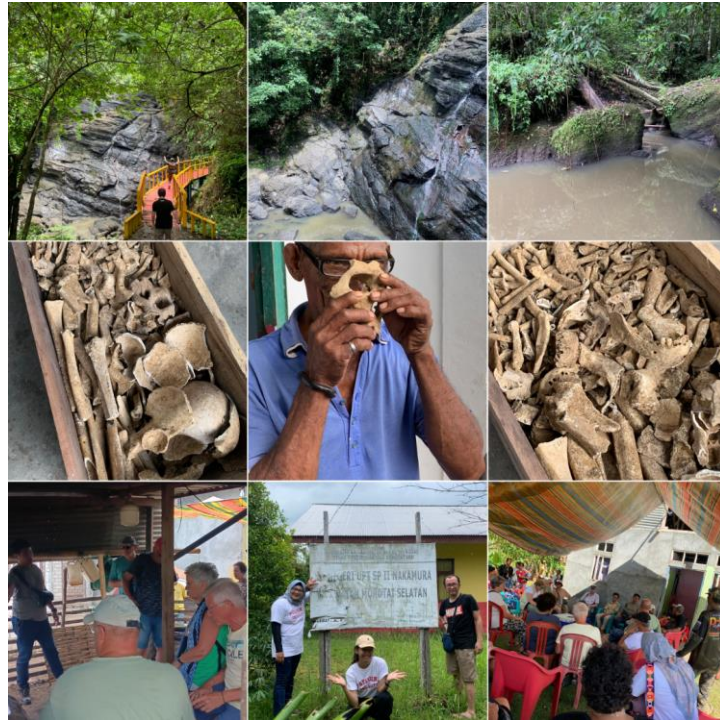


Source: Authors, 2023



Figure 4

Japanese colonial heritage relic and sites



(from row 1 to row 3) Nakamura waterfall, Japanese colonizers bones in the Sopi area, Nakamura village with visitors from abroad.

Source: Authors, 2023

On the demand side, Dinis and Krakover (2016) stated, tourists more interested in the destination who have locations that provide very specific offers can differentiate themselves as niche destinations. Several potential aspects to become attract foreign tourists from Lak et al., (2020) such as social practices, festival, gastronomy and handicrafts was clearly invisible. There are no designated shopping areas for tourists. In the meantime, the total number of lodgings in Morotai are 17 with 229 rooms and 82 staff with the majority of them are graduated from high school. As for the total data of tourists that visit Morotai Regency, there are 172 foreign visitors and 42,608 domestic visitors were present in 2022 (Regency, 2022). Despite the increasing importance of heritage tourism and efforts by the municipality Morotai's defense heritage, there are still some challenges in meeting their guests' expectations, as the local community is not eager enough to meet the needs and desires for tourists' development, particularly in terms of local products (handicrafts) and foods. Furthermore, aside several attractions, visitors could not enjoy events organized by the region, such as local products from its region small medium and enterprises, gastronomy, and traditional arts. The general manager of D'Aloha resort said:



Local gastronomy can be developed using local ingredients, particularly the abundance of seafood resources in Morotai waters. Our locals also eat sweet potatoes, but the way we cook and the way we eat is and the food name is Baduda, and it was originally made from this regency as this is a typical source from nature. However, local people have some certain culinary requirements that local business do not meet. (Extract from the interview).

As for the local community in Morotai, they are friendly to those tourists coming, however, their enthusiasm to make the region bigger in terms of defense heritage tourism are less, knowing the importance of tourism for their region development are beneficial for their future livelihoods.

4.3 CHALLENGES FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MOROTAI ISLAND

A notable example of a conflict between the preservation of heritage and tourism is the condition of Morotai Island's colonial heritage sites, where unrestricted access results the lack of active tourist management as a sign of institutional support. To support the prior analysis, Wijayanto (2021) case study research indicated that the two biggest obstacles to Morotai Island Regency's tourist growth are infrastructure and human resources. The development of Morotai Island as a major tourism destination has not been aided by the island's transportation infrastructure, which includes local land, sea, and air transportation. The ports and airport serve as Morotai's entry points, and both require maintenance. There are still not that many flights schedule to Morotai, and it is only provided by several domestic airline such as Lion Air, Sriwijaya Air, Garuda Indonesia. If visitors want to take all flight transportation, they must transit to Ternate or Manado and continued with only Wings Air airline that serve visitors to flight to Pitu Airport, Mortai. It is underlined that, the visitors can only be traveled by air transportation on Wednesdays, due to the lack of visitors. However, there are still several aspects of the airport that require improvement, such as the size of the airport and the quality of the amenities in the Morotai's airport terminal. If visitors want to take another form of transportation, they have to go to Tobelo in North Halmahera by land from there, and then take a ferry to Daruba on Morotai as the principal port in Morotai Island. It takes about two hours to get there by water. The state of the dock and terminal at Daruba Port hasn't yet helped Morotai Island compete to become a top travel destination in the globe. On Morotai Island, the road conditions already developed, but it exists only main road. Due to its frequently used by the local people, several road defects have been found from the city center to the East Morotai sub-district. According to general manager of D'Aloha who participated in the interview, tourists



are unable to reach the hidden heritage building sites in rural area due to the road situation. Furthermore, because those services are available within the city boundaries, tourists always try to stay within the city, discouraging total tourism development in the region.

For tourism to remain competitive, visitors must have a welcoming and comfortable social atmosphere. This has to do with how players in the tourist industry behave, think, and speak because visitors desire a safe environment. There are still very few English-speaking locals. Not only is the business sector suffering from a lack of experts, but so is the governmental sector, which includes the provincial council, divisional secretariats, and educational institutes. The majority of Morotai citizens only complete their basic education, as seen by the mean years of schooling (MYS) of just 7.1 years for Morotai residents (Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Pulau Morotai, 2020). One of the most major obstacles to promoting Morotai tourism is the lack of a tourism master plan. As a result, the regional public sector has initiated many unplanned tourism developments (**Figure 4**).

The continued rise of the defense heritage tourism in Morotai does not appear to be due to a lack of demand, but rather a lack of supportive services. These improved services may be reinforced by opportunities to meet members of the local community, as well as exhibitions and cultural attraction tailored to the preferences of this section of tourists. Managerial decisions to join various distribution networks should be supported by focused marketing initiatives aimed at the Morotai Island.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The historic island of Morotai is one of the Indonesia regions that has a huge potential to be developed through tourism with it is rich natural and heritage assets. The findings of this study suggest that any single specialty tourism (for example marine tourism) would not produce enough visitor traffic to be economically sustainable, at least not in the early stages of development. In this approach, niche tourism is segmented into a variety tourism package, includes nature, culture, and especially the heritage tourism, resulting in a diverse set of attractions that provide more reasons to visit the area. At tourism destinations, amenities that improve visitors' comfort must be constructed. Tourism business actors in Morotai regency need to take into account waste management at tourist destinations and the completeness of public amenities (such as restrooms, shelters, tourist information centers, evacuation routes, and assembly points in the case of a crisis). The growth of colonial heritage tourism in Morotai also depends on the development of human resources for tourism enterprises. To effectively



serve tourists, HR professionals must possess both hard and soft skills, such as English and technical proficiency and friendliness, initiative, and responsibility.

To develop a range of tourism supporting services, restaurants, and souvenirs in Morotai, the inventiveness of the region's tourism entrepreneurs also require training. The most valuable resource in the growth of tourism is human capital since they may enhance the innovation and raise the bar for competitiveness in the travel industry. To be more appealing to foreign tourist, the offer of local Morotai heritage products such as handicrafts could enhance its niche qualities as suggested research by Dinis and Krakover (2016), this should involve the provision of appropriate local foods and merchandise/souvenir that represent Morotai as a historical tourism tailored to the needs of the visitors. If it is further implement, Morotai may emerge as a viable tourist attraction. Potential tourists may have high hopes for their trip when they encounter eye-catching and educational advertisements concerning historical sites (Rahayu & Samsuddin, 2024). Our review of local administration efforts reveals that a key factor for the successful implementation of a niche tourism strategy is not only the existence of distinct cultural and historic resources, but also the presence of local managerial skills that articulately connect local and regional resources with global markets via distribution networks (Ardiwidjaja, 2018; Dinis & Krakover, 2016; Lak et al., 2020; Seraphin et al., 2018; Wijayanto, 2021).

To further strengthen the community and further its aims of tourism and regeneration, it could be beneficial for the autonomous organization defense heritage community in Morotai, Muhlis Eso, for the purpose of organizing and overseeing social and cultural events and activities. This could be achieved through a private-public initiative. When we observe different tour guides that explain Japanese history in Morotai, it is found that that they tune their interpretation to the visitors not in a significant and systematic manner as they are developing their own narratives and tours, loosely directed by shared points or values. Some countries, sites, and institutions restrict guides' narratives through training, licensing regulations, or surveillance, highlighting the impact of political context on their behavior (Feldman & Skinner, 2018; Wong, 2013). As Morotai being well known Indonesia starting point of World War II, it is suggested for Muhlis to build the standard narrative and training it to the forthcoming tour guide as it is forecasting a positive image of the country by directing tourists to specific attractions and delivering politically acceptable information that must be similar. The findings also indicate that there is a widespread belief that enhancing Morotai's urban and economic landscape through tourism will either keep residents in the area or discourage them from moving elsewhere in pursuit of better prospects and a higher standard of living. In this instance



it is also believed that Muhlis Eso self-help museum are already known for public and media, the environmental upgrades would have to do with improving the social cohesion of its ancient communities. It sheds light on the challenges and opportunities in promoting Morotai's heritage sites and crafting a captivating narrative around its history. The participants emphasize the significant roles that both the community and private sector can play in raising awareness among the local community and promoting Morotai historical tourism. Furthermore, to make Morotai more accessible, the authorities must improve air, sea, and land connectivity by enhancing airport facilities, seaports, and highway road networks that connect Morotai to the rest of the region's potential tourist sites.

Morotai Island regency, has enormous potential for development through tourism, given its untouched heritage features. The purpose of this work has been to identify stakeholders' opinions on tourist development in a former military based island. During the study, certain topics were examined through the eyes of stakeholders, including tourism potentials, problems, facilities, existing developments, and the path forward. Opportunities will change in the future since competitiveness is continually increasing, posing new obstacles.

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