

Strategy For Sustainable Tourism Development In North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract:

This article examines strategies for developing sustainable tourism in North Lombok Regency (Kabupaten Lombok Utara), West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, an area whose tourism assets range from the northern flank of the Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark to the Tiga Gili islands and several community-based tourism villages. The study aims to map the region's tourism potential, identify the structural challenges facing its development, and formulate collaborative strategies consistent with the four pillars of sustainable tourism destination management mandated by Indonesian tourism regulation. A qualitative descriptive method was used, relying on a literature review of scientific journal articles, institutional reports, and documented field studies published between 2018 and 2026. The results show that North Lombok possesses substantial and diverse tourism assets, including geoheritage sites, marine attractions, and culturally distinctive tourism villages, but development is constrained by the region's slow recovery from the 2018 earthquakes, limited institutional and human-resource capacity among local tourism actors, uneven distribution of economic benefits, and rising environmental pressure. The study concludes that an integrated strategy combining community-based tourism, agrotourism diversification, geopark conservation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration between government, private actors, and local communities offers the most realistic pathway toward sustainable and equitable tourism growth in North Lombok.

Key words: *Sustainable Tourism, North Lombok, Community-Based Tourism, Geopark, Destination Governance*

Abstrak:

Artikel ini membahas strategi pengembangan pariwisata berkelanjutan di Kabupaten Lombok Utara (KLU), Nusa Tenggara Barat, sebuah kawasan yang memiliki aset wisata mulai dari sisi utara Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark, kawasan Tiga Gili, hingga sejumlah desa wisata berbasis masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan memetakan potensi kepariwisataan KLU, mengidentifikasi tantangan struktural dalam pengembangannya, serta merumuskan strategi kolaboratif yang sejalan dengan empat pilar tata kelola destinasi pariwisata berkelanjutan sebagaimana diatur dalam regulasi kepariwisataan nasional. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian pustaka terhadap artikel jurnal ilmiah, laporan kelembagaan, dan hasil kajian lapangan yang dipublikasikan antara tahun 2018 hingga 2026. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Lombok Utara memiliki aset wisata yang beragam, mencakup situs geoheritage, atraksi bahari, dan desa wisata dengan kekhasan budaya, namun pengembangannya masih dihambat oleh proses pemulihan pascagempa 2018 yang belum sepenuhnya tuntas, keterbatasan kapasitas kelembagaan dan sumber daya manusia pelaku wisata lokal, distribusi manfaat ekonomi yang belum merata, serta tekanan lingkungan yang terus meningkat. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa strategi terintegrasi yang memadukan community-based tourism, diversifikasi agrowisata, konservasi kawasan geopark, dan kolaborasi multipihak antara pemerintah, sektor swasta, dan masyarakat lokal merupakan jalan paling realistis menuju pertumbuhan pariwisata yang berkelanjutan dan berkeadilan di Lombok Utara.

Kata kunci: *Pariwisata Berkelanjutan, Lombok Utara, Pariwisata Berbasis Masyarakat, Geopark, Tata Kelola Destinasi*

A. Introduction

West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is one of the provinces with the most rapid growth in the tourism sector in eastern Indonesia, with Lombok Island as its principal destination, underpinned by a combination of nature-based, marine, and cultural tourism. Among the ten regencies and cities in NTB, North Lombok Regency (Kabupaten Lombok Utara/KLU) occupies a strategic position, as it encompasses most of the island's leading tourism assets—from the Tiga Gili area (Gili Trawangan, Gili Meno, and Gili Air), long an icon of international marine tourism, to the northern flank of the Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark, officially recognized by UNESCO since April 2018 (UNESCO, n.d.). This region is also home to a number of community-based tourism villages, such as Senaru, Bayan, Genggelang, and Tegal Maja, which offer distinctive natural, cultural, and agrarian tourism experiences.

Tourism development in KLU has nonetheless been accompanied by considerable challenges. The series of earthquakes that struck Lombok in August 2018 caused severe damage to tourism infrastructure in the Tiga Gili area—including jetties, accommodation, and other supporting facilities—and triggered a sharp decline in visitor numbers before a gradual recovery took hold. At the same time, a number of studies of KLU's tourism villages, such as Senaru, Bayan, and Genggelang, indicate that substantial natural and cultural potential has often not been matched by adequate strategic planning, institutional capacity among managing organizations, or an equitable distribution of economic benefits to local communities (Nutralip et al., 2021; Fahmi et al., 2024; Dai & Kurniansah, 2025).

Prior studies have generally focused on a single village or area, such as the development strategy of Senaru Tourism Village (Nutralip et al., 2021), the application of agrotourism concepts in Genggelang Village (Fahmi et al., 2024), or community participation in Bayan Village (Dai & Kurniansah, 2025). Meanwhile, studies on the role of the Rinjani-Lombok Geopark in NTB's sustainable tourism (Patiro et al., 2023; Kartika & Wibisono, 2020) have generally concentrated on geotourism aspects and conservation-area governance, without explicitly linking these to the surrounding network of tourism villages and marine areas. This gap underlies the need for a study that treats North Lombok Regency as a single, integrated destination—combining the geopark, the Tiga Gili marine area, and the network of tourism villages—in order to formulate a more integrated and sustainable development strategy.

The significance of this study is further reinforced by the continued growth in visitor numbers to NTB in the post-COVID-19 period. The West Nusa Tenggara Provincial Statistics Agency

(Badan Pusat Statistik/BPS) recorded that the number of guests staying at both star-rated and non-star-rated hotels during January–November 2023 exceeded 1.5 million, comprising approximately 403,000 foreign tourists and 1.17 million domestic tourists. This trend continued into 2024, with the number of hotel guests during January–October reaching 1.77 million, while the NTB Provincial Tourism Office estimated total visitor arrivals for the year at nearly 2.2 million. This rapid growth in visitor numbers, on the one hand, opens substantial economic opportunities for North Lombok as one of the province's key destination nodes; on the other hand, it heightens the urgency of sustainable tourism governance, so that growth in the volume of visits does not come at the expense of environmental quality and local community welfare.

This sustainability issue is increasingly relevant given that NTB, with Lombok as its principal representative, is widely recognized as a leading halal tourism destination, having received the World Best Halal Tourism Destination award at the World Halal Travel Awards 2015. At the national level, Indonesia's performance in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), published by Mastercard-CrescentRating, has continued to improve, rising from second place in 2018 to first place in 2023, before returning to second place worldwide in the 2026 GMTI with a score of 79. This standing places North Lombok, with its wealth of natural and cultural tourism assets, in a strategic position to help strengthen NTB's image as a Muslim-friendly destination while also broadening its tourist market segments.

Building on the foregoing, this article aims to (1) map the principal tourism potential and characteristics of North Lombok Regency, (2) analyze the dynamics of visitor arrivals and NTB's tourism performance as the macro context shaping North Lombok, (3) identify the structural challenges facing its development, and (4) formulate a collaborative strategy for sustainable tourism development consistent with the four pillars of sustainable tourism destinations mandated by Ministerial Regulation of Tourism No. 14 of 2016—namely, destination management, economic benefit for local communities, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

B. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach based on a literature review. The data used are drawn from three main categories. First, national scientific journal articles addressing tourism in North Lombok Regency and the Rinjani Geopark area, retrieved through online journal databases (Garba Rujukan Digital/Garuda, Google Scholar, and

institutional repositories of higher education institutions). Second, official reports and statistical data from government institutions and international organizations, including the NTB Provincial Statistics Agency (BPS), the NTB Provincial Tourism Office, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Mastercard-CrescentRating, and UNESCO. Third, mainstream media coverage documenting specific events not always available in scholarly publications, such as the chronology of post-2018-earthquake tourism recovery in the Tiga Gili area.

The literature search was conducted systematically using relevant keywords, such as “sustainable tourism North Lombok,” “North Lombok tourism village,” “Rinjani Geopark,” “NTB tourist visits,” and “Lombok halal tourism.” Inclusion criteria comprised publications in Indonesian or English addressing destinations, policies, or tourism communities in North Lombok and NTB more broadly, published between 2018 and 2026 to ensure relevance to the post-disaster context and to recent tourism developments. The collected data were then analyzed thematically with reference to the four-pillar framework of sustainable tourism set out in Ministerial Regulation of Tourism No. 14 of 2016—namely, sustainable tourism destination management, economic benefit for local communities, cultural preservation for communities and visitors, and environmental conservation. As a complement, tourist arrival data and hotel occupancy rates from BPS NTB were used to provide quantitative context on provincial-level tourism demand dynamics with direct implications for North Lombok.

As a methodological note, this study is descriptive-analytical and based on secondary data, and therefore has limitations in generalizing its findings to a more micro unit of analysis (e.g., individual households or business operators). The quantitative visitor-arrival data presented are indicative, intended to illustrate macro-level trends at the provincial level, as official publications specifically disaggregating visitor data at the level of North Lombok Regency remain limited.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Tourism Potential and Characteristics of North Lombok Regency

North Lombok Regency has a distinctive geographical profile, stretching from the mountainous area on the northern slope of Mount Rinjani to the northwestern coastline of

Lombok Island, which faces directly onto the Tiga Gili area. This endows KLU with a comprehensive tourism portfolio encompassing mountain geotourism and ecotourism, marine tourism, and culturally and agriculturally based tourism villages, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Leading Tourism Potential of North Lombok Regency

Destination	Type of Tourism	Main Attraction	Administrative Location
Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark (northern side)	Geotourism, ecotourism, trekking tourism	Senaru hiking trail, volcanic geosites, tropical rainforest	Bayan Subdistrict
Tiga Gili (Trawangan, Meno, Air)	Marine tourism	Coral reefs, snorkeling, diving, white-sand beaches	Pemenang Subdistrict
Senaru Tourism Village	Nature and cultural tourism	Sendang Gile and Tiu Kelep waterfalls, traditional Sasak houses	Bayan Subdistrict
Bayan Tourism Village	Community-based tourism (CBT), cultural	Traditional hamlet, Bayan Beleq Old Mosque, Wetu Telu tradition	Bayan Subdistrict
Genggeling Tourism Village	Agrotourism	Coffee and clove plantations, smallholder estates, farming education	Gangga Subdistrict
Tegal Maja Tourism Village	Nature and cultural ecotourism	Forest trekking, rice-field panoramas, traditional arts	Kayangan Subdistrict

Source: compiled from Nutralip et al. (2021), Fahmi et al. (2024), Singandaru et al. (2024), and Patiro et al. (2023), 2026

On the mountain side, the Bayan area serves as the principal gateway to the Mount Rinjani hiking trail via Senaru Village, while also forming part of the Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark, recognized as a member of the Global Geoparks Network since 2018 (UNESCO, n.d.). This geopark encompasses dozens of geological, biological, and cultural heritage sites spread across several regencies on Lombok Island, with Bayan serving as an important node on its northern side. Beyond the hiking trail, Senaru Village is also widely known for the Sendang Gile and Tiu Kelep waterfalls, as well as for the rice-field and tropical-forest panoramas that constitute its principal ecotourism attractions (Nutralip et al., 2021).

On the southern side of the geopark, Bayan Village foregrounds community-based tourism (CBT) through its traditional hamlet, the Bayan Beleq Old Mosque, and the Wetu Telu tradition, which continues to be practiced across generations. A study by Dai and Kurniansah (2025) shows that local community participation in managing cultural attractions in Bayan is key to the success of the CBT model, although its implementation continues to face institutional constraints. Genggelang Village, for its part, has developed an agrotourism model based on smallholder coffee and clove plantations, which, according to Fahmi et al. (2024), has the potential to combine environmental conservation, farmer income generation, and visitor education. A similar pattern is evident in Tegal Maja Village, currently being developed as a nature- and culture-based tourism village through planning training grounded in the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (Singandaru et al., 2024).

In the coastal area, Tiga Gili remains the primary driver of international visitor arrivals to KLU owing to its marine tourism advantages, such as snorkeling, diving, and motor-vehicle-free beach tourism—a distinctive point of differentiation compared with other marine destinations in Indonesia. It is precisely this combination of mountain geotourism, village-based cultural tourism, and small-island marine tourism that establishes North Lombok as a destination with a diversity of tourism products rarely matched by other regencies in NTB.

2. Tourist Visit Dynamics and NTB's Tourism Performance

As the macro context shaping demand for North Lombok tourism, data from BPS NTB Province show a fairly robust recovery and growth trend in visitor arrivals in the post-COVID-19 period, as summarized in Table 2. The number of international tourists arriving via Lombok International Airport rose from 15,388 in 2022 to 38,905 in the January–June 2024 period alone—more than doubling. These international tourists are dominated by visitors from the ASEAN region, followed by Europe, reflecting a relatively diversified market base.

Table 2. Tourist Visit Trends in West Nusa Tenggara, 2022–2024

Year	International Tourists	Domestic Tourists / Guests
2022	15,388 persons (via Lombok International Airport, Jan–Dec)	Gradual increase in the post-COVID-19 period
2023	≈ 403,000 foreign guests staying (Jan–Nov)	≈ 1,172,000 domestic guests staying (Jan–Nov)
2024	612,228 foreign guests staying (Jan–Oct); 38,905 international arrivals via Lombok Airport (Jan–Jun)	1,158,366 domestic guests staying (Jan–Oct); total arrivals ≈ 2.2 million

Source: compiled from BPS NTB Province (2024), Gatra (2024), and IDN Times NTB (2024)

With respect to accommodation, BPS NTB Province also recorded fluctuations in star-rated hotel occupancy rates that follow a seasonal pattern—reaching 55.26 percent in August 2024 before falling to 38.42 percent in December 2024—with an average length of stay for star-rated hotel guests of between 1.7 and 2 days. This seasonal fluctuation confirms that tourism destinations in North Lombok, including Tiga Gili, remain highly dependent on specific holiday periods, underscoring the need for a strategy of year-round tourism-product diversification—for example, by strengthening special-interest tourism programming in the tourism villages during periods outside the peak marine-tourism season.

Nevertheless, the NTB Provincial Tourism Office also cautions that hotel-guest data do not capture the full scale of visitor numbers, since many tourists use non-hotel forms of accommodation, such as tents during the Mount Rinjani hike, phinisi boats, or homestays, which are not yet fully reflected in official databases. This is particularly relevant for North Lombok, given that the Rinjani hiking trail via Senaru and a number of homestays in tourism villages such as Bayan and Genggelang are frequently excluded from the star-rated and non-star-rated accommodation statistics published by BPS, meaning that the real economic contribution of community-based tourism in KLU may well exceed what is officially recorded.

3. Challenges to Sustainable Tourism Development in North Lombok

The first, and most evident, challenge concerns the post-disaster recovery process. The succession of earthquakes that struck Lombok in August 2018 caused severe damage to tourism infrastructure in the Tiga Gili area—including jetties, accommodation, and other supporting facilities—and triggered a sharp decline in visitor numbers in the first months

following the disaster. Although this area recovered comparatively quickly relative to other destinations in Lombok, owing to its proximity to Bali and the presence of operators with established international networks, both physical reconstruction and the recovery of domestic tourists' psychological trust required considerable time. This underscores the importance of building destination resilience to disaster risk as part of sustainable tourism governance.

The second challenge concerns institutional capacity and human resources at the level of individual tourism villages. Studies of Senaru and Bayan villages indicate that, notwithstanding substantial natural and cultural potential, destination management continues to face constraints, including low community participation in decision-making, limited capacity among Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis), suboptimal partnerships with the private sector, and mechanisms for sharing economic benefits that have not yet achieved full equity (Dai & Kurniansah, 2025). A study of Tegal Maja Village identifies similar challenges, namely a lack of strategic planning and a risk of environmental degradation arising from poorly organized tourism management (Singandaru et al., 2024).

The third challenge is the rising environmental pressure that accompanies growing visitor numbers, particularly in the Tiga Gili area, whose ecological carrying capacity is inherently limited as a small-island environment. Waste management, pressure on coral-reef ecosystems, and the availability of clean water are recurring issues that, if inadequately managed, may threaten the very sustainability of the tourist attractions themselves. In the Rinjani Geopark area, meanwhile, conservation challenges center on maintaining a balance between the continuing popularity of trekking-based tourism activities and the protection of geological sites and the tropical-rainforest ecosystem they contain (Patiro et al., 2023; Kartika & Wibisono, 2020).

The fourth challenge is the mismatch between the growth of visitor arrivals at the provincial level, as illustrated in Table 2, and the readiness of governance at the level of individual local destinations. The rapid growth in international tourist numbers, particularly via direct air routes from the ASEAN region, has the potential to intensify visitor pressure on popular destinations such as Tiga Gili without a corresponding readiness of basic infrastructure—such as waste management and clean-water provision—or readiness among surrounding tourism villages to capture the resulting spillover in visitor numbers. This mismatch risks widening the development gap between well-established marine tourism areas and land-based tourism villages that remain at an early stage of development.

The fifth challenge concerns the limited availability of tourism data and information systems at the regency level. As noted in the preceding subsection, the absence of visitor-arrival data specifically disaggregated for North Lombok Regency—including the economic contribution of informal accommodation such as homestays and trekking tourism—complicates the formulation of precise policy and the periodic evaluation of tourism development outcomes. Strengthening a regency-based tourism data system is therefore an important prerequisite for evidence-based destination governance.

4. Collaborative Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development

With reference to the four pillars of sustainable tourism set out in Ministerial Regulation of Tourism No. 14 of 2016, tourism development in North Lombok needs to be directed toward strengthening integrated destination governance across the geopark, the tourism villages, and Tiga Gili. The community-based tourism model already operating in Bayan Village can serve as a reference for more systematic replication in other tourism villages, with strengthened capacity among Pokdarwis and Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) as the principal managing bodies, so that the economic benefits of tourism genuinely accrue to local communities rather than to large operators from outside the region.

Diversification of tourism products through agrotourism, as pioneered in Genggeling Village, is likewise a relevant strategy for reducing dependence on seasonal marine tourism while strengthening the smallholder agricultural sector. This approach is consistent with the principle of environmental conservation, as it encourages sustainable cultivation practices while opening additional sources of income for local farmers through visitor education and the sale of processed coffee and clove products (Fahmi et al., 2024).

At the level of the conservation area, multi-stakeholder collaboration among the Rinjani Geopark management, the private sector, and local communities—including the involvement of women's tour-guide groups in Senaru—demonstrates a partnership model that could be expanded to strengthen the economic empowerment of communities surrounding the conservation area without compromising its conservation function. This form of collaboration is consistent with the findings of Patiro et al. (2023), who show that positive stakeholder attitudes toward ecotourism in the Mount Rinjani National Park area contribute significantly to the sustainability of geopark management.

A further relevant strategy for North Lombok is to strengthen its positioning as part of the Muslim-friendly (halal) tourism destination that constitutes a competitive advantage for NTB as a whole. As shown by Adel et al. (2020) and Nasution et al. (2023), Muslim travelers' preferences for sharia-compliant facilities and services increasingly influence their destination-choice decisions, so that integrating Muslim-friendly elements into accommodation and culinary offerings in KLU's tourism villages has the potential to broaden the market segment without diminishing the authenticity of local culture. This momentum is reinforced by Indonesia's performance in the Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI), which rose from second place in 2018 to first place worldwide in 2023 (KNEKS, 2023) before returning to second place worldwide in the 2026 GMTI with a score of 79, on a par with Saudi Arabia and Turkey (Fortune Indonesia, 2026). Lombok itself has a strong track record in this segment, having been named World Best Halal Tourism Destination and World Best Halal Honeymoon Destination at the World Halal Travel Awards 2015, an accolade that helped drive visitor growth to Lombok of up to 50 percent in subsequent years (CNBC Indonesia, 2018). This track record and national momentum constitute strategic capital for North Lombok in developing nature–culture–religious tourism packages that combine the Rinjani hiking trail, Bayan Tourism Village with its distinctive Bayan Beleq Old Mosque, and Muslim-friendly services in the Tiga Gili area.

Application of the 4A framework (Attraction, Amenity, Accessibility, Ancillary), as employed by Pratiwi (2023) in evaluating coastal destinations, can likewise be adapted to map gaps in supporting infrastructure at each tourism node in KLU, from road accessibility to tourism villages to the availability of visitor-information facilities. Systematic application of this framework to each destination listed in Table 1 could help local government prioritize infrastructure investment in a more measured manner, rather than distributing it evenly without regard to the readiness of each tourism village.

A further strategy is to strengthen disaster-risk mitigation systems as an integral part of sustainable destination governance, given that the experience of the 2018 earthquakes revealed the considerable vulnerability of the Tiga Gili area to external shocks. Investment in evacuation routes, emergency-response training for tourism operators, and rapid post-disaster recovery schemes should be directed not only at physical infrastructure but also at rebuilding the trust of the domestic tourist market, which has proven more sensitive to safety concerns than the international market. Finally, strengthening a regency-based tourism data and information system—for example, by integrating visitor data from tourism villages,

homestays, and hiking trails into a single, integrated database coordinated by the NTB Provincial Tourism Office—would support more precise planning while strengthening accountability in the use of regional tourism development budgets.

Overall, the success of these strategies depends heavily on consistent, collaborative governance among the North Lombok Regency Government, the NTB Provincial Tourism Office, geopark area managers, the private tourism sector, and village communities, underpinned by regional regulations that favor the equitable distribution of economic benefits and the sustainable preservation of the environment and culture. The synergy of five strategies—strengthening community-based tourism, diversifying agrotourism, pursuing collaborative conservation of the geopark area, strengthening Muslim-friendly tourism positioning, and strengthening disaster mitigation and data systems—is projected to address the five structural challenges outlined in the preceding subsection more comprehensively than the largely village-by-village, partial approaches applied to date.

D. Conclusion

North Lombok Regency possesses unique and diverse tourism potential, encompassing geotourism in the Rinjani-Lombok UNESCO Global Geopark area, marine tourism in Tiga Gili, and a network of culturally and agriculturally based tourism villages such as Senaru, Bayan, Genggelang, and Tegal Maja. The macro context further supports optimism regarding the region's development, as reflected in the continuing growth trend in visitor arrivals to NTB in the post-COVID-19 period and in Indonesia's standing as one of the world's leading Muslim-friendly tourism destinations according to the Global Muslim Travel Index. Nonetheless, tourism development in this region continues to face structural challenges, including a still-incomplete recovery process following the 2018 earthquakes, limited institutional capacity among tourism-village managers, an uneven distribution of economic benefits, rising environmental pressure accompanying growing visitor numbers, a governance gap between well-established marine destinations and tourism villages still at an early stage of development, and limitations in the regency-level tourism data system.

To address these challenges, the strategy for sustainable tourism development in North Lombok should be directed toward five principal measures: strengthening the community-based tourism model across the network of tourism villages; diversifying tourism products through agrotourism to reduce dependence on seasonal marine tourism; conserving the geopark area through multi-stakeholder collaboration; strengthening positioning as part of the

Muslim-friendly tourism destination in line with national trends; and strengthening disaster-mitigation systems and the regency's tourism database. The ultimate success of this strategy depends on collaborative governance that engages government, the private sector, and local communities in a balanced manner, consistent with the four pillars of sustainable tourism set out in national tourism policy. Further research employing quantitative approaches—for example, tourist-satisfaction surveys or input-output-based economic impact analysis—as well as in-depth case studies of individual tourism villages, is recommended to more precisely measure the economic, social, and environmental impacts of implementing the strategies proposed in this article.

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