

Local Wisdom-Based Tourism Development through Pasola Attraction in Sumba: An Innovative Approach

¹Calvin Ngguli Maramba, ²Arif Dwi Saputra, ³Siti Rochmi Lestari, ⁴Amelia Lintang

¹²³⁴Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata AMPTA Yogyakarta

¹calvinmaramba@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Developing tourism based on local wisdom is an important strategy in strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry. This research aims to explore the potential of Pasola cultural attraction in Sumba Regency as a tourism asset rooted in local wisdom. Using qualitative methods, this research analyzes the role of Pasola attraction in increasing tourist visits, as well as the social, economic and cultural impacts resulting from the management of this attraction. Data were collected through interviews with tourism stakeholders, traditional leaders and local communities, as well as direct observation to Pasola attraction. The results show that Pasola is not only a unique cultural attraction but also has great potential in attracting domestic and international tourists. However, Pasola tourism development faces challenges in terms of cultural preservation, infrastructure and sustainable destination management. Therefore, an innovative approach involving the active participation of local communities and culture-based marketing strategies is the key to maximizing Pasola's potential as the main driver of tourism growth in Sumba. This research provides practical recommendations for local governments and tourism actors to improve the management and promotion of Pasola effectively without sacrificing its inherent cultural values.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with very rich cultural diversity, which is the main attraction in the tourism sector (Ministry of Tourism, 2021). This is supported by research from Prabhawati (2019), which shows that local cultural diversity in Indonesia is a valuable asset that attracts tourists, especially in the context of cultural tourism. One of the unique cultural attractions that has great potential to be developed as a tourism destination is Pasola, a tradition typical of Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara (Keremata, 2023). According to (Wali 2023), Pasola is a tradition of horse-riding war carried out by the Sumba people to welcome the planting season and as a form of respect for their ancestors. This tradition is not only a traditional activity, but also part of the cultural heritage that attracts local and foreign tourists (Wibawati & Prabhawati, 2022). With the increasing interest in authentic cultural tourism experiences, it is important to understand how Pasola can play a more significant role in tourism development in Sumba Regency.

Sumba Regency, as one of the areas that maintains the Pasola tradition, has great tourism potential due to its cultural and natural attractions (Baru et al 2024). Research conducted by (Nugraha et al 2021) emphasized that the uniqueness of the Pasola attraction, which displays horse riding skills and strong cultural elements, can attract tourists looking for an authentic experience rich in cultural values. According to research (Sharen 2023), authentic cultural attractions such as Pasola are not only able to attract tourists but also contribute significantly to local economic growth. Therefore, to maximize the economic benefits of the Pasola tradition, efforts are needed to make it one of the main attractions that can increase tourist visits to Sumba Regency. Thus, Sumba Regency has a great opportunity to develop Pasola as a tourist magnet that can drive the local economy through the tourism sector.

Cultural attractions such as Pasola require appropriate strategies in management and promotion so that they can become an important part of sustainable tourism development (Afifa & Nugroho 2022). In this context, research conducted by (Jocom et al 2022) shows that the involvement of local governments and local communities is very important to ensure that cultural attractions such as Pasola can be managed in a sustainable manner. In addition, the challenge faced in preserving this attraction is how to maintain original cultural values while adapting them to the needs of the modern tourism industry (Mulyono et al 2024). According to (Nadya et al 2024), modernization is often a threat to the preservation of tradition, so policies are needed that can maintain a balance between cultural preservation and tourism development. Therefore, the success of Pasola management is highly dependent on collaboration between stakeholders to achieve sustainable tourism goals, which not only increase the number of tourist visits but also maintain local cultural values (Husin et al, 2022).

This study aims to analyze the role of Pasola as a cultural attraction in increasing tourism in Sumba Regency (Maranisya, U. 2024). Previous research by (Djaha, I., & Darmastuti, R. 2020) revealed that the development of local cultural attractions, such as Pasola, is very important in increasing the attractiveness of cultural tourism in Indonesia. Furthermore, research (Prabhawati, A. 2019) highlights the importance of synergy between the community, government, and tourism actors in efforts to promote sustainable cultural tourism. With this understanding, this study will also provide input to stakeholders regarding effective strategies to increase the attractiveness of Pasola as well as the importance of synergy between cultural preservation and tourism development to achieve sustainable tourism in Sumba Regency (Ismayanti, M. 2021). (Ariyani et al, 2020) emphasizes that collaboration between stakeholders is the key to achieving successful tourism development that focuses on cultural preservation and improving the local economy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Definition Of Pasola

Pasola is a traditional tradition typical of the Sumba community, East Nusa Tenggara. This match involves two groups of men throwing javelins at each other in a designated arena. In addition to being a cultural ritual, Pasola also has great potential in increasing tourism attraction in Sumba Regency. Existing literature shows that cultural attractions can contribute significantly to the development of local tourism. Pasola has deep cultural values. According to research by (Kami, Kanisius, et al 2024), Pasola is not just a game, but also a symbol of local wisdom, the identity of the Sumba community, and a way to celebrate the harvest. This ritual functions as a medium to strengthen social and spiritual relationships between humans and nature.

Pasola Potential in Tourism

In the context of tourism, Pasola has a unique appeal. Research by Choirunnisa, I. C., & Karmilah, M. (2022) shows that domestic and foreign tourists are interested in watching Pasola because of its uniqueness and cultural authenticity. This encourages an increase in tourist visits which can improve the local economy through the service and trade sectors.

Challenges in Developing Culture-Based Tourism

Despite its great potential, the development of culture-based tourism such as Pasola faces several challenges. Darmayasa, et al (2024) stated that the commercialization of Pasola can threaten the traditional values inherent in the ritual. Therefore, it is important to involve local communities in planning and development so that traditions are maintained.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive data analysis model to explore the role of Pasola as a cultural attraction in increasing tourism in Sumba Regency. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 15 informants consisting of members of indigenous communities, destination managers, local government officials, and tourists, as well as direct observation of the implementation of Pasola to understand cultural interactions and its appeal as a tourist attraction. Documentation in the form of reports, photos, and videos of the implementation of Pasola were also used as supporting data. Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction to filter relevant information, data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives and tables, and drawing conclusions based on the patterns and themes found, which were verified through triangulation of methods and sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of Pasola on Tourism in Sumba Regency

Pasola as a cultural attraction in Sumba Regency has a significant impact on the local tourism sector. Based on the results of interviews with local communities, tourism actors, and tourists, Pasola is considered one of the main attractions that attracts visitors from various regions, both domestic and international. This activity attracts thousands of tourists every year, especially when the Pasola event is held, which takes place routinely in several areas of West Sumba, such as Lamboya, Wanukaka, and Kodi. Observation results show that the number of visitors who come during the Pasola period has increased significantly. Tourists are not only interested in watching the match, but also to explore the culture and traditions inherent in Pasola, which are rarely found elsewhere. In addition, Pasola has also functioned as a "magnet" for other tourism activities. Tourists who come to see Pasola often visit other tourist attractions in Sumba, such as beaches, hills, and traditional villages, thus extending their stay in the area. This has a positive impact on the accommodation, transportation, culinary, and handicraft sectors.

Empowering Local Economy through Pasola

The impact of Pasola is not only limited to increasing the number of tourist visits, but also to empowering the local community's economy. Based on interviews with souvenir traders and tour guides, there was a significant increase in income due to tourist visits to watch Pasola. Local people are involved in various economic activities that support tourism, such as selling typical Sumba souvenirs, homestay accommodation, restaurants, and tour guide services. The income earned by the community from this tourism also supports their welfare. According to the data collected, several local entrepreneurs stated that they experienced an increase in income of 20-30% during the Pasola season. This is in line with the findings of Nissa, Mutya Aulia, et al (2024), which revealed that authentic cultural attractions can be a major driver in improving the local economy. In addition, local tourism actors, including tour guides, also stated that they received more training and experience in serving international tourists. This increase in human resource capacity also helps improve the quality of tourism services in Sumba, which in turn improves Sumba's image as an attractive tourist destination.

Pasola Promotion as a Tourism Attraction

Pasola not only acts as an attraction that attracts tourists, but also as an effective promotional tool to improve the image of Sumba Regency as a tourist destination. The results of interviews with tourism managers and policy makers show that Pasola has been in the spotlight of both national and international media. Various media, both print, digital, and social media, often highlight Pasola as a cultural attraction worth visiting. This

has increased Sumba's visibility among global tourists. According to Handayani et al (2021), Pasola promotion has succeeded in attracting more tourists from abroad, especially from Europe and Australia, who are interested in visiting Indonesia and enjoying an authentic cultural experience. The use of social media by local governments and tourism actors has also had a positive impact, where photos and videos of Pasola that went viral on platforms such as Instagram and YouTube attracted the attention of potential tourists. However, it is important to remember that this promotion must be carried out carefully so as not to over-commercialize Pasola, which could reduce the cultural value and spirituality of the event. Therefore, a balanced promotional policy is needed between attracting tourists and preserving traditions.

Challenges in Managing Pasola as a Tourist Attraction

Although Pasola has a positive impact on tourism and the local economy, this study also found several challenges in its management. One of the main challenges is commercialization that has the potential to threaten the original cultural values of Pasola. In interviews with indigenous people, several informants expressed concerns that the increasing number of tourists coming to watch Pasola could change the meaning of this tradition, which was originally carried out for spiritual purposes and respect for ancestors, to become more of a mere entertainment. In addition, another challenge is the infrastructure that is not yet fully adequate. Although Sumba has extraordinary natural beauty, accessibility to Pasola sites is still limited. Transportation, accommodation, and restaurant facilities that are not yet developed in several tourist areas are also obstacles for tourists who want to enjoy Pasola and other destinations in Sumba. Various parties, including local governments, communities, and tourism actors, need to work together to overcome this challenge. Sustainable infrastructure development and training for local communities to manage tourism wisely are essential to maintaining a balance between economic development and cultural preservation.

The Role of Government and Stakeholders in Pasola Management

Based on the results of interviews with policy makers, it was found that collaboration between local governments and local communities is very important in ensuring the sustainability of Pasola as a cultural attraction. Local governments have begun to make efforts to promote Pasola more professionally, including by holding cultural festivals involving tourists and local communities. However, more coordinated and planned management is needed to ensure that Pasola remains respected as part of the cultural heritage and is not only viewed as a tourist attraction. Local communities must also be given an understanding and training related to sustainable tourism management. This includes training in homestay management, tour guides, and the development of local products that can be sold as souvenirs. Community involvement in every stage of tourism development is essential to ensure that they receive sustainable economic and social benefits.

CONCLUSION

According to Sharen, (2024) Pasola, as a unique cultural tradition from Sumba, has been proven to have an important role in improving the tourism sector in Sumba Regency. As a unique cultural attraction, Pasola not only attracts tourists from all over the world, but also contributes significantly to empowering the local economy. This activity creates opportunities for local people to be involved in various economic sectors, such as accommodation, culinary, handicrafts, and tour guide services. However, challenges in managing Pasola as a tourist attraction remain, especially related to the potential for commercialization that can reduce the values of the original culture and the limitations of tourism infrastructure that need to be continuously improved. Therefore, collaboration between the government, community, and tourism actors is very important to ensure that Pasola can be managed wisely and sustainably. Overall, Pasola has great potential to continue to develop tourism in Sumba Regency, as long as there is a balanced effort between maintaining cultural sustainability and increasing the capacity of the tourism sector. With the right approach, Pasola will

not only be a sustainable tourist attraction, but also a major driver of the economic welfare of local people, while maintaining the cultural values inherent in this tradition.

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