

GREEN, HARMONY, AND HOPE: A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS MODELS IN SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE AND CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LIKUPANG, INDONESIA

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Abstract

The pursuit of sustainable tourism has become a central strategy in promoting long-term environmental preservation, cultural resilience, and inclusive economic development—especially in emerging tourism destinations such as Likupang, Indonesia, which has been designated as one of the government's Super Priority Tourism Destinations (DPSP). This study aims to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of sustainable business models implemented in Likupang and their contributions to the realization of quality tourism that balances ecological integrity, cultural preservation, and local community empowerment. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative interviews with key stakeholders (including local business owners, community leaders, and tourism authorities) and quantitative analysis of tourism performance indicators, the research identifies both achievements and gaps in current sustainability efforts. The findings reveal that while several tourism businesses have adopted environmentally conscious practices such as waste reduction, eco-friendly accommodations, and support for local products there remains a lack of integrated planning and capacity-building initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability. Furthermore, cultural commodification and unequal benefit distribution pose challenges to social harmony and equity. The study highlights the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, clear policy frameworks, and adaptive governance to enhance the resilience of the tourism sector in Likupang. It also underscores the role of culturally grounded business practices in reinforcing the identity and participation of local communities. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development in developing regions by offering practical insights for designing tourism models that prioritize the triple bottom line: people, planet, and profit.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Business Model Evaluation, DPSP Likupang, Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Preservation

Introduction

Tourism development in Indonesia has entered a new era with the establishment of Super Priority Tourism Destinations (Destinasi Pariwisata Super Prioritas/DPSP) by the Indonesian government. One of the highlighted regions is Likupang, located in North Minahasa Regency, North Sulawesi. Likupang is renowned for its natural marine beauty, cultural diversity, and its designation as one of the five DPSPs has accelerated infrastructure development and business opportunities. However, the growth of tourism must be aligned with sustainable practices to ensure environmental preservation, social harmony, and cultural resilience.

Sustainable tourism emphasizes a balance between economic benefits, ecological protection, and community well-being. It also requires the integration of environmentally responsible and culturally inclusive business models. In the context of Likupang, these models are expected to empower local communities, preserve indigenous cultural expressions, and implement environmentally friendly practices. Nevertheless, despite the positive intentions behind the DPSP initiative, this study finds that the actual implementation of sustainable business models in Likupang faces substantial challenges.

From the field research and stakeholder interviews indicate that businesses and community-based enterprises in Likupang are not yet operating optimally. Several factors contribute to this stagnation, including frequent changes in government leadership and policy direction, particularly within the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. These transitions have disrupted program continuity and caused confusion among local stakeholders.

Furthermore, development efforts in Likupang face a range of implementation challenges, such as limited capacity of local human resources, inadequate integration between public and private sectors, and the

commercialization of local culture without adequate protective mechanisms. These issues highlight the urgent need for a comprehensive evaluation of existing sustainable business models and the identification of concrete strategies for improvement. This study aims to address this need and contribute to the design of more effective and inclusive models for sustainable tourism development.

To understand the impact of DPSP development on tourism dynamics, this study examined the trend of domestic and international tourist visits to Likupang from 2019 to 2024. Based on data sourced from BPS (Badan Pusat Statistik) Sulawesi Utara and the North Minahasa Regency Tourism Office, there has been a notable fluctuation influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent policy interventions.



Figure 1
Trends in Tourists Arrivals in Likupang (2024)

As shown in the figure above, the number of tourist visits upward trend resumed in response to the government's recovery strategies and increased marketing of Likupang as a DPSP. Domestic tourists constituted the majority of visitors, although international arrivals have also shown signs of recovery in 2023 and 2024.

These patterns suggest that the DPSP designation has positively influenced Likupang's visibility and accessibility, but consistent efforts in destination management and service quality are essential to sustain long-term growth and maintain a balance between quantity and quality of tourism.

Methods

This research utilizes a mixed-methods approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques. The qualitative component consists of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including local business owners, community leaders, tourism officers, and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and academia. A total of 25 informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in tourism-related activities.

Quantitative data were gathered from government reports, tourism performance statistics (2019-2024), and survey questionnaires distributed to 100 local residents and tourists. The survey measured perceptions of sustainability practices, community participation, cultural preservation, and the environmental impact of tourism activities.

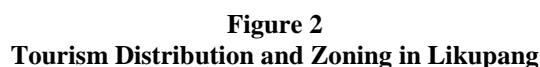
In addition, field observations were conducted in key tourism areas within Likupang, including Pulisan, Marinsow, and Bahoi villages. Documentation and photographs were collected to support the analysis. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was employed to map the strategic position of Likupang as a sustainable destination.

All qualitative data were analyzed thematically, while quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics to identify trends and patterns. Triangulation of data sources ensured the validity and reliability of findings.

Results and Discussions

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the implementation of sustainable business models in the tourism development of Likupang. By integrating qualitative data from in-depth interviews and

Sustainable tourism development in Likupang is focused on several key zones that have been designated in the spatial planning and DPSP strategy. Based on participatory mapping and field observations, four main villages have been identified as priority intervention areas: Pulisan, Marinsow, Kinunang, and Maen. Each village holds unique tourism characteristics and distinct development potential.



Kinunang Village offers both land and marine-based attractions. The Kinunang beach coastline remains relatively untouched, providing a tranquil beach experience away from tourist crowds. Additionally, Larata Hill, which stretches between Kinunang and Pulisan, can also be accessed from this village, offering alternative hiking routes and potential for nature-based cross-village trekking tours.

Maen Village is characterized by a smaller tourism footprint, with the Casa Baio Resort serving as its main tourism facility. The resort blends natural aesthetics with eco-friendly architecture, targeting mid-to-high-end visitors. While Maen lacks public beaches comparable to Pulisan or Marinsow, its seclusion and quiet atmosphere position it as a potential retreat location in the broader Likupang tourism ecosystem.

This spatial mapping reveals that each village holds unique value propositions, yet remains underutilized due to lack of coordinated promotion, infrastructure investment, and sustainability planning. Integrated destination zoning and community-based tourism planning are crucial to harness the full potential of these areas while avoiding over-concentration in a single locale.

This section will discuss in depth the five main dimensions revealed by the research: sustainable business practices, institutional and governance challenges, community capacity and participation, cultural commodification issues, and proposed strategic frameworks to strengthen tourism sustainability in Likupang.

1. Evaluation of Sustainable Business Practices

The study found that several businesses in Likupang have adopted sustainability principles in their operations. Examples include the use of solar panels in homestays, waste sorting systems in resorts, and the promotion of local food products in restaurants. However, these efforts are often isolated and lack integration into a cohesive regional sustainability strategy. Table 1 below presents a comparative overview of business practices across different enterprises in Likupang.

Table 1 Comparative Overview of Business Practices

Business Type	Environmental Practice	Community Engagement	Financial Sustainability	Cultural Integration
Asoka Homestay	Solar panels, compost	Local ownership	Moderate	Traditional cuisine
Welcome Manado Wisata – Tour Operator	Low emission transport	Local guides involved	Inconsistent	Weak
Café Mini	No clear practice	Employs locals	Profitable	Local snacks

While some businesses demonstrate strong environmental awareness, there is a visible gap in cultural integration and long-term financial planning. Moreover, without regional coordination, these efforts fail to create significant collective impact.

2. Institutional and Governance Challenges

Field data indicate that changes in political leadership and ministerial direction significantly affect the sustainability of tourism development programs. Many local stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of continuity in policy implementation and insufficient communication between government and local actors. These challenges have led to disjointed project execution and unclear roles among stakeholders.

A recurring issue is the limited involvement of the private sector in policy-making processes. Although private entities play a crucial role in operationalizing sustainable tourism, their engagement in decision-making forums remains minimal. This disconnect inhibits synergy and reduces the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives.

3. Community Capacity and Participation

The study reveals that local communities show a strong willingness to participate in tourism but are hindered by limited access to training, financial capital, and information. Community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives exist, but many lack managerial competence and marketing skills. This is further exacerbated by the dominance of external investors who often marginalize local stakeholders in benefit distribution.

Stakeholder interviews highlight a common sentiment:

“Kami punya semangat, tapi tidak cukup dukungan. Kadang program datang, lalu hilang tanpa tindak lanjut.”

– Homestay Owner, Marinsow Village. This underscores the necessity of institutional support mechanisms that prioritize local empowerment through consistent and context-sensitive programming.

4. Cultural Commodification and Protection Mechanisms

An important finding of this study is the emerging trend of cultural commodification. Cultural performances and local traditions are increasingly packaged for tourist consumption without adequate consultation with the community. While tourism offers economic benefits, the absence of protective mechanisms for intangible cultural heritage threatens the authenticity and continuity of local identities.

For instance, traditional dances are often shortened or modified to suit tourist preferences, leading to the erosion of spiritual and social meanings. The lack of local regulation or cultural governance structures further compounds this problem.

5. Strategic Framework for Sustainable Tourism in Likupang

Based on the SWOT analysis, the following strategic framework is proposed by table 2:

Table 2 SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rich natural and cultural resources Government infrastructure support	Limited community capacity Lack of integrated planning
Opportunities	Threats
Growing market for eco and cultural tourism Digital marketing platforms	Cultural commodification Climate change Political instability

To address these dynamics, a multi-stakeholder governance model is recommended. This includes establishing a local tourism council that integrates representatives from government, private sector, academia, and community groups. Such a body can facilitate inclusive planning, conflict resolution, and continuous capacity building.

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