

Tourism Development in Merauke Regency, South Papua Province: Strengthening Physical Infrastructure for Local Economic Growth and Enchanting Tourist Attractions

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Abstract: This research aims to understand the impact of physical infrastructure development in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, on the tourism sector and local economic growth. It also aims to highlight the importance of tourism development in Merauke Regency as a development priority and to promote the exoticism and allure of its tourist attractions. To achieve the research objectives, observation techniques, interview techniques, and documentation were utilized for data collection from various stakeholders. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. Interviews were conducted during focus group discussions with 12 informants who were involved, including representatives from higher education institutions, the Tourism Office, the Industry and Trade Office, the Regional Revenue Office, the Labor Office, Traditional Leaders, Religious Figures, the Cooperative and SME Office, the Cultural Office, the Social Office, the Education Office, and NGOs. The research results indicate that tourism management based on local wisdom in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, requires intensive and professional improvement within the tourism sector. Tourism development in Merauke Regency necessitates a well-planned strategy that considers the uniqueness of its culture and natural resources while empowering the local community. Despite the significant tourism potential in Merauke Regency, challenges such as limited transportation access, insufficient information about tourist sites, and a lack of synergy between the government and tourism stakeholders still need to be addressed. These challenges prompt new considerations about how the development of physical infrastructure can impact the tourism sector and local economic growth in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. Through enhanced infrastructure, intensive tourism promotion, effective management, and strategy development based on local wisdom, Merauke Regency in Papua Province has the potential to become an attractive tourist destination, making a significant contribution to both the tourism sector and the national economy.

Keywords: Physical Infrastructure Development; Tourism Sector; Local Community Empowerment; Local Economic Growth; Education Office and NGOs; Local Economic Growth; Tourist Attractions.

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1. Introduction

The Papua Province allocates a budget for developing physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and airports. This is a crucial step in building Merauke Regency and enhancing the tourism sector in the region. With well-established infrastructure, the accessibility to tourist destinations in Merauke Regency will improve, leading to a positive impact on the growth of the tourism sector and the local economy [7]. Unfortunately, tourism hasn't been fully accommodated in the development priorities, considering the natural potential in Papua Province might diminish over time [30]. Interestingly, upon detailed examination,

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Papua receives only 41,425 foreign tourists. This number falls short of the Ministry of Tourism's target of attracting 20 million foreign tourists to Indonesia [6].

Tourists are more familiar with other tourist destinations outside of Papua Province, such as West Papua Province with its renowned Raja Ampat, Yogyakarta with its Borobudur Temple, and so on. This demonstrates that Papua Province hasn't gained much public recognition in terms of tourism promotion, particularly regarding its exoticism and attractions [28]. The presence of tourism in Papua Province becomes crucial when tourists flock to a particular area, whether for leisure or business travel. This indicates that the region has instilled public trust that Papua Province is worthy of consideration as a place offering significant opportunities for people to visit [37]. Tourist visits to Papua are relatively small, as tourists prefer destinations like Bali, Jakarta, and Batam. The cost of transportation to Papua is high, making it cheaper for tourists to go to places like Singapore or Japan [31]. This statement is quite ironic, considering that Papua Province possesses abundant natural resources yet lacks proper management. If left unattended by the local government, tourism in Papua Province can become a thing of the past.

Java Island and Bali Island have become well-known tourist destinations both in Indonesia and around the world. The tourism potential in both of these islands has been recognized and prioritized in their development. Infrastructure on Java and Bali Islands has been well-developed, including adequate road networks, ports, and international airports. This has made accessibility to tourist destinations on these islands easier for both local and international tourists [1]. Java Island offers a variety of tourist destinations, such as the Borobudur Temple in Yogyakarta, Taman Safari Indonesia in Bogor, and the Ijen Crater in Banyuwangi. Bali Island is renowned for its beautiful beaches like Kuta, Nusa Dua, and Sanur, as well as its distinctive culture and traditional ceremonies. Strong infrastructure and intensive tourism promotion have turned both islands into major tourist attractions [3]. In this context, Papua Province needs to learn from the experiences of Java and Bali Islands in tourism development. There should be an enhancement of infrastructure, more active tourism promotion, and effective management of the natural and cultural potential [38]. By taking these steps, Papua Province has the potential to become an attractive tourist destination and make a significant contribution to the tourism sector and the national economy.

The management of tourism in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, currently requires intensive and professional improvement. The low number of tourist visitors to Merauke Regency poses a challenge for the local government to develop the existing tourism potential [21]. The tourism sector demands a well-planned development strategy to ensure that the potential can be optimally harnessed. The region's potential becomes a vital asset that needs thorough exploration, encompassing both cultural advantages and natural resources, allowing tourism to become a driving force for local economic growth [27]. Tourism management in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, should also focus on the region's uniqueness and identity. For example, innovative processing of eucalyptus oil can hold domestic market value, the Wasur National Park in Merauke with its diverse mammal species and implementing up-to-date tourism industry management concepts for Wasur National Park to enhance its appeal through entertaining attractions. The tourism sector has proven its ability to significantly contribute to national economic development as an industry that generates foreign exchange [4].

Therefore, the management of tourism in Merauke Regency should be carried out while respecting local wisdom. This approach can lead to improved facilities and infrastructure, with the condition that tourist sites offer attractions, accessibility, adequate infrastructure, and empower the local community [22]. These elements must be fulfilled for tourism destinations in Merauke Regency to flourish, encompassing attractions, accessibility, infrastructure, and community empowerment [2]. Despite having great tourism potential, Papua Province still faces several challenges, such as limited and expensive transportation access, lack of appealing tourism product packaging, minimal facilities at tourist destinations, underutilization of information technology, and inadequate synergy between the government and tourism stakeholders in the region. There are numerous worthy tourist spots in Merauke Regency, but the lack of information about these places results in low visitor numbers. Therefore, there is a need for infrastructure improvement, effective tourism promotion systems, and identifying the positive impacts of tourism on foreign exchange earnings, government revenue, prices, benefit distribution, job opportunities, ownership, and control [18]; [8]. This research highlights that tourism has the potential to make a significant contribution to the economic sector and regional development.

Analyzing the positive impact of tourist attractions on employment opportunities for the local community. Tourism activities create new job opportunities that benefit the local population, increase their income, and have a positive impact on regional development [9]. Emphasizing the importance of tourism development in Merauke Regency based on its natural wealth, cultural uniqueness, and untapped tourism potential. This research provides insights into the pathway of tourism development in Merauke Regency, focusing on promotion, accessibility, and the development of tourism areas. It underscores the need for creativity and innovative ideas in the tourism industry to create new forms and types of tourism.

This research indicates that tourism development should involve creative and diverse professional experts to advance the tourism industry and enhance destination appeal [23]. It emphasizes the importance of tourism management based on local wisdom in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. This research proposes a tourism development strategy that doesn't solely rely

on regulations but also fosters innovation through strengthening regulations and tourism management that considers local uniqueness and wisdom.

Tourism development that involves and empowers local communities as rightful custodians of ancestral land has significant benefits. This approach enables the sustainable management of cultural heritage and natural resources while providing the community with direct economic opportunities. Through their active participation in the tourism industry, local communities can increase their income, reduce poverty, and preserve both culture and the environment. This approach promotes inclusivity, fairness, and sustainability in tourism development.

Linking tourism development with the local political environment. This research indicates that public policies in the tourism sector will be influenced by the political context of the place where those policies are implemented [32]. A stable and supportive political environment will positively impact the performance of tourism policies.

The novelty of this research lies in analyzing the impact of physical infrastructure on the tourism sector, resulting in a deeper understanding of how specific physical infrastructure development, such as roads, bridges, and airports in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, affects the tourism sector. It offers fresh insights into the relationship between physical infrastructure and local economic growth through the tourism sector [24]. This research can provide new perspectives on how tourism can serve as a driving force in promoting the exoticism and attractions of Merauke Regency, Papua Province, and can also introduce new ideas for tourism promotion and marketing strategies [39].

The identified research objectives are to analyze the impact of physical infrastructure development in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, on the tourism sector and local economic growth. Additionally, the research aims to highlight the importance of tourism development in Papua Province as a developmental priority and to promote the exoticism and allure of its tourist attractions.

2. Method

The method used in this research is descriptive analysis with a qualitative approach. It involves techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation to depict the tourism conditions and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that Merauke Regency, Papua Province, faces. The goal of this method is to create a tourism development scheme in Merauke Regency, Papua Province.

The research was conducted at the Forest Department and Tourism Department in Merauke Town, specifically at the Wasur National Park Office, Bokem, Matara Beach, and Wendu Beach. These locations were chosen based on the consideration of natural tourism potentials in Merauke Town that are not yet well-managed due to still being under customary land ownership. Interviews were conducted during Focus Group Discussions (FGD) involving 12 participants, including representatives from universities, the Forest Department, the Tourism Department, the Industry and Trade Department, the Regional Revenue Department, the Labor Department, Traditional Leaders, Religious Figures, the Cooperative and SME Department, the Cultural Department, the Social Department, the Education Department, and NGOs. Secondary data were obtained from the internet, libraries, and previous studies, as discussed in the background of the problem and the discussion sections of this study.

The data analysis technique used is the SWOT Analysis. SWOT Analysis is an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that a company possesses and faces. SWOT Analysis is a method used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in a specific business situation or environment. In the context of the research you described, SWOT analysis is employed to depict the tourism conditions in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, and to identify factors that can influence the development of tourism in the area [25]. Here is the SWOT analysis that can be derived from this research:

2.1. Strength

Abundant natural potential: Papua Province is rich in natural resources. The Wasur National Park, located in Papua, Indonesia, is one of the significant national parks in the country. This national park holds numerous astonishing and diverse natural potentials. These include beautiful beaches such as Matara Beach and Wendu Beach.

Cultural diversity: Papua Province also boasts unique and diverse cultures, which can be appealing to tourists. Here are a few examples:

- **Biodiversity:** Wasur is renowned for its remarkable biodiversity. The national park serves as a sanctuary for many rare species, including the Birds of Paradise, mammals like pangolins, tree kangaroos, and lowland anoa. Additionally, a diverse range of insects, reptiles, and amphibians inhabit this area.
- **Wetland Ecosystem:** Wasur encompasses vast wetland ecosystems, including swamps, rivers, and small lakes. This ecosystem provides an ideal habitat for various wildlife species such as crocodiles, freshwater turtles, and rare fish like arapaima and snakehead fish.
- **Wetlands and Mangrove Swamps:** The national park also includes significant wetlands and mangrove swamps. Mangroves are coastal forests that grow along shorelines, serving as coastal buffers and providing a habitat for various fish, birds, and marine organisms.
- **Wildlife:** Wasur is home to a diverse array of wildlife. Apart from the iconic Birds of Paradise, there are also endemic Papua birds like cassowaries, Papua eagles, and Kuskus birds. Among the other mammals are wild pigs, kangaroos, and various primate species like long-tailed macaques.
- **Local Culture:** In addition to its natural beauty, Wasur holds rich potential in local culture. The national park is inhabited by native Papua tribes, such as the Marind and Asmat tribes, who uphold their traditions and culture. Visitors can learn and experience their unique way of life traditional arts and crafts.
- **Ecotourism and Education:** Wasur offers enticing opportunities for ecotourism and education. Visitors can partake in activities such as forest walks, riverboat rides, and birdwatching to observe rare birds. Moreover, the national park provides educational programs to understand the importance of nature conservation and sustainability.
- **With this diverse natural potential, the Wasur National Park is an appealing destination for nature enthusiasts and researchers to explore the biodiversity and natural beauty of Papua. This includes beautiful beaches such as Matara Beach and Wendu Beach.**

Involvement of various parties: The participation of various entities such as universities, government agencies, traditional leaders, and non-governmental organizations can contribute to the development of tourism in the region

2.2. Weaknesses

Lack of management: The natural tourism potential in Merauke Town is not well-managed, mainly due to challenges related to customary land ownership.

Limited infrastructure: There are limitations in infrastructure supporting tourism, such as restricted transportation access and a lack of supporting tourism facilities.

2.3. Opportunities

Increasing tourism interest: The demand for nature tourism is on the rise, and Papua Province has the potential to attract tourists seeking authentic natural experiences.

Regulatory and management development: With a focus on regulatory and management aspects, there are opportunities to enhance tourism management in Papua Province, including addressing customary land ownership issues and improving supporting infrastructure.

2.4. Threats

Political and security instability: Threats to tourism can arise from political and security instability in the Papua region.

Competition with other destinations: Papua Province must compete with other tourist destinations to attract visitors.

The distinguishing aspect between the two lies in the outcomes generated after the analysis. Qualitative SWOT produces information about Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T) for the analyzed product or business. On the other hand, modified or quantitative SWOT yields information related to S, W, O, and T, formulation of strategies, alternative strategy choices, prioritization of alternative strategies, and the best strategy that can be chosen and implemented.

Following this mapping, the authors create a development pathway for tourism based on the tourism development strategy in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. The focus of this tourism pathway is on regulatory and management aspects. These are the aspects that have been the catalysts for the tourism issues in Merauke Regency, Papua Province.

3. Result and Discussion

Management of tourism potential sites is a significant agenda in the development of tourism in Merauke Regency. The goal is to create tourism that aligns with the expectations of the community, being safe, comfortable, and economically accessible. The contribution of the tourism sector to the economy of Merauke Regency in Papua Province remains low despite its substantial tourism potential. One of the main reasons for the low number of visits by both foreign and domestic tourists to Papua is the challenge of transportation costs to reach tourist locations. High costs and difficult transportation access pose constraints for tourists intending to visit Merauke Regency. In alignment with the research objectives and the prevailing tourism conditions in Merauke Regency, the study can provide a deeper understanding of the impact of physical infrastructure development in Merauke Regency on the tourism sector and local economic growth [11]. Furthermore, the research can also underscore the importance of tourism development in Papua Province, including Merauke Regency, as a developmental priority, utilizing local advantages and considering factors of accessibility and affordable costs for tourists. Thus, the research could serve as a starting point in formulating the impact of physical infrastructure development in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, on the tourism sector and local economic growth while highlighting the significance of tourism development in Papua Province as a developmental priority and promoting its exoticism and attractive tourist offerings. Based on comparative data concerning infrastructure development, the tourism sector, and local economic growth are as follows:

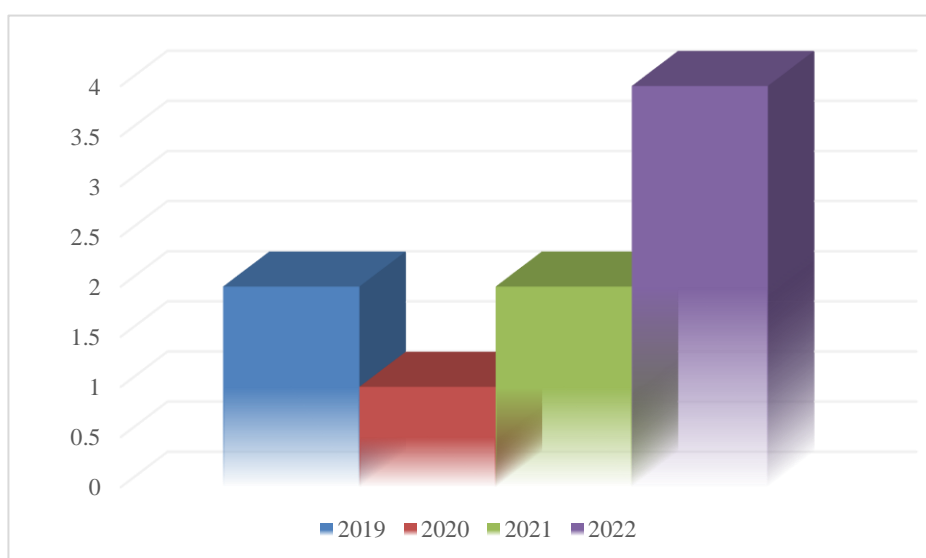


Figure 1: Infrastructure Development

Source: Merauke Regency Regional Development Plan, Papua Province, 2019

Table 1: Development of Infrastructure in Merauke Regency

Year	Number of Projects	Investment (in billion Rupiah)	Tourism Impact	Impact on Local Economic Growth
2019	2	500	Increased accessibility to tourist attractions, leading to an increase in the number of tourists.	Increased income from the tourism sector local business growth.
2020	1	400	Improved maritime accessibility to tourist attractions, boosting marine tourism.	Increased tourist visits and growth in transportation and hospitality businesses.
2021	2	600	Enhanced healthcare facilities improved safety and comfort for tourists.	Improved quality of healthcare services, growth in the healthcare sector businesses.
2022	4	1500	Increased accommodation capacity and growth in tourist visits.	Increased revenue from the hotel sector and growth in restaurant businesses.

Above is Figure 1 and Table 1, a comparison of the development of physical infrastructure in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, to the tourism sector and local economic growth from 2019 to 2022. The development of physical infrastructure in Merauke Regency from 2019 to 2022 experienced fluctuations every year. In 2019, there was an increase of 2 projects that generated around 500 billion Rupiah. And in 2020, there was a decrease or a total of 1 project that resulted in approximately 400 billion Rupiah. In 2021, there was an increase of 2 projects that generated around 500 billion Rupiah. And in 2022, there was a much larger increase or a total of 4 projects that generated around 1500 billion Rupiah. Table 1 compares the development of physical infrastructure in Merauke Regency from 2019 to 2022. It also includes the investments made and the impacts of development on the tourism sector and local economic growth. By highlighting the importance of tourism development in Papua Province, this table demonstrates how the development of physical infrastructure can promote the exoticism and attractiveness of tourism and contribute to local economic growth.

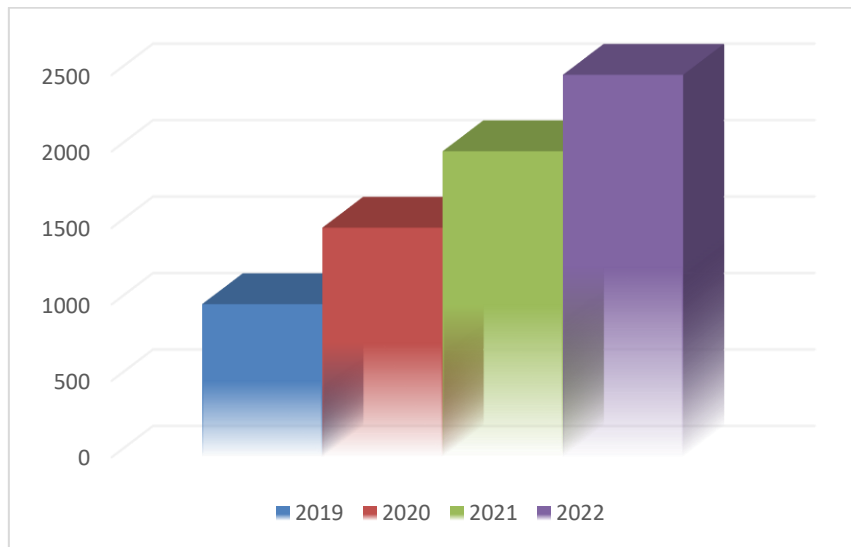


Figure 2: Tourism Sector (Number of Tourists)
Source: Merauke Regency Regional Development Plan, Papua Province, 2019

Table 2: Tourism Sector in Merauke Regency

Year	Number of tourists	Income (in billion Rupiah)	Impact of Physical Infrastructure	Impact on Local Economic Growth
2019	1000	50	Improved accessibility to tourist attractions	Increase in income from the tourism sector, growth of local businesses
2020	1500	75	Increased maritime accessibility to tourist attractions	Rise in tourist visits, growth of transportation and hospitality businesses
2021	2000	100	Enhanced healthcare facilities, safety, and tourist comfort	Enhancement of healthcare service quality, growth of healthcare sector businesses
2022	2500	125	Increase in accommodation capacity and supporting tourist facilities	Growth in revenue from the tourism sector, expansion of restaurant businesses

Figure 2 and Table 2 compare the tourism sector in Merauke Regency, a comparison of the Tourism Sector (Number of Tourists) in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, against Physical Infrastructure and Local Economic Growth from 2019 to 2022. The Tourism Sector in Merauke Regency experienced an increase each year from 2019 to 2022. In 2019, there was an increase of 1,000 tourists. In 2020, there was an increase of 1,500 tourists. In 2021, there was an increase of 2,000 tourists. In 2022, there

was an increase of 2,500 tourists. Table 2 presents the comparison of the tourism sector in Merauke Regency from 2019 to 2022. This table provides information about the number of visiting tourists, the revenue generated from the tourism sector, as well as the impact of physical infrastructure development on the tourism sector and local economic growth. With the increasing number of tourists and revenue in the tourism sector each year, along with the positive impact of physical infrastructure development, this table highlights the importance of developing the tourism sector as a development priority and an effort to promote the exoticism and attractiveness of Merauke Regency, Papua Province.

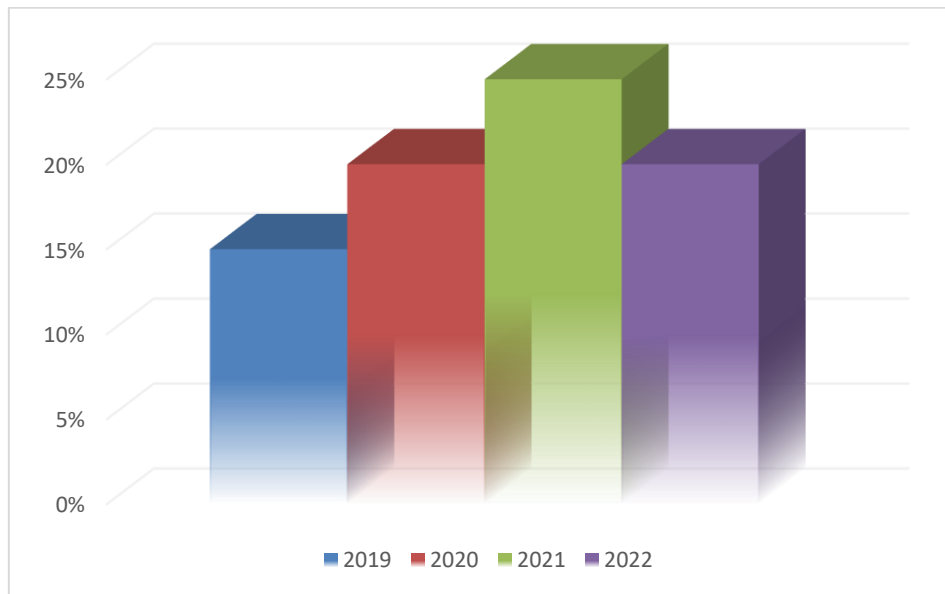


Figure 3: Local Economic Growth Sector

Source: Merauke Regency Regional Development Plan, Papua Province, 2019

Table 3: Tourism Sectors in Merauke Regency

Year	Revenue (in billion Rupiah)	Local Economic Growth
2019	500	15%
2020	600	20%
2021	750	25%
2022	900	40%

Figure 3 and Table 3 of Local Economic Growth in Merauke Regency are here. Figure 3 and Table 3 present the local economic income in Merauke Regency from 2019 to 2022, along with the percentage of local economic growth compared to the previous year. In 2019, the local economic income was 500 billion Rupiah. In 2020, there was a growth of 20%, with income reaching 600 billion Rupiah. In 2021, there was a growth of 25%, with income reaching 750 billion Rupiah. And in 2022, there was a further growth of 40%, with income reaching 900 billion Rupiah. This table provides an overview of the local economic growth in Merauke Regency over the past four years.

Inadequate infrastructure, in essence, can slow a region's economic growth. Road access, infrastructure, human resources, and tourism laws are just few of the areas that have been neglected in the name of tourism development. Moreover, the lack of upkeep for existing facilities and inadequate education and training supplied to employees and managers in the area continue to constrain the development of tourism attractions. This highlights the significance of the facilities within tourism destinations as draws for visitors [19]. Second, local tourist growth is profoundly affected by the policies of the Merauke Regency Government in Papua Province. Nganjuk Regency's tourism industry has been hampered by the lack of local rules outlining the region's strategy for developing its tourism industry. Mojokerto Regency is another case in point since they used three techniques (attraction development, promotion, and business encouragement) to increase tourism in their region. These studies provide confirmation that municipal governments should not overlook the tourism potential in their areas [40].

Similarly, empirical studies have shown that the tourism industry in Papua Province's Merauke Regency is receiving a much smaller share of government funding for development than other sectors like education and healthcare. In this era of special autonomy, many suggested projects have struggled to get off the ground since the tourism industry has not been identified as a major growth priority. Because of the exceptionally low number of tourists, the Merauke Regency in Papua Province has placed an exceedingly low priority for development. Therefore, the tourism industry in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, is not given much attention. In order to accommodate planned initiatives with the most beneficial impact in accordance with priority scales, prioritisation is an essential requirement that must be met. Assessing regional potential, including community demands, and thinking about other factors from sociopolitical, technological, participative, and policy perspectives are all part of this [17].

Moreover, the Merauke Regency in Papua Province has problems due to its outdated tourism promotion system. The lack of proper promotion and innovation in the tourism industry may be traced back to the local government's failure to place tourism at the top of its development agenda. As a result, there isn't enough money to properly develop tourism items for advertising and promotion. Tabanan has the potential to attract tourists in two ways: through its cultural offerings and through its natural settings, which might be developed into ecotourism hotspots. The failure to market these talents, however, is plain to see. This means that tourism marketing should unambiguously highlight the area's greatest strengths [29]. Attractive infrastructure and facilities within tourism locations are essential for attracting and retaining visitors. Several methods for capitalising on the tourism industry have been put into practise in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, as part of ongoing tourism development policies and projects. These plans are created by making the most of current assets, funds, and infrastructure in order to maximise tourism's potential. One respondent from the Merauke Regency Tourism Office in Papua Province said that the province's policies largely centre on two initiatives: the promotion of tourist attractions and the development of new ones. Local government funding has a role in the development and implementation of such initiatives or programmes [33].

Local governments have begun to engage with relevant stakeholders, such as travel agencies, hospitality services, and other relevant parties, by encouraging communication and collaboration in the development and promotion of tourism programmes, and by preparing skilled human resources in the field of tourism. Cooperation of this kind is essential to improving the standard of Papua Province's tourist industry. The Papua Provincial Government's strategy makes sense, as tourism growth requires participation from a wide range of parties, including stakeholders in the tourism sector. Therefore, it is important to maximise the contributions of all relevant parties by developing regulations that might improve these tourism products. There are several moving parts, including but not limited to the government, communities, and the corporate sector, that must all work together in order to strengthen tourist rules.

The results of the interviews show that the administration is serious about taking care of the popular tourist spots in their areas. The tourism hotspots of Wasur National Park Headquarters, Bokem, Matara Beach, and Wendu Beach are all undergoing renovations. Some places still need work, although many of the roads leading to popular tourist spots have been upgraded. The government has not yet made all of them ready to be visited by the public [26]. Even if tourism in Papua is not a top priority for planners, its presence is critical for the protection of natural resources in the province's Merauke Regency [12]. The Central Government is responsible for the development of this tourist region, and the local government must completely support and commit to all of these initiatives. Putting the needs of the community ahead of those of certain industries or individuals is essential. The tourism industry in the Merauke Regency of Papua Province is expected to benefit from this. Therefore, this study's findings attribute the poor quality of tourism in the Merauke Regency of Papua Province to a lack of investment in, and attention to, the sector's inherent strengths. Empowering local populations as indigenous land rights holders [5] is one element contributing to the low quality of tourism, while the lack of services and infrastructure supporting the industry is another. Therefore, the following table provides a more in-depth plan for expanding the region's tourism infrastructure in the Merauke Regency of Papua Province.

Table 4: Internal and External Factors in Developing Natural Tourism Potential in Merauke Regency, Papua Province

Factors Internal	
Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
Abundance of natural tourist potential	Lack of tourism destination promotion
Availability of nature-themed festivals	High costs and limited transportation accessibility

Existence of scenic landscapes and cultural richness as natural tourist attractions	Lack of professional management for natural tourist sites
Factors External	
Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
Increasing number of tourists	Diminishing of local culture/wisdom values due to external cultures
Growing income for local communities	Increasing migration to Papua
Increase the number of Local Own-source Revenue.	Unstable security conditions

The next step in establishing policy plans for the development of natural tourist potential in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, is to take into account all of the important internal and external aspects as given in Table 4. Policy development options for the advancement of natural tourism potential are broken down into four distinct approaches, as shown in Table 2. The S-O strategy, the W-O strategy, the S-T strategy, and the W-T strategy. The following is a SWOT analysis of the information in the table above:

3.1. Strategy S – T (Strength - Threat)

First, this tactic aims to increase both the frequency and intensity of tourism advertising. Merauke Regency, Papua Province, is located in a prime spot for attracting visitors from all over the world, making it imperative that concerted efforts be made to promote tourism there. Research shows that in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, the only ways to promote tourism are through the distribution of pamphlets and booklets and the hosting of provincial and national culture and tourism events. There have also been attempts to use IT for promotion, however there are certain problems with using government-run websites [13], [14]. Merauke Regency in Papua Province has a lot of untapped tourist potential, but thanks to modern technology, it may now be showcased for the world to see. The Tourism Office's sources stressed the importance of green investment strategies and other environmentally conscious ideas to keep up with these developments [41]. (Table 5).

Table 5: SWOT Matrix for Tourism Development Strategy in Merauke Regency, Papua Province

INTERNAL	STRENGTHS: Having natural tourism potential. Availability of natural attractions. Unique local culture compared to other regions in Indonesia, especially in terms of dance culture and love for nature.	WEAKNESS High transportation costs between regions and lack of supporting facilities such as roads, hotels, and local tours
EXTERNAL		
OPPORTUNITY An increasing number of tourists Increasing community income Increasing Local Own-source Revenue	STRATEGY S -O: Developing and enhancing the professional management quality of natural tourism products. Designing an annual management plan for sustainable nature tourism festival activities.	STRATEGY W-O: Improving both the breadth and depth of tourism advertising. Promoting the growth of ecotourism for its potential economic impact (multiplier effect).

THREATS	STRATEGY S -T:	STRATEGY W -T:
Defeat of indigenous values by dominant Western civilization. Migration to Papua is on the rise. Conditions of insecurity	Protecting indigenous knowledge and practises. Data organisation for managing population growth and migration.	Keeping natural landmarks in good repair so they don't disappear or get destroyed. Facilitating visitors' feelings of safety in Papua.

Secondly, encouraging the development of natural tourist potential can have an economic impact (multiplier effect). The strategy for developing natural tourist potential is also aimed at ensuring that the management of these attractions can create economic impacts through a ripple effect. Thus, the economic benefits are experienced by the local community managing the tourist sites and by various economic stakeholders such as food vendors, souvenir sellers, hospitality services, transportation services, and more. This collective effort is essential for advancing tourism in Merauke Regency, Papua.

3.2. Strategy S – T (Strength - Threats)

Strategies sourced from strengths and threats involve creating approaches that utilize internal environmental strengths to address external threats in tourism development in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. The strategies implemented are as follows:

Firstly, preserving local culture and wisdom values. As the number of tourists entering Merauke Regency, Papua Province, increases, balancing this with preserving cultural values within the community is essential. This is achieved by maintaining and upholding local cultural traditions and wisdom. The influence of global culture has become remarkably strong in recent times, making it crucial to protect local culture from fading away. Therefore, a strategy to preserve local culture through the continuous execution of cultural festivals, as already initiated, is imperative.

Secondly, organizing demographic data related to the growing migration flow. The development of the tourism sector in a region inevitably impacts migration patterns. Therefore, it becomes necessary to establish stricter regulations regarding the entry and exit of individuals in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. Allowing unchecked migration could negatively affect the stability of the local community's way of life.

3.3. Strategy W – T (Weakness - Threats)

Strategies derived from weaknesses and threats involve creating approaches that minimize weaknesses originating from the internal environment and are also utilized to mitigate threats from the external environment in developing natural tourism potential in Merauke Regency, Papua Province. The strategies implemented are as follows:

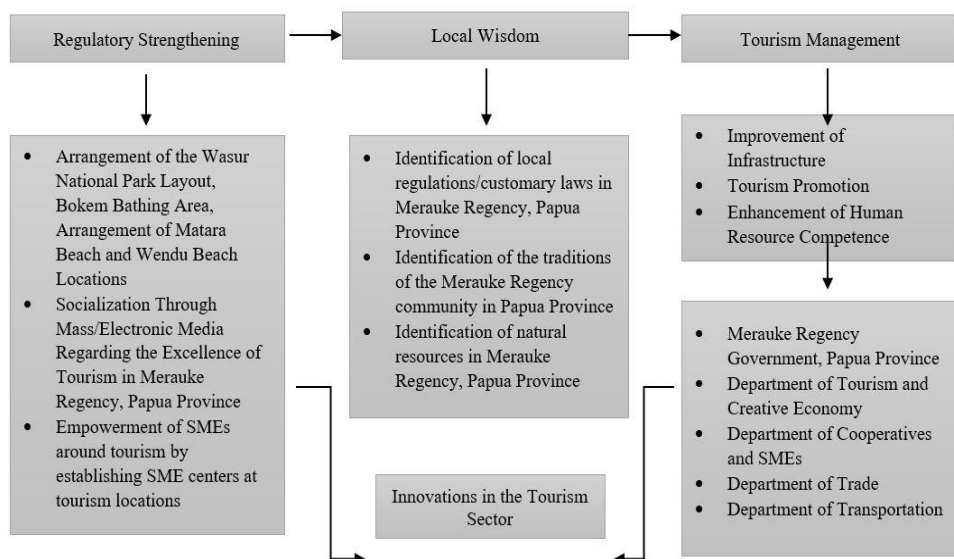


Figure 4: Flow of Strategy for Identifying Tourism Development in Merauke Regency, Papua Province

Firstly, Limited infrastructure: This strategy involves the development of tourism infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and well-maintained airports. This weakness can be addressed by increasing investments in tourism infrastructure development to enhance accessibility to Merauke Regency. This will improve accessibility for both local and international tourists.

Secondly, Limited trained human resources: This strategy involves the development of education and training programs to enhance the quality of human resources involved in the tourism industry in Merauke Regency [15]. This weakness can be addressed by strengthening collaborations with relevant educational and training institutions and conducting skills training and development programs for the local community [35]; [16].

Thirdly, it makes visitors to Merauke Regency, Papua feel safer. In Papua, security has long been a major concern. Therefore, a plan is required to ensure that tourists to Merauke Regency, Papua, feel secure during their stay. To counteract this, security checkpoints should be installed at strategic locations so that tourists' movements can be tracked in real time. The current situation in Merauke Regency, Papua Province, displays a shortage of protection stations at each natural tourism area [20].

Figure 4 depicts the author's proposed SWOT-based approach for the growth of the tourism industry in Papua Province. It is important to seek out indigenous perspectives before launching a tourism development project. Because of the continued relevance of indigenous knowledge, this attitude is crucial. This means that domestic and international tourists alike will have rules to follow based on the local culture's extensive restrictions. Tourism management is essential to the development of tourism and should not be separated from it. The difficulty comes from needing to implement more expert tourism management [34]. The initiatives range from focusing on tourism infrastructure and facility improvement to providing human resources and promoting tourism via the use of electronic and traditional media. The goal of these initiatives is to improve the general level of trust in society on a global and national scale. Facilities and infrastructure must be optimised in order to facilitate tourism growth [36].

4. Conclusion

The results presented provide useful information for the administration of Merauke Regency's and Papua Province's tourist potential. High and difficult-to-obtain transportation costs are the primary hindrance to the region's tourism growth, leading to a small pool of potential visitors from both near and far. Tourists are discouraged from visiting the area because of a number of factors, including a lack of accessibility, excessive prices, insufficient advertising, a lack of well-managed attractions, and dilapidated infrastructure. With a focus on local excellence and cheap accessibility, tourist development in Papua Province, particularly Merauke Regency, emerges as a priority on the development agenda. By working together, researchers and industry leaders in Merauke can learn more about how improvements to the city's physical infrastructure impact the city's tourism industry and its economy. Tourism marketing and product development must be stepped up to complement more impressive sights and attractions. Merauke Regency and Papua Province continue to benefit greatly from government, local community, and private sector collaboration aimed at enhancing the quality of the tourism industry. The contributions of various interested parties are essential to the growth of the tourism industry. Merauke's municipal government must be actively involved in the protection and upkeep of existing tourist destinations, as well as the provision of assistance and dedication to tourism development. Because of insufficient investment in infrastructure and the failure to fully empower local people as customary landowners, the tourism industry in Merauke is unable to live up to its full potential. To overcome obstacles and propel the expansion of the tourism industry in Merauke and Papua Province, a comprehensive, long-term plan that is grounded in the community is essential. Accessibility and affordability must be prioritised in this approach, and the local government must show its full support and dedication to the tourism industry for this plan to be successful.

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