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The impact of tourism on the sustainability of Gili Trawangan as a natural tourist destination

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Abstract

Purpose – This article analyzes the impact of tourism on Gili Trawangan's sustainability, focusing on natural resources and the local community.

Methodology/Design/Approach – The research uses library research and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to collect data from relevant articles and journals.

Findings – Tourism enhances Gili Trawangan's natural resources, such as beaches and coral reefs, providing economic benefits and job opportunities in sectors like accommodation and transportation. Infrastructure improvements have also been made. However, over-tourism puts pressure on resources and the environment.

Originality/Value – This study offers a balanced view of tourism's impact and stresses the need for careful management to ensure sustainable development while benefiting the local economy.

Keywords tourism, sustainability, environmental sustainability

Introduction

Gili Trawangan comes from the language of the Sasak tribe, where 'Gili' means small island, and 'Trawangan' or 'Terangan' is interpreted as a place where turtles lay their eggs. therefore tourists easily find turtles while snorkelling (Kemalasari, 2020). Gili Trawangan is one of the three Gili islands located in Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Gili Trawangan Island is a small island with biological resources in the form of coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangrove forests (Fitria, et al., 2023). As one of the natural tourist destinations in Indonesia which has the beauty of underwater nature and beaches that are popular among domestic and foreign tourists. The main attraction of Gili Trawangan Island lies in its beaches, natural beauty in the form of white sand, various kinds of coral reefs and the diversity of living things in it, as well as the atmosphere of the island which will provide a calm and free experience from motorised vehicles for tourists who visit. Gili Trawangan has an unwritten rule that prohibits the use of motorised vehicles to keep the air quality on the island free from pollution. This is also reinforced by the statements of tourists who say that the air in Gili Trawangan has good air quality (Rojabi1 et al., 2024). The existence of tourism in Gili Trawangan has a positive impact. The significant development of tourism in Gili

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Trawangan has an effect on local economic growth, with the opening of jobs that increase the income of the surrounding community (Demolingo et al., 2021). The utilisation of natural resources especially on the beach as well as sectors related to tourism, such as accommodation, restaurants, and transportation are growing rapidly. Not only does it open up jobs for local people, but it also opens up new business opportunities that support the surrounding economy (Aliansyah & Hermawan, 2021).

However, with the existence of tourism in Gili Trawangan, it experiences complex dynamics related to the influence of tourism on its natural sustainability. The use of tourism for the development of natural potential in Gili Trawangan has a negative impact resulting in damage to the marine ecosystem caused by excessive tourists (over capacity) and uncontrolled tourism activities. The number of tourists from time to time that continues to increase and results in over-tourism has the potential to damage the balance of natural ecosystems if not managed properly (Martayadi & Supriyadi, 2024). Tourism activities carried out without good supervision related to water activities have the potential to damage marine ecosystems, especially fragile coral reefs. Coral reefs are an important factor as a life support for marine biota to breed and find food, so it is important to preserve them (Wahyuni & Adikampana, 2021).

Then, the pressure on natural resources such as the need for clean water is increasing due to the growing number of tourists and the construction of tourist facilities, such as hotels and restaurants. The high demand for clean water will affect the balance of the ecosystem in Gili Trawangan, if not managed properly (Marbun et al., 2022). Therefore, it is important to preserve nature in Gili Trawangan while encouraging the growth of the tourism sector. This article aims to analyse the impact of tourism on the sustainability of Gili Trawangan as a natural tourist destination.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a study that prioritizes understanding the phenomenon being studied by understanding the meaning, perception, and related context. This study was conducted by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing literature sources that are relevant to the research topic being studied (Darmalaksana, 2020). In the qualitative approach in this study, researchers used the literature study and focus group discussion methods. Literature studies utilize written sources such as scientific journals, books, research reports, official documents, and other academic articles as the main basis for collecting information, analyzing literature, and developing an understanding of the research topic (Adlini et al., 2022). By using this method, researchers can collect and analyze data and information. According to Kitzinger and Barbour (1999), Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is defined as the exploration of a particular issue or phenomenon through individual group discussions that focus on shared activities. Individuals involved in this discussion group communicate with each other, ask questions, and provide comments on their experiences or opinions related to a problem or social issue discussed in the group (Afiyanti, 2022). The FGD method prioritizes the use of interaction data between participants during the discussion. Its main advantage is the ability of this method to produce more in-depth, informative and valuable data than other data collection methods.

Findings and discussion

The research findings show that tourism plays a crucial role in developing the natural potential of Gili Trawangan, particularly in the utilization of natural resources such as beaches and coral reefs. According to (Susanto, 2021), tourism has significantly contributed to the local economy through

the rapid growth of sectors such as accommodation, restaurants, and transportation. This growth has not only created numerous job opportunities for the local community but also boosted economic activities, impacting income and community welfare. This is evident from the emergence of many small and medium enterprises supporting the tourism sector, such as souvenir shops, marine tour service providers, and diving equipment rentals. Additionally, infrastructure development, such as public facilities (public restrooms, rest areas) and transportation services (footpaths, piers), continues to improve in line with the increasing number of tourists (Purba et al., 2024)). This infrastructure benefits not only tourists but also enhances the quality of life for local residents by facilitating mobility and access to various services.

However, the research also indicates significant challenges related to environmental sustainability. According to (Aminuddin¹, M. Afdhal Alfurqan², Nurwahida³ Rahman Subha⁴, 2024), With the increasing number of tourists, the issue of overcapacity arises, exerting considerable pressure on natural resources. This over-tourism can lead to a high demand for clean water, particularly for hotels, restaurants, and other tourist facilities. Consequently, water scarcity may occur if water resource management is not adequately addressed. Additionally, unsupervised water tourism activities, such as snorkeling and diving, pose a risk of damaging coral reefs, which serve as critical habitats for various marine species (Inayah, 2024). Damage to coral reefs could diminish the natural appeal of Gili Trawangan and negatively affect the sustainability of the tourism sector.

Discussion

The discussion in this research highlights the importance of balancing tourism growth with environmental sustainability in Gili Trawangan. According to (Rohman & Madura, 2024), while tourism has had a positive economic impact, there is a significant risk to environmental preservation if adequate management measures are not taken. The primary challenge is overcapacity, where the number of tourists exceeds the island's environmental carrying capacity (Margaretha, 2024). This issue arises because Gili Trawangan's main attractions, namely the beauty of its underwater scenery and beaches, draw large numbers of both domestic and international tourists. To address this problem, policies regulating the number of tourist visits are needed. According to (Leten et al., 2023), quotas could be set based on the existing environmental carrying capacity, taking into account the condition of the marine ecosystem and water resources. Such policies are crucial to prevent excessive environmental degradation due to uncontrolled tourism activities. In addition to limiting the number of tourists, efforts to educate and raise environmental awareness among visitors should be enhanced (Vega et al., 2024). This aims to encourage tourists to help preserve the natural environment during their visit, such as by avoiding littering and refraining from damaging coral reefs when snorkeling or diving.

Furthermore, water resource management should be a top priority. With the growing demand for clean water, measures to improve water use efficiency and develop environmentally friendly water treatment technologies, such as desalination systems or recycled water use, are necessary (Indriyani Rachman, 2023). These efforts will help reduce pressure on freshwater resources and ensure their availability for the local community. On the other hand, negative impacts on marine ecosystems, especially coral reefs, should also be minimized. Water tourism activities, like snorkeling and diving, should be closely monitored. According (Krisna et al., 2021), local authorities and tourism managers could establish marine conservation zones that restrict certain areas from tourist activities to protect the most vulnerable coral reefs. The use of eco-friendly equipment and boats, such as floating anchors that do not damage the seabed, should also be encouraged to reduce harm to marine habitats.

This discussion also emphasizes the importance of diversifying tourism products as a solution to alleviate pressure on marine ecosystems. By developing other tourist attractions such as cultural tourism, culinary tourism, or environmental education, Gili Trawangan can attract visitors without heavily relying on the beauty of its marine environment as the main draw (Silalahi et al., 2024). This not only helps to preserve the environment but also enriches the tourism experience for visitors. Therefore, the discussion concludes that tourism in Gili Trawangan has great potential for continued growth, provided that sustainable management practices are implemented. Firm policies, good supervision, and the involvement of all stakeholders—including local communities, government, and tourists—are essential to maintain a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. By applying sustainable tourism principles, Gili Trawangan can retain its appeal as a premier nature-based destination while ensuring environmental preservation for future generations.

Conclusion

Tourism in Gili Trawangan has a significant impact on the development of natural potential and the local economy. The utilization of natural resources such as beaches and coral reefs has driven the growth of sectors like accommodation, restaurants, and transportation, creating job opportunities and boosting local income. Additionally, infrastructure development, such as public facilities and transportation services, has benefited both tourists and the local community. However, alongside these positive effects, uncontrolled tourism brings negative impacts on environmental sustainability, particularly the marine ecosystem. One of the main challenges is the overcapacity of tourists exceeding the environmental carrying capacity, which increases pressure on natural resources, including clean water. Poorly supervised tourism activities, such as snorkeling, can damage coral reefs, which are crucial habitats for marine life. Therefore, strict policies and sustainable tourism practices are necessary to maintain a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation in Gili Trawangan.

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Declaration

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Author contributions

ANS and MI conceptualized the study, and collected data. MAR analyzed improved the quality of the manuscript.

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