

SWOT analysis in sport tourism development strategy in natural and cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia

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Abstract

Indonesia has great potential to develop sports tourism due to its natural wealth, cultural diversity, increasing public interest in sports and a healthy lifestyle. However, the development of this sector still faces various challenges, such as limited infrastructure, lack of international promotion, and limited trained human resources. Through SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, this study identifies key strengths such as tropical natural advantages and cultural heritage and opportunities in global trends towards physical activity-based tourism. The theoretical basis of this study is based on the theory referring to Patton's (2015) approach to qualitative research. This research design uses a qualitative descriptive approach, using secondary data relevant to the research objectives. Data collection involves reports consisting of 1. Internal strengths (Strengths): Natural resources, culture, infrastructure, local support, 2. Internal weaknesses (Weaknesses): Limited facilities, management, promotion, 3. External opportunities (Opportunities): Global sport tourism trends, government policies, digital technology, 3. External threats (Threats): Competition between destinations, environmental damage, dependence on seasonal events. The document samples analyzed were selected by purposive sampling and reduced to obtain the core of the main problems. Qualitative data were classified and mapped based on a combination of SWOT using the SWOT matrix to produce strategies: a. SO (leveraging strengths to take opportunities), b. ST (using strengths to overcome threats), c. WO (reducing weaknesses by leveraging opportunities), d. WT (avoiding threats by minimizing weaknesses). The findings of this study reveal that by improving infrastructure, stronger global promotion, and developing competent human resources, Indonesia can overcome external threats and become one of the leading destinations for sports tourism in the world. Collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities will be the key to success in developing this sector sustainably.

Keywords: Sport tourism; Natural tourism destinations; Cultural tourism; Development strategy; SWOT analysis

1. Introduction

The development of sports tourism in Indonesia has become a focus of attention in recent years, along with the increasing organization of international sporting events and awareness of the potential of sports-based tourism (Nugroho A. et al., 2022). However, the development of sports tourism in Indonesia still faces various challenges. The less-than-optimal synergy between stakeholders, limited infrastructure, and the lack of targeted promotion are the main obstacles to the development of this sector (Azad et al., 2023). Therefore, a strategic approach is needed in designing and implementing sports tourism programs so that they can make a real contribution to regional economic growth, cultural preservation, and improving public health (Markus H et al., 2023). Various studies have analyzed sports

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tourism development strategies, primarily through the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) approach.

Daud et al. (2024), in their study on the 2023 FIBA World Cup in Jakarta, used a SWOT analysis to formulate a strategy for developing sports tourism. They identified strengths, such as the attractiveness of the tourist destination and government involvement, and weaknesses, such as the lack of facility management. Opportunities identified included local economic growth and the development of information technology, while threats included the lack of effective promotion. The proposed strategy involved marketing planning, development of sports tourism concepts, government-private collaboration, and education and promotion of sports tourism programs.

Another study by Nabila et al. (2024) emphasized the government's role in supporting the development of sport tourism as part of an economic and social development strategy. A literature study concluded that support from the government, private sector, and local communities is essential to increasing local economic attractiveness, encouraging social development, and strengthening cultural identity through sport tourism (Perić, 2019).

Several case studies have been conducted to analyze the potential and strategies for developing sports tourism in various regions in Indonesia. Sukwika and Nurlestari (2024) also used SWOT analysis to formulate a strategy for developing sustainable sports tourism. They recommended an aggressive strategy by strengthening the potential for sports tourism and involving tourism actors. Meanwhile, using SWOT analysis, Mardiyanto and Okfitasari (2023) analyzed the impact of the 2022 ASEAN Para Games on the local economy. They found that the event positively impacted economic growth and the promotion of local culture.

Muko et al. (2023) evaluated the potential of sport tourism on Lahe Island using the SWOT approach. The results showed that the island has strengths in natural beauty and sports activities but faces weaknesses such as inadequate facilities and threats from weather changes. Other studies also found that developing sports tourism can positively impact inclusive economic growth by empowering local communities in South Sumatra (Harahap et al., 2023).

However, in previous studies, further development is still needed in the contribution of booming sport tourism in Indonesia. Therefore, this study focuses on the following problems:

- What is the role of infrastructure development in supporting Indonesia's competitiveness as a global sports tourism destination?
- How effective is Indonesia's international promotion in attracting sports tourism tourists?
- What is the quality and readiness of Indonesian tourism human resources in facing global sport tourism challenges?

What strategies can be implemented to overcome external threats and realize Indonesia's position as a leading world sports tourism destination? How does the study relate to previous work in the area?

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the development strategy of sports tourism in Indonesia's natural and cultural tourism destinations through a SWOT approach and formulate strategic steps that various stakeholders can implement to create a competitive and sustainable sports tourism ecosystem.

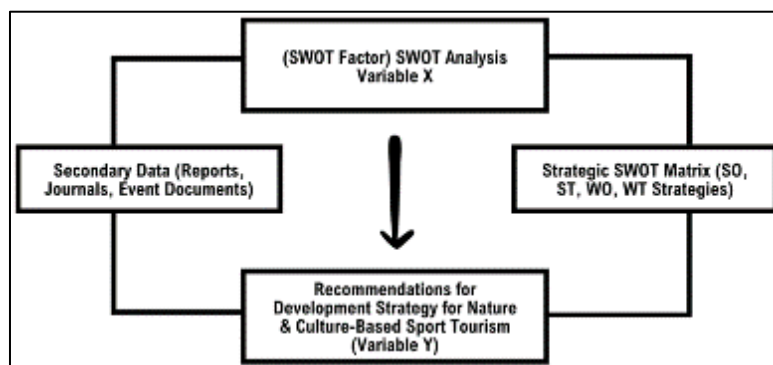


Figure 1 Theoretical Research Model

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design based on secondary data analysis (Dong et al., 2022). Secondary data were obtained from reliable sources: 1. Official government reports (Kemenparekraf, Bappenas, Tourism Office), 2. Academic publications (national and international journals), 3. Sports tourism event documents (proposals, activity reports), 3. Official websites of organizers and online media. This study aims to describe the actual conditions of sport tourism development in Indonesia and analyze them through the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) approach (Shao, 2020).

2.2. Research Participants

This study focuses on relevant units of analysis in a qualitative context. These units are: 1. Internal strengths (Strengths): Natural resources, culture, infrastructure, local support; 2. Internal weaknesses (Weaknesses): Limited facilities, management, promotion, 3. External opportunities (Opportunities): Global sport tourism trends, government policies, digital technology, 3. External threats (Threats): Competition between destinations, environmental damage, and dependence on seasonal events (Kartakoullis et al., 2002). The sample of documents analyzed was selected by purposive sampling: 1. 3 national tourism policy reports, 2. 5 international journal articles related to sport tourism, 3. 3–10 case studies of natural and cultural sport tourism destinations in Indonesia.

2.3. Research Analysis

The analysis was conducted in three stages: 1. Data Reduction: Selecting secondary data relevant to the research objectives; SWOT Classification: Categorizing information into four SWOT elements (S, W, O, T); 2. Strategy Mapping: Developing strategies based on a combination of SWOT using the SWOT matrix to produce strategies: a. SO (leveraging strengths to take opportunities), b. ST (using strengths to overcome threats), c. WO (reducing weaknesses by leveraging opportunities), d. WT (avoiding threats by minimizing weaknesses). The analysis was conducted thematically and interpretively, referring to Patton's (2015) approach to qualitative research (Nowell et al., 2017).

3. Results

3.1. Data Reduction of Official Government Report 2020 – 2024

Data reduction is done by sorting and filtering secondary information relevant to the research focus. The data sources analyzed are: 1. Official government reports, including Tourism and Creative Economy Statistics 2020 (Kemenparekraf), which records the contribution of sport tourism to domestic tourism; 2. Report on the Coordination of Increasing the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) across sectors in 2021; and 3. Report on the 2024 Sports Development Index Sports Industry: A New Source of Economic Growth.

From the data reduction process (Patton, 1994) selection and simplification of relevant data on the strategy for developing nature and culture-based sport tourism in Indonesia in the 2020 Tourism and Creative Economy Statistics report (Kemenparekraf) it has been found: 1. The number of foreign tourist visits has fallen drastically due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but there has been a shift in interest in nature-based and fitness tourism, 2. Domestic tourism is recovering in mountain, beach, and national park destinations with sport-based activity trends (hiking, trail running, bicycle tours); 3. The role of creative economy sub-sectors such as event organizers, digital media, and merchandise is increasing in supporting sports-based activities.

Then, the reduction in the 2021 Cross-sector Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) Coordination Report found the following results: 1. Indonesia's ranking in the TTCI fell, especially in the Infrastructure, Enabling Environment, and Health & Hygiene pillars, 2. Natural Resources and Cultural Resources & Business Travel remained high (ranked in the top 20 in the world), 3. Significant challenges in coordination between sectors (central-regional), limited spatial data, and tourism digitalization are present.

The key data that was further reduced was taken from the 2024 Sports Development Index Report, which includes: 1. The sports industry in Indonesia is projected to be a new driver of economic growth (contribution to GDP is still <1%), 2. Sports tourism events have high potential but are not standardized and are constrained by facilities and human resources for organizers; 3. The formation of a sports ecosystem in several provinces, such as East Java, Bali, and NTT, is not yet evenly distributed nationally.

3.2. Data Reduction of International Journals on Sport Tourism

Zhang (2023), in the International Journal on Semantic Web and Information Systems, highlighted the importance of integrating sports tourism with local natural and cultural potential in Hainan, China. The study emphasized that the main strength of the destination is the diversity of unique local ecosystems and cultures, which, if innovatively packaged in the form of sport tourism, can increase the competitiveness of regional tourism.

Another study by Yamashita (2022) highlighted that destinations combining sports activities such as marathons, cycling, and water sports with cultural attractions have attracted a wider range of tourists. They also underlined the importance of cross-sector collaboration, especially between local governments, tourism industry players, and local communities, to ensure the sustainability of the strategy. This is in line with the Indonesian context, where coordination between the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and local governments is crucial for the success of sports tourism.

Meanwhile, in terms of weaknesses, a study by Higham, J., & Hinch, T. (2009) stated that the main challenge in developing sports tourism lies in the lack of long-term planning and dependence on large-scale events without program continuity. Shao & Sun (2020), in the study "SWOT Analysis of Coastal Sports Tourism", added a SWOT analysis of the development of coastal sports tourism in coastal areas of China. From this study, it was found that there is a need for a sustainable development strategy, increasing environmental awareness, and diversifying coastal sports tourism products to increase the competitiveness of destinations.

Meanwhile, Dong et al. (2022) analyzed the development of sport tourism in Hainan, China, using a SWOT approach covering 12 main dimensions: branding, culture, finance, infrastructure, location, market, nature, policy, product, uniqueness, sustainability, and tourists. From this study, recommendations for five development directions were obtained: emphasizing event-oriented sports tourism, prioritizing sports motivation, identifying the primary market for sports tourism, utilizing resources rationally, and fostering a sports culture.

3.3. Indonesian Journal Data Reduction Regarding Sport Tourism

Based on a thematic analysis of several Indonesian journals discussing sports tourism during the 2020–2024 period, four main themes were found that represent SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threads) in the development of this sector.

In terms of strength, the potential for natural and cultural diversity in Indonesia is the main attraction that is often mentioned in various studies, as revealed by Damayanti et al. (2021) and Hidayat et al. (2023), which highlights the advantages of destinations such as Lake Poso, Singaraja, and Gorontalo. In addition, infrastructure support through the construction of sports facilities such as the Mandalika Circuit and policy support from the government strengthen the foundation for developing national sports tourism (Caraka, 2023). Holding international sporting events, such as the 2023 FIBA World Cup and the 2023 U-17 World Cup, also strengthens Indonesia's position on the global sports tourism stage (Narayana et al., 2023).

However, the most prominent weakness is the limited human resources (HR) and supporting facilities, especially in new destinations and non-priority areas. This is in line with the findings of Dewi and Asnawi (2021), who underlined the lack of training and managerial capacity at the local level. In addition, the less integrated promotional strategy and the less than optimal involvement of local communities also become structural obstacles in expanding the positive impacts of sport tourism (Putri et al., 2020).

From an opportunity perspective, the increasing trend of interest in physical and nature-based tourism post-pandemic provides new space for developing innovative sports tourism products (Julianti et al., 2022). Several studies, such as those conducted by Chang et al. (2023), state that sports tourism is increasingly in demand by the younger generation, who prioritize a healthy lifestyle and unique experiences. Policy support such as the National Sports Grand Design (DBON) also creates synergy between the tourism and sports sectors for regional development and local economic empowerment.

Meanwhile, threats to the sustainability of sports tourism in Indonesia cannot be ignored. Competition with countries in the ASEAN region, such as Thailand and Vietnam, is a challenge that needs to be anticipated through differentiation and improving service quality (Satrya et al. (2024). In addition, dependence on large-scale events without sustainable development support can trap this sector in a cycle of economic dependency on events. Global economic uncertainty and the potential for future health crises are also factors that can hinder the stability of sports tourism development (Mirehie, 2021).

This discussion shows that the SWOT-based sport tourism development approach can provide a comprehensive picture of Indonesia's strategic position. Strengthening internal strengths, reducing structural weaknesses, utilizing global trend opportunities, and mitigating external threats must be carried out simultaneously and planned. This aligns with the thematic and interpretative approach developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), where data is categorized and interpreted to support the formulation of more contextual and sustainable development strategies. Data reduction from several Indonesian journals can be seen in the table below. From the third data reduction, the data has been interpreted in Table 1:

Table 1 SWOT Matrix for Developing Nature & Culture-Based Sport Tourism in Indonesia

Aspect	Factors	Reference Source
Strengths	High natural and cultural diversity	Damayanti et. al., 2021
	Infrastructure support (Mandalika Circuit, national sports venues)	Hidayat et. al., 2023 Kemenparekraf (2020)
	National policy commitment (RPJMN, DBON)	Dong et al., 2022
Weakness	Dependence on big events	Mirehie, 2021
	Lack of international promotion	Laporan TCCI (2021)
	The quality of tourism services and human resources is still low	Shao & Sun, 2020
Opportunities	Global trends in sports and nature-based tourism	Dong et al., 2022
	Large domestic tourism market	Kemenpora (2024)
	Support for ASEAN Sport Tourism Agenda	Shao & Sun, 2020, Laporan TCCI (2021)
Threads	Regional competition from Thailand, Vietnam	Satrya et al. (2024)
	Economic dependency on events	Damayanti et. al., 2021
	Risk of environmental degradation without sustainability	Dong et. al., 2022, Shao & Sun, 2020

4. Discussion

4.1. SO Strategy (Utilizing Strengths to Take Opportunities)

Indonesia has extraordinary natural diversity and rich culture, which can be utilized to increase the attractiveness of sports tourism destinations. Indonesia's natural destinations, such as the beaches in Bali, Nias, or Mentawai Island, have great potential for water sports such as surfing. In contrast, mountains such as Mount Rinjani and Bromo offer opportunities for extreme sports such as hiking and trail running (Prasetyo, 2025). With the increasing global interest in extreme and outdoor sports, Indonesia has an excellent opportunity to host more international sporting events, such as the Tour de Singkarak and the Bali Marathon. Therefore, optimizing the potential of local nature and culture in sporting events can attract international tourists while introducing Indonesian culture more widely (Sitepu, 2019). The government and private sector must work together to promote these events through international platforms to expand market reach (Harrison-Hill, 2005).

4.2. ST Strategy (Using Strengths to Overcome Threats)

Although Indonesia has great potential in the sports tourism sector, the country faces threats from global competition and economic and political uncertainty challenges. However, Indonesia's main strengths, namely the government's commitment to the tourism sector and infrastructure development, can be utilized to overcome these threats. The Indonesian government has launched the "Wonderful Indonesia" program, which can be maximized to promote sports tourism destinations globally (BPS, 2023). In addition, developing sports infrastructure such as stadiums and international training facilities can ensure that Indonesia is the leading choice for global sports events despite the threat of an economic crisis. Improving the quality of global promotion and focusing on the international market can help Indonesia compete with neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Malaysia, which also actively promote sports

tourism (Sukwika et al., 2024). By leveraging the power of government promotion and developing sports facilities, Indonesia can attract more tourists despite external threats.

4.3. WO Strategy (Reducing Weaknesses by Utilizing Opportunities)

One of the main weaknesses must be addressed is the lack of global promotion and limited human resources (HR) trained to manage international sporting events (Maruta, 2023). Although Indonesia has great potential, many people still do not know or are not familiar with Indonesian sports tourism at the international level. Therefore, Indonesia needs to focus on increasing global promotion through digital platforms and international cooperation to take advantage of existing opportunities, such as increasing tourist interest in sports and international events. Given the increasing number of millennials and Gen Z interested in sports and a healthy lifestyle, Indonesia can strengthen its efforts to develop programs emphasising community-based sports and sporting events that appeal to this age group (Jiang et al., 2023). In addition, improving the quality of training and development of HR to manage sporting events can be done through collaboration with countries that are more advanced in sports tourism. This training will improve the ability of industry players to organize professional international events and attract more foreign visitors (Ariani, 2023).

4.4. WT Strategy (Avoiding Threats by Minimizing Weaknesses)

To face external threats such as economic crises, natural disasters, and global competition, as well as to minimize existing weaknesses, Indonesia needs to strengthen coordination between stakeholders and ensure more equitable development of sports infrastructure. Many sports destinations in Indonesia still lack adequate facilities, especially outside Bali and Yogyakarta (Harianja, 2022). Therefore, investment in sports infrastructure development in areas with great potential should be a priority. In addition, preparing contingency plans that include mitigation measures against natural disasters or other external disturbances can help the sector continue to grow despite threats (Gharibpoor, 2024). Indonesia can minimise these weaknesses by strengthening government and private sector cooperation, optimizing local resources, and being better prepared to face possible challenges.

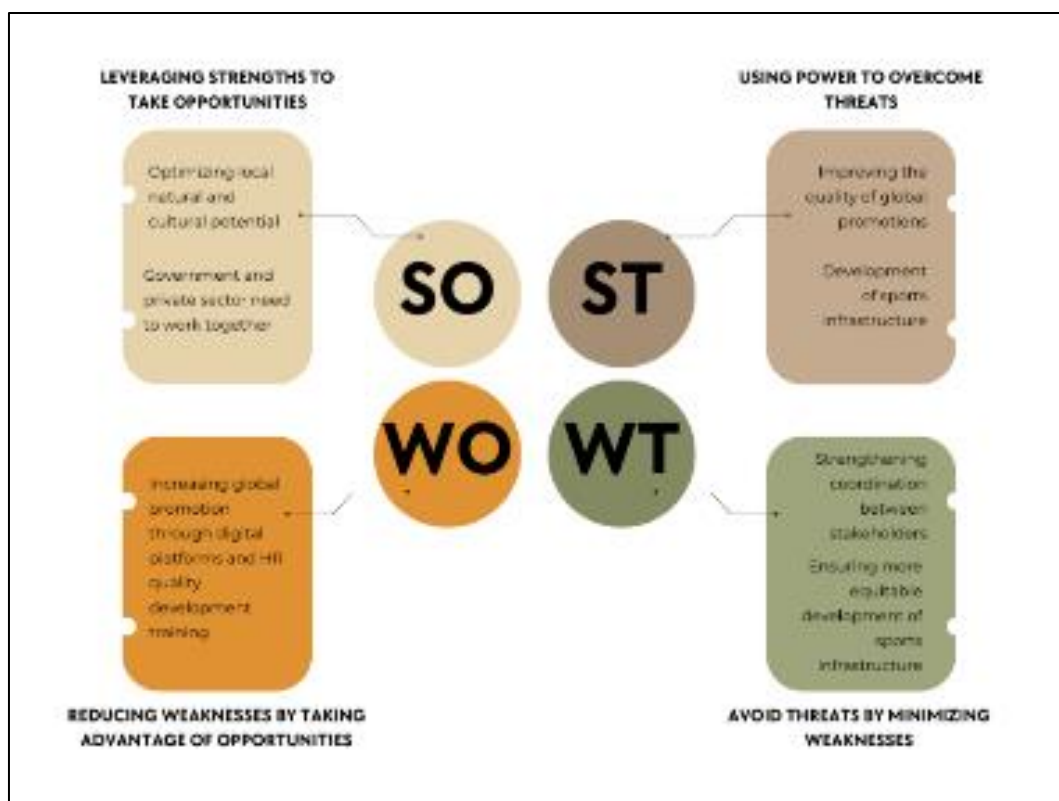


Figure 2 SO, ST, WO and WT Interpretative Strategies

5. Conclusion

From the results of the SWOT analysis of the development of sports tourism in Indonesia, it was found that sports tourism in Indonesia has great potential but requires clear strategic steps to maximize existing strengths, such as

overcoming weaknesses and taking advantage of emerging opportunities. With improved infrastructure, stronger global promotion, and competent human resource development, Indonesia can overcome external threats and become one of the leading destinations for sport tourism in the world. Collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities will be the key to success in developing this sector sustainably.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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