

**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT TO ATTRACT
TOURIST INTEREST IN TIGARAS, SIMALUNGUN REGENCY**

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ABSTRACT

This study is motivated by the low number of tourist visits to the Tigaras area in Simalungun Regency, despite its significant tourism potential in terms of natural beauty and cultural richness. The main issue lies in the ineffective management strategies implemented by local stakeholders. The aim of this research is to identify the tourism potentials that can be developed, analyze the factors hindering the increase in tourist visits, and formulate appropriate tourism management strategies to attract more visitors. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman and the SWOT framework. The results reveal that tourism development in Tigaras faces various challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, weak promotional efforts, and poor coordination among stakeholders. The study concludes that an integrated, participatory, and locally-based management strategy is crucial to transform Tigaras into a competitive and sustainable tourism destination.

Keywords: Strategy, Tourism Management, Local Government Tigaras, Destination Development

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh rendahnya jumlah kunjungan wisatawan ke wilayah Tigaras, Kabupaten Simalungun, meskipun memiliki potensi pariwisata yang besar dari segi alam dan budaya. Permasalahan utama terletak pada lemahnya pengelolaan strategi pariwisata yang dilakukan oleh pemangku kepentingan setempat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi potensi pariwisata yang dapat dikembangkan, menganalisis faktor-faktor yang menghambat pertumbuhan jumlah wisatawan, serta merumuskan strategi manajemen pengelolaan pariwisata yang tepat guna meningkatkan minat wisatawan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman serta pendekatan SWOT. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan pariwisata Tigaras menghadapi sejumlah tantangan seperti kurangnya infrastruktur, minimnya kapasitas SDM, lemahnya promosi, serta koordinasi stakeholder yang belum optimal. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini menyatakan bahwa strategi manajemen yang terintegrasi, partisipatif, dan berbasis potensi lokal sangat diperlukan untuk menjadikan Tigaras sebagai destinasi wisata yang kompetitif dan berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Strategi, Pengelolaan Pariwisata, PEMDA Tigaras, Pengembangan Destinasi

I. INTRODUCTION

The Tigaras area in Simalungun Regency, North Sumatra, is one of the tourism destinations with significant potential due to its strategic location along the shores of Danau Toba, its rich local culture, and the natural diversity it offers. Despite these advantages, the number of tourists visiting the

area remains limited and far from optimal. This condition reflects a gap between the region's tourism resources and the actual benefits perceived by the local community and tourism businesses.

Several factors contribute to this issue, including the inadequacy of supporting infrastructure, underdeveloped promotion strategies, weak destination management, and a lack of synergy among key stakeholders such as the local government, tourism entrepreneurs, and the surrounding community. In addition, limited human resources—particularly in terms of professional skills relevant to tourism management—further exacerbate the problem.

This study addresses the central question of how an effective tourism management strategy can be formulated to attract more tourists to the Tigaras area. Without a well-structured and targeted strategy, the existing tourism potential will fail to contribute meaningfully to local development and community welfare.

The aims of this study are threefold: (1) to identify the tourism potential that can be further developed in Tigaras, (2) to analyze the factors that hinder tourist interest in visiting the area, and (3) to formulate a tourism management strategy capable of enhancing the destination's appeal and maximizing its development potential. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative approach and supported by SWOT analysis, this study offers critical insights into tourism governance, particularly in regions where latent potential remains underutilized.

Given these considerations, this research is essential in providing data-driven, contextually relevant, and actionable strategic recommendations for local governments and tourism stakeholders managing regional tourism assets.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Strategy

Strategy is a systematically and deliberately planned approach used by both public and private organizations to achieve their objectives effectively and efficiently. According to (Siagian, 2005), strategy is a large-scale future-oriented plan that enables an organization to interact effectively with its environment under competitive conditions to optimize goal achievement. Jatmiko (2003) adds that strategy aligns organizational goals with external opportunities and threats as well as internal resources and capabilities. From these definitions, three core elements influence strategy: external environment, internal capabilities, and organizational goals. Strategy, thus, is a critical tool for achieving sustainable development.

To ensure that strategies are effective and on target, Siagian (2005) outlines three main conditions:

- a) Strategy must seize potential opportunities while minimizing threats.
- b) It must realistically assess organizational capabilities and resources.
- c) It must be operationalized meticulously—success lies not just in formulation, but also in implementation.

Factors Influencing Strategy, according to (Siagian, 2005), several factors influence strategic decision-making: (a) Top Management Involvement: Strategic decisions affect the entire organization and require top-level authority. (b) Resource Allocation: Decisions impact budget, facilities, and infrastructure distribution. (c) Timing: Strategic decisions are long-term and must be carefully planned. (d) Future Orientation: Strategies are based on anticipation and forecasting. (e) Multi-Asset Impact: Strategies affect all organizational components. (f) External Environment: External factors must be thoroughly analyzed and integrated into planning.

Benefits of Strategy, As outlined by (Siagian, 2005), the strategic planning process provides various benefits: Clarifies goals and how to manage sectors in the future, offers practical steps toward objective achievement, Guides execution across fields, specifies actionable priorities, Aids in decision-making and problem resolution dan aligns stakeholder perceptions and participation, reducing conflict and increasing synergy.

Strategic Management

Strategic management is the discipline that focuses on decision-making and actions that formulate, implement, and evaluate organizational strategies (David, 2009; Robinson, 2008). According to (Siagian, 2006), it involves top management and requires implementation across all organizational levels. Key elements of strategic management include: (a) Organizational mission and expectations, (b) Goals and objectives, (c) Internal and external analysis, (d) Strategy formulation, (e) Evaluation and strategic options, (f) Implementation planning, (g) Strategic control and evaluation (Tangkilisan, 2003).

Strategic Management Process

Fred (2011) identifies three key stages in the strategic management process:

1. Strategy Formulation: Develop mission, identify external threats and internal capabilities, set long-term goals, and select strategies.
2. Strategy Implementation: Set annual goals, create policies, motivate staff, and allocate resources effectively.
3. Strategy Evaluation: Review internal and external factors, measure performance, and make corrective actions to ensure ongoing relevance and success.

Tourism

Tourism refers to activities involving travel outside one's place of residence for leisure, business, or cultural purposes. According to Indonesian Law No. 10 of 2009, tourism includes various activities supported by infrastructure and services provided by the community, businesses, and government. Its goals include economic growth, poverty reduction, cultural promotion, and national identity building.

Tourism can be classified based on geography (domestic, regional, international), duration (short-term, long-term), number of participants (individual, group), transportation used (air, land, sea), and purpose. Types of tourism include: Cultural Tourism, Health Tourism, Commercial Tourism, Industrial Tourism, Political Tourism, Agricultural Tourism, Marine Tourism, Hunting Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism, Honeymoon Tourism, Adventure Tourism.

Tourism Development

Tourism development is a planned effort to improve the tourism sector economically, socially, and culturally. It must be integrated into national development programs and ensure the sustainable use of resources and stakeholder involvement.

Basic Principles of Sustainable Tourism Development, Key principles include: Ecological sustainability, Socio-cultural sustainability, Economic sustainability. Improvement of local community welfare, two additional principles include the preservation of cultural heritage and ethical development beyond economic gain.

Tourism development aims to boost foreign exchange, expand employment, and improve infrastructure. It also enhances national identity, promotes environmental awareness, and protects cultural traditions. Domestically, it fosters unity and supports public health, income distribution, and individual leisure rights.

Driving Factors of Tourism Development, Tourism growth is driven by: The need for relaxation and change of environment, Advances in transportation and communication, Curiosity and desire for new experiences. Increased income levels. Nationally, tourism development is encouraged by the declining role of oil exports, consistent tourism growth, and Indonesia's rich tourism potential.

Strategy in Tourism Management

In the context of tourism management, strategy refers to a systematic effort undertaken by stakeholders to achieve specific objectives such as increasing tourist arrivals, optimizing local potential, and developing sustainable destinations. Strategy serves as a guiding tool for directing policy, formulating actions, and maximizing available resources to achieve both short- and long-term goals (Porter, 1985).

In destination management, strategy functions as a response to external challenges while leveraging internal strengths, such as natural and cultural assets unique to a region (Ritchie & Crouch,

2003). Thus, strategy goes beyond technical planning and encompasses interrelated social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Gunn & Var, 2002).

Role of Local Government in Tourism Development

Local governments play a strategic role in facilitating, regulating, and advancing the tourism sector within their jurisdictions. This role is realized through the formulation of regional tourism policies, infrastructure development, promotional initiatives, and community empowerment programs (Inskeep, 1991; Dredge & Jenkins, 2007).

Their involvement is also critical in fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors and establishing a conducive investment climate (Hall, 2008). The success of tourism development in a given area largely depends on the local government's ability to craft and consistently implement strategies aligned with regional potential (Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

Sustainable Tourism Development

The concept of sustainable tourism underscores the need to balance economic growth with environmental preservation and social-cultural well-being. In this context, tourism development is not solely focused on increasing visitor numbers but also on minimizing adverse impacts on the environment and ensuring benefits for local communities (UNWTO, 2005; Weaver, 2006).

Sustainable tourism strategies prioritize community involvement in planning and decision-making, as well as the responsible use of natural resources to maintain their availability for future generations (Sharpley, 2009). Consequently, the sustainable approach serves as a crucial foundation for designing tourism management strategies in destinations such as Tigras.

SWOT Analysis in Strategy Formulation

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis framework is an essential tool in strategic planning, particularly for identifying internal and external factors that influence organizational or destination performance. It offers a structured means to assess current conditions and develop strategies responsive to environmental dynamics (Gürel & Tat, 2017; Pickton & Wright, 1998).

In tourism management, SWOT analysis helps to map out strengths such as scenic landscapes, weaknesses like poor infrastructure, opportunities including rising domestic travel interest, and threats from more popular competing destinations (Kotler et al., 2006). Accordingly, the SWOT framework is particularly relevant for developing locally grounded and strategically sound tourism policies.

Tabel 1. Matriks SWOT

IFAS	STRENGTHS (S) • Internal strength factors	WEAKNESSES (W) • Weakness factors
EFAS	SO STRATEGIES • Create strategies that use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	WO STRATEGIES • Create strategies that minimize weaknesses to take advantage of opportunities
THREATS (T) • External threat factors	ST STRATEGIES • Create strategies that use strengths to counter threats	WT STRATEGIES • Create strategies that minimize weaknesses and avoid threats

III. METHODS

Type and Approach of Research

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of tourism management strategies in the Tigras area of Simalungun Regency. The qualitative method

enables the researcher to explore meanings, experiences, and perceptions of informants concerning the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2013).

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, including officials from the Department of Tourism, local tourism entrepreneurs, and community leaders. These interviews were conducted using semi-structured formats to allow flexible and open-ended exploration of information (Patton, 2002). In addition, direct field observations were carried out to assess the actual conditions of tourism infrastructure, activities, and local tourism resources.

Secondary data were obtained through document reviews of regional development plans, tourism regulations, and relevant academic literature. The documentation process played a crucial role in reinforcing the primary data and ensuring triangulation for validation purposes.

Data Validity Technique

To ensure the credibility of the findings, data validity was maintained through triangulation across sources, methods, and time. This involved cross-checking interview results, field observations, and official documents to ensure consistency and reliability (Moleong, 2019).

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process employed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman (1994), consisting of three main components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. These stages were carried out concurrently and continuously throughout the data collection period.

Additionally, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was used to formulate strategic recommendations. This tool allowed the researcher to systematically evaluate internal and external factors affecting tourism management in the Tigaras area. The results of the SWOT analysis formed the foundation for developing actionable and context-sensitive management strategies.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Regional Government Strategies for Tourism Development in Simalungun Regency

Tourism Product Development Strategy, the local government emphasizes preserving local culture and developing leading tourism attractions. Strategies include infrastructure development, improving accessibility, enhancing human resources, and upgrading facilities and cleanliness. These efforts are aligned with the Regional Tourism Master Plan of Simalungun Regency.

Market and Promotion Development Strategy, Promotional efforts target three main segments: women, youth, and internet users. Promotions are conducted through: (1) Media Channels: Print (newspapers, brochures), electronic (TV, radio), and social media (Instagram, Facebook, etc.), with a strong focus on social media due to its wide reach and high engagement. (2) Events and Festivals: Annual cultural, art, and music festivals are used to attract tourists and showcase local potential. The local government supports this with free Wi-Fi in key areas to facilitate digital promotion, particularly by young locals.

Space Utilization Strategy for Tourism, The government sets a target to develop at least three new tourism sites annually, whether owned by individuals, villages, or through village-government cooperation. Emphasis is placed on developing tourism villages that align with sustainable tourism principles and foster community participation.

Human Resource Development Strategy, In cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, the local government provides biannual training programs focusing on tourism management, planning, and marketing. Community-based capacity building includes practical training on running homestays, food service, and hospitality basics, such as maintaining hygiene and customer service. Free foreign language courses are also provided annually for villagers.

Stakeholder Roles in Tourism Development in Simalungun Regency

Role of Local Government, the local government plays a key role in determining the direction and policies for regional tourism development. Simalungun Regency has intensified tourism promotion efforts by showcasing its natural beauty and cultural richness. Key government strategies include infrastructure improvements (such as roads and facilities), initiating Regional Regulations on tourist villages, and promoting tourism as a leading economic sector. These efforts are guided by the Strategic Plan of the Department of Culture and Tourism of Simalungun.

Flagship tourism sites include: (a) Pantai Raya Tigaras: A popular beach destination offering water recreation (banana boat, canoeing) and beachfront lodging. (b) Pantai Batu Hoda: Known for its tranquility and hotel facilities, offering a scenic Lake Toba view. (c) Pantai Paris: A romantic beach location featuring live music, paddle boats, and other attractions. Each destination is supported by government programs aimed at improving attractions, transportation infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and public facilities.

Role of the Private Sector, the private sector significantly supports tourism development through the "3A" concept: (a) Attractions: Financial support for tourism events and festivals. (b) Accessibility: Collaboration with PT. Telkom to develop a tourism app and digital calendar. (c) Amenities: Investment in hospitality infrastructure (e.g., hotels).

The sector is encouraged to adhere to tourism ethics, promote local products, engage local workers, and uphold environmental and cultural preservation based on the Simalungun Tourism Master Plan.

Role of the Community, Community participation is central to Simalungun's people-centered tourism concept. Locals are actively involved through: POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness Groups) managing community-based tourist sites, Training in hospitality skills such as homestay management, cooking, and sanitation, Free foreign language courses to improve interaction with tourists.

These efforts empower residents to develop and manage tourism independently, supporting both cultural preservation and economic equity.

Internal and External Factors in the Development of Tourism in Simalungun Regency

This study reveals that tourism management in the Tigaras area faces multiple strategic challenges despite possessing strong natural and cultural tourism potential. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, several key findings were identified based on an internal and external evaluation using SWOT analysis.

Strengths

Tigaras boasts outstanding natural beauty, including panoramic views of Danau Toba and the surrounding hills. Its location as an alternative crossing route to Parapat adds value to its accessibility. Moreover, the presence of basic facilities such as a port, local accommodations, and food stalls enhances its appeal as a tourism destination.

Weaknesses

On the other hand, tourism in Tigaras suffers from weak promotional efforts, limited human resource capacity, and subpar service quality. The local government has not fully optimized destination marketing, either through digital or conventional channels. Furthermore, the local community lacks adequate training in hospitality, tourism service, and destination management, diminishing the competitiveness of the destination.

Opportunities

Externally, the growing interest in domestic and international tourism to the Danau Toba area—especially following its designation as a National Strategic Tourism Area—presents a significant opportunity for Tigaras. Government support, including development funds and tourism programs, also offers potential for the advancement of community-based tourism.

Threats

The main threats include competition from more popular destinations around Danau Toba, such as Parapat and Balige, and broader issues such as global travel disruptions caused by pandemics.

Additionally, the lack of strong environmental regulations raises concerns about possible ecosystem degradation due to unsustainable tourism practices.

Stakeholder Roles

The findings also indicate that successful tourism development in Tigaras hinges on the collaboration of key stakeholders—namely the Department of Tourism, sub-district governments, local businesses, and the community. The local government plays a dominant role in policy and infrastructure provision, while businesses and community members provide services directly to tourists. However, intersectoral coordination remains suboptimal, necessitating stronger communication platforms among stakeholders.

Table 2. SWOT Matrix

Internal Factors	Strengths 1. Strong government role in tourism product development 2. Government commitment to Tigaras tourism 3. Qualified human resources	Weaknesses 1. Lack of infrastructure 2. Low public awareness of the importance of tourism 3. Limited foreign language proficiency
External Factors		
Opportunities 1. Increasing number of visitors 2. Development of new tourism products 3. Growth in local economic activity	SO Strategy Optimizing the role of local government and human resources to increase the number of tourist visits in order to achieve community economic growth	WO Strategy Enhancing community awareness of the importance of tourism and increasing the number of tourism actors proficient in foreign languages
Treaths 1. Relatively intense competition between villages in offering tourism products 2. Low interest among the younger generation in developing local culture 3. Economic disparity	ST Strategy Regulating competition among villages in offering tourism products and preventing economic disparities	WT Strategy Improving the provision of tourism-supporting infrastructure and facilities, and increasing community participation as tourism actors

Source: Processed by the Researcher, 2025

SO Strategy: Optimizing Local Government and Human Resources to Boost Tourism and Economic Growth

This strategy emphasizes the active role of the Simalungun Regency Government and tourism actors in developing and promoting tourism products. The implementation includes training and human resource development for communities near tourist attractions. These efforts are expected to increase the quality of services and boost the number of tourist visits, thereby supporting local economic development through promotional activities and cultural attractions.

WO Strategy: Enhancing Community Awareness and Foreign Language Proficiency

This strategy aims to increase local awareness of tourism's importance and improve foreign language skills among tourism stakeholders. Village-based tourism is proposed as a method to foster community participation and ensure inclusive economic development. The plan also includes regular foreign language training and the recruitment of language experts to support international tourism service delivery in Tigaras.

ST Strategy: Enhancing Amenities and Regulating Village Competition to Avoid Economic Disparities

The strategy focuses on managing competition among tourism villages and avoiding uneven economic development. It recommends that the local government guide less tourism-oriented communities toward creative industries. Additionally, the strategy highlights the importance of developing tourism attractions that meet the criteria of “something to see, something to do, and something to buy” to improve the overall tourist experience.

WT Strategy: Improving Infrastructure and Encouraging Community Participation in Tourism

This strategy addresses the need for adequate transportation and tourism infrastructure, particularly public transport to and within tourism-potential villages. Lack of infrastructure is a major barrier to mobility and comfort for tourists. The strategy also encourages greater community participation in tourism activities to enhance social and economic growth and generate widespread benefits for local residents.

Discussion

The tourism potential of Tigaras, when analyzed through the lens of its internal strengths, positions the area as a viable alternative destination within the Danau Toba region. Its natural landscape and strategic role as a ferry crossing to Parapat present a competitive advantage that has yet to be fully capitalized on. In the broader context of destination development, natural beauty is a critical component that can be leveraged as a comparative advantage (Inskeep, 1991).

However, the study shows that the low volume of tourist visits stems from structural constraints such as underdeveloped infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and the absence of innovative destination marketing. Existing managerial strategies implemented by the Department of Tourism have primarily focused on administrative operations and have failed to adapt to modern promotional techniques, including digital engagement, thus weakening Tigaras's positioning among competing destinations (Kotler et al., 2006).

The SWOT analysis underscores the necessity for differentiation strategies. With stronger neighboring destinations such as Parapat and Balige, Tigaras must emphasize its uniqueness through community-based tourism models that highlight authenticity and local participation. This approach aligns with Murphy's (1985) proposition that local community engagement enhances destination identity and sustainability.

The human resource constraints, especially in hospitality and tourism service management, directly impact the overall visitor experience. Therefore, capacity building must be prioritized as an integral part of sustainable tourism development strategies (Sharpley, 2009). The absence of this component results in an inability to meet visitor expectations and reduces the likelihood of repeat visits or referrals.

Stakeholder coordination remains another key weakness. The research confirms that while various actors—government, private sector, and local communities—have roles to play, their collaboration is fragmented and lacks a formalized mechanism for integrated action. Strategic tourism management requires multisectoral cooperation and shared vision (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003), which is currently insufficient in the Tigaras context.

Given the external opportunities provided by national recognition of the Danau Toba area and increased investment in tourism infrastructure, Tigaras can pursue a focused strategy that includes (1) improving basic infrastructure, (2) implementing integrated digital promotion campaigns, and (3) building institutional capacity among local stakeholders. These measures would not only address existing barriers but also position Tigaras as a sustainable and inclusive tourism destination.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**Conclusion**

This study concludes that the Tigaras area in Simalungun Regency possesses substantial tourism potential, particularly in its natural attractions and strategic geographic position within the Danau Toba region. However, this potential has not been supported by an effective and integrated tourism management strategy, resulting in suboptimal tourist visitation levels.

The research identifies several contributing factors to this issue, including inadequate supporting infrastructure, limited capacity among human resources, weak promotional strategies, and poor stakeholder coordination. These barriers prevent the transformation of potential tourism assets into tangible competitive advantages that could stimulate local development and enhance the visitor experience.

Based on the SWOT analysis, four strategic directions are proposed: (1) optimizing the role of local government and human resources to increase tourist arrivals; (2) enhancing community awareness and foreign language proficiency among tourism personnel; (3) regulating competition between villages offering tourism products; and (4) improving tourism-related facilities and encouraging greater community involvement in the tourism sector.

Therefore, an integrated, participatory, and sustainability-oriented management strategy is essential to unlock the full potential of Tigaras as a competitive destination. Such a strategy not only supports economic growth but also ensures equitable benefits for local communities and long-term environmental stewardship

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Improve the provision of tourism-supporting infrastructure and road access to tourist destinations in Tigaras, as many access roads to village tourism sites are damaged.
2. Provide community development programs in tourism areas to support the growth of creative industries.
3. Establish regulations to promote a cultural habit of proper waste disposal, led directly by POKDARWIS (Tourism Awareness Group)

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