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# The Potential of Komodo National Park in East Nusa Tenggara Province

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## Abstract

Komodo National Park is a natural tourist destination that act as a magnet tourism for local and foreign tourists in East Nusa Tenggara Province. Referred as one of Wonders of world not only because of the presence of the ancient Komodo dragon but also supported by its beautiful underwater scenery. The study aims to uncover the extension of Komodo National Park's role and contribution to regional development, as well as its obstacles on tourism development using qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. The results indicate that Komodo National Park has high possibility in increasing regional income and the development of East Nusa Tenggara, there are also several other potential destinations but not only have not been managed optimally but also has its own policies to do not involve the local community in managing tourist destinations. Furthermore, in practice of tourism the authorities must also pay close attention to the principles of local community participation, local cultural rights, aspects of resource conservation, education and training, promotion, and monitoring and evaluation.

## Keywords

komodo national park, potential, tourism

## 1 Introduction

Indonesia is a large area that has a lot of natural resources with beautiful natural panoramas both on land and sea. With this potential, many areas in Indonesia are used as tourism objects spread from Sabang to Merauke. The development of tourism in Indonesia has experienced rapid progress since the government decided to rely on the tourism sector as the largest foreign exchange earner for the country.

In constitution Republic Indonesia No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism mandates that tourism resources and capital be utilized optimally through the implementation of tourism aimed at increasing national income, expanding and equalizing business and employment opportunities, encouraging regional development, introducing and utilizing tourist attractions and destinations in Indonesia and fostering love for the motherland and strengthen friendship between nations. From this constitution it is concluded that tourism is the overall activity of the government, business world and society to regulate, manage and serve the needs of tourists (Sarbaitinil, 2018).

In this case the state mandates that the development and development of the tourism sector will aim increase foreign exchange earnings, increase business and employment opportunities, introduce the nature and culture of the archipelago and strengthen association between nations. The development of the tourism sector in this globalization era is an effort to improve the community's economy both at the local and international levels. However, currently in Indonesia itself tourism is experiencing quite rapid development which is able to provide a sizeable contribution in efforts to increase the country's foreign exchange.

By having many stunning exotic destinations in Indonesia. Not only diverse nature tourism, cultural and historical tourism in Indonesia is also a special attraction for tourists. However, the concept of tourism that is currently in demand and as an attraction is the concept of environment-based tourism (ecotourism). Fandeli *in* Putra & Parno (2018) defines ecotourism as a form of tourism that is responsible for preserving natural areas, providing economic benefits and maintaining cultural integrity for local communities. Samsuridjal (2001) stated that natural tourism was born from deteriorating environmental

conditions in big cities which caused people who live around these places to seek a new atmosphere, namely an atmosphere of a fresher and more pleasant natural environment to visit. With a dense working environment conditions and with a high level of saturation will result in people wanting to enjoy the free and cool air from nature. Indonesia, which has enormous potential for natural wealth, is very good to be developed as a center for nature tourism (ecotourism).

The province in Eastern Indonesia that has opportunities for developing tourism is East Nusa Tenggara (Osin et al., 2019). East Nusa Tenggara Province is one of the provinces in Indonesia which has natural wealth which is used as a tourist attraction. The Province of East Nusa Tenggara is also a tourist destination that is quite reckoned with at the national and international levels. This can be seen from the visits of domestic and foreign tourists which continue to increase every year and this is one of the indicators used to see tourism activity. So with tourists' interest in East Nusa Tenggara Province which has a myriad of potentials, further tourism development will be carried out.

From East Nusa Tenggara Province, there is one area or district that has famous tourism potential, namely West Manggarai Regency which is directly adjacent to West Nusa Tenggara Province. West Manggarai is one of the new reliable tourist destinations for Eastern Indonesia (Kelang, 2010). One of the mainstay natural tourism potentials of West Manggarai Regency is the Komodo National Park (Modestus Ziku, 2015). Komodo National Park is the main tourism activity in West Manggarai Regency (Iriyono, et al, 2013). (Hironimus et al., 2019) Komodo National Park is a tourist attraction which is currently used as a source of income for the West Manggarai Regency area. Even though this area is under the management of the Ministry of Forestry, the attractiveness of the area has become the forerunner to the growth of the West Manggarai Regency economy. In 2012, Komodo National Park was officially designated as the New 7 Wonders of Nature by UNESCO and in 2013, The Government of the Republic of Indonesia organizes Sail Komodo activities as a form of central government support for local governments as well as being a venue for promoting this tourist attraction to the international world.

Komodo National Park itself has tourism potential not only because of the habitat of the ancient Komodo dragon (*Varanus Komodoensis*), but also has beautiful nature both on land and in the sea, has biodiversity and the unique people who live there. With this potential, the Komodo National Park is very suitable to be used as an ecotourism concept by prioritizing natural, socio-cultural and economic aspects of the local community. From this ecotourism concept, it will provide added value to visitors and the community in the form of knowledge and experience. This added value will affect changes in the behavior of visitors, the community and tourism developers so that they have more awareness of respecting nature, the values of historical and cultural heritage.

The Komodo National Park itself was officially formed through the Announcement of the Minister of Agriculture on March 6, 1980 concerning the Formation of a National Park. Komodo National Park consists of three large islands, namely Komodo Island, Rinca Island and Padar Island as well as several small islands. The objectives of the establishment of the Komodo National Park include protecting biodiversity, especially Komodo dragons and commercial fish spawning grounds for the supply of fishing waters around them and sustainable use of area resources, for tourism, education and research

Currently East Nusa Tenggara Province is included in Corridor V MP3EI (Master Plan for the Acceleration of Indonesian Economic Development), together with West Nusa Tenggara and Bali Provinces which are expected to be able to develop the tourism sector to accelerate economic development for the welfare of the people. To support tourism development, therefore, it is necessary to know the potential that exists in the Komodo National Park and the extent of the role and contribution of this tourist destination to regional development as well as the constraints in developing tourism in the Komodo National Park, which is currently a mainstay of tourist attraction in the Province. East Nusa Tenggara.

## 2 Methods

The method is a way or way with respect to scientific endeavors, the method concerns work or learning problems to be able to understand, then the method concerns work or learning problems to be able to understand the object that is the target of the relevant science (Koentjaraningrat, 1994). Based on this understanding, the research method is a way of working that is used by researchers in an effort to find, collect, manage data and formulate it in the form of scientific writing. In this study using a qualitative descriptive method where the data obtained came from the field by conducting observations and in-depth interviews with informants which showed that there are many exotic natural resource potentials that can

be used as ecotourism concepts in the Komodo National Park Area and utilize human resources as managers of these natural potentials.

This research was conducted in the Komodo National Park Area, Komodo District, West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Location determination is done purposively. The data collection method used is through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation. Data analysis was carried out through three stages, namely the data reduction stage, data presentation and drawing conclusions that can identify the potential and constraints that exist in the Komodo National Park Area.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Potential of Komodo National Park

The Komodo National Park area is located in the Nusa Tenggara Islands, the westernmost tip of East Nusa Tenggara Province which is directly adjacent to West Nusa Tenggara Province. The Komodo National Park area is known as the original habitat of the Komodo dragon which consists of Komodo Island, Rinca Island and Padar Island. The Komodo National Park area is located in the west of Sumbawa Island, which is separated by the Sape Strait and this area is part of the Komodo District, West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia.

The local government of the Province of East Nusa Tenggara is currently continuing to develop the area to make Komodo National Park a world tourist destination. Since the establishment of the Komodo dragon as one of "The new seven Wonders of Nature", East Nusa Tenggara has become the entry point for Indonesian tourism besides Bali which has been well known so far. The existence of Komodo dragons (*Varanus komodoensis*) in Komodo National Park is not only on Komodo Island but they also breed on Rinca Island and Padar Island even though their numbers are more on Komodo Island. This Komodo dragon has attracted world attention as an ancient species that still remains today.

This momentum was then utilized by holding various national and international events as a bridge for East Nusa Tenggara to leading tourism destinations. Indonesia has a Sail Indonesia program which has been held since 2009 and in 2013 it was carried out in East Nusa Tenggara with the theme Sail Komodo. At that time, the Komodo dragon began to be favorite of Indonesia. As the Komodo Dragons have become favorite in Indonesia, many tourists are also competing to see for themselves not only the beauty of the Komodo Dragons but also the beauty of their natural resources which are truly amazing.

The tourism potential of the Komodo National Park is indeed extraordinary. The Komodo National Park has amazing natural tourist attractions, both on land and in its waters. The main attraction of the Komodo National Park area is the existence of ancient giant reptiles known as Komodo dragons and this is the original habitat of the Komodo dragons which is highly conserved. In addition to the presence of Komodo dragons, Komodo National Park also has extraordinary natural potential, such as thick tropical forests on the hills, or mangrove forests along wet areas which are of course a special attraction, especially for tourists who are fond of nature tourism activities. Not to mention the expanse of savanna that looks green during the rainy season and dries up during the dry season, overgrown with various types of grass and interspersed with lontar trees, which are typical plants of the region. This is a very exotic sight. From here tourists can carry out various types of activities, such as observing animals, hiking and camping.

In addition to the mainland, the tourism potential also exists in sea. The cluster of coral reefs in the waters of Komodo National Park is the most beautiful marine paradise in the world. Various types of coral animals that form clusters of coral reefs with various shapes and colors, thus presenting a very exotic underwater view. Not to mention the existence of more than 100 types of marine fish that make this coral reef their habitat and make the atmosphere under the sea even more stunning. Marine tourism activities such as fishing, snorkeling, diving, canoeing and boating can be done in the Komodo National Park area. The following are tourism potentials in the Komodo National Park Area, including:

##### 3.1.1. *Loh Liang in Komodo Island*

Loh Liang is located on Komodo Island, is the entrance to the main tourist areas of Komodo Island. This area offers land and maritime tourism potential. Some of the activities that can be carried out by tourists include climbing Mount Ara, exploring the Loh Liang forest by observing free-living animals such as dragons, deer and wild boar. Loh liang is an area that has the most Komodo Stars and they live freely in this nature, not only that they also live side by side with the native people of Komodo Village.

In this area almost every month of the year cruise ships (Cruises) from Australia or other parts of Europe come to visit Loh Liang to enjoy nature, tracking into the forest and seeing Komodo dragons that live freely in the forest and prey on their food. If these cruises come, the number of tourists can reach a thousand people compared to usual days, which sometimes only have around 20 people.

##### 3.1.2. *Pink Beach in Komodo Island*

This is a tourist attraction spot in the Komodo National Park. The Pink Beach tourist attraction is an unspoiled beach tourist attraction with red sand. This Pink Beach come from red sand occurs due to coral fragments which are red in color and from these fragments form red sand. The Pink Beach tourist attraction has a long coastline and red sand decorated with beautiful savanna views and hills on the beach that tourists can climb to see the beautiful scenery around Pink Beach from the top of the hill.

### 3.1.3. *Gili Laba*

Gili Laba is one of the favorite spots for tourists in the Komodo National Park because it is not only the scenery that is amazing but the beauty under the sea will also amaze tourists with the Komodo National Park. People say that Gili Laba is the tail of the island between the tip of Komodo Island and the tip of Gili Laba.

### 3.1.4. *Padar Island*

Padar Island is a spot that is visited by many tourists. Padar Island is right in front of Komodo Island which can be reached in approximately 1 hour from Komodo Island and this island is also included in the Komodo National Park Area. Currently tourists visiting Padar Island must pay to visit this spot and tourists must be accompanied by Komodo National Park officials because in this place there are also wild Komodo dragons, although only a few in number. This island is also a favorite island to visit in Komodo National Park by mountaineer and seeing panoramic views of the mountains and sea from a height.

### 3.1.5. *Ata Modo*

Ata Modo is an indigenous people of the Komodo Tribe who live in the Komodo National Park Area, precisely on Komodo Island. Before this area became a national park area, Ata Modo had lived side by side and had a long history of civilization with the Komodo Star. According to the story of Ata Modo, Komodo and Ata Modo are twins who were born from the same womb and this can also be seen from Ata Modo's physical resemblance to Komodo dragons. There are many legends about how Ata Modo and the Komodo Dragons look after each other and this can be proven from the ferocity of the Komodo Dragons that are still around their settlements. These stories are still believed and live among the indigenous people of the Komodo Tribe and this is used as a guide for the community in conserving Komodo Dragons.

In culture, Ata Modo has its own language, namely Komodo Language and in the majority belief system, Ata Modo is Muslim, which is mixed with mysticism, such as the myth about the Dragon Princess who is believed to currently have offspring, namely the Komodo Dragon. Ata Modo also has a Kolo Kamba ceremony which is a ceremony to repel reinforcements for the Komodo Tribe people. In his livelihood, Ata Modo works as a fisherman, but since this national park created a zoning system and has had an impact on the livelihoods of the Komodo Tribe, Ata Modo has finally switched professions as a sculptor of statues that exactly resemble Komodo dragons of various sizes. Not only that because their settlement is close to Loh Liang which is the entrance to Komodo Island, Ata Modo provides homestays in their residential areas so when tourists want to get to know Ata Modo they can stay at their homestays, apart from providing homestays, many Ata Modo also work as tour guides and souvenir seller in Loh Liang. From Ata Modo, when people talk about the Komodo National Park, which is highlighted by the outside world, it only revolves around the Komodo Dragons, not the tribes that occupy the area. In the end, Ata Modo, which is known as the twin of the Komodo Dragon, seems to be forgotten.

Within the Komodo National Park area is a group of islands in East Nusa Tenggara and the tourism potential described here is a mainstay potential in the Komodo National Park area and can provide benefits to the tourism sector. The Komodo National Park area can be accessed by using a phinisi boat or using a rented fishing boat, not only that other potential of the Komodo National Park Area are also on Kanawa Island, Kelor Island and Bidadari Island which are quite close from Labuan Bajo.

## 3.2 The Role and Contribution of Komodo National Park

The role of tourism in Komodo National Park is economically very important because it is an information-intensive, capital-intensive and labor-intensive industry. In tourism, it has a role that can be felt to generate economic benefits such as foreign exchange earnings for the country and regions, improving the economy of the surrounding community, opening employment opportunities and preserving culture, especially the culture of the local community. The real action taken by the regional government of West Manggarai Regency in order to increase regional income through the tourism sector is by regional levies as regional taxes which are expected to be one of the sources of financing for governance and regional development. With the role of the Komodo National Park supporting and paying attention to attractions which are the main attraction, uniqueness or rarity and environmental conditions, on the one hand it also pays attention to amenities which look at the facilities available, capacity and

quality of facilities and infrastructure, as well as accessibility with regard to quality the road to the tourist attraction, availability of information and availability of direction signs. The role of the Komodo National Park is also to attract investors to invest their capital which will increase regional income.

Furthermore, the role and contribution in Komodo National Park tourism is by carrying out the conservation of ancient animals, namely Komodo Dragons and environmental conservation by the Komodo National Park Agency where from the tourism role of this national park, the Komodo National Park Office itself organizes the system zoning with zoning types consisting of core zone, jungle zone, marine protection zone, land tourism utilization zone, marine tourism utilization zone, land traditional utilization zone, marine traditional utilization zone, special settlement zone and pelagic special zone. These types of zoning show the zones of the Komodo National Park area with the area of each zone and the activities that can be carried out in each of these zones. In relation to tourism, it can be seen that the core zone is not allowed tourism activities except for monitoring by national park officials, research (with special permits), and environmental restoration in the event of a disaster or damage caused by nature. While the other eight zones can carry out tourism activities in them with permission from the tourism management authority of the Komodo National Park.

The Komodo National Park Agency is not only carries out zoning arrangements but also manages the Komodo National Park area, controls forest fires, promotes and provides information on the conservation of living natural resources and their ecosystems, conservation counseling, collaborative development of conservation and community empowerment around the National Park Area Komodo dragon.

In the tourism industry, it is able to accelerate economic growth and provide employment, is able to increase income, living standards and is able to stimulate other productive sectors. As a complex sector, this will realize classic industries such as handicrafts made by indigenous people and selling souvenirs.

The Komodo National Park area will provide a direct impetus for the development progress of East Nusa Tenggara Province, especially West Manggarai Regency, this will also encourage the progress of highways, environmental sustainability, cleanliness and health, all of which will provide benefits and pleasure for both the community located in the area of the area concerned as well as for tourists.

With the role and contribution of the Komodo National Park, it shows positive things in the opening of new job opportunities for the local community. In that sense, the indigenous people in the Komodo National Park Area, who were originally traditional fishermen, realized that ecotourism in the Komodo National Park had the potential to provide benefits for themselves, so that the community began to participate in the tourism sector. Many indigenous people who were originally fishermen because they had no other abilities besides being fishermen, now they can work in the ecotourism sector in the Komodo National Park area, especially Komodo Island.

This proves that the growing development of ecotourism on Komodo Island will also open opportunities for local communities to participate in ecotourism businesses. There are various business opportunities that need to be looked at by the Komodo natives at this time. However, developing it certainly requires the support of every ecotourism stakeholder in the Komodo National Park.

### **3.4 Constraints in Komodo National Park Tourism**

The attraction in Komodo National Park is not solely due to the mere presence of the Komodo Star, but with underwater views and panoramic views of the savanna that belongs to the Komodo National Park Area, which is a potential supporting attraction. However, behind the admiration of tourists there is an inequality that occurs in society. The number of tourists who come to visit the Komodo National Park area is inversely proportional to the condition of the indigenous people who live in the Komodo National Park area. This shows that the existing constraints are the lack of tourism management that involves local communities due to limited knowledge and business capital, no training, no monitoring and evaluation which makes people become apathetic towards the management of Komodo National Park. Meanwhile, the implementation of tourism must pay attention to the principles of community participation, local cultural rights, aspects of resource conservation, education and training, promotion, as well as monitoring and evaluation.

From the concept and objectives of tourism development in Indonesia, it has been proclaimed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, where the identity and welfare of the local population is part of the goals to be achieved in tourism. The sustainable tourism development framework is an indicator of the success of national tourism development, in which the use of local products, empowerment and welfare of local residents, environmental preservation and local cultural sustainability as well as equitable distribution of regional economic development are a small part of the many indicators of success.

In the ecotourism principle, it is known as the concept of tourism management and development that cares about the functions of conservation, education, economy and community involvement. The concept



of ecotourism has an understanding that is not just "symbolism" but is a basic management principle that must be reflected in its policies, applications and realization. With this principle, ecotourism is not an easy thing that can be applied without a mature process, which must be reflected starting from the planning, management and operational stages, up to the evaluation stage. Ecotourism is a tourism concept that reflects environmental insight and follows the principles of balance and environmental sustainability. In general, the development of ecotourism must be able to improve the quality of human relations, improve the quality of life of the local community and maintain the quality of life of the local community and maintain the quality of the environment Suraji in (Imur & Junaeda, 2022).

As the Komodo National Park area becomes more and more famous in the eyes of the world, of course it indirectly creates hope for the people living around the Komodo area to improve their welfare. Tourism, which is known to have a multiplier effect, especially for the development of the regional economy and the development of the business of supplying the needs of the hospitality industry, is expected to be spread evenly and be able to prosper the population. In terms of tourism the Komodo National Park must be in line with the concepts and goals of tourism development in Indonesia which have been proclaimed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and make the responsibility and commitment of all stakeholders involved; local government, academics, managers, investors, local residents and tourists.

Furthermore, the obstacle in the development of the Komodo National Park is the limited budget because the budget really needs efforts in tourism development. The introduction of tourism to the public usually requires a budget and from this budget can also be allocated to build tourism infrastructure facilities. However, in reality, most managers of national park areas tend to lack funds in anticipating developments in tourism industry demand and conservation demands, especially for community empowerment, while the government as manager of the area does not provide proper funding for national parks. Communities living around the Komodo National Park area are generally poor people who depend on the rich natural resources of the Komodo National Park and to participate in ecotourism development activities of course requires money.

From this budget limitation, the management of the Komodo National Park Office affects the participation of the community around the Komodo National Park Area because the Komodo National Park Authority, as one of the stakeholders in the Komodo National Park area, should carry out programs to develop the quality of community human resources in the Komodo National Park area, including by providing coaching. However, due to this limited budget, the community does not receive guidance, which of course will not have the expertise or skills, so they will experience difficulties in participating in ecotourism development in the Komodo National Park in general or on Komodo Island in particular.

Furthermore, the obstacle in Komodo National Park tourism is the fluctuation in tourist visits. Komodo Island as an ecotourism destination also experiences fluctuations in tourist visits. July to November is the high season for tourist visits to the Komodo National Park in general and to Komodo Island in particular. The bustling tourist visits during these months have an impact on increasing the acceptance of local communities participating in ecotourism businesses in Komodo National Park. Apart from during high season, the abundant tourist visits to Komodo Island are when cruise ships dock at Loh Liang, Komodo Island. The people of Komodo Village who participate in the ecotourism business admit that, when cruise ships carry hundreds of tourists to Loh Liang, they can sell more souvenirs and also naturalist guides can get jobs easily. However, during low season or when cruise ships do not visit Komodo Island, indigenous people from Komodo Island who participate in ecotourism businesses on Komodo Island have difficulty getting jobs or have difficulty selling souvenirs due to the low number of tourists who buy the products that local people offer.

Fluctuations in tourist visits to Komodo Island are one of the factors that hinder the people of Komodo Village from participating in the development of ecotourism on Komodo Island. Minimum tourist visits during low season or when cruise ships do not visit Komodo Island, causing the participation of the Komodo Village community in developing ecotourism on Komodo Island to be less than optimal. Indigenous people who are in Loh Liang Komodo Island and switch professions as tour guides get jobs when many tourists visit only when cruise ships visit Loh Liang, but this also becomes a problem when cruise ships do not visit Loh Liang and it can be said that few tourists have visited Loh Liang even though this place is the center of the habitat of the Komodo Dragon. This is also an obstacle for indigenous people who sell souvenirs where there are only a few tourist visits at certain times.

Even with the constraints experienced and over time the Regional Government in collaboration with the Komodo National Park Office has had activities for the community in which the Village Government and the Komodo National Park Office have started educating the community, motivating and even providing education that is acceptable to the community. In this case the people who understand eventually accept and the people also want to participate in tourism development in the Komodo National Park. However, in this case not all of the community received the coaching program, only a small number

received the coaching program and this was due to a limited amount of the budget. Even so, the people who were seen participating in the tourism of the Komodo National Park started from cleaning the location until in the end the people also wanted to open stalls selling souvenirs and opening homestays.

One of Indonesia's hopes is now starting to focus on "Komodo", in order to be able to lift Indonesia's image as a country with the largest mega biodiversity in the world. However, the expected image is not only oriented towards abundant resources, this hope must be supported by commitment and a form of management realization that truly applies the tourism concept correctly. The development of tourism in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara, especially the Komodo National Park Area, is not an option, but must be an obligation (obligatory) for all stakeholders so that the intended "prosperity" can be achieved for the Komodo dragon as an endangered species and the benefits are equally distributed to the indigenous people who occupy the National Park Area. Komodo dragon.

#### 4 Conclusion

From the above description it can be concluded that the Komodo National Park area has exotic tourism potential from its natural resources and human resources which will attract tourists to visit Indonesia, especially East Nusa Tenggara Province. Furthermore, the role and contribution of Komodo National Park tourism is where the local government of West Manggarai Regency is able to collect regional fees to improve the local economy and the National Park Office which is able to carry out zoning arrangements and carry out conservation in Komodo National Park, from the role and contribution of the National Park Komodo will also open up new job opportunities for the community in the Komodo National Park Area.

However, even though it has tourism potential and the Komodo National Park has a role and contribution to the Komodo National Park in its development, it has obstacles, namely the involvement of local communities who are not qualified in managing tourist objects properly, furthermore the limited budget received by the Komodo National Park Office and fluctuations in visiting tourists who are in the Komodo National Park. Nonetheless, in this case the potential that exists in the Komodo National Park Area is not included in the concept of ecotourism because it should involve local communities participating in the tourism. As for the renewal of the potential that exists in the Komodo National Park, it is necessary to initiate the development and promotion of cultural tourism and the wisdom of local communities so that they are not forgotten and this will become a more aesthetic tourist attraction where in the concept of ecotourism tourists not only want to gain knowledge about nature but as well as the local culture.

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