Strategy of Ecotourism Development at Mundu Perdidu to be a Tourist Destination in Ossu De Cima Village, Viqueque Municipality

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Abstract:- This research analyzes the strategy of ecotourism development at Mundu Perdidu to become a tourist destination in Ossu de Cima village in Viqueque. The data has been obtained through observation and documentation together with interviews with 14 key informants. Data analyzed using the SWOT analysis. The results indicate that success is reliant on having a variety of solutions that strengthen tourism activities available, along with tourism facilities, as well as infrastructure to support a tourism industry. Training is also needed to prepare the local community to become tour guides and hosts for tourists. This study makes recommendations to a range of stakeholders in Timor-Leste to develop stronger ecotourism destinations like Mundu Perdidu.

Keywords:- Ecotourism, Development, Tourist Destination.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism encompasses the movement of international inbound tourists who travel to a destination country, often differing from their usual residence, for a period not exceeding one year (Fahmi et al 2018, 163). It involves individuals from one location journeying to different places and then returning to their point of origin (Madden et al 2016, 247). One specific form of tourism, ecotourism, garners considerable interest, with Mundu Perdido being a nature-based attraction that draws visitors.

Timor-Leste boasts a wealth of tourism potential, including natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural heritage. The natural tourism potential in Timor-Leste is substantial, and among these attractions is mountain ecotourism in Mundo Perdido, particularly in Viqueque municipality, specifically in the administrative post of Ossú. This location holds significant tourism potential but is still in the process of being fully recognized. Developing these unique tourism assets as tourist destinations is imperative as it can generate benefits and job opportunities for the local community. Viqueque already has a presence in ecotourism, with offerings like its rich flora and fauna, featuring deer, buffalos, birds, crocodiles, horses, coffee, banyan trees, snake fruits, and more. Ecotourism entails traveling to pristine natural settings with the explicit aim of studying, admiring, and enjoying the local flora, fauna, and any cultural elements present in the area (Bessie 2022, 781; Priambodo et al 2021, 613).

Mundu Perdido, situated in the Viqueque municipality in Ossu de Cima village and Ossu post administrative, is one of the prominent high mountains in the region. It distinguishes itself with its pristine environment and unique features, including a variety of flora and fauna, such as monkeys, buffalo, horses, and others. Ensuring the conservation of this ecotourism site is paramount, given its remarkable surroundings of water, clouds, and stone. The potential for numerous visitors to this site promises benefits for the local community. However, it has been observed that the local community, without sufficient oversight, has engaged in activities detrimental to the environment, including deforestation and hunting, with the additional challenge of climate change impacting the local wildlife.

In light of the aforementioned background, the research seeks to emphasize the importance of local community engagement and the leadership of the village chief in safeguarding the ecotourism potential of Mundu Perdido. As a result, the research topic proposed is "Strategies for the Development of Ecotourism at Mundu Perdido as a Tourist Destination in Ossu de Cima Village, Ossu Post Administrative, and Viqueque Municipality." The objective of this research is to analyze the strategies necessary for the development of ecotourism at Mundo Perdido, focusing on its role as a tourist destination in Ossu de Cima village, Ossu post administrative, and Viqueque municipality. The subsequent sections of this paper will include a literature review, methodology, results, discussions, and conclude with recommendations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecotourism, as defined by the International Ecotourism Society, represents a responsible form of travel to natural areas characterized by its commitment to environmental conservation, the sustenance of local communities, and the provision of educational experiences. The primary objective of ecotourism is to offer an ethical and sustainable alternative to activities that could harm the environment. Additionally, it seeks to counteract the negative incentives that might lure marginalized populations into less eco-friendly livelihoods and development practices that pose a greater threat to wildlife and ecosystems (Stronza et al 2019, 230).

In a broader context, ecotourism involves responsible travel to natural environments with multifaceted objectives. These objectives encompass acquiring knowledge, immersing oneself in local cultures, appreciating natural surroundings, and actively contributing to the preservation of ecosystems while fostering the growth and development of the local economy (Cobbinah et al 2015, 179; Dahal et al 2020, 61; Hakim 2017, 2; Lee and Han 2018, 792; Pornprasit and Rurkkhum 2019, 43; Priambodo et al 2021, 614).

Moreover, ecotourism can be seen as a specialized form of travel focused on natural areas, which prioritizes environmental conservation and the welfare of local populations. It initially emerged from the interests of nature enthusiasts who aspired to maintain the integrity and sustainability of tourist destinations while safeguarding the cultural heritage and well-being of the resident communities (Juwita and Hariyanto 2016, 22). In summary, ecotourism distinguishes itself as a fundamental component within the spectrum of nature-based tourism, carrying a unique mission to support and uplift local communities while preserving the natural world.

➢ *Benefit of Ecotourism*

Ecotourism, as outlined by Ecotourism World (2022), offers numerous advantages and is widely regarded as a form of responsible tourism. Eco-tourists tend to be more conscious of the potential impact their visit may have on the host community and the environment compared to other types of travelers. The increasing popularity of ecotourism in recent years can be attributed in part to a heightened global and local awareness of environmental concerns.

Ecotourism, in essence, strives to minimize its impact on the natural environment, making it a more sustainable mode of travel. It also plays a crucial role in supporting communities residing in environmentally sensitive areas over the long term. The following points highlight some of the key benefits of ecotourism:

- Preservation of Untouched Natural Settings: Ecotourism places a strong emphasis on preserving pristine and unspoiled natural environments. This approach ensures that these areas remain untouched and protected from detrimental human intervention.
- Environmental and Cultural Awareness: Ecotourism promotes an increased awareness of the environment and local cultures. Travelers engage with and learn about the natural world and the traditions of the communities they visit. This cultural exchange fosters a deeper appreciation for the diversity of our planet.
- Enriching Experiences for All: Ecotourism endeavors to create enjoyable and meaningful experiences for both visitors and the local population. Travelers gain unique insights into the destinations they explore, while the host communities benefit from economic opportunities and cultural exchanges.
- Mitigation of Negative Environmental Impact: One of the primary benefits of ecotourism is its ability to minimize the adverse effects of tourism on the environment. Sustainable practices and responsible tourism guidelines help reduce pollution, habitat destruction, and other ecological harms.

In summary, ecotourism stands out as a travel approach that not only offers enriching and unforgettable experiences for travelers but also actively contributes to the preservation of our natural world and the well-being of local communities. It is a responsible and sustainable way to explore our planet while ensuring its protection for future generations. Moreover, ecotourism operates on a set of fundamental principles that emphasize the importance of conservation, cultural respect, and mutual benefit for both travelers and local communities. It is not only a means of experiencing the natural world but also a path to understanding and preserving it, all while fostering economic and cultural enrichment.

➢ *Tourist Destination*

According to Vong et al. (2014,5), a tourist destination can be defined as a physical location comprising natural and social resources, infrastructure, tourism products, facilities, hospitality, activities, attractions, marketing, and promotional efforts, all designed to meet the demands of tourists. A key characteristic of a tourist destination is that it involves a visitor spending at least one night at the location within a year.

Macchiavelli (2001,6) offers a complementary perspective, explaining that a tourist destination is a place with defined boundaries, which can be based on actual physical boundaries such as islands, political demarcations, or market-driven categorizations.

In essence, a tourist destination is where tourists or travelers choose to visit, driven by their desire to temporarily break away from their daily routines and seek rejuvenation. Specifically, Mundu Perdidu is positioned as an ecotourism destination within this context.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Ossú de Cima Village, Ossu post administrative, and Viqueque municipality, situated in the eastern part of Timor-Leste. Data collection occurred over the course of one month, from February 6th to March 6th, 2023.

A. *Sample Selection*

The sample, in research terms, refers to the process of selecting a subset of individuals from the larger population of interest (Majid 2018, 3). In this research, purposive sampling was employed to intentionally select individuals who were directly relevant to the research objectives. In qualitative research, the specific sampling technique used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a deliberate method of selecting data sources based on particular criteria (Sugiyono 2010, 11). In this case, the sample was composed of individuals who had knowledge and direct involvement with the destination under study. This included key informants such as the Post Administrative personnel, the Chief of the village, the Chief of the Sub-Village (*Aldeia*), and members

of the local community, as well as academic students. These individuals played essential roles as informants in the study.

Table 1: The Key Informants

No.	Position	Total
1	Post Administrative	1
2	Chief of Village (Suco)	1
3	Chief of Sub-Village (Aldeia)	2
4	Traditional leader	2
5	Community	4
6	Academic Student	4
Total		**14**

B. Collecting Data

➤ *The Data Collection Process In This Research Followed A Systematic And Structured Approach, Incorporating The Following Methods:*

- Observation: Observation is a data collection method involving direct, systematic, and purposeful examination of the research problem. It extends beyond mere casual observation and employs the senses to gather detailed information about the subject of study (Alam, Kabir, and Akhtar 2015, 664).
- Interview: Interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information from participants. The responses provided by the interviewees were carefully analyzed, and the essence of their narratives was distilled to address the research question (Ciesielska 2018, 36).
- Documentation: The use of documentation, sometimes referred to as archival studies, relied on the analysis of various texts and documents. These documents provided valuable insights and data relevant to the research (Ciesielska 2018; 37).

These data collection methods were applied systematically to ensure a comprehensive and robust approach to gathering information and insights for the research.

C. Data Analysis

➤ *SWOT Analysis*
SWOT analysis is a valuable tool utilized in the field of strategic planning and management within organizations. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and it serves as a strategic planning method designed to assess both internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) within an organization's projects or business endeavors (Ip and Koo 2004, 534; Mondal 2017, 160; Singh et al 2008, 525).

Table 2: SWOT Matrix Table

IFAS (Internal Factors Analysis Summary) / EFAS (External Factors Analysis Summary)	Strength Mentioned the internal factors of strength	Weakness Mentioned the internal factors of weakness
Opportunity Mentioned the External of opportunity	Strategy (SO) Strategy that uses strength to take advantage of opportunities	Strategy (ST) Strategy that uses to strength to overcome threats
Threats Mentioned the external factor of threats	Strategy (WO) Strategy that uses strength to take advantage of opportunities	Strategy (WT) Strategy that minimizes weaknesses and avoid threats.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

The tourism potential in Ossu de Cima village has the capacity to drive tourism development, making it an attractive destination for both international and domestic tourists. One of the factors contributing to its appeal is the unique historical and natural attractions of Mundu Perdidu Mountain.

A. MundoPerdido Mountain
Based on the information from the informants, Mundu Perdidu Mountain, located in Ossu de Cima village, has a unique history that adds to its mystique. In the past, this mountain was once a lake. According to local lore, a bird named Kaba (Makasae) brought a stone to this location, which resembled a boat or ship. This stone, mysteriously, covered the entire lake, transforming it into the mountain we know today. It was given the name "Wai-taka" because the

stone concealed the lake. "Wai-taka" is derived from the local Kairui language, where "wai" means wastewater, and "taka" means covered.

Mundu Perdidu Mountain has earned its name due to an intriguing and somewhat eerie phenomenon. Over the years, both locals and strangers have reported experiencing disorientation and getting lost while within the mountain's boundaries. The mountain seems to have the power to transport individuals to different locations within its confines. While local residents have learned to navigate this mysterious landscape by changing their attire, visitors, particularly foreigners, often find it challenging to escape its grasp. In these cases, the intervention of traditional elders is needed to locate and rescue the lost individuals. According to local accounts, those who get lost in Mundu Perdidu may find themselves in another world, hence the name change from

"Wai-taka" to "Mundu Perdidu," reflecting the experiences of those who have vanished within its boundaries.

Additionally, certain customs and beliefs have developed around Mundu Perdidu as a means to prevent getting lost. It is advised not to use negative language or mention the possibility of getting lost before entering the mountain. Breaking these rules is believed to increase the likelihood of losing one's way. The Portuguese name "Mundu Perdidu" reflects the experiences of the first Portuguese visitors who became disoriented in the mountain, with "Mundo" meaning "world" and "Perdido" signifying "lost." This phenomenon continues to the present day, particularly when individuals fail to adhere to the established customs before entering the mountain.

Furthermore, Mundu Perdidu Mountain is not only associated with getting lost but also poses dangers if certain items, such as eggs and "kata," are brought into the mountain. The presence of these items can lead to accidental rockslides on the mountain's sides. For example, in 1975, a portion of the mountain collapsed in the Kaiwati area, followed by another collapse in the same area in 1999. In 2017, a collapse occurred in the Logobere area.

In summary, Mundu Perdidu Mountain is a place with a rich history, folklore, and unique characteristics, including its ability to disorient and potentially transport visitors to different locations within its boundaries, making it both intriguing and enigmatic.

Picture 1: Inside of MundoPerdidomountain
(Doc: Zelia Guterres, 2023)

B. Ecotourism of Mundu Perdidu

This research has identified several ecotourism attractions in Mundu Perdidu, including the stone resembling "Nossa Senhora" or the Hail Mary statue, waterfalls, and the diverse flora and fauna. With the presence of these natural assets, there is a strong potential to develop Mundu Perdidu as a tourist destination. This development can play a pivotal role in supporting economic growth by generating revenue through tourism-related taxes. Furthermore, it has the potential to alleviate socioeconomic challenges, particularly for the underprivileged classes in Timor-Leste, with a specific focus on Ossu de Cima Village.

➢ **Fatuk Maromak**

The stone resembling "Nossa Senhora" or the Hail Mary statue) Fatuk Maromak, also known as "God's stone," is situated at the summit of the mountain and is a natural formation. While the research may not have uncovered a specific narrative or story associated with this location, it holds great significance for the local community. Despite the absence of a documented history, the community reveres it as a sacred place, underscoring the deep cultural and spiritual connection that people share with the natural world and the land around them. Such sites often represent a profound sense of reverence and respect for nature and the spiritual world within local traditions and belief systems.

Picture 2: Fatuk Maromak (All Photos Docs by Zelia G, 2023)

➢ **Waterfall Tunia**

Waterfall Tunia, situated in the heart of the mountain, is a natural wonder that, despite not having a specific story associated with it, offers breathtaking views and a serene natural spectacle. Its beauty lies in the mesmerizing sight of cascading water, set amidst the lush flora that surrounds it. While it may lack a documented narrative, the waterfall's aesthetic charm and the peaceful ambiance it provides make it a noteworthy attraction within the mountain, showcasing the inherent beauty of nature.

Picture 3: Water Fall, Tunia

Picture 5: Lorikeet in Mundu Perdidu Mountain

Picture 4: Horses in Mundu Perdidu Mountain

Picture 6: Monkeys in Mundu Perdidu Mountain

C. Strategy for the Development

➢ *Internal Factor Analysis*

Analyzing the internal environment of an organization, including its strengths and weaknesses, is crucial for understanding its capabilities and limitations in achieving its objectives. Strengths are factors within the system that enable the organization to advance towards its goals, while weaknesses are elements that hinder its progress (Ip and Koo 2004, 535; Mondal 2017, 162). This analysis helps the organization identify which resources and capabilities can potentially provide a competitive advantage and which may not contribute significantly to its competitive position.

Based on the researcher's field observations, several internal factors have been identified:

Table 3: Internal Factor Analysis (IFAS)

No	Strength
1	Has a beautiful natural attraction (Amazing panorama, variety of flora and fauna (a unique Dara-ilu tree, and birds such as in Makasae dialect: Lai risa, Watakae, Pae, poti, kaukua, pulakai, and tirilolotauko), quite or calm place, waterfalls, green and clean environment, cold water and as a highest mountain in VQQ.
2	Has a historical value.
3	Has a unique stone, the stone like Nossa Sehnora (Hail Mary).
No	**Weaknesses**
1	Lack of facilities (No parking area, no bathrooms, and no rubbish bin).
2	Lack of accessibilities (No internet network, bad roads, and no proper water sanitation).
3	Lack of basic accommodation (No Restaurants and guest houses).
4	Lack of ancillaries (no security guards, no tour guides, community conscience to conserve the place, and product creativities to offer for tourists).

➢ *Analysis External Factors*

Analyzing external factors, including opportunities and threats, is essential for understanding how the environment outside the organization can impact its goals. Opportunities are external factors that can facilitate the organization's success, while threats are elements that may pose challenges or limitations to achieving its objectives (Ip and Koo 2004, 536; Mondal 2017, 163). These factors play a critical role in shaping the strategic direction of ecotourism development at Mundu Perdidu.

Based on interviews conducted by the researcher, several types of external factors have been identified:

Table 4: External Factor Analysis (EFAS)

No	Opportunity
1	Mundu Perdidu mountain can be developed as a tourist destination.
2	Create job opportunities for the residents, such as local guides, security guards, and hiring local horses.
3	Create activities such as Hiking, Sport Climbing, and Camping.
4	Build training Centre about tour guides and local product innovation.
5	Increase the number of tourists' visiting.
No	Threads
1	Natural adventures and obstacles (Strong wind/heavy wind, high hills (a dangerous place), the cloud covers the ground when it is rainy season (too many clouds), and climate change affects landslides).
2	Many small ways (Too many paths)
3	Don't say bad words and obey the local rules.

➢ *Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) and External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS)*

The following is the IFAS and EFAS analysis strategy and the programs proposed based on the SWOT analysis.

Table 5: Strategies

SO Strategy
Strategies for tourism activities: Animal protection, conserving the flora, protecting the environment, seeing animals (monkeys, birds, horses and buffalos), and horse riding.
WO Strategy
Building a tourism information Centre, establishing homestays and mini restaurants along with fixing the road and building a telecommunication network, and provide (needed for community involvement)
ST Strategy
Building local training Centre: respecting local culture and hospitality training. (required for community involvement)
WT Strategy
Building a notification for a restricted area and awareness of conservation for the Mundu Perdidu. (needed for community involvement)

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

In conclusion, Ossu de Cima village boasts a wealth of tourism potential, encompassing natural beauty, historical sites, and cultural attractions. This potential holds the promise of transforming the village into a thriving tourist destination, thereby supporting economic growth and providing job opportunities that can contribute to the welfare of the local population, especially in Viqueque Municipality, and Ossu de Cima Village.

This research has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the strategy for developing ecotourism at Mundo Perdido as a tourist destination in Ossu de Cima Village, Ossu post administrative, and Viqueque Municipality. The strategy development involves two key approaches:

- Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS): This strategy encompasses capitalizing on strengths to leverage opportunities (SO) and utilizing strengths to mitigate potential threats (ST). Key strategies for developing ecotourism include measures such as animal protection, conservation of flora and fauna, environmental preservation, offering experiences like observing monkeys, birds, horses, and buffaloes, as well as providing guided tours, hiking, and training in environmental protection and ecotourism for local tour guides.

- External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS): This strategy involves minimizing weaknesses to capitalize on opportunities (WO) and mitigating weaknesses to mitigate threats (WT). Specific measures include enhancing tourism facilities such as constructing a tourism information center, establishing homestays and restaurants, and improving tourism infrastructure by addressing road and telecommunication network issues. Furthermore, the development of human resources is critical, with training programs to equip the local community to serve as hosts for tourists.

This comprehensive strategy, integrating both internal and external factors, aims to promote the sustainable development of ecotourism at Mundo Perdidu, fostering economic growth and benefiting the local community while preserving the area's natural and cultural heritage.

B. Recommendation

➤ *Based on the Research Findings, the Following Recommendations are Proposed:*

- Wildlife and Plantation Conservation: The local community should actively participate in the protection and conservation of wildlife and vegetation to maintain the integrity of ecotourism in Mundo Perdidu.

- Collaboration with Local Authorities: Local residents should collaborate with the village chief, post administrator, and relevant government ministries to jointly oversee the development of ecotourism and other tourism potential in Ossu de Cima Village, transforming it into a well-managed tourist destination.

- Strengthening Legal Frameworks: The government and local authorities should enhance the enforcement of existing laws, including both the national laws of RDTL (Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste) and traditional regulations (tara-bandu), to safeguard the wildlife and vegetation, ensuring the preservation of their natural state.

- Security Measures: Considering the pristine beauty of the natural environment, collaboration with authorities is recommended to establish security measures that protect the natural surroundings and ensure the safety of both tourists and the ecological landscape.

- Facility Development: Entrepreneurs should collaborate with local communities and the government to construct essential facilities such as guest houses, networking infrastructure, restaurants, and souvenir shops. These facilities will enhance the overall tourist experience when visiting Mundo Perdidu Mountain.

- Diverse Study Tours: For university students, particularly that studying tourism management, it is advisable to diversify study tours by exploring different destinations. Avoid revisiting the same places and instead choose unexplored destinations within the country. This approach will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of various destinations within the nation.

These recommendations aim to promote responsible and sustainable ecotourism in Mundo Perdidu, emphasizing conservation, community collaboration, legal frameworks, security, infrastructure development, and diversified educational experiences for future tourism professionals.

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