

# Promoting the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre as a Tourism Product in Mahaquidan Village in Alas Sub-District, Manufahi, Timor-Leste

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**Abstract:** This study aims to identify the tourism products and strategize the suitable strategy for promoting the monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre as a tourism product in Manufahi, Timor-Leste. The fifteen informants were interviewed in-depth as key informants of this study, and the data was analyzed descriptively using NVIVO. The result revealed that the tourism products that existed in the Mahaquidan village are the Meti-Oan Massacre Monument, “Wedauberec” Beach, “Water Springs, and “Uma Katuas” Sacred House, and the thematic strategies for promoting the monument are promotion through online and offline methods and collaboration with local communities. By integrating these strategies, this research highlights the importance of digital and traditional marketing methods to create awareness, increase visits, and promote regional tourism. This blend of offline and online strategies can effectively target local communities and international tourists, building a robust promotional model for the Massacre Monument and other tourism products in Mahaquidan.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an essential economic sector contributing to national development, cultural preservation, and social cohesion (Yu et al., 2012). Among various types of tourism, heritage and historical tourism play crucial roles in educating visitors while fostering national identity. Heritage tourism promotes historical sites to attract local and international visitors, thereby generating economic benefits for local communities (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). However, despite its importance, promoting historical sites as a tourism product remains limited, necessitating an in-depth exploration of its potential.

In this context, the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre in Mahaquidan Village, Manufahi, Timor-Leste, holds significant historical and cultural value as a site of remembrance. One of the primary challenges in promoting the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre is the lack of adequate infrastructure and tourism facilities in Mahaquidan Village. Accessibility issues, insufficient promotional strategies, and limited awareness among potential visitors hinder its development as a recognized heritage tourism site (Hall & Page, 2014). Additionally, the absence of well-structured tour packages and professional tour guides limits

its attractiveness to tourists. The role of the government, local community, and other stakeholders is essential in overcoming these barriers and positioning the site as a key historical attraction. Without strategic interventions, the monument may fail to reach its full potential to contribute to the region's socio-economic growth.

A significant research gap exists in studying how historical monuments in Timor-Leste can be effectively integrated into the national tourism industry. While research on cultural tourism has been widely conducted (Smith, 2009), specific studies addressing the challenges and opportunities of promoting war memorials in Timor-Leste remain scarce. This lack of literature limits the understanding of best practices for heritage site promotion in post-conflict societies. By investigating the potential of the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre as a tourism product, this study aims to fill this gap and provide practical recommendations for sustainable tourism development in the region.

Furthermore, community engagement plays a crucial role in successfully promoting historical sites. Local participation in tourism development ensures the preservation of cultural heritage while creating economic opportunities for the community (Kantsperger et al., 2019; Su & Wall, 2014).

In the case of Mahaquidan Village, fostering community-based tourism initiatives can enhance visitor experiences and contribute to the monument's long-term sustainability. However, there is a need for policies that encourage local ownership, capacity-building programs, and financial support to strengthen the community's involvement in tourism activities. Addressing these aspects will help establish a sustainable model for heritage tourism development.

This study explores strategies for promoting the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre as a significant tourism product in Timor-Leste. By assessing existing challenges, identifying potential solutions, and engaging key stakeholders, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on heritage tourism development. The findings will provide insights for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and local communities to enhance the site's visibility and attractiveness. Ultimately, the study aspires to support the preservation of Timor-Leste's historical heritage while advancing the socio-economic well-being of Mahaquidan Village. The following is the literature review, methodology, results, and conclusions, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future studies.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Promoting Tourist Destinations

Promoting a tourist destination requires strategic marketing, branding, and stakeholder collaboration to enhance its visibility and attractiveness to visitors. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), destination marketing involves creating a strong image that resonates with potential tourists by highlighting unique cultural, historical, and natural attractions. Various promotional tools, including digital marketing, social media campaigns, and traditional advertising, significantly attract tourists. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) and Rahimzhan et al. (2020) also emphasize that e-tourism, mainly through online platforms and digital storytelling, significantly enhances destination awareness and visitor engagement. The effective promotion of a site, such as the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, requires integrating these strategies to reach a broader audience and establish its significance as a historical and cultural heritage site.

In addition, community involvement is key to destination promotion, as local participation enhances authenticity and sustainability. Studies by Su and Wall (2014) indicate that local communities contribute to destination branding by offering unique experiences, preserving traditions, and fostering a welcoming environment for visitors. This aligns with community-based tourism, where regional stakeholders actively promote and manage tourism resources (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). In the case of the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, empowering the Mahaquidan Village community to participate in promotional activities can create a more immersive and culturally rich experience for tourists. Moreover, local-led initiatives, such as storytelling events, guided tours, and cultural

performances, can strengthen the site's historical significance and attract heritage tourists.

Moreover, the role of government and tourism organizations is also essential in destination promotion, particularly in developing the necessary infrastructure and facilitating effective marketing strategies. Hall and Page (2014) argue that government support in providing better transportation, accommodation, and promotional campaigns enhances a site's accessibility and appeal. Furthermore, destination management organizations (DMOs) collaborate with tourism operators, travel agencies, and online platforms to maximize exposure and increase visitor numbers (Smith, 2009). In promoting the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, collaboration between government agencies, local communities, and the private sector can ensure the site's preservation and long-term sustainability as a historical tourism attraction.

### B. Tourism Products

Tourism products combine tangible and intangible elements that create an overall visitor experience. According to Middleton et al. (2009), tourism products include natural attractions, cultural heritage sites, accommodation, transport, and services contributing to a destination's appeal. These products are categorized into core, tangible, and augmented products, where the core represents the main attraction, the tangible includes physical infrastructure and services, and the augmented involves personalized experiences and branding. In the context of Mahaquidan Village, the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre serves as the core product, while supporting services such as guided tours, accommodations, and local cultural experiences enhance its attractiveness to tourists.

The development and marketing of tourism products require innovation and compelling storytelling to create unique and memorable experiences. Kotler et al. (2014) argue that differentiation in tourism products is essential for competitive advantage, particularly in heritage and cultural tourism. This is supported by Buhalis (2000), who highlights the importance of digitalization in promoting tourism products and engaging modern travelers. For the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, incorporating interactive elements such as digital storytelling, virtual tours, and historical re-enactments can enhance its appeal and make the visitor experience more immersive. Furthermore, collaborations between local communities and tourism stakeholders can enrich the product by integrating authentic cultural practices, performances, and narratives that connect visitors emotionally to the site.

Sustainability and community involvement play a vital role in the long-term success of tourism products. Swarbrooke (1999) states sustainable tourism products must balance economic benefits with environmental and cultural preservation. This is particularly important for heritage tourism, where sites must be managed to prevent degradation while ensuring they continue to generate income for local communities. The involvement of local stakeholders in product development fosters a sense of ownership and

ensures that tourism growth aligns with the needs and values of the community (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). In the case of the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, adopting a sustainable approach that includes conservation efforts, responsible tourism practices, and community-led initiatives will enhance its viability as a long-term tourism product.

### C. Monuments as Tourism Products

Monuments are significant tourism products, attracting visitors due to their historical, cultural, and symbolic value. According to Timothy and Boyd (2003), monuments are key elements of heritage tourism, representing past events, historical figures, or cultural identities that shape a nation's collective memory. These sites often function as educational resources, fostering cultural appreciation and historical awareness among tourists. Moreover, Hall and McArthur (1996) argue that monuments contribute to destination branding, embodying unique narratives that distinguish one location from another. For example, the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre in Mahaquidan Village is a testament to Timor-Leste's history, symbolizing resistance and remembrance. By integrating storytelling, guided tours, and interpretive materials, such monuments can enhance visitor engagement and create meaningful tourism experiences.

The practical promotion and management of monuments as tourism products require a strategic approach to sustainability and visitor experience. Swarbrooke (1999) and Prokopenko et al. (2019) emphasize that heritage tourism sites must balance conservation efforts with accessibility to ensure long-term viability. This involves preserving the monument's physical integrity while developing infrastructure that supports tourism activities, such as visitor centers, interpretive signage, and digital engagement tools. Additionally, Richards (2018) highlights the role of community involvement in managing heritage tourism, ensuring that local narratives and cultural significance remain central to the visitor experience. For the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre, incorporating local perspectives, oral histories, and traditional ceremonies into tourism initiatives can enrich its value as a heritage site while benefiting the surrounding community economically and socially.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Approach

The qualitative descriptive method is a widely used approach in qualitative research that focuses on understanding real-life conditions within the research setting. Sugiyono (2019) explains that this method involves systematically documenting and interpreting data gathered from various sources, including interviews, documentation, and observational records. This method allows researchers to construct a comprehensive narrative based on empirical findings, ensuring that research conclusions are grounded in authentic experiences and observations. Additionally, qualitative descriptive analysis provides flexibility in data interpretation, making it a valuable tool for exploring complex social, cultural, and behavioral dynamics.

### B. Research Informants

The informant is a research subject who can provide information about the phenomenon being investigated by the researcher using purposive sampling (Teeroovengadum & Nunkoo, 2018; Tongco, 2007). In qualitative research, informants are classified into three types: Key Informants, Principal Informants, and Additional/Supporting Informants. Key Informant: An informant with in-depth knowledge or a clear understanding of the research problem the researcher seeks to investigate. Principal Informant: An informant with technical and detailed knowledge about the research problem being studied. Additional/Supporting Informant: An informant who provides supplementary information to support understanding the phenomenon and research problem under investigation. In this study, the three categories of informants are mentioned in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Informants are Identified using Purposive Sampling

No.	Informants	Number of Informants
1	Administrator	1
2	Chief of the village	1
3	Chief of the sub-village	3
4	Cultural Public Figure	3
5	Local tourists	2
6	Local community	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>15</b>

### C. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques refer to systematic approaches researchers use to obtain relevant information from respondents, ensuring the accuracy and reliability of research findings. According to Sujarweni (2014:17), data collection techniques help researchers discover or capture information through various methods tailored to the study's objectives. This research employs three primary data collection methods: Observation, Interviews, and Documentation. Each technique ensures comprehensive data collection, offering different perspectives and depth to the research findings. Observation provides firsthand experience of the research setting, interviews allow for in-depth exploration of participant responses, and documentation ensures that historical and recorded information supports the study's credibility. By integrating these methods, researchers can achieve a holistic understanding of the research subject while maintaining data accuracy and reliability.

### D. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis techniques are essential for interpreting and making sense of collected data, ensuring that research findings are meaningful and reliable. This study employs a qualitative descriptive analysis method to systematically examine and present research data using NVIVO tools (Izza et al., 2021). Sugiyono (2012) as cited in Marfuah and Hartiyah (2019) states that qualitative descriptive analysis is conducted in natural conditions, allowing researchers to collect and interpret data using words or phrases rather than numerical values. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, as it enables researchers to capture the depth and nuances of participants'



experiences and perspectives. By organizing and categorizing data thematically, qualitative descriptive analysis helps uncover patterns and relationships, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research topic.

#### IV. RESULT

This study's results are based on the interviews, observations, and documentation, which are also based on its objectives. The objectives are to identify the tourism products in the village of Mahaquidan and explore strategies for promoting the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre as a significant tourism product.

##### A. Tourism Products in Suku Mahaquidan

###### ➤ Meti-Oan Massacre Monument

The Massacre Monument is a significant tourist attraction, drawing visitors due to its compelling historical and cultural value. This monument in Suku Mahaquidan, Posto Administrativu Alas, Municipality of Manufahi, symbolizes the area's history. The memorial is situated in a mild and refreshing climate, with surrounding sea views, which enhances the visitor experience. Upon visiting the monument, individuals can feel the calm, refreshing atmosphere, further enriched by the scenic views of the coastline and the adjacent hills. This site offers visitors a unique perspective, with the possibility of witnessing both the sunrise and the sunset in the area. The landscape provides a stunning panorama, creating an attractive and serene environment. Additionally, the local terrain and natural surroundings add to the overall appeal of the monument, making it a vital tourism product for the region (see Fig 1).

In addition to the monument's historical significance, it also refers to a history of strength and resilience. The Massacre Monument symbolizes historical events and serves as a point for reflection and remembrance. Visitors can enjoy panoramic views from the monument, including breathtaking sunrises as the morning light begins to rise and sunsets as the day transitions to night. The memorial offers a vivid reminder of past events, and visitors can engage in various activities, such as taking photos and learning about the site's history. In addition, the site was once known as the "Eleven Martyrs" location. In 1974-1975, during the conflict between FRETELIN and UDT, 11 individuals were captured and punished by the UDT party in the same villa. After three days of captivity, they were moved to Belaluhu, then to Natarbora, and finally to Meti-Oan, where they were able to honor the "eleven martyrs." The monument stands today as a tribute to their legacy. In 2020, after discussions with the local authorities and the families of the victims, efforts were made to locate the remains of the martyrs, and these were eventually found. On 27th August 2020, the Massacre Monument was inaugurated, commemorating the sacrifices made by these individuals.



Fig 1: Meti-Oan Massacre Monument  
(Doc by Authors, 2024)

###### ➤ "Wedauberec" Beach

The Wedauberec beach, located in the village of Debuwaen, Suku Mahaquidan, is a remarkable natural tourism product known for its refreshing and healthy atmosphere. This area is free from contamination and industrial influence, and its serene and clean environment is ideal for recreation (See Fig 2). The surrounding community primarily lives through fishing, which has contributed to the sustainable lifestyle in the area. Visitors to Tasi Ibun can enjoy a relaxing experience, whether by observing the sunrise or sunset or simply taking in the natural beauty of the surroundings. The area is particularly popular for its landscape, clean water, and lack of industrial pollution. The community has preserved the site, offering various activities for visitors, such as camping, fishing, and photography. It takes approximately two hours to drive from Same Village to the beach. During public holidays such as Christmas and New Year, the site sees many visitors from surrounding areas, including Same, Belaluhu, Natarbora, and Dotik.



Fig 2: Wedauberec Beach (Doc by authors, 2024)

### ➤ “Weda” Water Springs

The Wedawater spring is another notable tourism product located in Posto Administrativu Alas, Suku Mahaquidan, specifically in the village of Tahubein. Etymologically, “We Matan Weda” comes from the Tetun words “we” (meaning land) and “matan” (meaning eyes), which together refer to the place as “the land of eyes” or “a place of vision.” The Weda water spring traces back to an ancient story about ancestors who migrated to a peaceful place. Over time, the site was abandoned, but it has recently

garnered attention from younger generations. In August 2022, the community, with the support of local authorities, undertook a revitalization project, which included restoring an old house and obtaining permission for visitors to maintain the site. Visitors to Weda Water Springs can engage in activities such as photography and learning about the place's history. The picturesque landscape and cultural significance make it an attractive destination for nature and history enthusiasts.



Fig 3: “Weda” Water Springs (Doc by authors, 2024)



### ➤ “Uma Katuas” Sacred House

The “Uma Katuas” sacred house is located in Suku Mahaquidan, Posto Administrativu Alas, in the village of Tahubein. This traditional ceremonial house, which holds cultural and historical significance, was initially constructed by the community's ancestors. In 2022, it underwent renovation and restoration, and in 2023, it was inaugurated as a symbol of the community's cultural heritage (See Fig 4). The “Uma Katuas” sacred house is unique and distinguished from other traditional houses by its specific use. It is not a residential space dedicated solely to ceremonial and ritual activities. Unlike other houses where people live, this sacred house is reserved for specific rituals and ceremonies significant to the community's cultural identity. This house is important because it serves as a holy space for the community, where traditions and ceremonies are conducted, including traditional rites of passage, ancestor worship, and other important cultural events. In addition, the house is one of the largest in the area, with a specific design that accommodates ceremonial functions.



Fig 4: “Uma Katuas” Sacred House (Doc by authors, 2024)

It is essential to note that the Uma Katuas sacred house differs from regular residential houses, as its primary function is hosting rituals and cultural ceremonies. This unique role makes it a significant tourist attraction for those interested in learning more about the traditions and customs of the local community. Visitors can participate in activities such as observing the rituals, taking photographs, and engaging with the community to understand the deeper meanings behind the ceremonies.



### B. Methods to Promote the Massacre Monument in Meti-Oan

Effective promotion methods are needed to promote tourism products, specifically the Massacre Monument in Meti-Oan. These methods should integrate various promotional strategies that can reach a broad audience. Successful promotion efforts must use online and offline media and collaboration with the local community.

#### ➤ Promotion through Online and Offline Methods

Most of the informants agreed and mentioned that in this era, online promotion is the most powerful platform to attract tourists to visit a destination, especially young tourists. As they all have mentioned below:

*“Promotion in the modern era relies heavily on technology. With widespread internet access, platforms like Facebook, brochures, and television effectively reach local and international audiences. Social media, especially Facebook, has become a primary tool for tourism promotion because it allows users to easily access information, view updates, and engage with promotional content. Television also remains a widely accessible medium, with significant reach in urban and rural areas.”*

*“Collaboration with media outlets such as RTTL (A National TV station) and GMTV (a private TV station). The monument also uses Facebook pages and brochures as a promotional strategy. These tools are primarily practical due to Facebook's broad popularity and ease of sharing information. Brochures and posters further complement these efforts, providing physical resources that visitors can use to learn more about the monument.”*

*“Facebook, in particular, is considered a low-cost, time-efficient way to share information. This is because it enables the community to reach a global audience, ensuring that potential visitors from different locations, including international tourists, can learn about the site.”*



Fig 5: Facebook Accounts Created by Some of the Community

These findings illustrated that social media platforms and promotion on national TV and brochures are indispensable tools for promoting tourist sites. These platforms allow easy access to information, and the speed of sharing ensures that the message reaches a broad audience in real-time.

#### ➤ Collaboration with Local Communities

Most informants also affirmed that the best way to promote the destination is by collaborating with the local community, as they are the first actors to be beneficiaries of the destination. The following are some of the informant's comments:

*“While tourism in the area grows, the local community still lacks awareness of the importance of promoting tourism effectively. Despite the recognition of the Massacre Monument as an essential historical site, there is room for improvement in local engagement with tourism development. There is a need for better integration of the Massacre Monument within various types of tourism, such as historical, cultural, and religious tourism.”*

*“A stronger collaboration with local communities is needed to raise awareness about tourism development, ensuring that residents and visitors can appreciate the monument's historical and cultural value.”*

These findings illustrate that promoting through Facebook, television, brochures, and posters is efficient, considering the broad access to these platforms. Additionally, stronger collaboration with local communities is needed to raise awareness about tourism development and ensure that residents and visitors can appreciate the monument's historical and cultural value. By integrating these strategies, this research highlights the importance of digital and traditional marketing methods to create awareness, increase visits, and promote local tourism. This blend of offline and online strategies can effectively target local communities and international tourists, building a robust promotional model for the Massacre Monument and other tourism products in Mahaquidan.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

### A. Conclusion

This research in the Suku Mahaquidan, Postu Administrativu Alas, and Munisipiu Manufahi, Timor-Leste suggests the Massacre Monument in Meti-Oan is a significant tourism product. The monument and surrounding landscapes offer unique natural beauty, with striking sunrise and sunset views. Additionally, the area is rich in history, contributing to its appeal as a tourism destination. Besides the Massacre Monument, other notable tourism products in Mahaquidan include the “Wedauberec” beach, “Weda” water spring, and “Uma Katuas” sacred house. These sites hold immense potential for promoting tourism in the region. The research also highlights various promotional methods to market these tourism products, including online and offline promotions, particularly on Facebook pages, television, billboards, and

brochures. These methods help spread awareness and attract tourists.

### B. Recommendations

#### ➤ For the local Community:

- The community must take ownership and responsibility for maintaining Mahaquidan's tourism products. They should actively engage in initiatives that preserve these offerings' originality and cultural integrity, ensuring they remain attractive and authentic for visitors.
- Collaboration with relevant ministries or local organizations is crucial for the community to enhance the tourism sector. This collective effort will benefit tourism development and the community's overall welfare.
- The community should continue to work to attract local and international tourists through its initiatives to maintain and promote tourism effectively.

#### ➤ For the Government:

- The government, especially relevant ministries and competent authorities, should create favorable conditions for tourism development in the area. This includes improving the infrastructure, such as hotels, restaurants, sanitation, and transportation, making it easier and more convenient for tourists to visit the region.
- The Ministry of Tourism must proactively promote, develop, and support regional tourism products. Their involvement will be instrumental in drawing visitors and ensuring that tourism contributes to Timor-Leste's national development.

In conclusion, promoting and maintaining Suku Mahaquidan's tourism potential, mainly through effective collaboration between the community and government, will significantly contribute to the area's development. Continuing to market the region's unique historical and cultural products will help attract both domestic and international tourists, ultimately boosting the local economy and creating sustainable benefits for the community.

### C. Limitations and Future Study Recommendations

This research has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on a specific tourism product—the Monument of the Meti-Oan Massacre in Mahaquidan Village, Manufahi—limiting the generalizability of the findings to other historical or cultural tourism sites in Timor-Leste. Additionally, the study primarily employs qualitative methods, which, while providing in-depth insights, may lack the statistical rigor required for broader applicability. Future studies could incorporate mixed-method approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to enhance data reliability and depth. Another limitation is the reliance on available historical records and participant responses, which may be subject to recall bias or incomplete documentation. To address this, future research could integrate longitudinal studies to track the long-term impacts of tourism promotion efforts. Moreover, expanding the study to include

comparative analyses of other historical sites within Timor-Leste or Southeast Asia could provide a broader perspective on best practices in promoting monuments as tourism products. Lastly, future research should explore the role of digital marketing, technological innovations, and sustainable tourism policies in enhancing the visibility and preservation of historical tourism sites.

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