

Experiential Tourism as a Strategy to Improve the Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry in Tanah Datar Regency

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ABSTRACT

Tanah Datar Regency has considerable potential for cultural, natural, and historical tourism. However, tourism industry competitiveness remains constrained by short tourist stays, limited diversification of tourism products, and suboptimal implementation of experiential tourism concepts. These challenges may reduce tourism's economic value and weaken tourist loyalty. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between experiential tourism and tourism industry competitiveness in Tanah Datar Regency. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was employed at three major tourist destinations: Istano Basa Pagaruyung, Lembah Anai, and Nagari Pariangan. A total of 120 tourists were selected using accidental sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, observations, and documentation. Data analysis included univariate analysis using frequency distributions and mean scores, followed by bivariate analysis using the Spearman Rank correlation test at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha=0.05$). The results showed that 86 respondents (71.7%) perceived experiential tourism as good, with a mean score of 4.10 ± 0.51 . Meanwhile, 81 respondents (67.5%) assessed tourism industry competitiveness as high, with a mean score of 4.03 ± 0.47 . A strong and statistically significant positive relationship was found between experiential tourism and tourism industry competitiveness ($r=0.651$; $p<0.001$). Strengthening authentic tourist experiences can therefore improve destination competitiveness, visitor satisfaction, repeat visits, and tourism-related economic benefits.



INTRODUCTION

Tourism has developed into one of the strategic sectors that contributes to economic growth, job creation, increased community income, and cultural and environmental preservation. In recent years, the orientation of World Tourism Development has shifted from mass tourism to quality tourism, which emphasizes the quality of the tourist experience rather than the number of visits. The shift shows that modern travelers are no longer just looking for visually appealing destinations, but also experiences that are authentic, meaningful, and involve interaction with local cultures and communities. Therefore, the concept of experiential tourism (experiential tourism) is one of the approaches that is considered capable of increasing the added value of destinations while strengthening the competitiveness of the tourism industry in a sustainable manner (UN Tourism, 2023; Mwinuka et al., 2024).

These changes in tourist behavior encourage each destination to innovate in the development of tourist products. The experience gained by tourists during a visit is proven to affect the level of satisfaction, the intention to visit again, as well as recommendations to other tourists through various digital media. Thus, the excellence of a destination is no longer only determined by the wealth of natural and cultural resources, but also by the ability of managers to create a memorable experience for tourists. This condition makes experiential tourism as one of the strategies that is increasingly being applied in the development of tourist destinations in various countries (Mwinuka et al., 2024; Setyaningsih, 2025).

Indonesia is one of the countries that has great potential in the development of experiential tourism because it has a diversity of cultures, customs, landscapes, and historical heritage scattered in various regions. The Indonesian government also continues to encourage the development of quality tourism through increasing the competitiveness of destinations, strengthening the creative economy, and developing community-based tourism. Based on the publication of the Central Statistics Agency, the tourism sector continues to show positive development through an increase in the number of objects of tourist attraction and strengthening the economic contribution of the tourism sector. Nevertheless, there are still challenges in the equitable distribution of competitiveness between regions, improving service quality, strengthening human resources, and utilizing digital technology so that more innovative and experience-oriented development strategies are needed (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2025)

One area that has great opportunities in the development of experiential tourism is the province of West Sumatra. This province is known for its rich Minangkabau culture, distinctive natural scenery, culinary, Performing Arts, and indigenous traditions that are still well preserved. These characteristics are the main capital in building an authentic tourist experience so that it can provide more value than other destinations. However, tourism development in West Sumatra still faces challenges in the form of not optimal integration between cultural potential, local community involvement, tourism product innovation, and the use of digital technology in building a memorable tourist experience (Mariyanti et al., 2024; Verinita et al., 2025).

Tanah Datar Regency is one of the leading tourist destinations in West Sumatra which has a wealth of cultural, historical, religious, and natural attractions. Destinations such as Istano Basa Pagaruyung, Nagari Pariangan, Lembah Anai, as well as various Minangkabau cultural attractions are the main attractions visited by domestic and foreign tourists every year. This potential shows that Tanah Datar Regency has sufficient resources to be developed into an experience-based destination. However, the magnitude of this potential has not been fully followed by an increase in

the competitiveness of destinations because most tourist activities are still oriented to visits and documentation, not to the creation of an immersive experience for tourists.

This problem shows that the development of tourist destinations in Tanah Datar Regency requires strategies that are able to integrate cultural potential, community participation, quality of Service, and innovation of tourist experiences in one destination management unit. If this condition is not immediately overcome, the competitiveness of destinations has the potential to stagnate, especially in the midst of increasing competition between tourist regions in Indonesia. On the contrary, the application of the concept of experiential tourism is believed to be able to increase satisfaction, loyalty, and the image of the destination so that it has a positive impact on the sustainability of the regional tourism industry. Therefore, the study of experiential tourism as a strategy to improve the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency is important to be carried out as a basis for policy formulation and development of more competitive and sustainable destinations (BPS, 2025; Setyaningsih, 2025).

The development of the modern tourism paradigm shows that the tourist experience is one of the main factors in determining the success of a destination. Experiential tourism positions travelers as individuals who are active in creating experiences through emotional engagement, social interaction, cultural activities, and connectedness to the destination environment. This concept emphasizes that the tourist product is not only a visited object, but also an experience that is felt and remembered by tourists after the trip is completed. Therefore, the ability of destinations to create meaningful experiences is an important element in increasing the competitive advantage of the tourism industry (Pine & Gilmore, 2020; Rather, 2021).

A positive travel experience is closely linked to traveller satisfaction, loyalty and a desire to revisit. Travelers today tend to choose destinations that offer uniqueness, authenticity, opportunities to interact with local communities, as well as activities that provide emotional value. Previous research has shown that memorable tourism experiences (MTE) play an important role in shaping tourist behavior because memorable experiences can improve the image of destinations and tourist attractions. Thus, the development of experiential tourism can be a strategy to retain tourists while improving the competitive position of a destination (Zhang et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022).

In the context of the tourism industry, a destination's competitiveness is not only determined by the number of tourist visits, but also by the destination's ability to provide quality service, product innovation, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and a different experience than competing destinations. Destinations that are able to provide unique experiences have greater opportunities to build a positive image and increase the economic value of local communities. The tourism destination competitiveness Model places natural resources, culture, destination management, and the quality of the tourist experience as important factors in building sustainable competitive advantage (Crouch, 2020; Goffi et al., 2021).

Tanah Datar Regency as one of the tourist destinations in West Sumatra has characteristics that are in accordance with the development of experiential tourism. The existence of Istana Basa Pagaruyung as a symbol of Minangkabau culture, Nagari Pariangan as a cultural tourism village, and various natural attractions provide opportunities to create authentic tourist experiences. However, the management of this potential still faces various challenges, such as the limitations of tourism product innovation, the lack of optimal packaging of experience-based tourism activities, and the lack of maximum community involvement as part of the tourist experience. These



conditions indicate the need for development strategies that are able to transform potential destinations into high-value tourist experiences.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between travel experience and destination success. Rather (2021) research shows that a quality tourist experience affects tourist satisfaction and loyalty through the formation of emotional bonds with destinations. Furthermore, Research Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022) explained that authentic experiences and tourist engagement are important factors in building destination sustainability. The results of the study showed that experience-based strategies have great potential to improve tourism competitiveness, but most of the research is still carried out in urban destinations or popular tourist areas so that studies on local culture-based destinations such as Tanah Datar Regency are still limited (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022)

Research on experiential tourism in Indonesia also shows that the quality of the tourist experience is an important factor in increasing tourist satisfaction and re-visit intentions. The study conducted by Mariyanti et al. (2024) found that the tourist experience becomes a strategic aspect in the development of tourist destinations in West Sumatra, especially through improving the quality of interaction, service, and cultural value provided to tourists. However, the study emphasizes more aspects of the tourist experience in general and has not specifically tested how experiential tourism can contribute to increasing the competitiveness of the regional tourism industry. This shows the existence of research gaps that need to be studied further.

Based on previous research studies, there are several research gaps that still need to be developed. First, most of the previous research discussed the influence of tourist experience on tourist satisfaction or loyalty, while studies linking experiential tourism to the competitiveness of the tourism industry are still relatively limited. Second, the study of the strategy of increasing competitiveness through the approach of tourist experience in regional cultural destinations has not been done much. Third, the characteristics of Tanah Datar Regency as a destination based on Minangkabau culture require a special approach that considers local values in the creation of tourist experiences.

The urgency of this study is increasing because the competition between regions in attracting tourists is getting higher after the recovery period of the post-pandemic tourism sector. Tourist destinations are not enough to rely only on the beauty of the object, but must be able to provide a different, personal, and memorable experience. If Tanah Datar Regency is able to develop experiential tourism optimally, the cultural and natural potential it has can have a greater economic impact on local communities. Conversely, without a tourism experience development strategy, destinations risk losing appeal amid changing preferences of modern tourists.

This research is expected to contribute theoretically and practically in the development of Tourism Science. Theoretically, this study can strengthen the study of the relationship between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of destinations, especially in local culture-based tourist areas. In practical terms, the results of the study can be the basis for local governments, destination managers, and tourism industry players in designing tourism product development strategies that are more innovative and oriented to the tourist experience. Thus, the study focuses not only on increasing the number of visits, but also on improving the quality and sustainability of the region's tourism industry.

Based on various problems, the development of modern tourism concepts, as well as the limitations of previous research, researchers are interested in studying "experiential tourism as a strategy to improve the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency." This

research is important to determine the extent to which the application of the concept of experiential tourism is able to be a strategy in strengthening the competitiveness of the regional tourism industry. In addition, this study is expected to produce operational recommendations for stakeholders in developing tourist destinations based on experience, local culture, and sustainability. With this approach, Tanah Datar Regency is expected to improve its competitive position as one of the leading destinations in Indonesia.

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with cross-sectional analytical design that aims to analyze the relationship between experiential tourism with the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The research was conducted on several leading tourist destinations in Tanah Datar Regency, namely Istano Basa Pagaruyung, Lembah Anai, and Nagari Pariangan. The population in this study is tourists visiting the tourist destination. The research sample was 120 respondents who were selected using accidental sampling technique, which is sampling based on tourists who are met directly at the research site and meet predetermined criteria. Inclusion criteria in this study include travelers who are 17 years old, have visited one of the research destinations, are willing to be a respondent, and are able to fill out the questionnaire independently. As for the exclusion criteria, they are tourists who did not complete the filling out of the questionnaire or gave incomplete answers.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire with a Likert scale developed based on variable indicators of experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry. Research instruments are first tested for validity and reliability to ensure the feasibility of measuring instruments before being used in data collection. In addition to questionnaires, the study also used field observation techniques and documentation to obtain supporting information related to the condition of tourist destinations. The collected Data were analyzed through univariate analysis to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of each variable in the form of frequency, percentage, and mean value. Bivariate analysis was conducted using Spearman Rank test with a confidence level of 95% ($\alpha=0.05$) to determine the relationship between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry. This study pays attention to the ethical principles of research by providing an explanation of the purpose, benefits, research procedures, as well as the rights of respondents before data collection is carried out. Respondents were given informed consent and only respondents who expressed a willingness to participate were involved in the study. Confidentiality of identity and information of respondents is guaranteed and the data is only used for Academic Purposes and scientific development.

RESULTS

1. Frequency Distribution Characteristics of Research Respondents

Table 1. Frequency Distribution Characteristics of Research Respondents (n=120)

Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Men	52	43,3
Girls	68	56,7



Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
17-25 years old	46	38,3
26-40 years old	48	40,0
>40 years old	26	21,7
Frequency Of Visit		
First time	72	60,0
≥2 times	48	40,0

Based on Table 1, it is known that the characteristics of the study respondents, which amounted to 120 tourists, showed that most of the respondents were female, namely 68 people (56.7%), while male respondents were 52 people (43.3%). Based on the age group, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 26-40 years as many as 48 people (40.0%), followed by the age group of 17-25 years as many as 46 people (38.3%), and the age group >40 years as many as 26 people (21.7%). Based on the frequency of visits, most of the respondents are tourists who made a first visit as many as 72 people (60.0%), while tourists who have made a repeat visit as many as 48 people (40.0%).

2. Variable Distribution of Experiential Tourism and Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry

Table 2. Variable Distribution of Experiential Tourism and Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry (n=120)

Research Variables	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean ± SD
Experiential Tourism	Good	86	71,7	4,10 ± 0,51
	Less good	34	28,3	
The Competitiveness Of Height The Tourism Industry	High	81	67,5	4,03 ± 0,47
	Low	39	32,5	

The results of univariate analysis showed that most respondents assessed the application of experiential tourism in tourist destinations in Tanah Datar Regency was in the good category, namely as many as 86 respondents (71.7%) with an average value of 4.10 ± 0.51 . This shows that tourists have experienced a positive tourist experience through aspects of activity involvement, cultural interaction, destination uniqueness, and emotional experiences during their visit. Meanwhile, the assessment of the competitiveness of the tourism industry showed that as many as 81 respondents (67.5%) were in the high category with an average value of 4.03 ± 0.47 .

3. The Relationship of Experiential Tourism with the Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry in Tanah Datar Regency

Bivariate analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between experiential tourism variables with the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The test was conducted using Spearman Rank test with a significance level of 95% ($\alpha=0.05$). The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The Relationship of Experiential Tourism with the Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry in Tanah Datar Regency (n=120)

Variable	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value	Description
Experiential tourism with the competitiveness of the tourism industry	0,651	<0,001	There is a significant positive relationship

Based on Spearman Rank test results obtained correlation coefficient value of $r=0.651$ with $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ($p < 0.05$). The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The value of the correlation coefficient indicates a strong degree of relationship, which means that the better the application of the concept of experiential tourism perceived by tourists, the higher the competitiveness of the tourism industry perceived by tourists. These findings indicate that improving the quality of tourism experience through cultural interaction, local activities, services, and uniqueness of destinations can be one of the strategies in strengthening the competitive position of Tourism in Tanah Datar Regency.

DISCUSSION

1. Variable Distribution of Experiential Tourism and Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry

The results showed that the majority of tourists gave a positive assessment of the implementation of the concept of experiential tourism in Tanah Datar Regency. A total of 86 respondents (71.7%) were in the good category with an average value of 4.10 ± 0.51 . The findings indicate that the experience gained by tourists while in the destination has been able to meet the expectations of visitors, both through tourist activities, the atmosphere of the destination, and involvement with local cultural elements. Based on the views of researchers, the condition is related to the characteristics of Tanah Datar Regency which has strength in aspects of Minangkabau culture, history, and local community life that can be packaged into a tourist experience that has authentic value.

Experiential tourism is a tourism development approach that places the tourist experience as a key component in creating destination value. In this approach, tourists are not only positioned as recipients of services, but as individuals directly involved in the process of acquiring experiences through interaction, activity and emotional involvement. The experiences formed during the trip can affect the level of satisfaction, perception of the destination, and the possibility of tourists to make a return visit. Therefore, a positive tourist experience is one of the important factors in building the success of a tourism destination (Anía Melón et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2021).

The high average value on experiential tourism variables shows that tourists have the perception that Tanah Datar Regency tourist destinations are able to provide interesting and meaningful experiences. The advantage of the destination lies not only in the presence of attractions, but also in the ability of managers to present activities that allow tourists to understand the value of local culture and character. According to the assumption of researchers, the tourist experience that is perceived positively by tourists is influenced by a combination of cultural attractions, community interactions, and destination environments that support the creation of different experiences. This condition is an opportunity for Tanah Datar Regency to develop more innovative experience-based tourism products.



The results of this study reinforce the concept that experience is becoming an important element in the modern tourism industry. Tourists today tend to choose destinations that are able to provide a memorable experience than just offering the physical appeal of an object. Authentic experiences involving cultural elements, community activities, and educational values can increase a traveler's emotional attachment to a destination. Previous research explained that memorable tourism experience has an important role in shaping tourist satisfaction and strengthening the relationship between tourists and the destination visited (Ye et al., 2021).

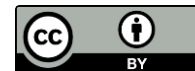
Based on the results of the study, experiential tourism aspects that are in the good category indicate that tourists have gained positive experiences during tourist activities in Tanah Datar Regency. This shows that the destination not only serves as a place to visit, but also as a space for interaction between tourists and the local culture and environment. According to the researchers' assumption, the development of tourist activities that involve tourists directly, such as Minangkabau cultural experiences, local culinary activities, and involvement in community life, can further strengthen the attraction of destinations. This strategy is important so that tourists get a more personal experience and have a strong memorable value.

The concept of experience economy explains that experience has become a new form of value that has an important role in the development of service industries, including the tourism sector. In the context of tourist destinations, tourists not only benefit from the products or services provided, but also from the emotional experiences and memories formed during the trip. Destinations that are able to deliver unique, authentic and meaningful experiences will have an advantage over destinations that rely solely on physical attractiveness. Therefore, the results of a study showing the high perception of tourists towards experiential tourism show that Tanah Datar Regency has great opportunities to develop experience-based tourism strategies (Pine & Gilmore, 2020; Anía Melón et al., 2021).

In addition to the aspect of the tourist experience, this study also found that the perception of tourists to the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency is in the high category. A total of 81 respondents (67.5%) gave a high assessment of the competitiveness of the destination with an average value of 4.03 ± 0.47 . The results show that tourists assess tourist destinations visited have the ability to provide attractiveness, quality of Service, and characteristics that distinguish them from other destinations. According to the assumption of researchers, the high assessment can not be separated from the strength of Tanah Datar Regency as an area that has a combination of cultural, historical, and natural attractions that become the main identity of the region.

The competitiveness of tourism destinations basically describes the ability of a region to create superior value so that it is able to attract and retain tourists. These advantages are not only influenced by the availability of tourist resources, but also by the ability of managers to develop innovation, improve service quality, and create experiences that suit the needs of tourists. Research on the competitiveness of destinations shows that factors of cultural resources, destination management, service quality, and tourist experience are important components in building a competitive position of a tourist area. Thus, the competitiveness of tourism should be understood as the result of a combination of various mutually supportive factors (Gómez-Vega et al., 2022; Shariffuddin et al., 2022).

The high perception of tourists towards the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency shows that the destination already has supporting elements that are able to provide satisfaction for visitors. The existence of Istano Basa Pagaruyung, Nagari Pariangan, and



various natural tourism potentials are important capital in building the image of the destination. However, according to the assumption of researchers, the attraction needs to be developed through tourism product innovation so that it not only becomes the object of visit, but develops into a tourist experience that has a higher economic value. Destination management oriented to the quality of experience will strengthen the position of Tanah Datar Regency in regional and national tourism competition.

The results of the study show that the category of high competitiveness is in line with the development of the current tourism paradigm which emphasizes the importance of destination differentiation. Tourist destinations are not enough to only have interesting resources, but also must be able to create uniqueness that differentiates them from other destinations. Previous research has suggested that the ability of destinations to produce authentic experiences is one of the factors that strengthen the image and competitiveness of Tourism. This suggests that the development of tourist experiences can be a strategic approach in improving the competitive position of a destination (Abou-Shouk et al., 2022).

When associated with the results of the study, the relationship between the high assessment of experiential tourism and competitiveness shows that the tourist experience has an important role in building a positive perception of tourists to the destination. Travelers who have had a pleasant experience tend to give a better assessment of the quality and excellence of the destination. According to the assumption of researchers, the experience gained by tourists while in Tanah Datar Regency is one of the factors that support the formation of the perception that the destination has good competitiveness. Therefore, tourism development strategies need to be directed towards improving the quality of experiences, not just increasing the number of attractions.

Research on travel experiences shows that changing tourist behaviour has led destinations to transform the provision of travel products. Modern travelers are increasingly looking for experiences that are personal, interactive, and have a relationship with local values. These conditions make an experience-based approach as one of the important strategies in maintaining the sustainability of the destination. The development of experience-based tourism can also strengthen the involvement of local communities because most tourism activities can be developed through the cultural and life potential of local communities (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022).

Based on the results of univariate analysis, both research variables showed relatively good values that illustrate the opportunities for tourism development in Tanah Datar Regency through a more innovative approach. A positive value in the experiential tourism variable indicates that the Traveler has benefited from the experience provided by the destination. Meanwhile, a high score on the competitiveness variable indicates that the destination has the ability to meet tourist expectations. According to the researchers' assumption, these conditions are an important basis for local governments and tourism managers to strengthen experience-based development strategies as the main identity of destinations.

The implications of the results of this study indicate that increasing the competitiveness of the tourism industry can not be done only through the construction of physical facilities, but also through improving the quality of tourist experience. Local governments need to encourage the creation of tourist activities that give tourists the opportunity to interact with local culture, society and the environment. In addition, destination managers need to increase the capacity of human resources to be able to provide services that support the formation of quality tourist experiences. The strategy is in line with the concept of sustainable tourism development that places the tourist



experience and usefulness to the community as an important aspect of Destination Development (UN Tourism, 2023).

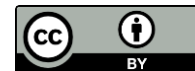
Overall, the results showed that Tanah Datar Regency has a strong foundation in the development of experience-based tourism and increased competitiveness of the tourism industry. The application of the concept of experiential tourism can be an alternative strategy to strengthen the excellence of destinations through the creation of authentic and valuable experiences for tourists. According to the researchers' assumption, the success of the strategy depends on the ability of all stakeholders in integrating cultural potential, service innovation, and local community participation. Thus, the tourism development of Tanah Datar Regency needs to be directed to the creation of sustainable tourism experiences so as to improve the competitiveness of destinations in the long term.

2. The Relationship of Experiential Tourism with the Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry in Tanah Datar Regency

Based on the results of bivariate testing using Spearman Rank method, it is known that experiential tourism variables have a positive, strong, and statistically meaningful relationship with the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The results of the analysis showed a correlation coefficient of 0.651 with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the improvement in the quality of the experience perceived by tourists goes hand in hand with the increasing perception of the excellence of the destination. These findings show that travel experiences have evolved into a strategic component in building a destination's competitiveness, not just as an additional element in travel activities. According to the view of researchers, the strong relationship between the two variables is influenced by the characteristics of Tanah Datar Regency which has a rich culture, history, and local traditions that have the potential to be developed into an authentic tourist experience and has a distinguishing value.

The positive link between experiential tourism and competitiveness suggests that improving the quality of the tourist experience can contribute to improving travelers' assessment of a destination's ability to withstand competition. Experiences that involve elements of feelings, social relationships, and direct participation of tourists are able to build a more positive perception of a destination. In Tanah Datar Regency, the tourist experience is not only obtained through the existence of tourist attractions, but also through the process of tourists getting to know Minangkabau culture, understanding historical values, and interacting with the local community. Based on the assumption of researchers, the element of authenticity is a distinguishing factor that provides more value than destinations that rely solely on visual appeal without the involvement of tourist experiences.

The results of this study strengthen the perspective of Experience Economy which explains that experience has become an important form of value in the development of modern service industries, including the tourism sector. Travelers today are not only buying travel products, but also looking for experiences that can provide depth, emotional involvement, and memories that can be remembered after the trip is over. Destinations that are able to deliver unique and meaningful experiences have a greater chance of building sustainable relationships with travelers. Thus, the travel experience can be positioned as a source of competitive advantage through a strategy of product differentiation and value creation that is different from other destinations (Pine & Gilmore, 2020).



The results also show that the application of the concept of experiential tourism is closely related to the formation of a positive image and an increase in the competitive value of a destination. In the current development of tourist behavior, the decision to choose a destination is influenced not only by the presence of attractions, but also by the quality of the experience that can be provided during the trip. Memorable experiences can increase tourist satisfaction, strengthen emotional connections with destinations, and encourage positive behaviors such as wanting to visit again or giving recommendations to others. Previous research has shown that memorable tourism experiences are an important factor in building relationships between travelers and destinations because they are part of a traveler's travel memories (Zhang et al., 2021).

The significant relationship between the two variables of the study shows that increasing the competitiveness of destinations is not only done through the provision of infrastructure and supporting facilities, but also requires a strategy for creating quality tourist experiences. Destinations that are able to deliver authentic experiences have a greater chance of building a strong identity and have a different position in the tourism industry competition. According to the assumption of researchers, Tanah Datar Regency has the main capital in the form of Minangkabau cultural wealth that can be developed through various forms of experiential activities, such as cultural educational tourism, historical exploration, introduction to traditional culinary, and direct interaction with local communities. This approach allows tourists not only to act as visitors, but to be part of the tourist experience created by the destination.

Research findings that show a strong relationship between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry suggest that the quality of the tourist experience is one of the main aspects in strengthening the position of a destination. Travelers who gain positive experiences during travel tend to have a better perception of the quality, uniqueness, and excellence of a destination. This shows that the tourist experience can be a source of added value that is difficult to replicate by other destinations because it is related to the cultural characteristics, environment, and social interactions that a region has. According to the assumption of researchers, the superiority of Tanah Datar Regency lies in its ability to integrate elements of Minangkabau culture, regional history, and local community life into a tourist experience that has its own characteristics.

In the study of the competitiveness of destinations, the ability of a region to develop valuable tourism experiences is one of the factors that determine success in facing tourism competition. The competitiveness of a destination is not only influenced by the availability of natural and cultural resources, but also determined by how these resources are managed into tourist products that are relevant to the needs of tourists. Destinations that are able to offer authentic experiences will have an advantage because they provide stronger emotional and personal value to travelers. Previous studies have explained that destination management innovation, quality of tourist experience, and optimization of local resources are important factors in building a competitive advantage in the tourism sector (Crouch, 2020; Goffi et al., 2021).

The results of this study can also be explained through the destination competitiveness model approach which states that the competitive ability of a destination is formed through the relationship between key resources, supporting factors, destination management, and the quality of the tourist experience. Based on this approach, the existence of strong cultural resources needs to be followed by management strategies that are able to transform these potentials into experiences that have value for tourists. The positive relationship found in this study shows that experiential tourism can be one of the destination management approaches to strengthen the



competitiveness of the tourism industry. Thus, the tourist experience is not only seen as the end result of travel activities, but also as a strategic instrument in creating destination excellence (Mendola & Volo, 2022).

Based on the results of the study, the improvement of the quality of tourist experience is related to the increased perception of the ability to compete with Tanah Datar Regency destinations. This condition shows that experience has a role in shaping tourists' assessment of the overall quality of the destination. According to the assumption of researchers, the experience that arises through interaction with Minangkabau culture, community friendliness, and the atmosphere of the destination environment are factors that strengthen the positive image of Tanah Datar Regency. Therefore, the development of destinations needs to be directed to the creation of activities that allow tourists to be directly involved in understanding local cultural values and character, rather than just passively enjoying attractions.

Various previous studies have shown that a positive tourist experience has contributed to the formation of the image of the destination, tourist satisfaction, as well as the tendency of tourists to re-visit. When a traveler's experience meets or exceeds their expectations, the emotional connection with the destination becomes stronger. This condition has an impact on increasing competitiveness because tourists who have good experiences tend to give positive recommendations to others. Therefore, the development of experience-based tourism is a relevant approach to answer the changing preferences of modern tourists who are increasingly looking for authentic, personal, and meaningful experiences (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Rather, 2021).

The positive relationship found between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry implies that destination development strategies need to pay greater attention to the quality of the experience tourists receive. The tourist experience is not only formed through interaction with the main attraction, but is the result of a whole series of trips, ranging from Ease of access, quality of service, available activities, to social relationships between tourists and local communities. According to the researchers' assumption, increasing the competitiveness of Tanah Datar Regency is not only done by maintaining the existence of superior destinations, but also through the ability to package the potential into a tourist experience that has high value and attractiveness. Therefore, the experience aspect needs to be placed as a major part in the planning and management of regional tourism products.

The development of experience-based tourism is related to the effort to create sustainable destinations because this approach encourages tourists to better understand and appreciate the value of local culture and environment. Direct involvement of tourists in community activities, traditions, and local life can create a stronger relationship between tourists and the destination visited. In addition to providing economic benefits, authentic tourism experiences can also increase concern for the preservation of cultural and environmental resources. Previous research has shown that quality, locally oriented travel experiences can support destination sustainability through increased tourist appreciation of cultural and environmental assets (Chen et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022).

The results showed that the strong relationship between the two variables provide the basis that the development of tourism experiences can be used as one of the strategies in improving the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The implementation of this strategy can be done through the development of tourism programs that provide opportunities for tourists to be directly involved in cultural activities, learning history, processing local products, and interaction with local communities. According to the researchers' assumption, this approach

will produce a unique destination because the experience based on local culture has characteristics that are not easily confused with other tourist areas. Thus, experiential tourism can serve as a differentiation strategy that strengthens the identity and competitive position of Tanah Datar districts.

The findings of this study provide an overview that increasing the competitiveness of the tourism industry needs to be directed at improving the quality of the tourist experience, not just on the aspect of the quantity of visits. Destination managers need to understand that the success of a destination is not only measured by the number of tourists who come, but also by how tourists feel, assess, and remember the experience gained while in that destination. Previous research has shown that destinations that are able to produce meaningful experiences have a better ability to build long-term relationships with travelers and create a competitive advantage. Therefore, strengthening tourism product innovation, improving human resource capabilities, and collaboration with local communities are important aspects in the implementation of experiential tourism strategies (Kastenholz et al., 2022; Rather et al., 2022).

Overall, the results of the study confirmed that experiential tourism has an important contribution in supporting the competitiveness of the tourism industry in Tanah Datar Regency. The positive and significant correlation values indicate that the more optimal the tourist experience created by a destination, the stronger the perception of tourists on the ability of the destination to compete. Based on the assumption of researchers, Tourism Development in Tanah Datar Regency in the future needs to put the tourist experience as a core element in the destination management strategy. Optimizing cultural potential, increasing community involvement, service innovation, and creating authentic tourism activities can be strategic steps to strengthen Tanah Datar Regency's position as a competitive and sustainable tourist destination.

CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that the development of experiential tourism in Tanah Datar Regency has been going well based on the perception of tourists who became respondents to the study. Most tourists consider that the experience gained during visiting tourist destinations has given a positive value, while the competitiveness of the tourism industry is also perceived to be at a high level. Statistical analysis showed a positive and significant correlation between experiential tourism and the competitiveness of the tourism industry ($r=0.651$; $p<0.001$). These findings indicate that improving the quality of tourism experiences, whether through cultural authenticity, tourist involvement in local activities, or the creation of memorable experiences, contributes to increasing tourist perceptions of the excellence and competitiveness of destinations. Therefore, strengthening experience-based tourism strategies can be an important approach in improving the competitive position of the Tanah Datar tourism industry.

This study has limitations that need to be considered in the interpretation of the results. The use of cross-sectional research design causes the study is only able to describe the conditions of the relationship between variables in a certain period and has not been able to explain the development of changes in the perception of tourists over time. In addition, the scope of respondents is still limited to tourists visiting some of the leading destinations in Tanah Datar Regency, so that the results of the study cannot be generalized to all existing tourist areas in the area. The use of questionnaire-based instruments also has limitations because it has not been able to explore the tourist experience in depth from an emotional and social point of view. The next study is expected to expand the scope of locations and respondents, using a combination of



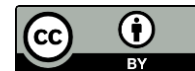
quantitative and qualitative approaches, and considering other factors such as destination innovation, service quality, the role of local communities, and sustainability aspects to obtain a more comprehensive picture of increasing the competitiveness of the tourism industry.

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