

The Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office's Strategy for Developing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite Towards a National Geopark

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Abstract:

This study examines the development strategy of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office in managing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite as part of efforts to support Gorontalo's geopark development. Although Gorontalo has 13 identified potential geosites, this research focuses on Botubarani because it has distinctive biodiversity value through the presence of whale sharks and faces specific problems related to management, accessibility, facilities, tourism services, and the unpredictability of whale shark appearances. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and structured interviews with four informants, namely representatives of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office, Bappeda of Gorontalo Province, and the Botubarani Village Government. The data were analyzed using SWOT analysis through the identification of internal factors, including strengths and weaknesses, and external factors, including opportunities and threats. The results show that the Botubarani geosite is positioned in Quadrant I, indicating an aggressive SO strategy. Therefore, development should prioritize the use of local strengths and opportunities, including community participation, marine resources, educational tourism potential, and government support, while reducing weaknesses and threats that may affect destination sustainability.

Keywords: Geosite; Whale Shark Botubarani; Development Strategy; SWOT; Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office



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Introduction

Indonesian tourism is currently competing to continuously develop each regional destination to become a leading tourist destination. Destination development is essential because shifts in tourist interests and motivations require regions to provide more diverse, high-quality, and sustainable tourism products. Limited tourism products, weak destination management, and a lack of supporting facilities can reduce the interest of both domestic and international tourists in visiting a destination.

Indonesia is a country rich in natural resources, diverse flora and fauna, and cultural traditions, which are key potentials for developing geoparks as tourist destinations that can attract both domestic and international tourists. Geoparks are earth parks within conservation areas, encompassing geodiversity, biodiversity, and cultural diversity, and serving as spaces for conservation, education, community empowerment, and sustainable local economic development (Brilha, 2016; Hutabarat, 2023; Putri, 2019). In the context of sustainable tourism, geoparks are understood not only as natural tourism areas but also as regional management models that integrate the protection of earth heritage, disaster and environmental education, and the improvement of local community welfare (Dowling, 2013; Farsani et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2015).

Currently, geopark development is a key direction in the development of sustainable tourism destinations, aiming to protect the earth's heritage through conservation, education, community empowerment, and improving the economy and well-being of local communities. Therefore, conservation and management of natural resources in geopark areas are crucial for both the public and the government, as geosites are non-renewable assets and have the potential to be damaged if not managed properly (Wibowo et al., 2021). In addition to their unique and rare beauty, geosites that will be designated as geoparks can provide educational opportunities, particularly in geology and environmental science, for visiting tourists. The geopark concept also encourages greater public awareness of the surrounding environment, the wise use of natural resources, climate change, natural disasters, and how to mitigate them (Arifin et al., 2023; Dowling & Newsome, 2010).

Gorontalo is a potential destination for geopark development due to its location within the Wallacea bioregion, its diverse flora and fauna, its unique geological processes, and its rich cultural traditions. This potential suggests that geopark development in Gorontalo should be directed not only at increasing tourist visits but also at conservation, education, institutional strengthening, and empowerment of local communities.

There are 13 areas that have been identified as potential geosites for geopark development in Gorontalo, namely Lake Limboto, Otanaha Fort, Soekarno Landing, Olele Marine Park, Botubarani Whale Shark, Bubohu Religious Tourism, Dulanga Beach, Dulamayo Pine Forest, Hungayono, Biluhu Beach, Saronde Island, Torosiaje Bajo Tribe Village, and Pulo Cinta. The list shows that Gorontalo Province has great potential for geopark development. However, this study does not discuss all of these geosites empirically, but rather focuses on the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite as one of the geosites that has unique biodiversity and educational tourism value. This needs to be emphasized so that the scope of the research is in accordance with the object of study being analyzed.

However, several geosites in Gorontalo still face various development issues, including difficult accessibility, suboptimal natural resource maintenance, inadequate tourism facilities, toilets that do not meet hygiene standards, the lack of information centers, souvenir centers, health facilities, worship facilities, security services, and other supporting facilities at several tourist attractions. Other issues that have emerged include low public awareness of the geosites, suboptimal promotion, and weak destination management institutions. Gorontalo, however, possesses three essential elements for geopark development: geodiversity, biodiversity, and cultural diversity. These conditions underlie the need for a more targeted development strategy, particularly for the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite, the focus of this research. Therefore, support from local governments, the central government, universities, the private sector, stakeholders, and the community is crucial to protecting the geosites through conservation, education, and the development of tourism destinations towards a National Geopark.

Geopark development is currently a form of conservation- and education-based tourism development that can encourage tourist interest, increase the number of visits, and strengthen the economic activities of local communities. Therefore, planning and development strategies are needed, balanced with management by the local government, local communities, and relevant stakeholders. In this context, the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office plays a strategic role because it is related to destination development planning, tourism promotion, fostering tourism institutions, increasing tourist attractions, and cross-stakeholder coordination. Therefore, the issue of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite development strategy is relevant to be studied through the role of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office, because geopark development depends not only

on natural resource potential, but also on facilities, accessibility, security, tourism services, promotion, and community readiness to receive tourists.

In 2018, the provincial government initiated the formation of the Gorontalo Geopark Committee and initiated development phases. However, management of several identified geosites has not yet been optimal. One of the locations focused on by this research is the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite, which boasts biodiversity potential through the presence of whale sharks. Despite its aesthetic value, unique fauna, and educational tourism potential, the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite into a National Geopark still faces several challenges, such as suboptimal management, limited facilities, accessibility, and a lack of a variety of tourism activities. The main attraction of this geosite still relies heavily on the unpredictable appearance of whale sharks, so tourists tend to focus solely on the attraction of seeing whale sharks and lack alternative tourism activities.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the strategy of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office in developing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite toward a National Geopark. Specifically, this study identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing the geosite's development. This study utilizes data obtained from observations, documentation, and interviews with four key informants directly involved in geopark development and management of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in depth the development strategy of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite towards a geopark area in Gorontalo Province (Moleong, 1989). The study was conducted at the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office located at Jl. Jamaluddin Malik No. 41, Limba U2 Village, Gorontalo, and in the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite area as the main study object. The location selection was based on the institution's role as an agency related to the planning, promotion, coordination, and development of tourism destinations, including geosites directed towards the geopark area. The study was conducted for two months, namely October–November 2022. Research informants were determined using a purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of informants based on the consideration that they have knowledge and direct involvement in geopark development and management of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite. Purposive sampling was used because it is suitable for selecting informants deemed capable of providing in-depth information as needed for qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2014; Sugiyono, 2021). The informants consisted of four individuals: the Head of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office, the Head of the Tourism Marketing Development Division, the Head of the Research and Development Division of the Gorontalo Provincial Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), and the Head of Botubarani Village.

The research data sources include primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through participant observation and structured interviews with four key informants to gather information on geosite development strategies, management issues, institutional roles, government support, and policies for developing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite into a geopark. Interviews were conducted using an interview guide as a research instrument and supported by a recorder, field notebook, laptop, and camera to document the information obtained. Secondary data were obtained through document analysis, such as institutional profiles, organizational structures, geosite maps, policy archives, and tourism development planning reports relevant to the research.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively from the data collection stage to drawing conclusions through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and interpretation of findings as commonly used in qualitative data analysis (Miles et al., 2014). The data obtained were then analyzed using a SWOT analysis to identify internal and external factors in the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite. The analysis stage began with the preparation of an IFAS (Internal Factor Analysis Summary) matrix to identify strengths and weaknesses, and an EFAS (External Factor Analysis Summary) to identify opportunities and threats. Next, a matching of internal and external factors was carried out through the SWOT Matrix to formulate alternative strategies and determine the position of the development strategy based on the results of the IFAS and EFAS calculations (Rangkuti, 2015). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, namely comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation from various informants so that the findings obtained were more consistent and methodologically accountable.

Results and Discussion

Result

Internal Factors of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite

1. Strength

Research results indicate that the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite possesses several key strengths. First, the geosite boasts exotic ocean views, characterized by clear waters, attractive coastal conditions, and the presence of rocks along the shore. These conditions allow tourists to enjoy the open sea and engage in activities such as snorkeling.

Second, the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite offers a unique and challenging tourist attraction, allowing visitors to see whale sharks up close. The sight of whale sharks around tourist boats offers a unique experience compared to other beach destinations in Gorontalo Province. However, whale shark feeding activities must be carefully managed to ensure both wildlife conservation and tourist safety.

Third, the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite is one of the proposed geoparks in Gorontalo. This status demonstrates Botubarani's significant potential as a geopark, particularly in terms of biodiversity, thanks to the whale sharks as its main attraction.

Fourth, interviews revealed substantial government and community support for the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite. This support is crucial because the geosite is viewed as a regional asset and an icon of Botubarani Village. For the local community, the presence of whale sharks has the potential to strengthen village identity and open up opportunities for economic development.

Fifth, Botubarani boasts abundant marine resources, such as shrimp, grouper, and niki fish. This potential is supported by the condition of the coral reefs, which are still protected by the community. These rich marine resources provide additional support for the development of coastal-based tourism and local products.

Sixth, Botubarani Village has the potential for processed marine products that can be developed as souvenirs typical of the destination, such as processed shrimp products. This potential can strengthen the tourism value chain because tourists not only enjoy the whale shark attraction but also learn about the local creative economy products.

Seventh, the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite has the potential to be an educational tourist attraction. Tourists, including students, can gain knowledge about whale sharks, marine ecosystems, conservation, and the relationship between tourism and environmental preservation.

This aligns with informants' statements that the objectives of the geopark are related to education, conservation, and research activities.

2. Weakness

The research also shows that the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite has several weaknesses. First, the geosite lacks an official management body specifically established to regulate the protection, development, services, and supervision of tourism activities. Currently, management is largely handled by the local community and village government, resulting in institutionalized and systematic coordination of destination development.

Second, access to the tourist site remains challenging due to the lack of adequate public transportation. This presents a barrier for tourists without private vehicles and can reduce accessibility to the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite.

Third, boat rental prices are considered unaffordable by some tourists, especially those from the lower-middle class. The boat rental price of around IDR 100,000 for three people is a source of visitor complaints. Although this cost covers boat operational costs and contributions to local management, affordability remains a key consideration in developing tourism services.

Fourth, road access to the whale shark site is not attractively maintained, as it is located within residential areas. This situation highlights the need for improved access, information signs, and area appearance to enhance the tourist experience upon entering the destination. These limitations also demonstrate that the development of Botubarani still requires cross-sectoral coordination, particularly in providing basic infrastructure.

Fifth, the parking area is not large enough to accommodate both private and group transportation. Limited parking can reduce tourist comfort and lead to congestion around tourist sites, especially during peak visitor numbers.

External Factors of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite

1. Opportunity

The first opportunity for developing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite is the availability of local human resources. Botubarani Village has a population of approximately 1,187, comprising 413 households, 606 men, and 581 women. Community livelihoods include farming, fishing, artisans, private sector workers, civil servants, security personnel, and craftsmen. This composition demonstrates the potential for local labor to be involved in destination management. The community's initiative to form a tourism management organization also demonstrates growing tourism awareness and concern for the sustainability of whale sharks, coral reefs, and marine resources.

The second opportunity is the creation of employment opportunities for the surrounding community. Since the appearance of whale sharks in Botubarani Village, tourism has stimulated an increase in community businesses, such as food stalls, boat rentals, parking, and other supporting services. If this geosite is developed more specifically toward a geopark, local employment opportunities have the potential to expand and diversify.

The third opportunity is increasing community income. Field data indicates that some residents earn additional income from tourism activities, such as opening food stalls or kiosks, boat services, and providing parking. Community income is said to increase to around IDR 300,000–IDR 500,000 per day during peak tourism periods. This indicates that geosite development has the potential to provide a direct economic impact for local communities.

The fourth opportunity is the lack of similar tourist attractions in Gorontalo Province. The appearance of whale sharks is a rare phenomenon and is not found in all regions. This uniqueness

places the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite in a competitive position as a biodiversity tourism icon in Gorontalo and has the potential to attract both domestic and international tourists, including researchers and marine conservationists.

2. Threats

The first threat is the uncertainty of whale shark sightings. Whale shark sightings do not occur daily and cannot be fully predicted by the public. When whale sharks are absent, the destination's main attraction is diminished, leading to a decline in visitation. This situation impacts communities that rely on tourism for their income around the geosite.

The second threat is climate and weather factors. Weather changes can hinder tourist access to whale shark viewing sites and pose safety risks. In severe weather conditions, management may temporarily close tourist activities for visitor safety. This situation demonstrates that the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite requires consideration of risk mitigation, tourist safety, and diversification of tourism activities so as not to rely solely on whale shark sightings.

IFAS and EFAS Matrix

Based on [Table 1](#), the internal factors of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite consist of strengths and weaknesses. The total weighting of all internal factors is 1.00, indicating that all internal factors have been distributed proportionally according to their level of importance in the development of the geosite. The strength factor received a total weighting of 0.65 with a total weighted score of 2.27, while the weakness factor received a total weighting of 0.35 with a total weighted score of 0.93.

These results indicate that strengths outweigh weaknesses. The Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite's primary strengths lie in its unique whale shark appeal, exotic natural scenery, rich marine resources, government and community support, and potential for educational tourism development. However, weaknesses include the lack of an official management body, limited public transportation, less-than-affordable boat rental prices, poorly developed road access, and limited parking.

Table 1. Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) Matrix of Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite

INTERNAL FACTORS	WEIGHT	RATING	SCORE
(Strengths)			
It has exotic views	0,12	4	0,48
It has challenging tourist attractions	0,09	3	0,27
It is one of the sites proposed to become a geopark	0,08	3	0,24
It has government and community support	0,08	3	0,24
It has abundant marine resources	0,12	4	0,48
It has seafood products that can be made into unique souvenirs	0,08	4	0,32
It has educational tourist attractions	0,08	3	0,24
Total Strengths	0,65		2,27
(Weaknesses)			
No official management body	0,09	3	0,27
No public transportation to tourist destinations	0,07	2	0,14
Unaffordable boat rental prices	0,07	3	0,21
Unattractive road access to the location	0,05	2	0,10
Insufficient parking area	0,07	3	0,21
Total Weaknesses	0,35		0,93
Total IFAS Score (S + W)	1,00		3,20

Source: Researcher Data Processing, 2023

The total IFAS score of 3.20 indicates that the internal conditions of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite are in the strong category. Furthermore, the difference between the strengths and weaknesses score of 1.34 indicates that the geosite's internal strengths outweigh its weaknesses. Therefore, the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite has sufficient internal potential to be directed toward geopark development, especially if weaknesses in institutional aspects, accessibility, and supporting facilities can be minimized in a planned manner.

Furthermore, according to Table 2, the external factors of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite consist of opportunities and threats. The total weighting of all external factors is 1.00, indicating that all external factors have been proportionally considered in the EFAS analysis. The opportunities factor received a total weighting of **0.75** with a total weighted score of **2.25**, while the threats factor received a total weighting of **0.25** with a total weighted score of **0.65**.

These findings indicate that the development opportunities for the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite outweigh the threats it faces. Key opportunities include the availability of local human resources, job opportunities, increased economic stability, and the absence of similar tourist destinations in Gorontalo Province. This situation demonstrates Botubarani's strategic external position for development as a biodiversity-based tourism destination, providing education, and community empowerment.

Table 2. External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) Matrix of Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite

EXTERNAL FACTOR	WEIGHT	RATING	SKOR
Peluang (Opportunities)			
Having supportive local human resources	0,22	3	0,66
Creating jobs	0,18	3	0,54
Improving community economic stability	0,18	3	0,54
No similar tourist attractions in Gorontalo Province	0,17	3	0,51
Total Opportunities	0,75		2,25
(Threats)			
Absence of whale sharks during tourist arrivals	0,15	3	0,45
Climate or weather changes affecting tourism activities	0,10	2	0,20
Total Threats	0,25		0,65
Total EFAS Score (O + T)	1,00		2,90

Source: Researcher Data Processing, 2023

However, several threats require attention, particularly the uncertainty of whale shark occurrences and the impact of climate change on tourism. These threats demonstrate that destination development cannot rely solely on whale sharks as its primary attraction, but rather requires diversification of tourism activities, strengthening destination information systems, improving tourist safety, and managing environmental risks.

The total EFAS score of **2.90** indicates that the external environment of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite is relatively supportive of destination development. The difference between the opportunity and threat scores of **1.60** confirms that the available external opportunities outweigh the threats faced. Therefore, the results of the IFAS and EFAS analyses strengthen the position of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite in the SO strategy, namely a strategy that emphasizes utilizing internal strengths to optimally capture external opportunities in supporting the development of the geosite towards a National Geopark.

Quadrant positioning is determined by calculating the difference between internal and external factors. The internal factor score is obtained by subtracting the total strengths score from the total weaknesses score, which is $2.27 - 0.93 = 1.34$. Meanwhile, the external factor score is

obtained by subtracting the total opportunities score from the total threats score, which is $2.25 - 0.65 = 1.60$. Both values indicate a positive result, placing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite in Quadrant I. This position indicates that the geosite has more internal strengths than weaknesses, and external opportunities outweigh the threats it faces.

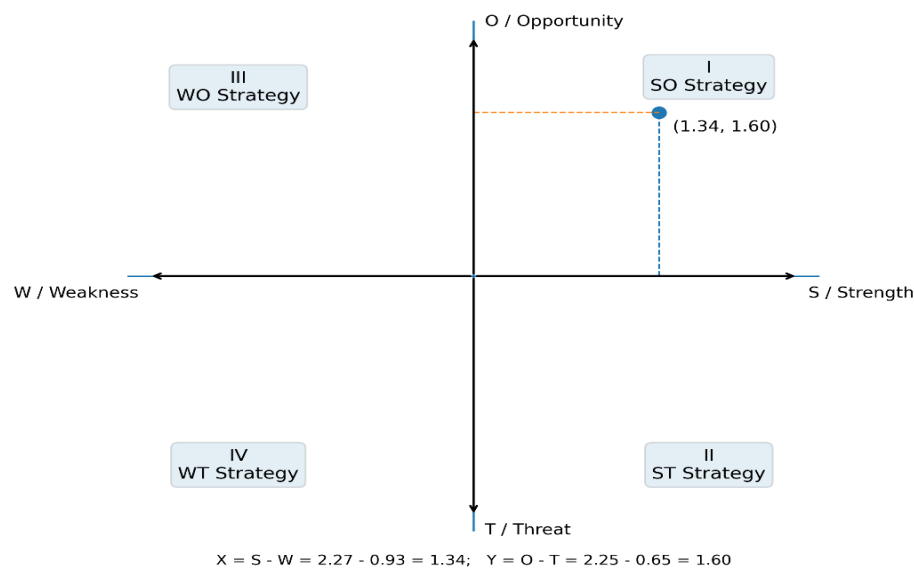


Figure 1. SWOT Quadrant Position of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite.

Source: Researcher, 2023

Based on the quadrant position in [Figure 1](#), the appropriate strategy for the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite is the SO strategy or aggressive strategy (Growth-Oriented Strategy). This strategy emphasizes utilizing internal strengths to optimally capture external opportunities. In the context of Botubarani, an aggressive strategy is directed at strengthening the uniqueness of whale sharks as a main attraction, developing conservation-based educational tourism, improving the quality of facilities and accessibility, developing local seafood-based products, and involving the community in destination management. Thus, the development strategy for the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite needs to be directed in a planned manner to support the destination's development towards a National Geopark in a sustainable manner.

Table 3. SWOT Matrix of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite

Internal Factors		(Strengths)	(Weaknesses)
External Factors	Strategy SO		Strategy WO
	(Opportunities)		
	1.	Utilize competent local human resources in geosite management.	1. Establish a destination management body so that the management of tourism contributions and services is more focused.
	2.	Developing marine products such as shrimp and nike fish into culinary products and typical Botubarani souvenirs.	2. Encourage the provision of public transportation or supporting transportation access to destinations.
	3.	Add and develop management staff so that the geosite is more organized.	3. Arrange road access to the whale shark location to make it more attractive and easier for tourists to reach.
	4.	Utilize government and community support to improve	

	destination facilities and infrastructure.	
(Threats)	Strategy ST 1. Maintain the sustainability of whale sharks and marine ecosystems as the main icons of the destination. 2. Develop alternative attractions, such as information centers, educational spaces, photo documentation, or whale shark replicas, so that tourists still have activities when whale sharks are not present.	Strategy WT 1. Invite the community to maintain and develop geosites together. 2. Strengthen coordination with the government regarding improving access, managing weather risks and maintaining tourist facilities.

Source: Researcher, 2023

Discussion

Based on the SWOT Matrix, there are four main strategic alternatives: the SO (Strengths-Opportunities) strategy, the ST (Strengths-Threats) strategy, the WO (Weaknesses-Opportunities) strategy, and the WT (Weaknesses-Threats) strategy. These four strategies demonstrate that the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite depends not only on the attractiveness of whale sharks, but also on the quality of management, facility readiness, accessibility, safety, and community involvement. Therefore, the SWOT results need to be discussed as a basis for determining the direction of destination development towards a National Geopark.

The SO strategy was the primary strategy because it received the highest score. This strategy demonstrates that the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office can leverage the strengths of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite, such as the uniqueness of the whale shark, the seascape, the educational potential, the marine resources, and community support, to address geopark tourism development opportunities. In the context of geopark development, the SO strategy is crucial because it aligns with the principles of conservation, education, community empowerment, and strengthening the local economy.

The ST strategy aims to leverage the destination's strengths in the face of threats, particularly the uncertainty of whale shark sightings and changing weather. Strengths such as beautiful beaches, marine ecosystems, community support, and educational tourism potential can be leveraged to maintain tourist interest even when whale sharks are not always present. Therefore, developing alternative activities is crucial to ensure the tourism experience is not solely dependent on the primary attraction of whale sharks.

The WO strategy demonstrates the need to capitalize on opportunities to minimize a destination's internal weaknesses. Opportunities such as community support, job potential, and the uniqueness of the destination can be leveraged to address weaknesses such as the lack of an official management body, limited public transportation, a lack of supporting facilities, and limited parking. Establishing a management institution and organizing facilities are crucial for the community's economic opportunities to develop more sustainably.

The WT strategy is defensive and aimed at minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats that could hinder the destination's sustainability. This strategy is crucial because Botubarani still faces weaknesses in institutional aspects, accessibility, and facilities, while weather threats and the uncertainty of whale shark sightings can impact visitation. Coordination between the government, community, and destination managers is necessary to strengthen destination readiness, particularly in aspects of tourist safety, facility maintenance, and risk management.

Based on the quadrant results and strategy scores, the SO strategy or aggressive strategy was chosen as the priority strategy in developing the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite towards a National Geopark. This strategy can be implemented through several steps, namely: 1) utilizing local human resources who are competent in geosite management; 2) developing a wealth of marine products such as shrimp and nile fish into culinary products and typical Botubarani souvenirs; 3) adding and developing management staff so that the geosite is better maintained and organized; and 4) utilizing government and community support to improve destination facilities and infrastructure. The choice of SO strategy shows that the development of Botubarani needs to be directed at strengthening local potential as well as resolving management weaknesses so that this geosite can support sustainable geopark development.

Conclusion

Based on the SWOT analysis, the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite into a National Geopark is positioned as an SO (Strengths-Opportunities) strategy, an aggressive strategy that leverages the destination's main strengths and opportunities. These strengths include the uniqueness of the whale shark attraction, sea views, educational tourism potential, seafood, local processed products, and government and community support. Opportunities that can be utilized include the availability of local human resources, job creation, community economic improvement, and the absence of similar destinations in Gorontalo Province. Thus, the strategy of the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office needs to be directed at strengthening the main attraction, improving supporting facilities, arranging accessibility, developing local products, and strengthening the community's role in geosite management.

The SO strategy was chosen as the priority strategy because it obtained the highest score compared to the ST, WO and WT strategies. This strategy can be implemented through the use of competent local human resources, the development of marine products such as shrimp and nile fish as culinary delights and typical Botubarani souvenirs, the addition and development of management staff, as well as cooperation between the government and the community in improving destination facilities and infrastructure. This strategy is important because the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite does not only depend on the presence of whale sharks, but also on the quality of management, readiness of facilities, variety of tourist activities, tourist safety and sustainability of the coastal environment.

Based on the research results, the formulated development strategy needs to be followed up by the Gorontalo Provincial Tourism Office together with the village government, community, and relevant stakeholders to ensure a more consistent and sustainable development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite. The strengths and opportunities of the destination need to be maintained and enhanced, while weaknesses and threats need to be minimized through institutional strengthening, facility improvements, access management, and the development of alternative tourism activities. The results of this study can serve as an initial reference for the development of the Botubarani Whale Shark Geosite, and can be considered as a learning experience for the management of other geosites in Gorontalo Province while still adapting to the characteristics of each location.

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