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Sustainable Tourism Development: A Comparative Study of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone and the Kura-Kura Bali Special Economic Zone

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable tourism development in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) requires a balance between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. However, comparative studies examining tourism development orientations within Indonesian SEZs remain limited. This study compares sustainable tourism development in the Mandalika SEZ in Central Lombok and the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ, focusing on economic, social, and environmental aspects. A qualitative comparative case study design was employed, drawing on primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 selected informants representing government, local communities, private-sector actors, and civil society. Secondary data were obtained from government statistics, policy documents, academic publications, and media sources. Data were analysed thematically using NVivo 12 Plus, supported by triangulation, member checking, and intercoder agreement. The findings reveal contrasting development orientations. Mandalika follows an infrastructure-led, investment-oriented model that promotes tourism visibility, employment, and economic activity, but faces challenges including limited community participation, unequal benefit distribution, land conflicts, and environmental pressures. In contrast, Kura-Kura Bali demonstrates a regenerative, diversified approach that emphasises community participation, cultural integration, economic diversification, and environmental restoration, although global competitiveness remains a challenge. The study concludes that sustainable tourism requires hybrid governance combining investment, participatory community empowerment, and proactive environmental management.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism has become a global policy priority as awareness of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism continues to grow. Tourism is recognized as one of the world's largest industries, contributing nearly 10% to global GDP and supporting millions of jobs (UNWTO). However, its rapid expansion has also generated critical challenges, ranging from overtourism in popular destinations to biodiversity loss and carbon emissions. International organizations such as the UNWTO and the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) have called for new frameworks that balance economic growth with ecological protection and social inclusion. Countries around the world are responding by adopting sustainable tourism policies that promote environmental conservation, strengthen community participation, and integrate sustainability indicators into destination management [1].

In Asia, the rapid growth of international arrivals highlights the urgency of these issues. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for about 25% of global tourism flows, with Southeast Asia recording a 7% growth in arrivals and a 5% increase in revenue in 2018 alone [2, 3]. This growth presents opportunities for economic transformation but also risks of overexploitation. Projections estimate that international tourist arrivals worldwide will reach 1.8 billion by 2030, and destinations without sustainable planning may face declining environmental quality, resource scarcity, and increased social tensions [4].

Indonesia, with its immense cultural diversity and rich natural resources, stands at the center of these dynamics. Tourism has been identified as one of the most effective sectors for driving economic development and foreign exchange earnings [5]. Bali and Lombok have long been iconic destinations for their beaches, cultural heritage, and marine biodiversity. Recognizing this potential, the Indonesian government has designated Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to accelerate tourism-led growth and attract foreign investment. SEZs are designed to provide fiscal incentives, infrastructure, and regulatory support to foster regional development while reducing economic disparities across the archipelago [6, 7].

Among the SEZs, two stand out as flagships of sustainable tourism development: the Mandalika SEZ in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, and the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ on Serangan Island, Bali. Although both share the overarching

vision of sustainable tourism, their approaches are markedly different. Mandalika emphasizes large-scale infrastructure, such as the MotoGP circuit, luxury resorts, and transport facilities. This approach seeks to accelerate international visibility, attract investment, and position Lombok as a global sports tourism hub. In contrast, Kura-Kura Bali adopts a regenerative model of ecotourism that prioritizes marine conservation, renewable energy, green architecture, and community integration. Serangan Village, located within the SEZ, is actively engaged in planning and management, reflecting a stronger emphasis on local empowerment [8, 9].

While both SEZs embody sustainability in their rhetoric, their development trajectories reveal distinct trade-offs. Mandalika's rapid land conversion has raised questions of ecological fragility, waste management, and community displacement. Reports suggest that while new infrastructure boosts international tourism, benefits for local Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) remain limited, and social conflicts over land tenure persist. Conversely, Kura-Kura Bali demonstrates stronger ecological and social integration but faces questions about economic competitiveness in an industry often driven by large-scale investments and global accessibility [10, 11]. These differences underline the need for a deeper analysis of SEZ-based tourism strategies and their implications for sustainable development.

A growing body of literature explores sustainable tourism in Southeast Asia, yet most studies focus on single-destination case studies, policy evaluations, or thematic issues such as social media marketing and technology [12, 13]. Few attempts have been made to directly compare two SEZs within Indonesia, despite their central role in national tourism policy. This is a critical research gap because comparative insights can illuminate how different governance models, development priorities, and community engagements shape sustainability outcomes. Without such analysis, policy decisions risk overemphasizing short-term economic gains while neglecting long-term social and ecological resilience.

Furthermore, official statistics underscore the importance of measuring sustainability outcomes. In Central Lombok, the Human Development Index (HDI) increased to 67.57% in 2022, reflecting improvements in income, health, and education, partly associated with tourism development [14]. In Denpasar City, where the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ is located, HDI rose from 83.3% in 2017 to over 84% by 2023, coinciding with the SEZ's expansion. Similarly, environmental quality indicators show mixed progress: while air and land quality indices in Lombok have improved, Denpasar faces persistent challenges in water quality and ecosystem stress [10, 12, 15, 16]. These statistics reveal not only opportunities but also contradictions in the pursuit of sustainable tourism.

The challenges of carrying capacity and overtourism are particularly relevant for Indonesia. Studies show that when visitor numbers exceed ecological thresholds, destinations experience environmental degradation, reduced visitor satisfaction, and community tensions [17-19]. Bali has long faced such issues, while Lombok, though less saturated, risks repeating similar patterns if sustainability is not prioritized in planning. Mandalika, with its ambitious infrastructure projects, faces pressure on coastal ecosystems and waste management systems. Kura-Kura Bali, by contrast, positions ecological regeneration at the center of its strategy, but ensuring economic viability remains a challenge [20, 21].

Given these dynamics, a comparative analysis of Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali is timely and necessary. Such a study not only highlights the strengths and weaknesses of each model but also contributes to broader discussions on how SEZs can serve as laboratories for sustainable tourism. The findings have practical implications for policymakers, private investors, and local communities in Indonesia, as well as theoretical contributions to the academic literature on sustainable tourism governance.

Therefore, the objectives of this research are threefold. First, to examine how Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali balance the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism. Second, to identify similarities and differences in their governance approaches, stakeholder involvement, and sustainability outcomes [22-24]. Third, to generate lessons for policymakers and practitioners on designing SEZ-based tourism models that integrate infrastructure-driven growth with ecological and social priorities. By addressing these objectives, the study fills a significant research gap and provides valuable insights into the future of sustainable tourism in Indonesia and beyond [25, 26].

Comparative studies on sustainable tourism development remain limited. For example, study [27] focused on sustainable tourism policy, destination management, and sustainable tourism development. Then, research [28] focused on technology and sustainable tourism in an era of disruption. Further research focused on social media usage by different generations as a tool for sustainable tourism marketing in society's 5.0 idea. Although previous studies have analyzed sustainable tourism in SEZs, there has been no comparative study that systematically examines Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali within the framework of the Indonesian SEZ. This study fills the knowledge gap by focusing on Sustainable Tourism Development: A Comparative Study of Mandalika SEZ and Kura-Kura SEZ, Bali.

This study has several limitations, including limited primary data on sustainable tourism's long-term impact on the Mandalika SEZ and the Kura-Kura SEZ of Bali. In addition, external factors, such as government policies and climate change, can affect the analysis results, so further studies are needed with a multidisciplinary approach and more comprehensive data.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative comparative case study design to examine sustainable tourism development in the Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali SEZs. The comparative case study approach is appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of complex social, economic, and environmental dynamics while highlighting similarities and differences across contexts. Unlike quantitative approaches that measure outcomes through indicators alone, a qualitative lens allows the researcher to capture nuanced perspectives, stakeholder narratives, and the contextual factors shaping tourism governance.

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach is grounded in three main reasons. First, sustainable tourism involves multidimensional interactions between communities, governments, private investors, and ecosystems, which cannot be reduced to numerical data alone. Second, both Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali SEZs are evolving projects with ongoing negotiations among stakeholders, requiring flexible methods that capture processes rather than only outcomes. Third, qualitative inquiry provides the opportunity to analyze

meanings, values, and perceptions that influence sustainability practices, making it particularly relevant to the tourism study [29].

Within the qualitative paradigm, this study is framed as a comparative case study. The two SEZs were selected through purposive sampling because they represent contrasting models of sustainable tourism in Indonesia: one oriented toward mega-infrastructure (Mandalika) and the other toward regenerative ecotourism (Kura-Kura Bali). The comparative design facilitates cross-case analysis by identifying similarities and differences in strategies and drawing lessons applicable to other contexts [30].

This study integrates primary and secondary data sources to ensure completeness and triangulation. Primary data: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 key informants between January and April 2024, and the study reached data saturation where no new themes were found after the 15th interview. Informants were selected purposively to represent diverse perspectives relevant to sustainable tourism development. Categories covered include (a) government representatives, officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the Indonesian Tourism Development Agency (ITDC) for Mandalika, and the Bali Turtle Island Development Agency for Bali Turtles; (b) local community leaders of village organizations, representatives, cultural custodians, and community activists from Central Lombok and Serangan Island; (c) private sector actors—entrepreneurs involved in MSMEs, such as handicrafts, coffee, and marine-based tourism services; and (d) civil society organizations—NGOs working on environmental conservation, coastal management, and social empowerment in both regions.

The interviews followed a flexible guide covering themes such as perceptions of sustainability, challenges in development, community participation, and environmental management. Interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, with consent and ethical approval from participants. Secondary data: Complementary secondary data were obtained from multiple sources, including (a) official statistics from the Central Statistics Agency; (b) policy documents such as SEZ masterplans, government regulations, and sustainability reports; (c) academic publications and peer-reviewed journals on tourism development in Indonesia and Southeast Asia; and (d) media and digital content, particularly local newspapers and social media, to capture narratives on public discourse and promotional strategies.

The integration of primary and secondary data ensured both depth (through stakeholder narratives) and breadth (through official indicators and policy frameworks). Data analysis followed the framework [20, 31], involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. NVivo 12 Plus software was employed as the main tool for computer-aided qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS). The analytic process unfolded in several steps: (a) transcription and data cleaning: Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. Secondary documents were imported into NVivo in text or PDF format; (b) open coding: The first round of coding generated descriptive codes capturing basic ideas; (c) axial coding: Codes were grouped into categories to identify relationships; (d) theme development: Broader themes were constructed around the three sustainability pillars: economic, social, and environmental. Comparative codes such as "Mandalika and Kura-Kura differences" were also developed; (e) Visualization and Query Tools: NVivo's word frequency queries, coding matrices, and thematic maps were used to detect patterns, overlaps, and contrasts between cases; (f) Triangulation: Findings from interviews were cross-validated with secondary data, such as statistical trends and policy documents; (g) Interpretation: Themes were synthesized into narratives that explain how sustainability is conceptualized and practiced in both SEZs, highlighting tensions, synergies, and trade-offs [32].

This analytic procedure ensured systematic and transparent handling of data while allowing flexibility for emergent insights. To enhance credibility, several strategies were applied. Triangulation across data sources reduced the risk of bias. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with a subset of informants for feedback and validation. Thick description was employed to provide detailed contextualization of cases, enabling transferability of findings. Finally, audit trails within NVivo documented coding decisions, ensuring dependability and confirmability.

To ensure coding reliability and analytical rigor, this study employed peer validation and intercoder agreement strategies. A second researcher independently coded a subset of interview transcripts (approximately 30%) to assess consistency in code application. The level of agreement was then discussed and refined through iterative comparison, resulting in high coding consistency. Discrepancies were resolved through consensus, and the coding framework was adjusted accordingly. In addition, peer debriefing sessions were conducted to review emerging themes and interpretations, ensuring that the findings were not solely dependent on a single researcher's perspective. These procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the qualitative analysis.

The study adhered to ethical research standards, including informed consent, confidentiality of participants, and respect for cultural sensitivities. Data were anonymized, and participants had the right to withdraw at any point.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings and analysis of sustainable tourism development in the Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali SEZs. The discussion is structured around three key dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental, followed by a comparative synthesis highlighting similarities, differences, and broader implications.

3.1 Mandalika Special Economic Zone: Infrastructure-led growth

The Mandalika SEZ in Central Lombok represents one of Indonesia's most ambitious infrastructure-driven tourism projects. Covering over 1,000 hectares along the southern coastline, the SEZ features large-scale developments such as the MotoGP circuit, luxury hotels, golf courses, and international resorts. These investments are intended to position Lombok as a global sports tourism destination and to attract foreign investment.

Empirical evidence shows that Mandalika has generated employment opportunities, particularly in the construction and hospitality sectors. According to the Badan Pusat Statistik [14], the HDI of Central Lombok rose to 67.57% in 2022, with improvements in income, health, and education linked partly to tourism expansion. MSMEs in handicrafts, coffee, and

agriculture have also been promoted through government programs, although interviews with local entrepreneurs revealed that many face challenges competing with large-scale investors.

From a theoretical standpoint, Mandalika's model reflects the "growth-first" paradigm of tourism development, which prioritizes international visibility and infrastructure as catalysts for economic transformation [12]. However, critics argue that such approaches risk marginalizing local actors and creating uneven benefit distribution.

Kura-Kura Bali SEZ: Diversified and regenerative economy. By contrast, the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ adopts a diversified model rooted in regenerative tourism. Located on Serangan Island near Denpasar, this SEZ integrates eco-resorts, marine-based tourism, educational hubs, and cultural facilities. The economic strategy focuses on blending international investment with community-based enterprises. For instance, the integration of Serangan Village allows local residents to run tourism-related businesses, ranging from homestays and handicrafts to cultural performances.

Statistical trends support this approach. Denpasar City, where Kura-Kura Bali SEZ is located, recorded an HDI increase from 83.3% in 2017 to 85.06% in 2023 [14]. Interviews with local stakeholders highlighted that the SEZ has stimulated not only direct jobs in tourism but also indirect opportunities in education, technology, and cultural industries. Scholars argue that this diversified economic model enhances long-term resilience by reducing reliance on single attractions or events [20]. It aligns with the global shift toward regenerative tourism, where destinations seek not just to sustain but to restore and enhance natural and cultural assets [33].

Maintaining a balance between contemporary progress and preserving Balinese culture is important. The Bali Kura-Kura SEZ is an example of the synergy between modernization and globalization, as well as the preservation of the customs and lifestyle of indigenous peoples. This project shows great ambition to make Kura-Kura Bali a comprehensive destination that combines modernity, culture, and environmental sustainability.

According to Figure 1, sustainable development is intrinsically linked to economic improvement through economic empowerment. The Lombok government is increasing community capacity through MSME participants, including initiatives in the agricultural sector, support for coffee entrepreneurs, further agricultural progress, and crafts sector development. Meanwhile, in the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ, tourism development contributes to local and national economic growth by creating jobs, increasing people's income, and encouraging investment and infrastructure development. Tourism in Indonesia has substantial value and benefits for local and global economic progress. As a result, the tourism sector is recognised as the largest industry globally, characterised by rapid growth and providing many employment opportunities. Economic resources and job prospects are evident in agriculture, animal husbandry, artisanal crafts, coffee shops, and various small businesses. According to a 2018 report from the WTTC, Indonesia's tourism sector experienced the strongest growth, reaching the ninth global ranking. Furthermore, the main objective of developing sustainable tourism in the Bali Kura-Kura SEZ is to preserve marine ecosystems, empower local communities, and educate future generations about marine ecosystems. Meanwhile, the Mandalika SEZ focuses more on developing tourism and sports infrastructure to develop the economy of communities in the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ.

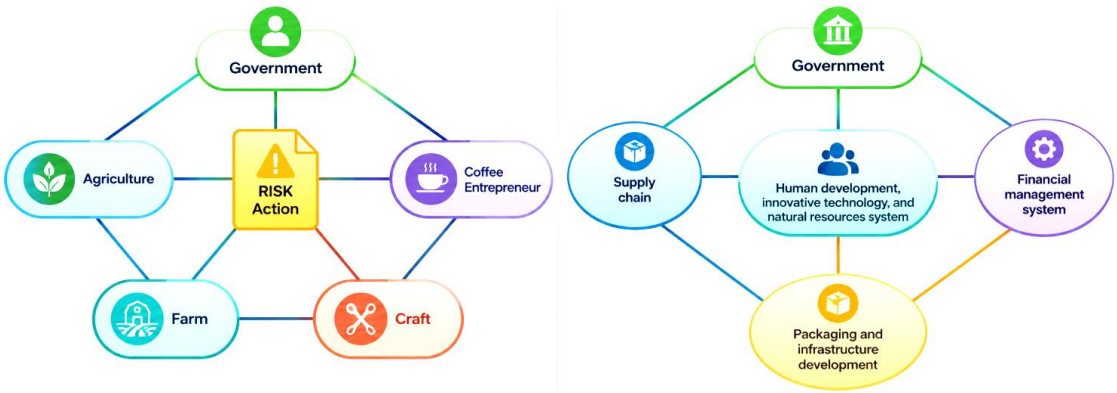


Figure 1. Economic empowerment by the Central Lombok Regency Government and the Denpasar City Government
Source: Research process using NVivo 12 Plus (2024).

The comparison reveals a clear divergence: Mandalika emphasizes infrastructure-led growth with a focus on mega-projects, while Kura-Kura Bali emphasizes regeneration and diversification. Mandalika offers rapid economic visibility but risks dependency on large-scale investors and international events. Kura-Kura Bali, meanwhile, prioritizes inclusivity and ecological integration but must ensure global competitiveness. This trade-off reflects broader debates in sustainable tourism on balancing short-term growth with long-term resilience.

3.2 Social dimension Mandalika Special Economic Zone: Community tensions and limited inclusion

Social impacts in Mandalika have been both positive and contentious. On one hand, tourism expansion has created employment and promoted MSMEs. On the other hand, rapid land acquisition for infrastructure has triggered conflicts over tenure and displacement of local communities. Interviews with local leaders revealed concerns about insufficient consultation and limited participation in decision-making processes.

Although government initiatives such as training for MSMEs in agriculture and handicrafts exist, stakeholders noted that these programs often lack continuity and market access support. As a result, many local businesses struggle to benefit from the influx of international visitors. Scholars warn that without meaningful participation, infrastructure-led tourism risks exacerbating inequalities and undermining local cultural identity [12, 34].

Kura-Kura Bali SEZ: Stronger Community Integration Kura-Kura Bali presents a more inclusive model. The SEZ design explicitly integrates Serangan Village, allowing local residents to participate in planning, management, and operations. Community members are engaged in cultural preservation activities, such as traditional ceremonies and performances, which are incorporated into the SEZ's tourism offerings. Local NGOs are also active in promoting social empowerment and environmental education.

This inclusivity reflects the principles of community-based tourism, which emphasize local ownership, empowerment, and cultural continuity [11]. Stakeholders interviewed expressed greater satisfaction with decision-making processes, noting that partnerships with investors have been structured to include local voices. This approach has strengthened trust between the community and developers, contributing to social sustainability.

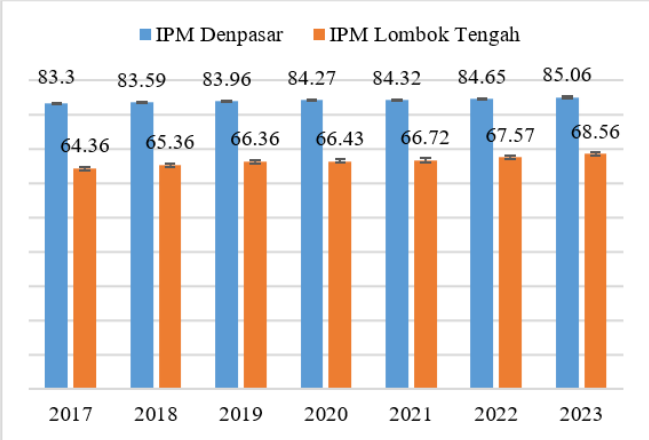


Figure 2. Human Development Index (HDI) of Central Lombok Regency and Denpasar City
Source: Badan Pusat Statistik [14].

Figure 2 illustrates the progression of the HDI in Central Lombok Regency and Denpasar City from 2017 to 2023. Central Lombok Regency recorded HDI values of 64.36 in 2017, 65.36 in 2018, 66.36 in 2019, 66.43 in 2020, 66.72 in 2021, 67.57 in 2022, and 68.56 in 2023. Meanwhile, Denpasar City's HDI was recorded at 83.30 in 2017, 83.59 in 2018, 83.96 in 2019, 84.27 in 2020, 84.32 in 2021, 84.65 in 2022, and 85.06 in 2023.

These differing values provide context for understanding the social conditions within the Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali SEZs. The change in HDI values between 2017 and 2023 was 4.20 points for Central Lombok Regency, compared to 1.76 points for Denpasar City. This disparity reflects distinct characteristics of human development.

The HDI data should be interpreted alongside qualitative findings regarding governance, community participation, and access to development benefits. In Mandalika, findings indicate limited local community participation in decision-making processes and the distribution of tourism benefits. Conversely, Kura-Kura Bali demonstrates the integration of the local community into economic, cultural, and tourism activities. These differences highlight that social conditions are linked not only to macro indicators but also to the quality of governance, community participation, and access to development benefits.

Overall, Figure 2 illustrates the differences in HDI levels and patterns of change between the two regions during the observation period. This reinforces the importance of a contextual and participatory approach to tourism development.

3.3 Environmental dimension Mandalika Special Economic Zone: Ecological pressures

Environmental sustainability in Mandalika faces significant challenges. Coastal ecosystems are under pressure from rapid infrastructure development, and issues such as waste management and water scarcity remain critical. The Environmental Quality Index (Indeks Kualitas Lingkungan (IKL)) shows improvements in air and land quality, but these gains are fragile and risk reversal if carrying capacity is exceeded [35].

Interviews with environmental NGOs raised concerns that tourism activities could disrupt coral reefs and fisheries if not properly managed. While ITDC has initiated waste management programs and eco-friendly infrastructure, implementation remains uneven. Scholars emphasize that infrastructure-led models often struggle to internalize ecological costs, leading to unsustainable trajectories [36].

3.3.1 Kura-Kura Bali Special Economic Zone: Regenerative environmental practices

Kura-Kura Bali has embedded ecological restoration into its development. Key initiatives include mangrove rehabilitation, renewable energy systems, and marine conservation programs. The SEZ collaborates with NGOs and academic institutions to monitor biodiversity and educate visitors about environmental stewardship.

These practices align with the principles of regenerative tourism, which aim not only to minimize harm but also to actively restore ecosystems [34]. Interviews with community activists highlighted pride in conservation initiatives, particularly in mangrove rehabilitation, which provides both ecological and cultural value.



Figure 3. Environmental quality index (Indeks Kualitas Lingkungan (IKL)) of Denpasar City and Central Lombok
Source: Badan Pusat Statistik [14].

As shown in Figure 3, the IKL provides a composite measure of environmental conditions based on water quality, air quality, and land cover within specific geographic and temporal contexts. In Central Lombok Regency, the official assessment for 2023 recorded an IKL score of 67.18 points, compared to 63.17 points in 2022. This 2023 score comprised a Water Quality Index (Indeks Kualitas Air, IKA) of 56.67 points, an Air Quality Index (Indeks Kualitas Udara, IKU) of 94.70 points, and a Land Cover Quality Index (Indeks Kualitas

Tutupan Lahan, IKTL) of 34.34 points. These results indicate significant variation in environmental performance across indicators, with air quality as the strongest dimension and land cover quality the weakest. The values observed in 2023 must be distinguished from the targets set in the Environmental Agency's 2021–2026 strategic plan. The 2023 targets were 43.03 points for IKA, 91.38 points for IKU, and 33.84 points for IKL, while the 2026 targets were 84.14, 91.71, and 36.39 points, respectively. Consequently, these targets represent planned policy benchmarks rather than projected or observed environmental outcomes. The discrepancy between targets and achievements indicates that Central Lombok exceeded its annual targets in 2023; however, these results do not imply that tourism development is environmentally neutral. IKL captures overall environmental conditions and cannot, on its own, establish a causal link between tourism expansion and environmental changes. Such an assessment requires evidence regarding land-use conversion, water demand, waste generation, pollution, ecosystem disruption, and the effectiveness of environmental governance.

The significance of tourism in Central Lombok is closely linked to the development of Mandalika as a strategic tourism destination. Government promotion of halal tourism via digital platforms can enhance destination visibility and stimulate tourism-related activities in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Improvements in transportation systems, accommodation, and digital booking capabilities can reduce accessibility barriers for visitors. In 2021, the West Nusa Tenggara Statistics Agency recorded 76 starred and 1,094 non-starred accommodation establishments, comprising 5,570 rooms and 8,389 beds. These tourism-supporting facilities provide a crucial foundation for destination development, although their environmental impact depends on resource efficiency, waste management, and local carrying capacity.

The environmental profile of Denpasar City offers a useful benchmark for comparison. In 2023, Denpasar recorded an IKL of 58.78 points, comprising an IKA of 50.83 points, an IKU of 82.20 points, and an IKTL of 29.11 points. Consequently, Central Lombok recorded a higher aggregate IKL than Denpasar during the same year. However, this difference should not be interpreted as evidence that tourism development in Central Lombok generates less environmental pressure. Variations in ecological characteristics, urbanisation, land-use structures, population density, and environmental governance can also influence the observed index values. Therefore, this comparison is best understood as reflecting differing environmental conditions across tourism-oriented regions.

The pressures of large-scale infrastructure development and intensifying tourism activity are shaping Mandalika's environmental trajectory. In contrast, Kura-Kura Bali has more explicitly integrated ecological restoration and environmental considerations into its development strategy. This contrast illustrates the potential trade-offs between accelerated tourism development and ecological protection. For Mandalika, combining a regenerative approach, resource efficiency measures, ecosystem restoration, and stronger environmental governance could mitigate ecological risks while supporting the destination's long-term resilience.

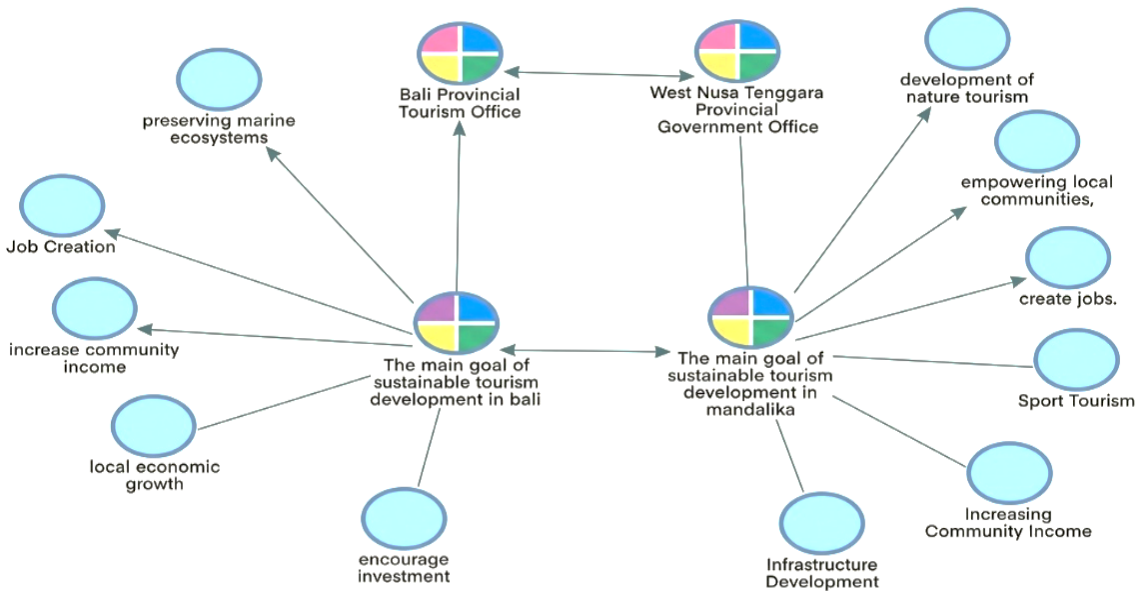


Figure 4. The main objectives of sustainable development in the Kura-Kura Bali and Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ)
Source: Processed using NVivo 12 Plus (2024).

Across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, this comparison reveals complementary strengths and vulnerabilities. Mandalika demonstrates strong international visibility and investment potential but requires enhanced social inclusion and sustainable environmental management. Kura-Kura Bali places greater emphasis on ecological integration and community-oriented development, while maintaining economic competitiveness in the international tourism market.

This synthesis contributes to the sustainable tourism literature by demonstrating that SEZs serve not only as instruments for economic growth but also as institutional spaces for experimenting with alternative approaches to sustainability. These findings reinforce the contextual nature of sustainability: environmental performance cannot be evaluated solely through aggregate indices or tourism growth indicators. However, this approach requires an integrated consideration of the remaining factors to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Such an approach provides a stronger basis for

assessing whether tourism development can achieve economic competitiveness while maintaining ecological integrity and long-term territorial resilience [2].

Based on Figure 4 above, the main objectives of sustainable development in the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ and the Mandalika SEZ, in the Mandalika SEZ are more focused on sport tourism, job creation, infrastructure development, increasing community income, and natural tourism development. Meanwhile, the Kura-Kura Bali SEZ focuses more on preserving marine ecosystems, regional economic growth, increasing community income, encouraging investment, empowering local communities and creating jobs. The main objective of establishing SEZs is to spur economic growth in certain areas by increasing investment, creating jobs and advancing development infrastructure. SEZs seek to attract domestic and international investment by offering various benefits such as tax breaks, simplified licensing, and access to technology. Accelerating economic growth in strategically important but underdeveloped regions is crucial for building new economic centres to drive the national economy. Furthermore, SEZs aim to increase export competitiveness and support industries with significant added value. These areas usually concentrate on certain sectors, including manufacturing, tourism, technology, and agriculture, which have considerable potential to increase national exports. Supporting facilities and infrastructure in SEZs enable companies to operate more efficiently, increase productivity, and take advantage of important geographic locations to access markets worldwide [7]. This will improve the country's foreign exchange reserves and support.

Indonesia's global economic position. Another goal is to reduce economic disparities between regions in Indonesia. SEZs are often established in underdeveloped areas or outside Java to stimulate regional economic development. It is hoped that increasing economic activity in the region will encourage economic equality so that local communities can enjoy the benefits of this growth, including improved infrastructure, employment opportunities, and living standards. The formation of SEZs can encourage organized urbanization, reducing the burden on densely populated economic centres [37].

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that Mandalika prioritizes infrastructure-driven tourism development through large-scale investments such as the MotoGP circuit and luxury resorts, which have contributed to economic growth and job creation, but also generate challenges, including limited community participation, unequal distribution of benefits, land conflicts, and environmental pressures. In contrast, Kura-Kura Bali adopts a regenerative, diversified tourism model by integrating eco-tourism, cultural industries, and community-based initiatives, thereby strengthening social inclusion and environmental management. However, it faces constraints in achieving global competitiveness. These differences highlight that sustainable tourism is shaped by governance models and local contexts, requiring a careful balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Theoretically, this study contributes to sustainable tourism literature by proposing a hybrid governance perspective that integrates growth-oriented development with participatory, community-based approaches. It demonstrates that sustainability should be understood as a dynamic, negotiated process, in which MSME-based community empowerment serves as a key mechanism linking economic development with social equity and environmental sustainability, thereby extending existing conceptual frameworks that often treat these dimensions separately. Practically, the study suggests that policymakers should adopt a hybrid development strategy that combines large-scale investment with inclusive governance, ensuring active community participation in planning and benefit distribution. Strengthening MSME integration into the tourism value chain is essential to promote economic equity, while stricter environmental regulations and conservation initiatives are necessary to safeguard ecological sustainability. Despite being limited to two SEZs and a relatively short observation period, this study underscores the importance of expanding future research to other regions and longer timeframes. Overall, the comparison between Mandalika and Kura-Kura Bali demonstrates that sustainable tourism is an ongoing process that requires balancing growth, inclusion, and environmental preservation, offering important insights for the development of globally competitive yet sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

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