



Marketing Strategy Analysis in Optimizing Tourism Potential

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Abstract: Batu Katak has significant potential to be developed as a leading tourist destination. However, despite its uniqueness and natural attractions, tourist visits to Batu Katak remain relatively low compared to other tourist destinations in Bahorok District, such as Bukit Lawang. This highlights the challenges in maximizing Batu Katak's tourism potential. This study aims to develop a strategic marketing plan to optimize the tourism potential of Batu Katak Bahorok using SWOT analysis supported by IFAS and EFAS matrices. This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Employing a mixed-method approach, data were collected from stakeholders through interviews and questionnaires. The findings place Batu Katak in Quadrant I (growth oriented strategy), indicating strong internal strengths and favorable external opportunities. Key strengths include natural biodiversity and pristine environments, while weaknesses involve poor infrastructure and limited promotion. Opportunities lie in tourism promotion through digital marketing, while threats include environmental risks and competition. The integration of Maqashid Syariah principles in Batu Katak's tourism development emphasizes a balance between economic, social, and environmental preservation aspects, ensuring that tourism remains sustainable and does not harm living beings or nature.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a vital sector in the global economy, contributing significantly to national revenue and job creation. In Indonesia, the tourism sector has become a key pillar of economic development, particularly in improving the well-being of local communities through the development of sustainable tourism destinations. In this context, effective tourism destination development is essential to attract more visitors. Optimizing marketing strategies significantly contributes to increasing the attractiveness and accessibility of tourist attractions, as well as improving the quality of services offered to tourists (Gultom & Winata, 2024).

Batu Katak is a natural tourist destination located in Batu Jonjong Village, Bahorok District, Langkat Regency, North Sumatra. While relatively unknown to the public, it holds immense and promising tourism potential. Batu Katak is filled with pristine natural surroundings and is home to a variety of endemic Sumatran flora and fauna.

Batu Katak has significant potential to be developed as a leading tourist destination. However, despite its uniqueness and natural attractions, tourist visits to Batu Katak remain relatively low compared to other tourist destinations in Bahorok District, such as Bukit Lawang. This highlights the challenges in maximizing Batu Katak's tourism potential.



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Tourists are attracted to a destination for various factors, such as the uniqueness of the destination, ease of access, complete facilities, and the availability of services from tourism organizations (A. I. Lestari et al., 2023). The lack of supporting infrastructure is a major challenge in developing tourist destinations. The roads leading to the location are unpaved, requiring caution for four-wheeled vehicles, as large rocks and potholes can hinder travel. Furthermore, promotional activities are still not well managed to reach a wider market.

Marketing strategy is a crucial factor in increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations. Research by Aziz (2022) emphasizes the importance of digital tourism development, which must be effectively implemented with the support of adequate internet infrastructure. Furthermore, Nugroho (2020) highlights the importance of collaboration between local governments, tourism stakeholders, and the community in creating sustainable marketing programs. Previous research by Ramadhan (2023) found that ecotourism in Batu Katak has had an economic impact on the local community, serving as both a primary and supplementary source of income. However, this study focused more on the economic impact of ecotourism and did not delve into the marketing strategies that can be implemented to increase tourist visits to Batu Katak.

Tourism development, especially ecotourism in Batu Katak, must be in line with the principles of Maqashid Syariah, which means not only focusing on economic profit alone, but also environmental preservation as part of preserving the soul, empowering the local community economy to preserve wealth, and ecotourism education to preserve the mind (Mutmainah et al., 2022).

This research aims to formulate an appropriate marketing strategy for Batu Katak to optimize its potential as a leading tourist destination. The research focuses on identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, while integrating the principles of Maqasid Sharia (Islamic principles). It is hoped that this research will make a tangible contribution to increasing tourist arrivals, stimulating economic growth, and preserving the environment in accordance with Islamic values.

Tourism marketing is a continuous process involving planning, research, implementation, control, and evaluation of programs to meet tourist needs and achieve destination goals. Marketing strategy involves the analysis, development, implementation, and evaluation of activities in developing a tourist destination (Kurniawan, 2024). According to Kotler and Keller, promotion is a key element in the marketing mix that can increase visibility and audience appeal. In this study, the promotion theory used refers to the marketing mix concept of Kotler and Keller (2021), specifically the fourth element, Promotion. This element is an important part of the 4P strategy (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), which emphasizes the importance of effective communication to reach and influence consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2021). In the context of Batu Katak Bahorok tourism development, promotional elements include various efforts to disseminate destination information to potential tourists, build appeal through visual and digital narratives, and increase awareness and interest in visiting through various media. Forms of promotion used include social media, websites, and collaboration with travel agents. This strategy aims not only to introduce Batu Katak as a natural and ecotourism destination, but also to create a positive, sustainable and competitive image amidst the fierce competition from other tourist destinations.

The concept of ecotourism aims to promote environmental conservation through tourism activities that have a low impact on the local ecosystem. Properly managed ecotourism can support nature conservation and provide economic benefits to local communities. Ecotourism strategies include developing environmentally friendly facilities and increasing community capacity to participate in natural resource conservation (Ananda & Artajaya, 2020). The application of ecotourism principles at Batu Katak

Bahorok will encompass environmental protection and improving the welfare of the surrounding community.

The abundant availability of natural resources is a gift from Allah SWT to all living creatures. Humans, as caliphs on earth, have a responsibility to manage and maintain the balance of nature through wise use and sustainable environmental preservation (Nurbaiti et al., 2024). This aligns with the warning in Q.S. Al-A'raf, verse 56, which reads:

“And do not cause damage on the face of the earth, after (Allah) has repaired it and pray to Him with fear (of not being accepted) and hope (of being granted). Indeed, Allah's mercy is very close to those who do good”.

Maqashid Sharia is the goal or core of establishing Islamic laws, which serve to safeguard five main aspects: religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), reason (hifz al-aql), descendants (hifz al-nasl), and wealth (hifz al-mal) (Syahputra et al., 2023). In the context of tourism, implementing maqashid sharia means ensuring that tourism activities not only provide economic benefits but also support the preservation of the environment, culture, and spiritual values (Astutih, 2021).

Quoted from Istiani and Purwanto(2022), According to Imam Al-Qardhawi, preserving the environment (hifz al-bi'ah) is positioned on a par with other Maqashid Syariah objectives: preserving religion, life, intellect, descendants, and property. Al-Qardhawi uses the term hifz al-bi'ah as a consideration in formulating his concept of environmental fiqh (Istiani & Purwanto,2022). It is important to ensure that tourism development does not damage the environment or disrupt the balance of the ecosystem, as part of the maqashid syariah (Billah & Maryani, 2020). The marketing strategy of Batu Katak Bahorok based on maqashid syariah will not only increase the number of tourists but also bring blessings in the development of a sustainable destination in accordance with Islamic values.

METHODS

This study uses a mixed methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Researchers used this research method because by combining qualitative data (which provides context and meaning) and quantitative data (which offers statistical analysis), researchers can better explain the results and obtain a more comprehensive picture (Justan & Aziz, 2024). Mixed methods research is a methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods in a single study to obtain more comprehensive and valid data. According to Creswell (2021), this approach allows researchers to collect, analyze, and combine both types of data to strengthen research findings. The mixed method used is a qualitative descriptive SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis used to identify internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats) that influence tourism development in Batu Katak. Furthermore, a quantitative descriptive matrix of Internal Factor Analysis Strategy (IFAS) and External Factor Analysis Strategy (EFAS) was used. IFAS and EFAS are quantitative techniques used to assign value weights and ratings to factors identified in a SWOT analysis (Mandira & Damayanti ,2023) The primary objective of this research is tourism development in Batu Katak. The study was conducted over a period of approximately two weeks. Two types of data sources were used: primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from interviews and questionnaires with stakeholders, while secondary data came from reports or publications related to the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Evaluation of Internal Environmental Strategy Factors

Internal factor assessment is based on the weights and ratings given by respondents to each strength and weakness factor. The results of the internal factor assessment are shown in Table 1. The total strength factor score is 2.71, and the total weakness score is 1.59.

Table 1. IFAS Factor Assessment

No	Internal Factors	Weight	Ratings	Skor
Strength				
1	Frog Stone has a natural panorama that is still pristine.	0,13	4,1	0,54
2	Habitat for endemic flora and fauna such as orangutans, Sumatran tigers, and rafflesia flowers.	0,14	4,2	0,59
3	Offering various activities such as trekking, caving, and tubing.	0,13	4,3	0,54
4	Entrance ticket prices and tourist activity fees are more competitive.	0,12	4,3	0,52
5	Tourism facilities, such as accommodation and dining, are available and managed by the local community.	0,11	4,7	0,51
Total		0,63		2,71
Weakness		Weight	Ratings	Skor
1	The road to Batu Katak is still not in good condition, with rocky road conditions that are difficult for large vehicles to pass.	0,08	4,4	0,33
2	Lack of facilities such as public toilets, parking, quality accommodation, and tourist information centers.	0,09	4,3	0,40
3	Marketing is still limited and not yet integrated into digital platforms.	0,08	4,2	0,33
4	The absence of well-organized tour packages is an obstacle for tourists in planning their visits.	0,07	4,2	0,28
5	Local community tourism management skills still need to be improved.	0,06	4,1	0,23
Total		0,37		1,57
S-W		1		1,13

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

In this case, the IFAS value is 1.13, which is considered low. Interpreting this on a scale with a minimum value of 1 and a maximum of 5 yields the following scale range (Slamet Riyanto et al., 2021):

- 1,00 <Average < 1.80 is very poor category
- 1,80 <Average < 2.60 less category
- 2,60 <Average < 3.40, sufficient/moderate category
- 3,41 <Average < 4.20 good category
- 4,20 <Average < 5.00 very good category

So an IFAS value of 1.12 indicates a poor or very inadequate strategy in responding to the internal environment.

The IFAS table results show that the highest strength factor is the habitat for endemic flora and fauna, with a weighting of 0.14. This means that the presence of these endemic species is a key selling point of Batu Katak due to its unique biological features, which are not easily found elsewhere. This advantage can be leveraged to strengthen Batu Katak's image as a conservation-oriented ecotourism destination.

The strength factor with the lowest weighting is the tourism facilities managed by the local community, with a weighting of 0.11. However, when viewed from the rating value, the strength with the highest influence on the development of Batu Katak tourism is the tourism facilities managed by the local community, with a rating of 4.7. This means that community-managed facilities are considered the least dominant compared to the other strength factors, but tourists experience a very positive impact. Meanwhile, the strength with the lowest rating is the pristine natural panorama, with a rating of 4.1. Although this value remains high, it shows that visual appeal alone is not enough without the support of an engaging tourism experience. Developing nature-based tourism interpretation and education can strengthen the influence of this strength in attracting visitors.

The weakness factor with the highest weighting is the lack of basic facilities such as public toilets, parking, quality accommodation, and a tourist information center, with a weighting of 0.09. This means that these basic facilities are essential needs that have not been optimally met and directly impact tourist comfort during their visit. The absence of these facilities can hinder repeat visits and detract from the overall tourism experience. Meanwhile, the weakness factor with the lowest weighting is the need for improvement in local community tourism management skills, with a weighting of 0.06. This factor is considered important but has not yet received a primary focus compared to physical aspects such as infrastructure.

In terms of rating, the most significant weakness is the poor condition of the road leading to the location, with a rating of 4.3. This means that difficult accessibility is a major obstacle for tourists reaching this destination. The rocky and damaged roads make it difficult for both private and public vehicles to access the area, so infrastructure improvements are urgently needed to increase competitiveness. Overall, these weaknesses demonstrate that Batu Katak tourism development relies not only on its natural attractions but also on improving the quality of infrastructure and community management capacity to ensure it can compete with other leading destinations such as Bukit Lawang.

Results of Evaluation of External Environmental Strategy Factors

External factor assessment is based on the weights and ratings given by respondents to each strength and weakness factor. The results of the external factor assessment are shown in Table 2. The calculation results show a total opportunity score of 2.91 and a total threat score of 1.43.

Table 2. EFAS Factor Assessment

No	External Factors	Weight	Ratings	Skor
Opportunity				
1	The trend of increasing tourist interest in ecotourism.	0,15	4,3	0,65
2	Increased use of social media for tourism promotion.	0,18	4,4	0,80
3	Potential for cooperation with the private sector for investment.	0,17	4,7	0,78
4	Development of local culture-based tourism.	0,15	4,6	0,68
	Total	0,65		2,91
Threat				
		Weight	Ratings	Skor
1	High rainfall and potential flooding can be obstacles for tourists to access tourist locations.	0,09	3,8	0,35
2	Lack of public awareness in conservation.	0,08	4,4	0,34
3	Competition with other more popular tourist destinations.	0,14	3,6	0,49
4	Negative impacts of uncontrolled tourism activities (e.g., litter).	0,05	4,9	0,23
	Total	0,35		1,41
	O-T	1		1,5

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

An EFAS score of 1.5 indicates a poor or very inadequate strategy in responding to the external environment. The highest-weighted opportunity factor is the increased use of social media for tourism promotion, with a weight of 0.18. This opportunity can be utilized to accelerate the progress of Batu Katak as a leading tourist destination in North Sumatra. Meanwhile, the lowest-weighted opportunity factor is the trend of increasing tourist interest in ecotourism, with a weight of 0.15. Judging from the rating values, the opportunity factor with the highest influence is the potential for cooperation with the private sector for investment with a rating of 4.7, indicating that the private sector can be the main driving force in developing this destination, especially in terms of facilities and marketing. Meanwhile, the factor with the lowest rating is the ecotourism trend with a value of 4.3, which is still quite high. This indicates that although the influence of this trend is large, its utilization in Batu Katak is not yet fully optimal and still needs to be accompanied by a promotional strategy.

The highest-weighted threat factor is competition with other, more popular tourist destinations, with a score of 0.14. This indicates that Batu Katak's presence is still inferior to more well-known destinations like Bukit Lawang. Meanwhile, the lowest-weighted threat is the negative impact of uncontrolled tourism activities, such as waste issues, with a score of 0.05. However, in terms of rating, it has the highest influence, with a score of 4.9. This means that this problem has not yet reached a large scale that threatens tourism. Despite its low weight, if not managed properly, this threat can damage the natural beauty that is Batu Katak's main strength and have very dire consequences. Meanwhile, the lowest-weighted threat is competition with tourist destinations, with a score of 3.6. This indicates that despite the fairly intense competition, Batu Katak still has unique characteristics that can be leveraged to build its own market, especially in the ecotourism segment.

Internal-External (IE) Matrix

After conducting an assessment of the Internal Factor Analysis Strategy (IFAS), which consists of strengths and weaknesses, and the External Factor Analysis Strategy (EFAS), which includes opportunities and threats, the next step is to determine the strategy through a SWOT analysis diagram (Nurohman et al., 2021).

This method is carried out by calculating the difference between the total score of strengths and weaknesses (internal factors), as well as the difference between the total score of opportunities and threats (external factors). Based on the results of the IFAS evaluation, from 5 indicators of strengths obtained a total score of 2.71, while 5 indicators of weaknesses produced a total score of 1.57. The result of subtracting the strengths and weaknesses produced a score of 1.13. This value reflects the internal strengths of Batu Katak are still dominant and are the main capital in the development of the tourist destination. On the external side, 4 indicators of opportunities have a total score of 2.91, while 4 indicators of threats obtained a total score of 1.41. The difference between opportunities and threats resulted in a score of 1.5, which indicates that the external environment is quite supportive in the development of tourism in Batu Katak.

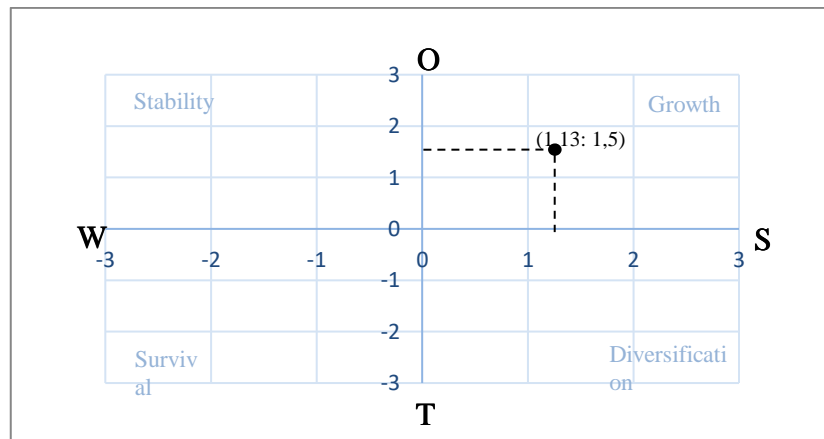


Figure 1. SWOT Analysis Diagram
Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Based on the SWOT analysis diagram, Batu Katak Bahorok tourism is located in quadrant I. This quadrant represents a very advantageous position for the development of natural tourism and ecotourism destinations. This position indicates that Batu Katak has strong internal strengths and is supported by significant external opportunities, so the implemented strategy supports an aggressive growth approach (growth-oriented strategy).

Some strategies that can be implemented include:

Developing integrated digital promotions through social media, official websites, and collaboration with tourism influencers to strengthen Batu Katak's branding as a leading ecotourism destination.

Establish cooperation with private investors and local governments to build basic infrastructure such as roads, public toilets, parking areas, and adequate tourist information centers.

Developing and offering educational and conservative tourism packages, which combine nature activities (trekking, caving, tubing) with education about endemic flora and fauna.

Empowering local communities through training in tourism management, guest services, and entrepreneurship, so that communities can be actively involved and obtain direct economic benefits from the tourism sector.

Establish a souvenir center for Batu Katak specialties based on natural products or local handicrafts, to strengthen the destination's identity.

SWOT Matrix

The SWOT matrix serves as a strategic analysis tool for formulating strategies based on the internal and external conditions being faced. The concept of this matrix was developed by (Wheelen & Hunger, 2023) who identified the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) and the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS).

Table 3. SWOT Matrix

IFAS	Strengths	Weaknesses
EFAS		
Opportunities	Strategi S–O Using strengths to take advantage of opportunities: a) Develop tourism promotions through digital marketing such as social media. b) Offering educational tour packages that explore nature and the conservation of flora and fauna. c) Attracting private investment to build environmental facilities such as information centers.	Strategi W–O Formulate strategies that optimize opportunities by addressing weaknesses: a) Improvement of basic infrastructure such as roads, through government collaboration. b) Conduct tourism management training for local communities. c) Developing structured tour packages offered online.
Threats	S–T Strategy Using force to overcome threats: a) Highlighting the uniqueness of Batu Katak (natural beauty, flora, endemic fauna) as a differentiator from other destinations. b) Encourage tourists to participate in conservation education during their visits. c) Increasing environmental awareness through waste management	W–T Strategy Develop strategies to reduce weaknesses and avoid threats: a) Improving public facilities and destination management based on tourism cleanliness and safety standards b) Arranging tourist spaces so that the environment is maintained. c) Strengthening the position of the Batu Katak brand to be able to compete with other destinations.

Source: Data processed by researchers (2025)

Based on the SWOT matrix analysis, the development of Batu Katak Bahorok tourism is positioned in Quadrant I, indicating an aggressive growth strategy. An effective Batu Batak tourism development strategy involves three essential components: digital marketing, community empowerment, and government involvement. A successful digital marketing strategy has been proven to increase the visibility and attractiveness of tourist destinations. Through social media, websites, and visual content, tourist destinations can reach a wide audience in real time and with greater personalization (Saputra, 2023). Empowering local communities through training, tourism management, and MSME product development is key to sustainable tourism development because it creates a sense of ownership and direct economic benefits (Yuardani et al., 2021). The government plays a crucial role as a coordinator, facilitator, and stimulator in providing infrastructure, regulations, and promoting tourism through policies and strategic program support (E. D. Lestari et al., 2023).

Maqashid Syariah in the Development of Batu Katak Tourism

Maqashid Sharia is a basic principle in Islamic law that serves as a protector of five basic aspects of life: religion (hifz al-din), life (hifz al-nafs), reason (hifz al-'aql), descendants (hifz al-nasl), and property (hifz al-mal). In the context of tourism development, the Maqashid Sharia approach serves as an important guideline so that tourism development does not only pursue economic profit, but also considers spiritual values, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment (Azizah, 2024).

According to Yusuf al-Qardhawi in his book *Ri'āyat al-Bī'ah fī Shari'at al-Islām*, which places environmental preservation (hifz al-bi'ah) as part of an important wasilah in

realizing *kulliyāt al-khams* (five main objectives of sharia). According to him, environmental ethics includes the principles of responsibility, simplicity, justice, and compassion for nature, which if ignored, *kulliyāt al-khams* will not be realized (Al-Qardhawi). As the word of Allah SWT in Q.S. *Asy-Syu'ara* verse 183 which means:

"And do not deprive people of their rights, and do not spread corruption on the earth". In tourism activities, it is crucial to refrain from actions that harm others and cause damage to the earth. *Hifz al-bi'ah* serves as the theological basis for protecting the environment from damage such as pollution, overexploitation, and ecosystem imbalance, all of which violate the rights of other living creatures and our mandate as caliphs on earth (Nasution & Nasution, 2020).

According to Mutmainah, developing tourism areas based on the *maqashid sharia* (Islamic principles) not only focuses on economic aspects, but also encompasses environmental preservation, Islamic-based tourism education, and community empowerment as guardians of assets and key drivers of development. Implementing *maqashid sharia* in tourism is crucial, as tourism activities are not solely economic in nature but also contribute to preserving the environment, spiritual values, and sustainably sustaining community well-being (Annisa & Harahap, 2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the SWOT analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that, internally, the primary strength of Batu Katak Bahorok tourism development is the natural richness of endemic flora and fauna, which are a major tourist attraction. Meanwhile, the primary weakness lies in the limited basic infrastructure, such as road access and inadequate public facilities. Externally, emerging opportunities include increased tourist interest in ecotourism and opportunities for collaboration with the private sector in tourism development. The main threats stem from competition with more popular destinations and the potential for environmental damage from uncontrolled tourism activities. The results of this SWOT analysis indicate that Batu Katak tourism development falls into quadrant I, a growth-oriented strategy. Therefore, local governments and tourism managers are expected to design policies focused on expanding and improving the quality of tourism services, including digital promotion, infrastructure, and community engagement. The strategies developed must also consider the values of *Maqasid Sharia*. Batu Katak tourism development should not only increase tourist visits but also create a blessed, sustainable destination that aligns with *Sharia* principles.

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