



Marketing strategies for tourism development in frontier and outermost Talaud islands

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Abstract

Purpose — This study examines how global price, logistics, and exchange-rate channels jointly determine Indonesia's coal export performance, and whether China's manufacturing demand adds independent explanatory power.

Method — Using monthly data (2015–2025), a two-stage framework is applied: a VECM to identify long-run equilibrium relationships, followed by a conditional error-correction model with Newey–West inference to assess short-run export dynamics and the role of China PMI proxies.

Findings — Two long-run equilibria link exports with prices and exchange rates, and logistics with exchange rates. In the short run, only logistics (BDI) and exchange-rate changes significantly drive exports, with logistics shocks dominating overall dynamics. China PMI proxies are insignificant, suggesting their effects are absorbed by structural channels.

Implications — Export performance is highly sensitive to logistics conditions, highlighting the importance of supply-chain efficiency and policy stability over reliance on commodity price movements.

Originality — The study provides a unified dynamic framework linking price, logistics, and currency channels while re-evaluating the role of China demand at monthly frequency.

Keywords: Coal export performance; baltic dry index; exchange rate dynamics; vector error correction model; commodity price transmission

JEL Classification: Z32; L83; M31

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Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as one of the most dynamic sectors contributing to global and national economic growth. It generates significant foreign exchange earnings, stimulates investment, creates employment opportunities, and strengthens regional development (Gössling & Hall, 2019; Vaz, 2025). In Indonesia, tourism has been prioritized as a pillar of the national economy, not only for its direct economic value but also for its role in fostering cultural exchange, environmental stewardship, and social cohesion.

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In line with the opinion of Alcalá-Ordóñez et al. (2024), Ady et al. (2022), Seetanah et al. (2020), and Amaluddin (2019) that tourism development has a positive impact on a country's economic growth. Tourist motivations, often framed through push–pull factors, remain central to explaining visit and revisit intentions across diverse destinations (Ayoub, 2024; Joseph and Gillariose, 2025). The sector has shown resilience and recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, tourism contributed approximately 4% to Indonesia's GDP, supported around 25 million jobs, and attracted 13.7 million international arrivals alongside more than 1 billion domestic tourist trips (Kemendikbud, 2025). These achievements were accompanied by improvements in Indonesia's ranking in the Travel and Tourism Development Index and increased foreign exchange earnings. At the regional level, however, tourism performance in frontier areas such as the Talaud Islands remains significantly lower.

For instance, while Indonesia recorded millions of domestic and international tourist visits, the Talaud Islands only received 1,732 total visitors and 115 foreign tourists in 2024 (BPS Provinsi Sulawesi Utara, 2024; Talaud District Tourism Office, 2025). This stark contrast indicates a substantial gap between national tourism growth and local tourism performance in peripheral regions. Beyond the main tourism corridors, Indonesia's frontier and outermost islands offer rich and unique potential that is often underexplored. The Talaud Islands, situated in North Sulawesi, are categorized as daerah 3T, with Miangas as Indonesia's northernmost island bordering Mindanao, Philippines. Tourism development in Talaud has been formally prioritized by the Provincial Government of North Sulawesi, as stated in Perda No. 1/2014 on the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW) 2014–2034, in alignment with Indonesia's national tourism development blueprint (Perpu No. 50/2011). The islands offer diverse marine and coastal attractions, pristine natural settings, rare species, and distinctive cultural and culinary heritage (Cerdá-Mansilla, 2024). These characteristics form the foundation of destination appeal and image, which are critical determinants of tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Akadiri et al., 2019; Gannon et al., 2017; Suhartanto, 2018).

Despite the existence of supportive policies and strong tourism potential, many peripheral and small-island destinations experience a gap between potential and actual tourism performance. Prior studies suggest that structural constraints, such as limited accessibility, inadequate infrastructure, weak institutional coordination, and low destination visibility can hinder the transformation of tourism resources into competitive advantage (Nowacki, 2009; Meng et al., 2008; Fakfare, 2024). This indicates that the presence of natural and cultural assets alone is insufficient; effective strategic management and marketing are required to translate potential into sustained tourist demand.

When maintained sustainably, tiny islands' biodiversity and natural resources can also have multiplier impacts, such as enhanced household income, job creation, and foreign exchange contributions (Suharyanto et al., 2020; Raman et al., 2024). Talaud continues to underutilize these opportunities. Arrivals of tourists have changed dramatically in recent years: Foreign arrivals dropped 79.5% from pre-pandemic levels in 2020 to just 115 in 2024 from 585 in 2019 (Talaud District Tourism Office, 2025).

These patterns draw attention to ongoing issues with infrastructure preparedness, accessibility, and tourism marketing. The number of foreign tourists visiting North Sulawesi in July 2025 reached 5,903 people, a 24.46% increase compared to July 2024. The number of Domestic tourists (wisnus) in July 2025 was 1,401,821 visitors, an increase of 101.96% compared to July 2024.

This data shows a positive trend in tourism visits in North Sulawesi, especially towards international tourist visits. The trend of visits by Domestic tourists and foreign tourists to the Talaud Islands Regency area can be seen in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Visits of Domestic and Foreign Tourists in Talaud Islands Regency (2019–2024)

Year	Domestic and Foreign Tourists (visitors)	Growth Rate (%)	Foreign Tourist (visitors)	Growth Rate (%)
2019	3,273	-	585	-
2020	2,500	-23.600	120	-79,490
2021	2,140	-14.400	98	-18,330
2022	1,975	-7.700	95	-3,060
2023	1,680	-14.900	110	15,790
2024	1,732	+3.100	115	4,550

Source: Talaud District Tourism Office, 2025

Table 1 shows a decrease in visits from domestic tourists and foreign tourists from 2019 to 2023. The reasons include the fact that in 2020, the number of tourists was affected by the spread of the COVID-19 virus, where this condition began to improve again in 2023 and 2024. In addition, the Talaud Islands Regency is still unknown to domestic and foreign tourists until now. These conditions highlight a fundamental problem: despite possessing strong natural and cultural tourism potential, the Talaud Islands have not been able to translate these assets into sustained tourist arrivals and competitive positioning. These conditions indicate a persistent mismatch between tourism potential and actual performance in Talaud, driven by structural constraints in accessibility, infrastructure, and destination visibility.

Despite its considerable tourism potential, Talaud remains a relatively underdeveloped destination with limited market reach, as reflected in declining visitor numbers from 3,273 in 2019 to 1,732 in 2024, with only 115 foreign tourists (Talaud District Tourism Office, 2025). As an outermost archipelagic regency, Talaud is geographically remote and relies on limited sea and air connectivity, which constrains accessibility (BPS Kabupaten Kepulauan Talaud, 2025). In addition, limited infrastructure and dependence on infrequent maritime transport further complicate access to the region (Lahamendu et al., 2023). Lack of infrastructure, poor supporting facilities, and insufficient digital infrastructure contribute to the reduction of the tourism experience's quality (Nowacki, 2009; Meng et al., 2008).

These structural constraints collectively suggest limited destination visibility, which may further hinder Talaud's ability to compete in the broader tourism market. While prior studies have examined tourism development and destination competitiveness, they predominantly focus on well-established or emerging mainstream destinations, with limited attention to how structural constraints and marketing strategies interact in shaping tourism performance in frontier and outermost regions (3T areas). As a result, there is insufficient understanding of how such destinations can translate tourism potential into competitive advantage under conditions of remoteness, limited infrastructure, and low visibility. The Talaud Islands were selected as the case study due to their status as an outermost (3T) region with significant tourism potential but persistent structural constraints.

Unlike established destinations such as Bali, Talaud reflects a peripheral tourism context characterized by limited accessibility, underdeveloped infrastructure, and low destination visibility. In response to these challenges, Talaud requires integrated and adaptive destination strategies that enhance visitor value, reduce perceived constraints, and strengthen destination attractiveness, as prior studies suggest that, in smart tourism environments, visitor behavior is shaped by the interaction of push–pull motivations, perceived risk, and digitally mediated value creation (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2025; Suharyanto et al., 2020; Gursroy, 2014). This study aims to analyze the internal and external conditions of Talaud’s tourism sector via a SWOT analysis, to formulate a strategic tourism development model with a marketing orientation tailored to the unique characteristics and challenges of frontier island destinations, and to offer recommendations for stakeholders to improve promotion, competitiveness, and sustainability.

Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative descriptive analysis and quantitative evaluation to examine the evolution of tourist marketing tactics in the Talaud Islands. Primary data were obtained through structured interviews and field observations of 35 informants, consisting of 10 international tourists, 10 domestic tourists, 10 local tourists, and 5 key stakeholders (officials from the District Tourism Office, tourism business operators, and local entrepreneurs). Informants were selected purposively to ensure they had direct experience with the destination or were directly involved in its management and promotion. Secondary data were sourced from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and the Talaud District Tourism Office. Data were collected using interview guidelines, allowing flexibility to explore respondents’ experiences and perspectives.

The SWOT analysis was applied, supported by the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) and External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS). SWOT was selected for its ability to integrate internal and external factors in formulating strategic recommendations, which fits the contexts where research is exploratory and relies on limited structured data. The identification of internal and external factors was based on both literature review and field data, including visitor and stakeholder inputs. Several aspects highlighted during interviews included cleanliness of facilities (notably toilets), accessibility, community hospitality, and promotional effectiveness, in addition to the islands’ natural and cultural assets. These factors were cross-validated with secondary data and previous studies to ensure accuracy and validity.

This method follows established approaches that systematically examine internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats (Helms & Nixon, 2010; Phadermrod et al., 2019). This analysis integrates qualitative identification of strategic factors with quantitative evaluation through weighing, rating and scoring procedures of SWOT. First, the identification of internal and external strategic factors was carried out through a triangulation approach, combining an extensive literature review with empirical field data.

This process aimed to ensure both conceptual grounding and contextual relevance. Internal factors included aspects inherent to the destination, such as the quality of facilities, accessibility, cleanliness (particularly sanitation facilities such as toilets), community hospitality, and the availability of natural and cultural attractions. External factors encompassed broader environmental conditions, including market trends, promotional effectiveness, and competitive dynamics.

The identified factors were further triangulated with secondary data and previous studies to enhance reliability and reduce potential bias. Second, the evaluation of strategic factors was conducted by assessing the relative importance of each factor based on respondent perceptions. Respondents, including visitors and key stakeholders, were asked to rate each factor using a four-point Likert scale. In this scale, higher scores (4) for strengths and opportunities indicated greater importance, whereas the scoring direction was reversed for weaknesses and threats. This approach ensured that the evaluation captured both the significance and direction of each factor, integrating empirical insights with expert judgment. Third, a weighting process was applied to reflect the relative contribution of each factor to the overall strategic position of the destination.

The weights were derived from aggregated respondent assessments, ensuring that more critical factors received proportionally higher emphasis. To maintain analytical consistency, the total weight assigned to all internal factors and all external factors was normalized to 1.00, respectively. Fourth, ratings were assigned to each factor to measure its degree of influence on destination performance. These ratings were based on respondent perceptions and were classified using the range method, which allows for systematic categorization of factors into varying levels of impact. This step enabled the transformation of qualitative judgments into quantifiable inputs for further analysis. Fifth, the calculation of weighted scores was performed by multiplying the assigned weight of each factor by its corresponding rating.

The resulting scores were then aggregated to determine the overall internal and external strategic positions. The difference between total strengths and weaknesses formed the X-axis, while the difference between opportunities and threats formed the Y-axis.

These coordinates were used to position the destination within the Grand Strategy Matrix, which classifies strategic conditions into four quadrants: (1) Quadrant I (Aggressive), indicating strong internal and external conditions that support growth-oriented strategies; (2) Quadrant II (Diversification), representing strong internal capacity but exposure to external threats, requiring diversification strategies;

Table 2. SWOT Analysis Matrix

	STRENGTH	WEAKNESSES
	Positive characteristics and Advantages of the Issue, situation, or technique	Negative Characteristics and disadvantages of the Issue, situation, or technique
OPPORTUNITIES	S-O Strategy/ Analysis	W-O Strategy/ Analysis
Factors, situations that can benefit, Enhance or improve The issue, condition, or technique	<i>Using strengths to Take advantage of opportunities</i>	<i>Overcoming weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities</i>
THREATS	S-T Strategy/ Analysis	W-T Strategy/ Analysis
Factors, situations that can hinder the issue, problem, or technique	<i>Using strengths to Avoid threats</i>	<i>minimize weaknesses and avoid threats</i>

Source: Puspitasari et al., (2022)

(3) Quadrant III (Turn-around), reflecting internal weaknesses but external opportunities, necessitating corrective and improvement strategies; and (4) Quadrant IV (Defensive), indicating weak internal and external conditions, where survival and risk minimization become the primary focus. Finally, based on the positioning within the matrix, strategic recommendations were formulated through the SWOT matrix framework.

This involved synthesizing the interactions between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats into four strategic alternatives: SO (leveraging strengths to exploit opportunities), WO (overcoming weaknesses by utilizing opportunities), ST (using strengths to mitigate threats), and WT (minimizing weaknesses and avoiding threats). These strategies were designed to provide actionable and context-specific recommendations for sustainable destination development. The output of this stage is summarized in the SWOT Analysis Matrix (Table 1), which consolidates the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats into four strategic quadrants (SO, WO, ST, WT) to guide further analysis.

Results and Discussion

The internal analysis of the Talaud Islands tourism sector was carried out using the Internal Factor Analysis Summary (IFAS) to capture the destination's strengths and weaknesses. This matrix summarizes the weighted scores assigned to key internal elements identified through fieldwork and secondary sources. The results are presented in Table 3. The internal environment of the Talaud Islands tourism sector reveals a combination of distinctive strengths and critical weaknesses. The IFAS findings show a total weighted score of 2.20.

Table 3. IFAS (Internal Factors Analysis Summary) Matrix

Internal Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Strengths			
Attractive coastal and natural tourism sites	0.150	4	0.600
Scenic natural landscapes	0.100	3	0.300
Local transport and adequate accommodation (basic)	0.100	3	0.300
Weaknesses			
Low recognition among national and international tourists	0.150	2	0.300
Risky sea crossings and extreme weather	0.200	2	0.400
Remote location from provincial and urban centers	0.150	2	0.300
Total	1.000		2.200

Source: Data Processed, 2025.

This means that the destination has valuable internal assets, but have not yet been utilized to their maximum potential to enhance competitiveness. On the strength side, the Talaud Islands include appealing coastal and marine tourism destinations, pristine landscapes, and distinct culinary traditions, which is similar to results from other small-island contexts such as the Philippines (Fernandez-Abila, 2024).

These strengths are embodied in diverse natural and cultural attractions, including Pulau Sarra, Pulau Intata, Desa Pulutan, Pantai Tambio'e, and Air Terjun Ampadoap. Cultural assets consist of Abaca weaving, Sasaroho and Bara dances, bamboo and tambor music, and the traditional Mane'e ritual. Two destinations currently prioritized by the district government for development are Pantai Tambio'e and Air Terjun Ampadoap in Beo District. These strengths are consistent with recent

research indicating that small-island tourists are driven not just by scenic value, but also by ecological conservation and pro-environmental conduct (Fakfare, 2024).

Local transportation and basic accommodation facilities, although still poor, lay the groundwork for tourist accessibility (Subrahmanyam, 2017; Hussain et al., 2015). These elements underline the destination's ability to stand out as a specialized ecological and cultural experience in comparison to more marketed Indonesian attractions. In contrast, many problems limit Talaud's capacity to reach larger tourism markets. The islands remain relatively inaccessible to both local and foreign travelers, limiting their exposure in the competitive tourism environment. Geographic remoteness and long travel distances pose logistical barriers, while risky sea crossings often affected by extreme weather further constrain accessibility.

Local planning documents and stakeholder interviews also highlight critical gaps in infrastructure, including unpaved village roads connecting districts, limited street lighting, underdeveloped ports and rest areas at tourism sites (including Sarra Island and Intata Island), and inadequate accommodation services. Electricity access remains uneven in remote areas such as Kakorotan Island and Karakelang Island (Nanusa District), while telecommunication networks are unreliable. Basic amenities such as waste bins, toilets, and visitor information counters are largely absent. Limited flight schedules and irregular shipping connections further exacerbate accessibility issues. These weaknesses reduce the overall visitor experience and constrain Talaud's ability to transform its natural and cultural resources into sustainable competitive advantage.

To understand how external conditions influence tourism development in the Talaud Islands, the External Factor Analysis Summary (EFAS) was used. This matrix evaluates opportunities and threats in the broader environment, especially those related to tourism markets, infrastructure, and global trends. Opportunities include ecological uniqueness and digital marketing expansion, while threats involve competitive pressures and limited connectivity. The detailed scoring is presented in Table 4. The external environment provides both possibilities and risks that influence the future growth of tourism in the Talaud Islands.

The EFAS findings provide a total weighted score of 2.70, suggesting that external forces have a significant impact on the destination's strategic orientation. On the opportunity side, the Talaud Islands can use their unique natural resources, such as their rich ecosystems and unique marine biodiversity, to attract tourists who want authentic and eco-friendly travel experiences. Social media, especially, has become a powerful way to generate awareness and promote lesser-known places like Talaud, opening up new ways for audiences from other countries to connect with them (Liang & Furkan, 2025).

Table 4. EFAS (External Factors Analysis Summary) Matrix

External Factors	Weight	Rating	Score
Opportunities			
Unique natural environment, including marine biodiversity and natural ecosystems	0.200	4	0.800
Culinary and cultural attractions/destinations	0.150	3	0.450
Positive developments in digital marketing and sustainable tourism	0.150	3	0.450
Threats			
Competition from similar, more accessible destinations	0.250	2	0.500
Limited connectivity and digital infrastructure	0.250	2	0.500
Total	1.000		2.700

Source: Data Processed, 2025.

Recent research shows that digital marketing that is in line with sustainability values can greatly increase how valuable a destination is perceived (Kusumaningrum, 2024). At the same time, various factors could limit Talaud's expansion as a competitive destination. Comparable places, such as Labuan Bajo, which are more easily accessible and well-established in tourism markets, continue to garner more attention and investment, putting Talaud in risk of being overlooked.

Moreover, the limited connectivity and underdeveloped digital infrastructure in the region pose barriers to fully utilizing online platforms and delivering seamless tourist experiences, reducing the ability to compete in an increasingly digital tourism environment. In sum, the external environment underscores the dual nature of opportunities and risks (Gunter et al., 2018; Chiang, 2017). While global tourism trends favor sustainable and unique destinations, realizing this potential for Talaud requires overcoming infrastructural and competitive pressures.

While the IFAS and EFAS matrices provide a structured summary of internal and external factors, interviews revealed additional qualitative insights that reinforce and complement the analysis. Based on responses to semi-structured interview questions, respondents consistently highlighted several practical issues affecting the overall tourism experience. A primary concern relates to the cleanliness of public facilities, particularly sanitation facilities such as toilets, which were perceived as directly influencing visitor satisfaction and overall comfort. In addition, respondents pointed to the limited availability and quality of supporting facilities, including signage, food stalls, and resting areas, indicating that these amenities remain underdeveloped and insufficient to meet visitor needs.

Accessibility also emerged as a critical issue, particularly in terms of transportation frequency and the ease of mobility within the islands, which significantly affects tourists' ability to explore destinations efficiently. These inputs, although not explicitly weighted in the IFAS/EFAS tables, were considered as part of broader categories (e.g., accommodation, infrastructure, connectivity). Their inclusion in the discussion highlights the importance of practical, visitor-centered factors that can influence perceptions of service quality and competitiveness. Addressing these immediate concerns would enhance the effectiveness of the broader strategic initiatives identified in the SWOT framework. Building on the IFAS and EFAS analyses, the next step was to integrate the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats into a comprehensive SWOT strategy matrix.

This framework allows the alignment of internal conditions with external dynamics to generate actionable strategies for sustainable tourism development in the Talaud Islands. The resulting matrix is presented in Table 5. Based on the IFAS and EFAS results, the Talaud Islands obtained an IFE score of 2.20 and an EFE score of 2.70, positioning the destination in Quadrant II of the Grand Strategy Matrix, which indicates a Weakness–Opportunities (WO) strategic orientation. The SWOT matrix (Table 4) synthesizes the findings of the internal and external environment into four sets of strategic options: Strengths–Opportunities (SO), Weaknesses–Opportunities (WO), Strengths–Threats (ST), and Weaknesses–Threats (WT). This mapping highlights how internal conditions can be aligned with external dynamics to support the sustainable development of tourism in the Talaud Islands. Among the four quadrants, WO strategies are prioritized for Talaud, while SO strategies serve as supporting measures. The SO strategies emphasize capitalizing on natural and cultural strengths, such as marine biodiversity, endemic species, and culinary traditions while capitalizing opportunities in digital promotion and ecotourism trends.

Table 5. SWOT Strategy Matrix for the Development of Tourism in the Talaud Islands

Strategy	Strategic Formulation	Implementation Direction
SO (Strengths-Opportunities)	Digital branding highlighting unique marine biodiversity and rare endemic species Integration of culinary and cultural tourism packages Promotional partnerships with travel agents Digital promotion through YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram	Leverage natural and cultural strengths to capture opportunities in marine, culinary, and cultural tourism markets
WO (Weakness-Opportunities)	Development of integrated online travel services Storytelling to frame remoteness as an "exotic advantage" Development of thematic tourism (diving, cultural festivals, ecotourism)	Overcome low recognition by expanding digital promotion and emphasizing unique narratives
ST (Strength-Threats)	Differentiated branding compared to similar destinations Collaboration with airlines and transportation to improve access Risk mitigation for travel and extreme weather conditions	Use natural and cultural strengths to counter competition from other destinations
WT (Weakness-Threats)	Development of digital infrastructure (Wi-Fi zones, real-time information systems) Target niche markets (divers, eco-travelers, researchers)	Minimize internal weaknesses to avoid being worsened by external threats through differentiation and mitigation

Source: Data Processed, 2025.

Meanwhile, the WO strategies directly address Talaud's limited recognition and accessibility through targeted digital promotion, improved storytelling, and the integration of travel services. Although the ST and WT strategies remain important as complementary measures for risk management, the primary pathway for enhancing competitiveness lies in the WO strategies, supported by selected SO initiatives. Based on the SWOT analysis, several strategic directions can be formulated.

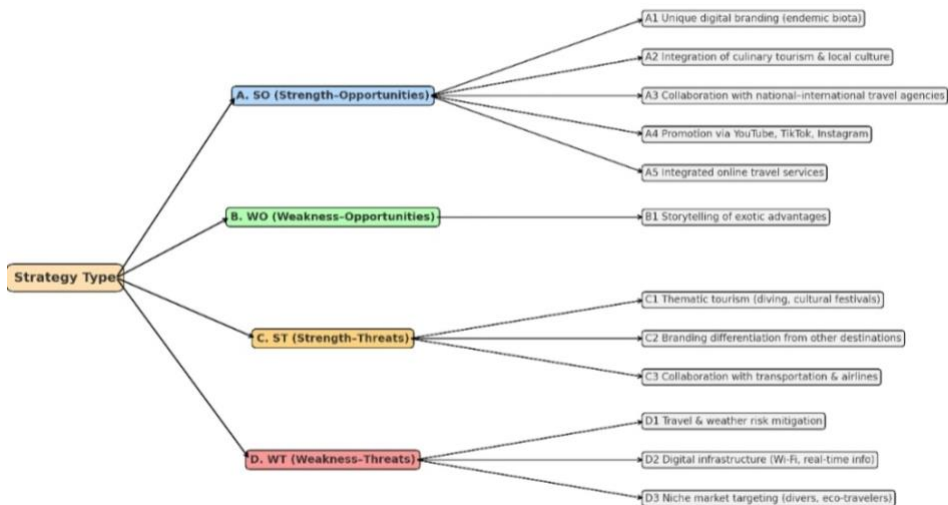
The SO strategies emphasize leveraging existing strengths to capitalize on external opportunities. In this regard, digital promotion and unique branding play a crucial role, particularly through the use of social media and creative digital content such as photos and videos to enhance Talaud's visibility as an exclusive destination characterized by rare marine biodiversity. In addition, the development of ecotourism and culinary-based events, such as annual endemic seafood festivals combined with cultural and artistic performances, can serve as a strategic instrument to attract both domestic and international tourists. The WO strategies focus on addressing existing weaknesses by taking advantage of emerging opportunities.

A key priority lies in the development of infrastructure and accessibility, including improvements in transportation systems and supporting facilities such as small harbors, access roads to tourist sites, and sanitation infrastructure to enhance visitor comfort and mobility. Furthermore, strengthening digital public relations capacity among local stakeholders is essential. This includes training in areas such as influencer marketing, live streaming, and virtual tourism, which can significantly expand promotional reach and improve destination visibility in digital spaces. The ST strategies are oriented toward utilizing existing strengths to mitigate external threats.

One important approach is fostering institutional collaboration through partnerships with tourism associations such as ASITA and ASPDI, as well as national media and online travel platforms. Such collaborations can broaden promotional coverage and reduce reliance on limited local resources, thereby enhancing resilience in a competitive tourism market. Finally, the WT strategies aim to minimize weaknesses while avoiding potential threats. This can be achieved through strengthening community participation and implementing risk mitigation measures.

Engaging local communities in tourism development such as through homestay management, guiding services, event organization, and culinary-based small enterprises not only promotes local ownership but also ensures a more equitable distribution of economic benefits.

Figure 1. Marketing Strategies for the Development of Tourism in the Talaud Islands



Source: Data Processed, 2025.

At the same time, preparing risk mitigation strategies for potential travel disruptions and extreme weather conditions is essential to maintain sustainability and operational stability. Taken together, these strategies provide a roadmap for positioning Talaud as a unique frontier destination. The SO and WO options form the proactive growth agenda, while ST and WT ensure resilience against competition and infrastructural limitations. The logic tree in Figure 1 provides a systematic visualization of how the SWOT-derived strategies are structured and interconnected. It shows the logical flow from each quadrant (SO, WO, ST, WT) into more specific actions that together form a coherent roadmap for developing the Talaud Islands as a frontier tourism destination.

Consistent with the Quadrant II positioning, WO strategies represent the primary strategic direction for Talaud. These strategies focus on leveraging external opportunities to overcome internal weaknesses, particularly in terms of limited recognition and geographical remoteness. Digital platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram can be utilized to enhance destination visibility, while integrated online travel services can improve accessibility and convenience. In addition, strategic storytelling that frames remoteness as an “exotic advantage” can transform perceived limitations into unique selling points of Talaud.

SO strategies serve as supporting initiatives that build on Talaud's existing strengths. These include utilizing digital branding campaigns to promote its unique marine biodiversity and endemic species, cultural assets into eco-cultural tourism packages, and establishing partnerships with travel agencies to expand market reach. The main goal of ST strategies is to use Talaud's strengths to protect against external challenges. Thematic tourism (like diving with native marine species or cultural festivals) sets Talaud apart from its competitors and enables it to produce experiences that are challenging to find anywhere else. Strategic partnerships with airlines and transportation companies make access easier.

Finally, the WT strategies protect by minimizing weaknesses and avoiding away from threats. These include creating a risk mitigation protocol for extreme weather and travel, improving digital infrastructure in tourist areas (like Wi-Fi hotspots and real-time information), and branching out into niche markets like divers, eco-travelers, and researchers to decrease the reliance on mass tourism. The logic tree shows how the four types of strategies work together: SO and WO construct plans for development for the future, while ST and WT mitigate risks. This systematic arrangement shows that the tourism development of the Talaud Islands demands not only bold branding and marketing but also adaptability and resilience in the face of environmental and competitive challenges.

The Talaud Islands' marketing strategies have important practical and policy implications. First, the results highlight the role of digital technology in overcoming geographic isolation and limited visibility. Through integrated digital promotion via social media, storytelling, and virtual tours, Talaud can reach broader national and global audiences at relatively low cost. This aligns with prior studies emphasizing the role of digital platforms in enhancing destination visibility in remote areas (Nieves-Pavón et al., 2025; Gursoy, 2014). Therefore, stakeholders should strengthen digital public relations and develop a consistent online brand that highlights Talaud's "frontier advantage." Second, the findings emphasize the importance of infrastructure and accessibility. Without improvements in transport, port facilities, and supporting amenities, promotional efforts will remain limited. This supports previous research showing that infrastructure is a key determinant of tourism competitiveness (Nowacki, 2009; Meng et al., 2008).

Accordingly, government investment in connectivity at both district and provincial levels is essential for sustainable tourism growth. Third, the strategies stress community participation as a cornerstone of sustainable development. Involving residents in homestays, cultural events, and SMEs ensures that economic benefits are distributed locally while fostering a sense of ownership.

This aligns with broader principles of inclusive and community-based tourism, suggesting that local empowerment should be embedded into policy design and implementation (Ali & Li, 2024; Meyer and Meyer, 2016). Inclusive stakeholder engagement is also crucial for balancing tourism growth with ecological conservation, a finding echoed in recent studies on fragile island destinations (Shang, 2025).

Fourth, the analysis highlights the importance of institutions collaborating to conduct market positioning. Talaud can compete with other well-known places by working with travel companies, airlines, and tourism groups. At the same time, making Talaud a specialized destination for eco-tourists, divers, and cultural explorers makes it less likely that it will compete directly with popular tourist spots like Bali or Labuan Bajo. Finally, the focus on risk reduction and resilience shows that frontier places like Talaud are ready for unexpected events, such as changes in tourism demand and climate-related occurrences.

The destination's ability to adapt gets enhanced when it sets safety standards, builds real-time information systems, and expands into niche markets. In general, these implications imply that Talaud's tourism industry needs to find a balance between promotion and infrastructure, growth and sustainability, global visibility and local empowerment. The pursuit of aforementioned balance may from a group of remote islands into a unique and competitive frontier destination for Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study finds that despite possessing significant natural and cultural tourism resources, the Talaud Islands continue to face persistent structural constraints, particularly in terms of accessibility, infrastructure, and destination visibility. These limitations hinder the ability to transform existing potential into competitive tourism performance. These findings are consistent with prior studies, which emphasize that tourism assets alone are insufficient without adequate supporting infrastructure, effective institutional coordination, and well-developed marketing strategies (Nowacki, 2009; Meng et al., 2008; Fakfare, 2024). For long-term tourism sustainability, both community involvement and infrastructure development are equally critical. Therefore, to enhance Talaud's position as a more competitive and resilient tourism destination, two parallel approaches are required: strengthening promotional efforts to increase visibility in national and international markets, and investing in infrastructure to improve accessibility and overall resilience.

Based on the analysis, several practical recommendations can be proposed, along with the identification of relevant stakeholders responsible for their implementation. First, integrated digital marketing campaigns should be intensified through social media marketing, promotional videos, and influencer engagement. This initiative should be led by the Talaud District Tourism Office in collaboration with local SMEs and national media partners to broaden market reach and strengthen destination branding. Second, the organization of annual tourism events that highlight Talaud's unique assets, including marine biodiversity, seafood-based culinary experiences, cultural performances, and diving attractions, should be prioritized.

These events require coordination among local government actors at various administrative levels, from the regency to the village level, in collaboration with cultural associations and active community participation to ensure sustainability and authenticity. Third, strengthening institutional synergy is essential to support tourism development.

This can be achieved through strategic partnerships with tourism associations such as ASPPI, ASITA, and ASTINDO at both provincial and national levels, as well as through collaboration with airlines and national media. These efforts should be facilitated by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in coordination with regional governments to ensure integrated and scalable implementation. Fourth, infrastructure investment must be prioritized, particularly in improving small ports, transportation networks, and digital connectivity. These developments are primarily the responsibility of district and provincial governments, with support from central government funding, as they are crucial for enhancing accessibility and overall tourism resilience. Fifth, inclusive community participation should be strengthened by encouraging local involvement in tourism-related activities such as homestay management, tour guiding, event organization, and the development of small and medium enterprises.

This approach can be facilitated through village cooperatives, local SMEs, and non-governmental organizations to promote equitable economic benefits and strengthen local ownership. Finally, the adoption of sustainable tourism principles and circular economy practices is necessary to ensure long-term environmental and economic sustainability. This effort should be promoted by the Tourism Office in collaboration with environmental NGO's and academic institutions, thereby supporting a more responsible and resilient tourism development model. This study also acknowledges several limitations. The analysis is largely descriptive and based on a limited number of stakeholder inputs, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings.

Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt comparative approaches across Indonesia's frontier islands or to employ quantitative models in order to measure economic and social impacts more rigorously. In addition, computational techniques such as word cloud visualization and content analysis of online reviews, travel blogs, and social media platforms could be utilized to capture broader visitor perceptions and enrich the analysis. These extensions would provide deeper policy and managerial insights for positioning frontier regions such as the Talaud Islands within both national and international tourism contexts.

AI declaration

The authors declare that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely to assist in language refinement, grammar checking, and improving the clarity of writing. The use of AI did not influence the research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of results, or the development of conclusions. All intellectual contributions, including conceptualization, methodology, analysis, and final content, remain the full responsibility of the authors.

Conflict Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently without any financial, commercial, or personal relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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