

Tourism as an Alternative Sector for Regional Economic Transformation in Kutai Kartanegara Regency: A Systematic Literature Review

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| Informasi Artikel | Abstract |
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| E-ISSN : 3026-6874 Vol: 4 No: 6 June 2026 Page : 105-110 | Kutai Kartanegara Regency, East Kalimantan Province, has long depended on coal mining and petroleum as its primary economic drivers. This dependence creates structural vulnerability to global commodity price fluctuations and long-term sustainability challenges. This article presents a systematic literature review examining tourism as an alternative sector for regional economic transformation in Kutai Kartanegara. Drawing on 15 peer-reviewed studies from 2016–2024, the review synthesizes evidence on: (1) the role of tourism-led growth and its multiplier effects on local economies; (2) community-based tourism (CBT) as an inclusive development model; (3) structural transformation theory as a framework for economic diversification; and (4) the specific potentials and constraints facing tourism development in resource-dependent regions. The review finds that tourism exhibits significant forward and backward economic linkages, stimulates SME growth and creative economy, and can meaningfully reduce reliance on extractive industries. Key barriers include infrastructure gaps, limited human resource capacity, and suboptimal governance coordination. The findings provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the ongoing field research into tourism's transformative role in Kutai Kartanegara's regional economy. |
| Keywords: Tourism, Regional Economic Transformation, Kutai Kartanegara, Economic Diversification, Community-Based Tourism | |

Abstrak

Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara, Provinsi Kalimantan Timur, telah lama bergantung pada sektor pertambangan batu bara dan minyak bumi sebagai penggerak utama perekonomian daerah. Ketergantungan ini menciptakan kerentanan struktural terhadap fluktuasi harga komoditas global dan tantangan keberlanjutan jangka panjang. Artikel ini menyajikan tinjauan literatur sistematis yang mengkaji pariwisata sebagai sektor alternatif dalam transformasi ekonomi regional Kabupaten Kutai Kartanegara. Berdasarkan 15 studi yang ditinjau dari rentang 2016–2024, kajian ini mensintesis bukti mengenai: (1) peran pertumbuhan berbasis pariwisata dan efek penggangannya terhadap ekonomi lokal; (2) pariwisata berbasis masyarakat (CBT) sebagai model pembangunan inklusif; (3) teori transformasi struktural sebagai kerangka diversifikasi ekonomi; serta (4) potensi dan kendala spesifik pengembangan pariwisata di daerah yang bergantung pada sumber daya alam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pariwisata memiliki keterkaitan ekonomi ke depan dan ke belakang yang signifikan, mendorong pertumbuhan UMKM dan ekonomi kreatif, serta mampu mengurangi ketergantungan terhadap sektor ekstraktif. Hambatan utama meliputi kesenjangan infrastruktur, keterbatasan kapasitas sumber daya manusia, dan koordinasi tata kelola yang belum optimal.

Kata Kunci: Pariwisata, Transformasi Ekonomi Regional, Kutai Kartanegara, Diversifikasi Ekonomi, Pariwisata Berbasis Masyarakat

INTRODUCTION

Kutai Kartanegara Regency (Kukar) in East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia, possesses one of the largest concentrations of natural resource wealth in the country, dominated by coal mining and petroleum extraction. For several decades, the regional economic structure has been heavily dependent on these extractive industries as the primary pillars of Regional Own-Source Revenue (PAD) and Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP). While this comparative advantage has delivered exceptional fiscal contributions, it has simultaneously created a deep and concerning structural dependency (Todaro & Smith, 2021).

Regional governments are increasingly called upon to create sustainable sources of economic growth in order to reduce reliance on sectors that are vulnerable to market fluctuations and national or global policy shifts. In this context, regional economic transformation has become a critical agenda for

local development. Such transformation fundamentally involves the structural shift of a regional economy from sectors of low productivity toward those with higher value-added, greater sustainability, and broader employment creation potential.

Global evidence highlights tourism as one of the world's largest economic sectors, contributing significantly to employment generation, income growth, and regional development (UN Tourism, 2024). In Indonesia, tourism has been designated as a national development priority, with the government actively promoting tourist destination development and the creative economy as new engines of growth capable of reducing dependence on natural resource-based sectors. The concept of sustainable tourism development has become an integral component of the national development strategy, as the sector is recognised for its capacity to generate inclusive, sustainable, and environmentally friendly economic growth.

Kutai Kartanegara offers considerable tourism potential, encompassing natural, cultural, historical, and built attractions. Notable destinations include the Mulawarman Museum, Kumala Island, the Kutai Sultanate cultural complex, the Mahakam River, Bukit Bangkirai, and numerous village tourism (desa wisata) sites. The proximity of the regency to the new Indonesian capital city, Nusantara (IKN), further opens strategic opportunities for tourism development as a supporting destination corridor (Mulyadi, 2021).

Despite this potential, the tourism sector's contribution to regional economic transformation in Kukar remains limited, confronting challenges including infrastructure deficits, human resource capacity constraints, suboptimal destination promotion, and insufficient coordination among stakeholders. While a growing body of empirical research has examined the relationship between tourism and economic growth, there remains a significant research gap regarding how tourism can specifically function as an instrument of economic diversification in regions historically dominated by extractive industries.

This article addresses that gap through a systematic literature review. The review synthesizes existing theoretical and empirical scholarship on tourism-led regional economic transformation, with the aim of providing a robust theoretical and evidence-based foundation for ongoing field research in Kutai Kartanegara. Three principal research questions guide the review: (1) How does tourism contribute to regional economic transformation through its growth and multiplier mechanisms? (2) What does the literature reveal about community-based tourism (CBT) as a model for inclusive economic development? (3) What enabling and constraining factors shape tourism's effectiveness as an alternative economic sector in resource-dependent regions?

METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) methodology, following guidelines adapted from Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA). The SLR approach was selected because the research is conducted at the proposal/pre-fieldwork stage and aims to synthesize existing knowledge to inform subsequent qualitative field research.

Literature searches were conducted across three academic databases: Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Sinta (Science and Technology Index) Indonesian national database. Search terms used included combinations of: "tourism AND regional economic transformation," "tourism-led growth," "community-based tourism Indonesia," "structural transformation AND tourism," "economic diversification AND extractive industries," and "Kutai Kartanegara tourism." The search was limited to publications from 2016 to 2024 to ensure contemporary relevance.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters in English or Indonesian; (2) primary focus on tourism's economic role at regional or local scale; (3) theoretical or empirical relevance to structural economic transformation; and (4) applicability to developing country or Indonesian contexts. Exclusion criteria were: (1) studies focused exclusively on international tourism at the national macroeconomic level without regional disaggregation; and (2) studies published before 2016. An initial screening of 87 sources yielded 15 studies for full synthesis after abstract and full-text review.

Data extraction followed a structured protocol capturing: author(s), year, geographical context, methodology, key variables, and principal findings relevant to tourism's transformative economic role.

Thematic synthesis was applied to organise findings into the three analytical themes corresponding to the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism-Led Growth and Multiplier Effects in Regional Economies

The literature consistently demonstrates that tourism functions as a base sector in regional economies, generating inflows of revenue from visitors originating outside the local area thereby stimulating new income circulation within the local economy (North, 1955). Brida, Cortes-Jimenez, and Pulina (2016) conducted a panel analysis of European Mediterranean economies and found that tourism development exerts statistically significant positive effects on economic growth through increased investment, expanded consumption, and employment creation. These findings are consistent with Keynes's (1936) multiplier mechanism: tourist expenditure produces chain effects across transportation, accommodation, trade, food services, creative industries, agriculture, fisheries, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

Dogru, Bulut, and Suess (2024) extended this analysis to emerging economies and confirmed that sustainable tourism development strengthens regional economic competitiveness while simultaneously building economic resilience against global shocks. Their study is particularly relevant to the Kutai Kartanegara context, as regions transitioning away from commodity dependence require diversified economic structures capable of absorbing external shocks. The World Bank (2024) further emphasised that tourism can catalyse regional economic transformation in resource-rich regions by generating tax and retribution revenues for regional governments (PAD), thereby reducing fiscal dependence on extractive royalties.

Applying economic base theory (North, 1955) and Lewis's (1954) structural transformation model to the Kukar context, the literature suggests that tourism development can serve as a mechanism for labour reallocation from low-productivity extractive activities to higher-value service sector employment, consistent with patterns identified in the broader development economics literature (Chenery, 1975). The Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model proposed by Butler (1980) further provides a dynamic framework for understanding destination development trajectories, indicating that sustainable tourism outcomes depend on adaptive management and the capacity of local governance to navigate through exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and stagnation/rejuvenation phases.

Community-Based Tourism as an Inclusive Development Model

A central theme in the reviewed literature concerns community-based tourism (CBT) as a model that aligns tourism development with inclusive economic growth objectives. Hanafi (2024) examined CBT implementation in Magelang Regency and found that community-led tourism development increased household incomes, strengthened community participation in destination management, preserved local culture, and enhanced environmental sustainability. Crucially, the study demonstrated that the success of CBT is strongly contingent upon community involvement from the planning through evaluation stages a finding with direct implications for participatory governance in Kukar's desa wisata programmes.

Junaid (2024) reached comparable conclusions through a case study in Barru Regency, South Sulawesi, identifying local leadership quality and multi-actor collaboration between government and community as determinants of CBT success. Prasetyo, Febriani, and Dewi (2024) found that CBT functioned as an effective model in Ngadas Village, Malang, through community empowerment, new employment creation, cultural preservation, and rural income enhancement. These converging findings reinforce the theoretical argument that tourism's transformative effects are amplified when local communities are positioned as active agents rather than passive recipients of development.

Raynaldi, Malihah, and Andari (2024) analysed CBT sustainability in Karedok Tourism Village, Sumedang, and identified institutional capacity, government support, and sustainable resource utilisation as preconditions for durable community tourism outcomes. Their work highlights that while CBT generates local economic impacts, governance and institutional challenges remain significant barriers. Sutomo et al. (2024) similarly concluded from a multi-actor value chain analysis that the policy

environment is decisive regional governments must actively construct enabling ecosystems that position tourism as a genuine driver of territorial development.

For Kutai Kartanegara, these findings suggest that the development of village tourism (*desa wisata*) and cultural tourism centred on the Kutai Sultanate heritage including the annual Erau Festival constitutes a promising platform for CBT-aligned economic transformation, provided that governance frameworks ensure genuine community participation and equitable benefit distribution.

Structural Transformation and Economic Diversification in Resource-Dependent Regions

The structural transformation literature offers the most direct theoretical framing for Kukar's development challenge. Lewis's (1954) dual-sector model posits that economic development occurs through labour migration from the traditional low-productivity sector (analogous to extractive industries in the Kukar context) to the modern high-productivity sector (services including tourism), thereby raising wages and accelerating economic growth. Chenery's (1975) patterns of development research demonstrated that structural transformation characterised by shifts in GRDP composition, labour force reallocation, urbanisation, and productivity growth represents the core empirical signature of successful economic development.

Myrdal's (1957) cumulative causation theory and Richardson's (1973) regional growth framework both underscore the spatially uneven nature of structural transformation: economic growth concentrates in regions with strong comparative and competitive advantages, potentially bypassing peripheral resource-dependent areas unless deliberate diversification policies intervene. Friedman's regional planning theory (as reviewed in Rustiadi et al., 2021) similarly argues that growth poles require active public investment to generate spread effects into surrounding regions.

Applied to Kutai Kartanegara, these theoretical frameworks collectively suggest that tourism development can function as a deliberate growth pole capable of stimulating linked economic activities across transportation, food services, accommodation, creative industries, and MSMEs provided that public investment in infrastructure, human capital, and destination management is adequate. Sharpley (2020) cautioned, however, that the theoretical divide between tourism and sustainable development remains unresolved, with empirical outcomes highly context-dependent. This underscores the importance of the qualitative field research planned in the companion thesis study, which will investigate implementation realities on the ground in Kukar.

Enabling and Constraining Factors: Implications for Kutai Kartanegara

The reviewed literature converges on several enabling factors for successful tourism-based economic transformation: (1) quality transport infrastructure connecting tourism destinations; (2) skilled tourism human resources at destination management and hospitality service levels; (3) effective destination marketing and branding; (4) supportive local government policy and regulatory frameworks; (5) productive public-private-community partnerships; and (6) integration of tourism with the creative economy and MSME development ecosystems (Pitana & Diarta, 2018; Yoeti, 2019; Dwyer, Forsyth & Spurr, 2020).

The principal constraints identified in the literature for regions similar to Kukar include: infrastructure deficits at secondary and tertiary destination sites; limited human resource capacity in tourism hospitality and management; weak destination promotion beyond immediate regional markets; coordination failures among government agencies, private sector actors, and communities; and constrained investment flows into tourism infrastructure relative to the extractive sector (Kuncoro, 2018; Rahmawati & Nugroho, 2024). The literature further identifies that regions with strong institutional path dependence on extractive industries face particular difficulties in reallocating fiscal and political attention toward service sector development.

For Kutai Kartanegara specifically, Mulyadi (2021) noted that regional economic transformation initiatives in East Kalimantan must navigate the dual challenge of entrenched extractive sector interests and emerging development opportunities catalysed by the IKN relocation. Arsyad (2019) argued that regional economic development success fundamentally depends on the government's capacity to broker partnerships between public and private sectors to generate employment and investment in targeted alternative sectors. These findings directly inform the research design of the companion qualitative field

study, which will examine how Kukar's regional government, tourism operators, community organisations, and tourism village representatives perceive and implement tourism-led transformation strategy.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review synthesized theoretical and empirical evidence on tourism as an alternative sector for regional economic transformation, with specific reference to the context of Kutai Kartanegara Regency. The review yields four principal conclusions.

First, the literature robustly supports tourism's capacity to function as a base sector with high multiplier effects, generating income, employment, and fiscal revenues across multiple linked economic sectors. This is consistent with structural transformation theory and economic base theory, and provides strong theoretical justification for Kukar's strategic priority of tourism sector development.

Second, community-based tourism emerges as the most evidence-supported model for achieving inclusive economic outcomes from tourism development, with success conditioned on participatory governance, strong local institutions, and supportive government policy frameworks. These findings are directly applicable to Kukar's *desa wisata* and cultural tourism development agenda.

Third, structural transformation from extractive to service-sector-led growth is theoretically feasible and empirically documented across comparable regional contexts, but requires deliberate, sustained, and coordinated public investment in infrastructure, human capital, and enabling governance environments. Path dependence on extractive industries constitutes a significant institutional barrier that demands explicit policy attention.

Fourth, the literature identifies a clear research gap: while numerous studies document tourism-growth relationships at aggregate levels, there is a shortage of in-depth qualitative studies examining how tourism-led transformation is implemented, experienced, and contested at the sub-regional level in resource-dependent Indonesian regencies. This gap directly motivates and validates the qualitative field research design of the companion thesis study, which will collect primary data through interviews with Bappeda Kukar, Dispar Kukar, tourism destination managers, Pokdarwis leaders, and tourism enterprise operators.

Future research should continue to examine: (1) the specific GRDP and employment contribution of tourism across sub-districts of Kukar; (2) the institutional architecture required for effective CBT governance; and (3) the effects of the IKN development on tourism demand patterns and investment flows in the surrounding Kukar regency. The findings of this review will serve as the theoretical and empirical backbone for the ongoing field research.

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