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The rise of surf tourism in Lombok and its impact on stakeholders' perceptions and behaviors regarding the destination's sustainability

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Master in Tourism and Hospitality Management

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June, 2026

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Abstract

This study explores the sustainability of surf tourism in Lombok, Indonesia, through a multi-stakeholder perspective, focusing on environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. Drawing on qualitative data collected through interviews, visual methodologies and stakeholder engagement, the research applies a grounded theory approach to explore how different actors perceive and respond to sustainability challenges in an emerging surf destination. The findings reveal that surf tourism generates significant economic benefits, particularly through employment creation and local business development. However, these benefits are accompanied by increasing environmental pressures, including inadequate waste management, coastal ecosystem degradation, and infrastructure expansion. From a socio-cultural perspective, the results highlight a complex process of cultural negotiation, where local communities demonstrate resilience while adapting to growing tourist presence and external influences. The findings suggest a relatively high level of environmental awareness among surf tourists, partially challenging the commonly discussed attitude–behavior gap in sustainable tourism literature. By integrating stakeholder perspectives with theoretical frameworks such as the Surf Resource Sustainability Index (SRSI), this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of sustainability in surf tourism destinations. The results emphasize the need for stronger integrated governance and community-based tourism strategies to ensure long-term sustainability in rapidly developing coastal regions.

Keywords: Surf tourism, stakeholders, TBL sustainable practices, SRSI, Lombok

JEL Classification: Z32, Q56, R11

Resumo

Este estudo explora a sustentabilidade do turismo de surf em Lombok, Indonésia, através de uma perspetiva multistakeholder, focando-se nas dimensões ambiental, económica e sociocultural. Com base em dados qualitativos recolhidos através de entrevistas, metodologias visuais e envolvimento de diferentes stakeholders, a investigação utiliza uma abordagem de Grounded Theory para explorar a forma como diferentes atores percecionam e respondem aos desafios da sustentabilidade num destino emergente de surf. Os resultados revelam que o turismo de surf gera benefícios económicos significativos, particularmente através da criação de emprego e do desenvolvimento de negócios locais. No entanto, estes benefícios são acompanhados por crescentes pressões ambientais, incluindo gestão inadequada de resíduos, degradação dos ecossistemas costeiros e expansão de infraestruturas. Numa perspetiva sociocultural, os resultados evidenciam um processo complexo de negociação cultural, no qual as comunidades locais demonstram resiliência enquanto se adaptam à crescente presença turística e a influências externas. Os resultados sugerem ainda um nível relativamente elevado de consciência ambiental entre os surfistas, desafiando parcialmente a frequentemente discutida lacuna entre atitudes e comportamentos na literatura sobre turismo sustentável. Ao integrar as perspetivas dos stakeholders com enquadramentos teóricos como o Surf Resource Sustainability Index (SRSI), este estudo contribui para uma compreensão mais aprofundada da sustentabilidade em destinos de turismo de surf. Os resultados reforçam a necessidade de uma governação mais integrada e de estratégias de turismo baseadas na comunidade, de forma a assegurar a sustentabilidade a longo prazo em regiões costeiras em rápido desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave: Turismo de surf; Sustentabilidade; Lombok; Perceções dos stakeholders; Turismo sustentável; Desenvolvimento costeiro.

Classificação JEL: Z32, Q56, R11

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1. Introduction

The International Surfing Association (ISA) defines surfing sports as activities whose primary purpose is riding waves, encompassing bodyboarding, longboarding, shortboarding, stand-up paddling, and tandem surfing, including big-wave and tow-in surfing (ISA, 2026). In the beginning of the 20th century, the worldwide expansion of surfing began. The surf phenomenon gained worldwide notoriety in the mid-20th century, due to the representation of surfing culture in the media and entertainment, namely reports, photographs and films (Reis et al., 2025). The development of surf industry started in Hawaii, where it was promoted to attract tourists and investment. Then, it spread to Anglo-Saxon countries as the UK, Australia, and South Africa, and eventually, by the 1960s, to other regions with surfable coastlines. By the 1970s, surfing had gained popularity in Europe, starting in Biarritz, France. Today, surfing is a global activity with a multibillion-dollar industry (Esparza, 2016; Lazarow, 2007). In the 21st century, surf tourism is considered a global industry, involving thousands of surf tour operators around the world, from homestays, resorts, charter boats, wholesalers and retail travel agents and a combination of tourism-related services (Ponting, 2009).

Today, surfing has evolved into a global sport and tourism industry with growing economic significance worldwide. The ISA reported that surfing is now officially represented by national federations in 117 countries across five continents, reflecting the continued international expansion of both the sport and surf-related tourism (ISA, 2025). This shows that surfing has increasingly evolved from a niche sport culture into a global tourism and economic system, contributing to the development of new surf destinations and increasing tourism activity in coastal regions worldwide.

Despite the inherent economic benefits of increased tourism in coastal areas, the rise in visitors also brings challenges in terms of sustainability, not only economically, but also in maintaining the cultural values of the people and destinations that receive visitors (Martín-González et al., 2021; Reineman & Ardoin, 2019). These challenges have attracted the attention of researchers worldwide and, as a result, there has been an increase in studies related to this topic (Martin, 2022). In recent years, surf tourism has been approached from different perspectives, namely: destination development (Brody, 2015; Mach, 2019; Ruttenberg, 2023), destination sustainability (Buckley, 2002), tourism industry (Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Tantamjarik, 2004), governance (Ruttenberg, 2023), inhabitants (Towner, 2016; Veldman & Van der Duim, 2020), local culture (Canniford, 2005), tourists (Zhang & Chen, 2022; Lindsay

et al., 2016) and multi-stakeholder analysis (Hardy, 2006; Martin & Assenov, 2014; Towner, 2016).

The study focuses on the specific Indonesian province of West Nusa Tenggara, which includes several islands. The two main islands are Lombok and Sumbawa. Indonesia is the country known as the world-class surf destination, as it has some of the most famous surf breaks in the world (Ogden-Fung, 2021). Its coastlines and the favorable weather make the Indonesian islands contribute to some of the world's richest surfing spots (Ponting & O'Brien, 2013).

Within the broader context of surf tourism development, certain coastal regions have experienced rapid growth (Kurniawan et al., 2023). One such province is West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), Indonesia. Data from the Central Statistics Agency of NTB Province show that tourist arrivals rose between 2016 and 2019, reaching 2,155,561 domestic tourists and 1,550,791 international tourists in 2019 (Kurniawan et al., 2023). This growth stimulated expansion in tourism infrastructure, particularly accommodation facilities (Masyhudi et al., 2021). Regional development policies simultaneously emphasized the creation of a more progressive and sustainable provincial space under the 2009–2029 spatial plan. Sustainable tourism strategies have been associated with economic growth in the region (Kurniawan et al., 2023), while government initiatives have focused on improving infrastructure, accessibility and local governance.

Concerning the West Nusa Tenggara area, the island Lombok stands out for being the most attractive tourism destination. This is due to the island's strategic location and a rich natural and cultural appeal. Positioned within Indonesia's "golden triangle" of top tourist destinations, between Bali to the west, Tana Toraja and Bunaken to the north, and Komodo Island to the east, Lombok serves as both a key destination and a transit hub for international sailing routes, including connections to Surabaya, Makassar, and Darwin, Australia (Jaelani, 2017; Kusumaningrum & Prasetyo, 2014). Its unique biodiversity, shaped by its position along the Wallace Line, offers a fascinating mix of flora and fauna from both the Asian and Australian continents, making the island a prime location for nature studies and eco-tourism (Wirnas et al., 2021).

The southern area of Lombok is particularly popular for tourism, since this region is known for its beaches, consistent waves and relaxed atmosphere, which makes it a prime destination. (McLellan, 2023). According to the World Bank (2023), tourism development in Lombok significantly contributes to the local economy by generating employment opportunities and

stimulating infrastructure development. Infrastructure initiatives have aimed at strengthening regional infrastructure and supporting broader economic growth in the region (World Bank, 2023). These efforts are framed within a broader ambition to promote tourism models that balance economic benefits with environmental conservation. However, Rahadi et al. (2022) argue that tourism development in Lombok still requires a more sustainable approach to ensure that both local communities and the natural environment benefit in the long term.

Existing research on Indonesian surf tourism focuses on larger destinations as Bali and the islands Mentawai, while surf destinations in West Nusa Tenggara, mainly Lombok, have been less scientifically explored (Buckley, 2002; Towner, 2016; Towner & Davies, 2019; McLellan, 2022). Hence, this dissertation focuses on Lombok as an emerging surf tourism destination and contributes to the existing literature by combining an integrated sustainability perspective with a multi-stakeholder approach. Through the examination of environmental, economic and socio-cultural dimensions from the perspectives of tourists, entrepreneurs and local inhabitants, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of surf tourism in this specific region.

1.1 Research Aim

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that, despite the proliferation of scientific publications in surf tourism there is still a lack of understanding how the increase in tourist activity in surf destinations should be managed, to allow the sustainable balance of the destination, based on the TBL concept (Triple Bottom Line) of Elkington (1994). The rapid growth of surf tourism in Indonesia is contributing to sustainability challenges. While the local population initially views it as a positive development due to the economic benefits for the country, at the same time it is harming Indonesia's natural environment, cultural heritage, and long-term economic stability (Buckley, 2002; Towner & Davies, 2019; van Loon & Rianne, 2020). This contradiction between short-term economic gains and long-term socio-environmental impacts illustrates the need for deeper research on how surf tourism in Indonesia can develop in a sustainable way.

Thus, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the sustainability of surf tourism development in Lombok by adopting a multi-stakeholder perspective. To achieve this aim, firstly, the study examines the environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of surf tourism through the perspectives of tourists, entrepreneurs and local inhabitants. Furthermore, the study aims to understand whether the perceptions of the three groups of stakeholders under study converge or diverge from their behaviors. Finally, this

work aims to explore stakeholders' perspectives on the future development of surf tourism in Lombok, including the perceived risks, opportunities and necessary changes associated with its continued growth in the region.

1.2 Dissertation structure

The present master's dissertation is structured into six major chapters, as shown in Figure 1.

The first chapter introduces the topic of the study, contextualizing and defining the research problem, research questions and objectives, as well as explaining the relevance of the study. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical foundation of the study by reviewing the relevant literature on the topics under analysis. The third chapter explains the methodology applied in the research, the design and projection of the research, describes the methods used for data collection and analysis and outlines the treatment of the data obtained. The fourth chapter presents the results and provides an analysis and discussion of the collected data to achieve the research aim. The final chapter summarizes the main theoretical findings and managerial implications, clarifying the study's limitations and presenting suggestions for further research.

Figure 1: Dissertation structure



Source: Own elaboration

2. Literature Review

The literature review outlines the theoretical foundation for analyzing surf tourism development and sustainability in Lombok, as this research explores stakeholder perceptions and behaviors regarding environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts on Lombok's surf tourism, as well as processes of tourism development. Thus, the present literature review is structured to reflect these key dimensions. The first part introduces surf tourism as a distinct niche tourism form shaped by interactions between tourists, entrepreneurs, and regulatory actors. These form the main stakeholders within surf tourism. By conceptualizing surf tourism as a system, it highlights how a destination evolves through dynamic relationships between demand, supply and governance structures.

The second part introduces the three core dimensions of sustainable tourism, environmental, economic, and socio-cultural. This section discusses different models to outline destination-level perspectives (SRSI), community-level analysis (Sustainable Livelihoods model) and entrepreneurial agency. Together, these frameworks provide a multidimensional understanding of how sustainability is structured, experienced and used in operation.

Finally, the literature review addresses tourism development and change in West Nusa Tenggara and Lombok, situating surf tourism growth within broader regional transformations. This theoretical foundation enables a structured analysis of how different stakeholders perceive tourism development, sustainability challenges, and future opportunities in Lombok.

2.1 Surf tourism contextualization

2.1.1 The Surf Culture

Before defining surf tourism, it is necessary to recognize surfing as a cultural practice rather than merely a sport. Surfing can be understood as a distinct subculture built around shared values, embodied experience in the ocean and a deep connection to natural environments (Stranger, 2011). Surf culture extends beyond the act of riding waves and is expressed through material and symbolic forms such as surfboards, clothing, films, magazines, and surf-specific language (Congdon & King, 2002). These cultural elements communicate identity and belonging within the subculture, while also linking surfing to broader systems of consumption and commercialization (Congdon & King, 2002; Stranger, 2011). Surfing therefore functions

not only as a physical practice, but as a visible lifestyle embedded in everyday spaces and markets.

More specifically, surf culture is characterized by a set of values, beliefs, behaviors, and symbols that shape how individuals engage with surfing and identify with it, such as freedom, stimulation, companionship, spirituality and environmentalism, which contribute to a way of life strongly connected to the ocean and surrounding environments (Reis, 2020). This cultural orientation reinforces the idea that participation in surfing is closely tied to identity formation and lifestyle choices rather than solely athletic achievement. A distinctive feature of surf culture is the search for the "perfect wave," which often motivates participation in surf tours and travel to specific coastal destinations (Martin-González et al., 2019; Reis, 2020). In addition to this mobility-oriented dimension, surf culture is also shaped by what is commonly referred to as *localism*. According to Reis (2020), localism describes a territorial sense of ownership over surf spots, where long-term or local surfers may claim symbolic control over waves and access. In this sense, surf destinations are not merely natural settings but socially constructed spaces where cultural norms regulate access and behavior (Booth, 2013; Reis, 2020).

2.1.2 Definition Surf Tourism

Surf tourism can be defined as a trip with the purpose of riding a wave on a surfboard or participating in a surf-related tournament (Martin & Assenov, 2014). This definition is, however, very generalist considering the range of studies relating to surfing as a tourist product, (Martin, 2022). A broader approach allows us to address the topic of surf tourism considering the sustainability of the destination and the various stakeholders involved in the tourism process, namely governance, industry, tourists, and population (Buckley, 2022; Lindsay et al., 2016; Martin-González et al., 2021; Towner, 2016). According to Rosa et al. (2019) surf tourists primarily travel for surfing, involving trips of at least forty kilometers with an overnight stay. This includes domestic trips lasting up to six months and international trips up to twelve months, during which active participation in surfing is the key activity (Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003; Portugal et al., 2017; Brochado et al., 2018).

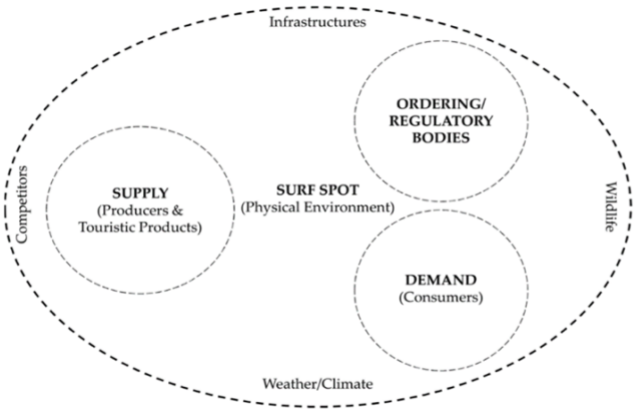
To understand surf tourism, it is essential to recognize the nature of surfing. Vuorela (2019) found that following surfing's initial surge in popularity and overcrowded surf spots created tension and aggression at major destinations. This pushed surfers to search for more rural, less crowded waves (Towner, 2013). The issue of overcrowding has driven surfers worldwide to travel in pursuit of perfect, secluded waves in remote areas. This continuous search defines surf

tourism, as newly discovered spots quickly attract more surfers, making it hard to maintain exclusivity.

2.1.3 Surf Tourism Stakeholders

Surf tourism can be understood as a system shaped by the interaction of multiple stakeholder groups (Martin & Assenov, 2014; Towner, 2016). Rather than focusing solely on tourists or economic outcomes, it requires an analysis of the actors who influence, benefit from, and regulate surf-related activities. Martín-González et al., (2021) set up a system which helps with the identification of the stakeholders of surf tourism in the context of a capitalist system (consumers, producers, regulatory bodies, and products). In surf tourism, the surf spot and its surrounding area are the main attractions. Other important factors include infrastructure, competitors, weather and wildlife (Martín-González et al., 2019). Figure 2 shows how surf tourism can be understood as a system involving key components as tourists (the demand circle), service providers and tourism products, such as cultural sites, hotels, and other services (the supply circle) and regulatory organizations responsible for planning and managing tourism growth (the ordering/regulatory bodies circle).

Figure 2: Surf tourism system



Source: Martin-González et al. (2021)

2.2 Surf tourism and sustainability

2.2.1 The TBL of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism includes a multidimensional approach to ensure the long-term viability of tourism activities while minimizing its negative impacts. This approach is based on The Triple Bottom Line framework (TBL) developed by Elkington (1994). The TBL for sustainability is based on the following three dimensions: i) the environmental., ii) the economic and iii) the socio-cultural dimension (Elkington, 1994). Firstly, it requires the efficient use of environmental resources that support tourism development, prioritizing the maintenance of essential ecological processes and the preservation of natural heritage and biodiversity (UNWTO, 2022; Buckley, 2002). This approach aims to ensure that tourism occurs harmoniously with the environment it depends on. Secondly, sustainable tourism requires the establishment of viable and equitable economic operations (Elkington, 1994; UNWTO, 2022). Sustainable tourism strategies should deliver socio-economic benefits that are fairly distributed among stakeholders. These actions include ensuring stable employment opportunities, generating income for local communities, and improving access to social services (Towner & Davies, 2019; Martín & Assenov, 2014). Lastly, sustainable tourism emphasizes the importance of respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, by preserving their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, traditional values, and fostering mutual understanding and tolerance between visitors and local populations (RSOAP, 2021).

2.2.2 Destination-Level Sustainability: The SRSI Framework

The research of Martín-González et al. (2021) relates to these dimensions as well. The study refers to Martín- and Assenov's 'Surf Resource Sustainability Index' (SRSI). This SRSI is a framework designed to evaluate and manage surf tourism in a sustainable way. According to their research, the SRSI serves as a tool to assess the sustainability of surf destinations by using various indicators that consider environmental, social, economic and governance aspects. The SRSI includes the following key aspects:

1. Environmental Indicators: These focus on the ecological health of surf spots and surrounding areas. Factors as water quality, coastal erosion, wildlife, and the natural integrity of the surf zone are considered. The aim is to preserve the environmental conditions that make the surf spot viable, meaning the surf conditions, environmental

health, and surrounding infrastructure are stable and can support ongoing surf tourism without degrading or becoming unsustainable.

2. Social Indicators**:** This aspect considers the impact of surf tourism on local communities. It focuses on how surf tourism affects local traditions, cultures, and social dynamics, as well as how local people benefit from tourism through employment or business opportunities.

3. Economic Indicators**:** This index assesses the economic sustainability of surf tourism, analyzing whether the activity generates revenue that benefits the local economy. It also considers whether this revenue is distributed fairly and whether surf tourism creates long-term economic opportunities.

4. Governance Indicators**:** This set of indicators examines the policies, regulations and management systems in the area to protect surf resources. It looks at whether local authorities and organizations are actively involved in planning and managing surf tourism in a sustainable way.

2.2.3 Social Sustainability: The Sustainable Livelihoods Model

Towner and Davies (2019) present a similar framework, called the Sustainable 'Livelihoods' (SL) model, which offers a complementary perspective by focusing on how local communities experience and depend on surf tourism. Whereas the SRSI evaluates sustainability at the destination level, the SL framework analyses how environmental, economic and governance dynamics shape local resilience, vulnerability and livelihood strategies (Towner & Davies, 2019).

1. Vulnerability Context in Surf Tourism: Communities involved in surf tourism face external challenges such as natural disasters, political instability, economic fluctuations, and seasonal variations in tourist demand. These factors influence local livelihoods, making them vulnerable to disruptions in tourism flow and income.

2. Livelihood Assets in Surf Tourism: Local communities rely on various forms of capital to benefit from surf tourism:

- Human capital (skills and training) enhances service quality and resilience.
- Natural capital (beaches, waves, and ecosystems) is vital for tourism since its protection ensures long-term sustainability.
- Physical capital **(**infrastructure such as roads and accommodation) boosts tourism but needs to be sustainable.

- Financial capital helps diversify local economies, but equitable access is necessary to prevent exclusion.
- Social capital involves community networks and collaborations that strengthen tourism management and outcomes.

3. Transforming Structures and Processes: The success of sustainable surf tourism depends on supportive government policies, private sector involvement and respect for cultural values. Policies that protect coastal ecosystems and regulate tourism development contribute to maintaining natural surf breaks, while private operators and eco-tourism practices play a pivotal role in aligning economic growth with environmental preservation.

4. Livelihood Strategies in Surf Tourism: Communities can pursue strategies such as: small-scale businesses, as surf schools and eco-lodges, to keep economic benefits within the community, diversification, combining surf tourism with other sectors like fishing or agriculture to increase economic resilience and promoting low-impact, eco-friendly tourism to reduce environmental degradation.

5. Livelihood Outcomes and Sustainability: The aim is to create positive outcomes for communities through a stable income from eco-conscious tourists, improved infrastructure, employment and social services, diversification of income to reduce vulnerability to seasonal fluctuations and external shocks and sustainable management of natural resources, ensuring that surf destinations remain viable for future generations.

2.2.4 Entrepreneurial Agency in Sustainable Surf Tourists

The SRSI (Surf Resource Sustainability Index) framework conceptualizes sustainability at the destination level, focusing on environmental, social, economic and governance conditions of a specific destination, while the Sustainable Livelihoods model shifts the focus toward the community stakeholder, analyzing how local populations depend on, adapt to and are affected by surf tourism dynamics (Towner & Davies, 2019). Building further on these perspectives, sustainable tourism entrepreneurship represents a third analytical layer, focusing on the entrepreneur as an active stakeholder within the surf tourism system (Utami et al., 2023; Martín-González et al., 2021). While destinations provide the structural context and communities form the social base, entrepreneurs operationalize tourism development through concrete business practices, investment decisions and sustainability strategies. These conditions are grounded in

the three core sustainability dimensions, environmental, social, and economic, while also incorporating institutional factors (Utami et al., 2023; Kurniawan et al., 2023). Together, these elements influence how entrepreneurs operate, make strategic decisions, and respond to challenges. The findings of Utami et al. (2023) identify ten key factors that contribute to the successful development of sustainable tourism villages through rural tourism entrepreneurship:

1. Income Management**:** Efficient use of tourism revenue to reinvest in community development and ensure long-term benefits.
2. Business Unit Development**:** Creating diverse, tourism-related businesses to broaden economic opportunities and resilience.
3. Economic Growth**:** Enhancing the local economy by attracting tourists, generating income, and supporting livelihoods.
4. Mutual Cooperation**:** Fostering a collaborative community spirit to manage and promote tourism initiatives collectively.
5. Collaboration**:** Partnering with stakeholders, including local governments, non-governmental organizations, and private entities, to support sustainable tourism.
6. Innovation**:** Developing creative approaches to tourism services and attractions, enhancing visitor experiences.
7. Creativity**:** Leveraging unique local traditions, culture, and resources to differentiate rural tourism offerings.
8. Environmental Awareness**:** Promoting practices that protect and sustain natural ecosystems vital to tourism.
9. Resource Management**:** Ensuring efficient use and preservation of natural and cultural resources.
10. Visitor Management**:** Controlling tourism activities to prevent overcrowding and mitigate environmental or social impacts.

2.3 Surf tourism development

2.3.1 Tourism Development in Coastal Areas

Tourism development strategy requires essential elements as well-maintained roads and public transportation, reliable water supplies, law and order, a skilled and motivated workforce and accessible banking services (Kamaludin et al., 2021). Tourism development relies on the following key elements: attractions, facilities, accessibility, and community involvement with

tourists (Nowacki et al., 2018). Tourism framework includes natural, cultural, and artificial resources, known as tourism capital (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Community involvement is one of the most important elements, as locals contribute directly to the tourist's experience by offering services and fostering connections, and promoting local cultural values, which enhances the destination's appeal (Abou Hashem et al., 2017; Farhan & Anwar, 2016). Coastal ecosystems and associated nearshore ocean areas such as beaches, which are often epicenters of population and economic activity, ecologically significant due to the land-sea interface, and highly susceptible to disruptions resulting from climate change and potentially inappropriate development (Reinman & Ardoin, 2017). Mass tourism in coastal locations often follows in the wake of earlier surf tourism exploration and development, producing a pattern of coastal expansion outward from popular surf breaks (Ruttenberg, 2023).

2.3.2 Surf Destination Sustainability

Sustainability in surf destinations has become an increasingly relevant topic within tourism studies, particularly due to the strong dependency of surf tourism on fragile coastal ecosystems and local socio-cultural dynamics. Consequently, any environmental degradation has an immediate impact on the attractiveness and long-term viability of surf destinations (Buckley, 2002; Martin & Assenov, 2014). From an environmental perspective, the sustainability of surf destinations is closely linked to the preservation of coastal and marine ecosystems. Issues such as coastal erosion, coral reef degradation, water pollution, and inadequate waste management systems significantly affect both surf conditions and the overall tourism experience (Reineman & Ardoin, 2019; Román et al., 2022). Socio-cultural sustainability represents another critical dimension of surf destination development. The interaction between tourists and host communities can promote cultural exchange and mutual understanding, but it may also lead to cultural commodification, loss of authenticity, and the gradual adoption of external values (Canniford, 2005; Martin, 2022). Furthermore, the rapid expansion of surf tourism in emerging destinations is often associated with challenges related to overtourism, unregulated development, and increasing economic pressure on local resources (Ruttenberg, 2023; Gössling et al., 2024). Overall, surf destination sustainability should be understood as a dynamic and multidimensional process, shaped by the interaction between environmental conditions, economic structures, and socio-cultural dynamics.

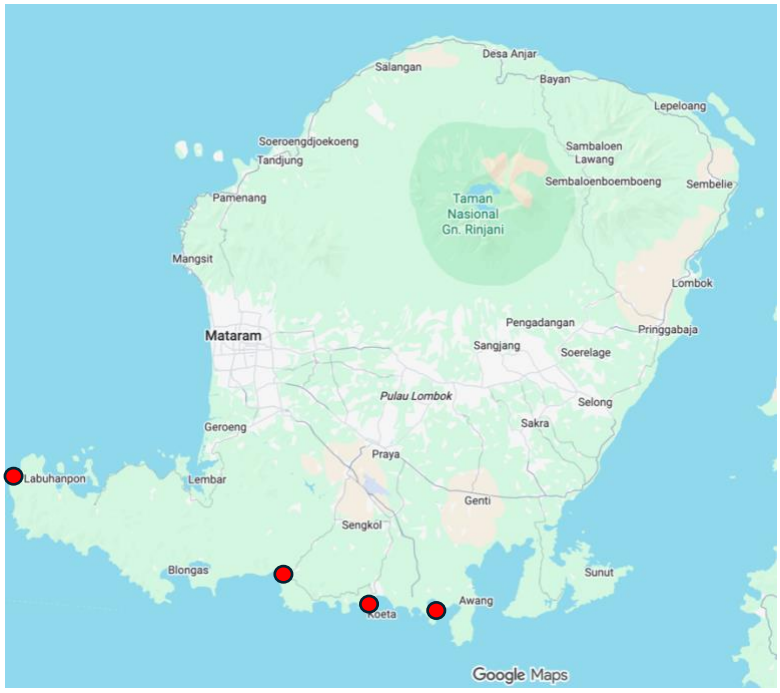
2.3.3 Surf Tourism development in Lombok

Travel to surf has become common and surf tourism has facilitated surfers to satisfy their primal instinct for interacting with waves (Tantamjarik, 2004: Reis, 2020). Modern surf travelers are comparable to leisure tourists, willing to pay more for better amenities, often booking week-long surf vacations at beachfront resorts and hotels (Tantamjarik, 2004). According to Buckley (2002), as surfers age, their ability to afford such experiences increases. Furthermore, advancements in technology have made surfing easier to learn, which could lead to an increase in the popularity of surfing among future generations (Martin, 2022; Reis et al. 2025). The development of surf camps, local surf schools and accommodation options also contributed to the growth of the sector (McLellan, 2023). Surf breaks are part of the natural infrastructure and provide recreational opportunities for a variety of sports, including surfing, stand-up paddling, bodyboarding, and body surfing, among others (Monteferri et al., 2020).

Surf tourism is thriving in Lombok, due to its famous surf breaks. The most famous surf spots in Lombok are Selong Belanak, Gerupuk, Kuta, and Desert Point, as illustrated in figure 3. These areas are part of Lombok's Southern Coast, which has gained a reputation as a surf tourism destination, offering both challenging waves and beautiful landscapes and beaches (Farhan et al., 2023). Selong Belanak is known for its beautiful beach and consistent surf conditions and is especially popular for beginner surfers (McLellan, 2023; Towner, 2016). Gerupuk, on the other hand, offers various surf breaks suitable for different skill levels, while Kuta and Desert Point are known for their more challenging and advanced waves, attracting experienced surfers (McLellan, 2023).

The island's surf tourism is growing due to its relatively untapped potential compared to Bali, which is known as a surf tourism hotspot (Buckley, 2002; Ruttenberg, 2023). Lombok mostly attracts tourists for its natural beauty, less crowded surf spots and authentic local culture, making it an attractive alternative for surfers looking for an escape from more commercialized locations (Farhan et al., 2023; McLellan, 2023).

Figure 3: Map of Lombok highlighting the main surf spots



Source: Google Maps

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on grounded theory methodology to develop theoretical data on the perceptions and behaviors of different stakeholder groups regarding the sustainability practices of surf tourism in Lombok, Indonesia. Grounded theory rests on the assumption that social science theory can be constructed from data collected systematically in a social setting (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is particularly suitable for this study as it facilitates the exploration of respondents' feelings, perceptions and behaviors, allowing theoretical constructs to emerge inductively from the data, rather than being imposed based on previously defined assumptions, and has been used in similar work on surf tourism (Lindsay et al., 2016., Zhang & Chen, 2022).

This study was conducted using a combination of qualitative research methods. Firstly, interviews with different regional tourism actors were conducted, namely tourists, entrepreneurs and inhabitants. Semi-structured interviews were performed using predefined questions but remain flexible to allow the conversation to evolve naturally, which allows to enrich the data obtained (Bryman, 2016). All participants provided informed consent, having been informed about the objectives of the study and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time if they wished. It was ensured that all General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines regarding anonymity and confidentiality would be met. The interview script addressed the sustainability dynamics in surf tourism, tourist's behaviors and the opportunities and challenges associated with surf tourism development in Lombok. The interviews were conducted at the destination by the author of this dissertation between the 25th of November 2025 and the 24th of December 2025. The overall interview process followed an outlined strategy considering the following steps: i) field observation to understand the destination's dynamics regarding surf tourism and sustainability; ii) definition of the data collection instruments, ensuring the impartiality of the results; iii) preliminary contacts with interviewees from each stakeholder group; iv) conducting and transcribing interviews; v) initial coding, which allowed the identification of categories that emerged from the interview content; (vi) axial coding, enabling the extraction of distinct thematic dimensions; (vii) description of all research phases and procedures; and (viii) analysis of results.

The second qualitative method was based on photographs collected on-site, defined as documentary visual data. Images are often used as a visual qualitative support tool for

interview-based studies (Nigatu et al., 2025). The photographs were taken by the researcher during field observation in Lombok and were used as complementary qualitative material to reinforce and contextualize the interview findings. In particular, the photographs supported the identification of good and bad practices related to the environmental, socio-cultural and economic dimensions of sustainability. Together, these two methods provided a comprehensive understanding of the three stakeholder groups' perceptions and behaviors regarding the three pillars of sustainability in Lombok, as well as their views on the measures needed to ensure the destination's development, taking long-term sustainability into account.

3.2 Sample characterization

The research is based on a total sample of 31 respondents, divided into three stakeholder groups within Lombok's surf tourism system according to Martín-González et al. (2019) their model: tourists, entrepreneurs and inhabitants. The sample was designed to ensure representation of different roles and interests within the system, enabling comparative analysis between demand-side actors (tourists), supply-side actors (entrepreneurs) and community stakeholders. The largest stakeholder group consists of 16 tourists**.** Within this group, a distinction was made between short-term visitors (n = 9), defined as tourists staying in Lombok for less than three weeks, and long-term visitors (n = 7) who stayed for extended periods. The distinction between short-term and long-term tourists was made to explore differences in levels of engagement, economic behavior and socio-cultural interaction with the destination. By distinguishing temporary and more embedded visitors, the study allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different types of tourists interact with the local tourism system.

The second stakeholder group includes entrepreneurs (n=9) operating within the surf tourism sector. Out of these 9 entrepreneurs, 7 are local Indonesian business owners, while 2 are Western entrepreneurs**.** The businesses represented include surf schools, accommodations, restaurants and mixed tourism-related enterprises. The distinction between local and Western entrepreneurs was made to capture potential differences in perspectives, knowledge backgrounds and approaches to tourism development and sustainability. Western entrepreneurs often bring international business experience, exposure to global sustainability discourses and alternative tourism models, while local entrepreneurs are more integrated in the socio-cultural and economic context of Lombok. This distinction allows for a more nuanced comparison of how tourism development is understood, managed and experienced across different actor positions within the system.

The third stakeholder group consists of 6 inhabitants all of whom are directly or indirectly involved in tourism-related activities. The inhabitants' perspective regarding the impact of tourism and visitor behavior is extremely important to contextualize the topic in the region under analysis. The inhabitants' responses provide information about how tourism development positively and negatively affects their daily life, local livelihoods, cultural norms and environmental conditions from a community perspective. The following table summarizes the demographic composition of each stakeholder group.

Table 1: Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Sociodemographic variables	n (%)
Stakeholder Group 1: Tourists (n = 16)	
Gender	
Male	9 (56.3%)
Female	7 (43.7%)
Age group	
20–25 years	6 (37.5%)
26–30 years	6 (37.5%)
31+ years	4 (25.0%)
Nationality	
Dutch	7 (43.8%)
German	2 (12.5%)
Italian	1 (6.3%)
Norwegian	1 (6.3%)
Spanish	1 (6.3%)
Australian	1 (6.3%)
British	1 (6.3%)
American	1 (6.3%)
Type of Traveler	
Backpacker	11 (68.8%)
Digital nomad	3 (18.8%)
Luxury traveler	2 (12.5%)
Length of stay	
Short-term (< 3 weeks)	9 (56.3%)
Long-term (> 1 month)	7 (43.7%)
Stakeholder Group 2: Entrepreneurs (n =9)	
Gender	
Male	8 (88.9%)
Female	1 (11.1%)
Age group	
20–30 years	2 (22.2%)
31–50 years	5 (55.6%)
51+ years	2 (22.2%)
Ownership type	
Local entrepreneur	7 (77.8%)
Western entrepreneur	2 (22.2%)
Type of business	
Surf school	4 (44.4%)
Accommodation (hotel/homestay)	3 (33.3%)
Mixed (surf + F&B)	2 (22.2%)
Stakeholder Group 3: Local Population (n = 6)	
Gender	
Male	4 (66.7%)
Female	2 (33.3%)
Age group	
20–30 years	4 (66.7%)
31–50 years	2 (33.3%)
Involvement in tourism	
Directly involved	4 (66.7%)
Indirectly involved	2 (33.3%)

Source: Own elaboration

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Interviews

The first section of questions is grounded in the Surf Resource Sustainability Index (Martín & Assenov, 2014), the Sustainable Livelihoods framework (Towner & Davies, 2019) and broader sustainable tourism principles (UNWTO, 2022). These frameworks emphasize that tourism sustainability cannot be assessed from a single perspective, but must be examined across environmental impacts, economic viability and social-cultural well-being. Hence, questions 1, 2 and 3 were designed to explore each of these three sustainability dimensions.

Question 1: Environmental impact perception

This question addresses the environmental dimension of sustainability within the research question. It is supported by research on environmental impacts of surf tourism (Krause, 2012; Román et al., 2022).

Question 2: Economic impact perception

The question explores how surf tourism influences employment, income generation and financial distribution within the local community. It is grounded in the economic indicators of the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014) and the Sustainable Livelihoods model (Towner & Davies, 2019).

Question 3: Socio-cultural impact perception

This question addresses the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability and is grounded in the Sustainable Livelihoods model (Towner & Davies, 2019) and cultural authenticity sustainable tourism principles (UNWTO, 2022).

The second section is grounded in research on sustainable surf tourism and stakeholder perspectives which highlights how tourism behavior affects local economic and social systems in Lombok, based on the works of Zografos and Adams (2015), van Loon and Rianne (2020) and Román et al. (2022).

Question 4: Tourist behavior towards the environment

This question explores how tourists interact with the natural environment and whether their behavior contributes in a good or bad way to environmental sustainability. It builds on research on environmental responsibility in surf tourism (van Loon & Rianne, 2020.).

Question 5: Tourist contribution to the local economy

This question explores whether tourists primarily support local businesses or tend to engage more with foreign-owned businesses, supported by the research on unequal benefit distribution in surf tourism destinations (Zografos & Adams, 2015).

Question 6: Tourist behavior influence on culture

This question investigates whether tourist behavior supports the cultural preservation of Lombok. It is grounded in research on the socio-cultural impacts of surf tourism (Román et al., 2022) and the sustainable tourism principles regarding cultural authenticity (UNWTO, 2022).

The final section of questions focuses on stakeholder opinions regarding destination development. This section is grounded in the surf tourism system model (Martín-González et al., 2019), which highlights the interaction between demand, supply and regulatory actors, regarding regional tourism development research in Lombok. Thus, questions 7, 8 and 9 were made to examine tourism development over time, as understanding past and current development patterns is essential for interpreting sustainability impacts and anticipating future challenges.

Question 7: Sustainable improvements

This question was inspired by governance indicators within the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014) and livelihood strategies within the Sustainable Livelihoods model (Towner & Davies, 2019), both of which highlight the importance of planning, management and stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development.

Question 8: Changes in tourism development

This question is grounded primarily in regional tourism development research in West Nusa Tenggara, which document structural growth patterns, infrastructure expansion and policy-driven tourism initiatives in Lombok (Wibowo et al., 2024; Rahadi et al., 2022).

Question 9: Future risks and opportunities

This question builds on sustainability indicators within the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014) and on sustainable tourism strategies in West Nusa Tenggara (Kurniawan et al., 2023), both of which highlight the importance of policy planning, infrastructure management and balanced growth to prevent future sustainability challenges.

3.3.2 Photographic data analysis

Visual data was analyzed to provide contextual insight into surf tourism practices in Lombok. The photographs, taken during field observation, were examined through a reflexive visual analysis approach inspired by visual research literature (Spencer, 2023; Nigatu et al., 2025). Reflexive visual research emphasizes the use of photographs to capture meaningful moments and make both positive as negative impacts of experiences visible (Nigatu et al., 2025).

While the images in this study were not produced by participants, as in Nigatu's study, they are analyzed through this reflexive lens, functioning as tools to critically examine tourism's environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts in Lombok. The photographs were systematically organized and archived using software Onstruc. Each image was labelled according to location, observed tourism practice and preliminary sustainability dimension (environmental, socio-cultural, economic), allowing for structured integration into the later data analysis. The visual analysis followed three interconnected analytical stages:

1. Data familiarization: the photographs were systematically reviewed to identify what is visible in each image;

2. Reflexive interpretation: the photographs were interpreted by reflecting on the researcher's immediate reaction at the time of capturing the image, considering whether the observed practice reflected a positive or negative impact within a specific sustainability dimension;

3. Thematic integration with interview findings: the visual observations were compared and integrated with emerging themes from the interview data.

4. Results

4.1 Interviews content analysis

Content analysis of interviews with surf tourists focusing on their perceptions on environmental sustainability, revealed that there is a consensus on the negative impacts of increased tourist activity. Among the problems highlighted is the fact that the local government does not have an efficient waste treatment system. Another issue highlighted was the progressive damage of coral reefs and the progressive ecosystem degradation. In the interpretation of the tourists' words, one can also infer concerns regarding overtourism, overbuilding and carbon footprint as consequences of the accelerated increase in the number of visitors to Lombok. Nevertheless, all respondents highlighted the fact surfers generally care about nature and are mindful of their environmental footprint. Furthermore, respondents believe that surf tourism attracts a more environmentally aware group of tourists compared to other forms of overtourism.

Table 2: Line by line coding of tourist's environmental sustainability perceptions

Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
Waste management systems do not seem sufficient to handle the growing number of tourists, which leads to visible pollution in public areas"	Waste management	Governance investment
"The greater demand created by tourists leads to the development of large areas, which inevitably changes the natural landscapes"	Fast tourism growth	Overtourism
"I'm concerned that increased surf activity and tourism-related pressure may contribute to coral damage if not properly managed"	Damage to coral reefs	Ecosystem degradation
"Hotels, villas, and new roads are being built rapidly, which puts pressure on land and coastal ecosystems. The scale and speed of development creates environmental stress"	Uncontrolled construction	Overbuilding
"Scooter traffic, the absence of electric vehicles and the lack of public transport. Although not all problems are caused directly by tourists, the increase in the number of visitors intensifies environmental pressure"	Air pollution	Carbon Footprint
"Air travel is as a major contributor to CO_2 emissions due to the high number of flights required to reach Lombok"		

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding tourists' perceptions of economic sustainability, surf tourism impacts the local economy, but not always in a positive way. In their words, although surf tourism supports both local and Western-owned businesses and creates job opportunities and income for locals, there is also the opposite aspect of tourism growing. Most tourists expressed their concern that Western businesses may increasingly dominate the tourism sector and that this harms the ability

of local entrepreneurs to create their own businesses. The summary of the most significant opinions is presented in table 3.

Table 3: Line by line coding of tourist's economic sustainability perceptions

Line by line coding	*Initial coding*	*Axial coding*
"Many businesses in Lombok are family-run, such as homestays and restaurants, where entire families work together. Since tourists returned after Covid-19, local businesses have recovered income and stability"	Benefits for small business	Financial stability
"Surf tourism has increased employment opportunities compared to the past when there were fewer jobs available, and income was often shared communally"	Employment opportunities	Creation of jobs
"There are currently many surf shops and surf schools, which may exceed actual demand, especially during low season. This imbalance between supply and demand could create economic instability for local business owners"	Oversupply	Excessive competition
"Many Western-owned companies employ locals but pay very low wages. This process resembles a form of modern "colonialism", where Western investors benefit disproportionately"	Labor exposure	Social injustice

Source: Own elaboration

Tourists' opinions about the impact of tourist activity on local culture and way of life present several considerations. Some participants feel that their visit does not have a substantial impact on the lives of the locals, who, according to them, seem to adapt well to Western customs. On the other hand, most interviewees highlight several negative effects of this acculturation process, including the loss of local identity through the assimilation of Western habits and a lack of engagement with local culture. However, respondents note that this lack of understanding, which can, in some cases, be interpreted as disrespect for local culture and religion as Lombok is predominantly Muslim, such as wearing bikinis or revealing clothing in town areas, is generally unintentional. Respondents also noted that Lombok's Muslim culture is less accessible to tourists than Bali's Hindu culture, which they perceive as more outward-facing and tourism-oriented. Accordingly, tourists are encouraged to adapt more to local customs, particularly outside beach areas, by wearing appropriate clothing. Cultural preservation is perceived as stronger in Lombok than in Bali. Table 4 presents a summary of the line-by-line analysis and respective coding process.

Table 4: Line by line coding of tourist's social and cultural sustainability perceptions

Line by line coding	*Initial coding*	*Axial coding*
"Locals maintain a relaxed lifestyle and have not changed their behavior to adapt to tourists. Rather than a threat the exposure to tourists can offer inspiration and knowledge about life abroad through a positive cultural exchange"	Cultural inspiration and knowledge	Cultural resilience
"The increasing presence of Western-style resorts and clubs are pleasant for tourists but detrimental to the preservation of local culture because it gradually removes elements of Lombok's original cultural identity"	Barriers to cultural preservation	Cultural identity
"Tourists rarely fully understand Indonesian culture and traditions. Tourists are temporary visitors and do not live according to local customs, which limits cultural exchange"	Cultural misunderstanding	Cultural barriers
"Locals increasingly adapt their routines and social norms to tourists, such as increased nightlife, alcohol consumption and Western-style leisure activities"	Changes in cultural norms	Cultural subjugation

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding behavioral attitudes towards environmental preservation, participants agree that, generally, tourists have a high environmental awareness, and their actions during their stay point to the care of minimizing the environmental impact. Furthermore, tourists are generally more environmentally aware than locals due to recycling systems and environmental education in Western countries. However, participants argue that the increase in tourism poses dangers to the environmental sustainability of corals as well as changing the environment with the construction of more tourist infrastructure, as well as an increase in the carbon footprint because of air travel and increased traffic on the island. Although tourists are generally perceived as environmentally aware and behave respectfully, respondents also noted that this respectful behavior does not apply to all tourists.

Concerning tourists' economic sustainable behavior, participants agree that tourism has a positive economic impact on the destination. Participants also report that there is a good balance between local and Western-owned companies, although many Western tourists prefer going to accommodation and food establishments that are owned by foreigners. Regarding accommodation, short-term tourists tend to spend more money in Western-owned businesses, while long-stay visitors are more likely to use local *warungs*, homestays, and services due to the low cost. Western restaurants are often preferred particularly for comfort, food familiarity and the fear of getting sick in local restaurants.

In terms of social sustainability, tourists in Lombok are generally receptive to cultural exchange. Tourists appreciate local friendliness and hospitality, and thus, cultural exchange occurs naturally without forcing locals to change their lifestyle. On the other hand, the responses reveal that cultural exchange often remains relatively limited and mainly connected to tourism-

related services rather than deeper cultural engagement. From the perspective of the tourists interviewed, a deeper engagement between visitors and locals depends on the individual motivations of each tourist and on the length of their stay, that is, the longer the time of contact with the native culture, the greater the degree of involvement with the locals and their traditions and culture, as presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Line by line coding of tourist's sustainable behavior

Environmental sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Surf tourists are generally environmentally conscious, especially compared to locals. Many tourists come from countries where recycling systems are well developed and therefore bring environmental behaviors with them"	Respectful behavior	Environmental awareness
"Most tourists are environmentally conscious and bring strong environmentally sustainable values. However, there is an indirect environmental impact: Western demand has transformed natural sites to meet tourists' expectations."	Environmental transformation	Environmental impact
"Lombok has a fragile underwater environment and tourists should be particularly careful about waste and pollution"	Underwater environment	Environmental preservation
"I saw tourists throwing garbage on the roads and in the sea. This behavior is disrespectful and hurtful, especially given how friendly and helpful the inhabitants are"	Disrespectful behavior	Environmental damage
Economic sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Tourists contribute positively to local economy by spending money in local homestays, restaurants, and other businesses"	Positive economic impact	Economic sustainability
"Although tourists contribute economically, many still prefer choosing Western accommodation over local homestays"	Preference for Western accommodation	Limited economic contribution
"The majority of tourists prefer Western restaurants when given the option, although local food remains widely accessible and consumed to some extent "	Preference for Western restaurants	
Social and cultural sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Many tourists focus almost exclusively on surfing and leisure activities. As a result, they may behave carelessly toward local customs and cultural norms, not out of disrespect but due to lack of awareness"	Lack of interest about local traditions	Lack of awareness
"Tourists do not significantly help keep Indonesian culture alive. They generally do not adapt to local cultural norms"	Basic interaction	Weak acculturation
"Some tourists show strong interest in learning about local traditions, respecting customs, and understanding cultural differences. Others behave exactly as they would in their home countries and show little interest in language, customs, or deeper cultural understanding"	Cultural understanding based on individual motivation	Level of engagement
"Tourists who stay longer have more time to build relationships with locals, learn basic language skills, and understand cultural norms. Short-term visitors often remain focused on leisure activities"	Time to understand native culture	Length of stay influence

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the tourists' opinions on changes in tourism development (Table 6), participants suggested sustainable improvements as the introduction of a quota to define Lombok's maximum lodging capacity, programs to encourage the reduce of ecological footprint, greater investment in green energy and the promotion of values of mutual respect for culture, religions and traditions between visitors and inhabitants. Evidence of tourism development reveal the increase in infrastructure related to tourist activity and the consequent loss of natural territory, as well as the possible degradation of the population's quality of life. Participants identified inadequate waste management as the most significant risk associated with tourism growth in Lombok. Other concerns included increasing foreign investment and economic domination by Western businesses, the environmental pressure caused by luxury tourism development, the reduction of natural areas and the gradual weakening of local culture and traditions.

Table 6: Line by line coding of tourist´s opinions about tourism development

Sustainable improvements		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Waste management is the main sustainability challenge, especially the burning of waste, due to lack of alternatives and lack of knowledge from the inhabitants"	Destination load capacity	Tourism political boundaries
"If every surfer collected a few pieces of trash during each surf session, the cumulative effect could significantly reduce pollution"	Community spirit	Pollution reduction
"Investing in green energy solutions, such as electric scooters, cars, and improved public transport"	Green energy	Rethinking sustainability
"Promoting positive values such as respect, presence, and connection to nature and vents that connect tourists with local communities"	Tourists and locals' connection	Mutual respect
Tourism development evidence		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"There are signs of rapid development of tourism, such as increased construction of tourist facilities and economic activity. Villages like Kuta are already showing signs of losing its original character"	Increase in tourist infrastructures	Identity loss
"If tourism growth is driven solely by financial investment, both the tourist experience and local quality of life will deteriorate."	Deterioration of quality of life	long-term sustainability
"When using Google Maps satellite imagery to locate quiet, undeveloped places, in several cases, locations that appeared undeveloped were already built up upon arrival"	Loss of nature area	Physical evidence
Risks and opportunities		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Waste management is the main sustainability challenge, especially the burning of waste due to lack of alternatives, especially lack of knowledge from the inhabitants"	Sustainability challenge	Environmental education
"The main risk rather than opportunity is economic colonization by Western investors, where locals lose control over land and economic power"	Loss of economic control	Economic colonization
"There is a clear increase in luxury tourism in the area and expresses concern that this growing demand may negatively affect the natural environment"	Increase in luxury tourism	Environmental impact
"Surf tourism brings economic opportunities and income. However, there is significant risks related to: cultural erosion, environmental degradation, and Westernization"	Economic opportunities versus risks	TBL balanced
"Both, government and local authorities must regulate land sales and require investors to contribute to community development, such as the construction of roads, infrastructure and public facilities"	Tourist regulations	Proactive measures

Source: Own elaboration

Participants also argue that authorities should oblige investors to contribute to the well-being of communities, with the construction of roads and other public facilities. The fact that there is still no rigid legislation that places limits on unbridled tourist growth, materializes in the purchase and occupation of land by foreign investors.

About the content analysis of the interviews with the inhabitants (table 7) it was found that, in their perspective, surf tourism does not directly contribute to the environmental degradation of the island. Nevertheless, inhabitants identify the expansion of businesses that revolve around tourism as the biggest danger to Lombok's natural habitat. In terms of economic sustainability, the inhabitants interviewed recognize the benefits of surf tourism for local communities. On the other hand, residents also state that, although foreigners do not take away their jobs, the rise in unregulated foreign investment may gradually reduce the economic opportunities and land control of local communities in the future.

Table 7: Line by line coding of Inhabitant's sustainability perceptions

Environmental sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Surf tourism has not directly caused major environmental damage in Lombok. Surf tourists generally respect nature and do not intentionally pollute the sea or beaches"	Respect for nature	Indirect environmental damage
"Tourism-driven business development leads to land being destroyed to build accommodations and other facilities. However, not all tourism causes damage, but certain tourism-related developments harm nature "	Land destruction	Environmental challenges
Economic sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Western people don´t take jobs away from locals. However, Western investors increasingly take over villages and land, which creates economic pressure for locals "	Economic pressure	Hostile investment
"Surf tourism creates significant job and income opportunities for local people. Tourism has improved employment availability compared to the past when economic options were more limited"	Job opportunities	Economic stability
Social and cultural sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
Local culture has not changed because of tourism. Despite increased business activity, locals continue practicing religion, ceremonies, and daily traditions. Tourists generally stay near the beach and respect local customs"	Low impact on local culture	Culture preservation
"Tourism has changed local culture, particularly in terms of dress code and public behavior. Tourists often dress very openly outside the beach, such as walking through villages or streets in bikinis, which was uncommon in the past"	Concern about cultural acculturation	Cultural weakening
"Some local people now dress more like tourists, influenced by Western fashion, including lighter clothing and dyed hair. These changes may have an impact on traditional culture and religion"	Changes to dress code norms	Cultural flexibility

Source: Own elaboration

The responses of the inhabitants surveyed regarding cultural sustainability reflect pride in preserving their cultural identity and Islamic traditions, with interviewees noting that their culture and traditions have resisted “Westernization”. However, their accounts also reveal concern about the influence of tourists on the local population, particularly in relation to Western clothing trends. Furthermore, the responses reflect the inhabitants’ concern regarding gradual relaxation of local dress code norms, which now permit tourists to wear less clothing outside beach areas.

With regard to the interviewees' perceptions about the sustainable behavior of tourists (table 8) in general and, in particular, surf tourists, the analysis of the inhabitants' words, expressed in table 8, suggests that inhabitants recognize positive environmental behavior in visitors, including teaching good practices to locals. Regarding economic sustainability, the inhabitants interviewed highlight visitors' preferences for establishments owned by Westerners upon arrival but the longer they stay, the more they adapt to local options, creating a balance between local and Western businesses. However, they mention the lack of capital among locals to compete with the more modern and appealing establishments owned by foreigners. From a socio-cultural perspective, inhabitants generally perceive tourists as curious about local traditions and willing to engage with cultural experiences. However, stakeholders note that this engagement often remains superficial and that cultural misunderstandings occur, particularly regarding dress codes and local customs.

Table 8: Line by line coding of Inhabitant's tourists' behavior perceptions

Environmental sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Tourists generally treat the environment well. Furthermore, tourists often show greater concern for environmental issues than residents do"	Environmental concern	Environmental preservation
"Instead of harming the environment, tourists sometimes introduce environmental improvements. However, this does not mean that tourists are perfect. From my perspective, environmentally sustainable behavior is linked to education and awareness"	Behavior is linked to education and awareness	Environmental mentality
Economic sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"I observe a pattern in tourist behavior: many may initially prefer Western destinations, especially upon arrival and opting for familiar options, but they tend to adapt and increasingly utilize local services"	Balance between Western and local business	Cultural adaptation
"Locals often do not have the financial capital to open large or modern establishments. As a result, they tend to work as employees in Western-owned businesses"	Economic dependence on foreign investment	Lack of capital
Social and cultural sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Many tourists are curious about local traditions. Some tourists attend ceremonies and weddings, rent traditional clothing, and attend cultural events. These indicate that tourists are not only focused on surfing but may also show interest in cultural experiences"	Cultural curiosity	Mutual cultural respect
"Tourists' connection with local culture is essentially superficial. Some tourists visit cultural villages such as Sade as sightseeing experiences rather than meaningful cultural engagement"	Functional culture connection	Superficial engagement
"Some tourists do not respect local customs, particularly regarding dress codes. This reinforces that cultural impacts depend heavily on tourists' awareness and willingness to adapt, and that both respectful engagement and cultural tension can occur at the same destination"	Cultural misunderstanding	Cultural tension

Source: Own elaboration

About sustainable improvements, inhabitants suggest controlling the growth of tourist infrastructures to guarantee environmental sustainability but also the well-being of communities. Participants also suggest signs in the streets and awareness-raising actions in the lodging facilities to explain local customs and norms, as well, as signs in the streets, to educate tourists. Inhabitants say the development of tourism on the island in recent years is visible and hope that Lombok does not go the way of Bali, which will result in more people, more traffic, and greater degradation of the environment. Another consequence of tourism growth is the fact that more and more local homeowners have chosen to rent their homes to tourists at prices that are prohibitive for locals. Inhabitants also comment that today's tourists are looking for entertainment and nightlife, wish contrasts with the type of tourists they were accustomed to and who essentially sought the comfort of natural landscapes. Interviewees also highlight that, although there are more jobs available, it will be harder for locals to survive economically, if

the living costs keep rising. Table 9 summarizes the main ideas of the inhabitants regarding tourism development changes.

Table 9: Line by line coding of Inhabitant's opinions about tourism development

Sustainable improvements		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"The current situation is stable, but it is very important to preserve nature. I hope Selong Belanak will not develop in the same way as Bali or Kuta Lombok and for this not to happen it is necessary for investors to consider the well-being of small local communities"	Controlled tourist development	Well-being preservation
"Tourists are unaware of local traditions and religious norms. Therefore, clearer communication and stricter guidelines, such as providing cultural rules in hotels and hostels, or using signs or notices to explain local customs, should be actively used to educate tourists"	Lack of knowledge of cultural values	Tourist education
Tourism development evidence		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"The development of tourism has become increasingly visible over time, with the construction of more buildings, which has reduced parts of the natural landscape"	Evidence of more construction	Environmental pressure
"Tourism development will bring positive and negative results. While the growth of tourism will benefit businesses financially, Lombok will become increasingly crowded, with more traffic and a loss of calm, peaceful daily life"	Positive and negative results	Contradictory consequences
Many residents now rent houses to tourists rather than to other locals because tourism provides higher income. This illustrates how tourism reshapes local living conditions and prioritizes income generation over residential comfort"	High income vs locals' comfort	Primacy of economic interests
"Tourist motivations have changed over time. In the past, tourists came mainly to enjoy nature and landscapes. Today, many visitors come in search of nightlife, parties, and leisure activities"	Changes in tourist motivations	Change of consumption patterns
Risks and opportunities		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"There will be more jobs but higher living costs, making it harder for locals to survive. If the rise in land prices continues, it will mean that locals will no longer be able to buy land in the future and that Western investors will dominate land ownership."	More jobs but higher living costs	Gentrification
"Residents fear they could miss out on opportunities if they are unable to compete with foreign investors or adapt to new tourism trends. Lombok's future depends on local communities can maintain economic participation and ownership, rather than simply remaining employees in externally in companies controlled by foreigners"	Lost opportunities for locals	Unfair competition
"The potential loss of nature if development continues unchecked. Overdevelopment driven by ego and profit, meaning that investors or developers may prioritize personal gain over community well-being and environmental protection"	Overdevelopment and loss of nature	Sustainability imbalance

Source: Own elaboration

Lombok is facing a process of tourist gentrification, where the increase in the cost of living is increasingly noticeable. Another of the risks highlighted is the loss of competitive capacity of small local entrepreneurs, given the arrival of more and more Westerners, who invest in the destination.

The analysis from entrepreneurs' interviews about their sustainability perceptions reveals that, from their perspective, environmental problems are not a consequence of tourists' behavior but rather of the destination management. Entrepreneurs state that it is not surf tourism itself that damages the environment, but factors related to the expansion of tourism, namely the

construction of infrastructure, which “steals” land from the natural habitat. Concerning economic sustainability, interviewees report that tourist activity has substantially improved Lombok's economy, although they acknowledge that the growth in tourist demand, increased the value of properties, which makes it difficult for locals to acquire their own house. In terms of social and cultural sustainability, local entrepreneurs say that tourism, instead of weakening local culture, has reinforced increased awareness of cultural preservation among locals. Even so, they admit that tourism has brought greater flexibility in clothing standards, which two decades ago would have been unthinkable. Table 10 presents some example sentences of the most important points of view highlighted by the interviewees.

Table 10: Line by line coding of entrepreneur’s sustainability perceptions

Environmental sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
“Surf tourism itself does not harm the natural environment. Environmental problems arise from human behavior, particularly waste management practices”	Environmental problems because of behaviors	The importance of sustainable behaviors
“Surf tourism has significantly changed the natural environment in Lombok. Tourism growth has reduced the amount of visible natural scenery and negatively impacted environmental quality”	Changes in the natural environment	Environmental quality
“I’m concerned about the rapid increase in buildings and infrastructure, which negatively affects the landscape and contributes to environmental problems such as flooding”	Increase in buildings and infrastructure	Environmental threats
Economic sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
“Tourism has strongly improved the local economy. Many former fishermen now work in tourism-related services such as surf instructors, boat drivers, restaurant owners, and homestay operators”	Tourism significantly alters local´s activities	Improvements in the local’s economy
“Tourism brings both economic growth and economic pressure, as rising prices create serious risks for local inhabitants. Land prices have increased significantly, making it difficult for local people to acquire land”	Tourism growth leads to rising property prices	Economic growth and economic pressure
Social and cultural sustainability		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
“Tourism has increased awareness of cultural preservation rather than causing cultural change Locals preserve their culture and focus on teaching tourists about Indonesian traditions rather than adapting to Western culture”	Increase of cultural awareness	Culture preservation
“Surf tourism has changed local culture and daily life, particularly regarding clothing norms. 20 years ago, it was not acceptable to walk through the village wearing a bikini, whereas today this has become more common “	Cultural concessions due to tourism	Cultural change

Source: Own elaboration

With respect to entrepreneurs' statements about tourists' sustainable behaviors, there is a consensus about the environmental awareness of most tourists, particularly surf tourists, who reveal concern regarding their ecological footprint. Local entrepreneurs also reinforce the idea that the destination's environmental problems are not derived from the behavior of tourists but are a consequence of the increase in tourist activity, which leads to an increase in construction over the natural area. In economic terms, interviewees highlight the contributions of tourists to

boosting the local economy. They also note that Western businesspeople have a legal obligation to employ local citizens and that Westerners have brought technological and digital innovations, which have changed the way local small business owners run their businesses more efficiently.

The opinions of the entrepreneurs consulted about social and cultural sustainability behavior are divided. For some, the behavior of visitors does not weaken local culture and traditions, on the contrary, interactions between tourists and the community translate into mutual respect and a means of showcasing local culture and traditions. For other interviewees, there are tourists who do not respect local cultural values, namely habits related to religious practices. Table 11 presents some examples of the coding process for these themes.

Table 11: Line-by-line coding of entrepreneurs' perceptions of tourists' sustainable behaviors

Environmental sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Many Western visitors are conscious about issues such as waste disposal and are more careful when it comes to throwing trash away properly. Tourists often show concern for the cleanliness of beaches and public areas, particularly in surf-related environments"	Tourists show concern for environmental conservation	Environmental concern
"Surf tourism negatively affects Lombok's natural environment, mainly due to construction and land development, rather than tourist behavior itself. More and more land is being purchased for the development of tourism, which leads to the destruction of local villages and natural space"	Negative effects of surf tourism	Environmental degradation
Economic sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Tourists contribute to the local economy by staying in homestays, eating in local restaurants, taking surf lessons, and participating in tours. Also, Western business owners are required to employ local people due to regulations"	Tourists and Western business owners' economic contribution	Local economy improvement
"A major economic change is the growth of digital business practices. More locals now understand digital ordering systems. Men usually fish, while their wives manage online businesses, selling fish and seafood through order-and-delivery systems, supplying restaurants and hotels"	The growth of digital business practices	Digital education
Social and cultural sustainability behavior		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Tourist behavior does not appear to undermine local culture. Instead, the presence of respectful interactions between tourists and the community has contributed to a greater awareness of cultural identity and preservation"	Respectful interactions	Cultural coexistence
"Some tourists respect local culture and traditions, while others don't. In some cases, tourists complain about religious practices, such as the call to prayer. This shows a lack of respect for local´s religious"	Respect and disrespect for local culture, religion, and traditions	Cultural acceptance

Source: Own elaboration

Finally, the analysis and coding of the entrepreneurs' words regarding sustainable tourism improvements reveal the need to promote environmental awareness and education, both among tourists and locals, as well as the need for a change in policies that protect the territory and

nature in the face of the increase in foreign tourist enterprises. Concerning tourism development evidence, interviewees recognize that the tourist's profile remained the same throughout the years; although Lombok attracts all types of tourists, surf-related tourism is in fact the most important segment. It also highlighted the fact that although tourism has increased in recent years, the average tourist spending remains the same. In terms of risks, they fear that soon the price of land and properties will be unaffordable for locals. As an opportunity, they say that, in the view of entrepreneurs, surf tourism still has room for growth in Lombok, as surf tourism development can still be spread across less developed areas of the island. A summary of these statements is presented in table 12.

Table 12: Line by line coding of entrepreneurs' opinions about tourism development

Sustainable improvements		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Government policies currently encourage foreign investment, but lack sufficient regulations to protect land and nature "	High foreign investment, with no legislation for environmental protection	Tourism land grabbing
"Education is the key to solving environmental problems, especially teaching both locals and tourists how to take responsibility for waste and cleanliness"	Education as the key factor for environmental sustainability	Changing environmental mentality
Tourism development evidence		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Lombok attracts all kinds of tourists, but their main motivation remains surfing, followed by fishing. Over the last 13 years. The economic level of tourists has remained similar, and there has not been a clear shift toward luxury tourism"	No changes to the tourist profile	Persistent tourist preferences
"Gerupuk was very quiet. Over time, tourism increased gradually, and today the number of tourists is much higher than in the past"	Increase in the number of tourists	Tourism booming
Risks and opportunities		
Line by line coding	***Initial coding***	***Axial coding***
"Land ownership is the biggest future risk. I fear that local people will no longer be able to buy land and that Lombok could become like Bali within 10-15 years with Western dominance over land and business"	Western dominance over land and business	Foreigners economic domain
"I see opportunities for the future development of surf tourism infrastructures. Currently, surfing activities are concentrated in a relatively small number of surf spots, in some locations, which is insufficient considering the growing number of surf tourist's arrivals"	Opportunities for the development of surf tourism	Tourism expansion opportunities

Source: Own elaboration

4.2 Documentary Visual Data

4.2.1 Environmental dimension

Data familiarization

The photography shows a manually dug hole in the sand on Tanjun Aan beach, one of the touristic beaches of Lombok, filled with mixed waste, including plastic packaging, organic debris, and other household waste materials. The waste appears to have been deposited directly into the ground without formal containment or waste management infrastructure.

Reflexive interpretation

The image reflects waste disposal practices in Lombok. It appears to be a way of hiding waste rather than managing it through a structured collection system. The image illustrates that environmental sustainability practices are not adopted yet in Lombok.

Thematic integration with interview findings

One of the environmental problems highlighted by the three stakeholder groups was precisely the lack of solid waste treatment in Lombok. Although the development of tourist infrastructure is evident, the local government still struggles to properly address the problem of waste treatment.

Photography 1: waste disposal on Tanjun Aan beach



Source: Own elaboration

Data familiarization

The photograph shows a surfboard with multiple visible damages across its surface. Near the lower section of the board, next to fin, a clearly visible hole, and a section where the outer layer has been broken away can be observed.

Reflexive interpretation

The photograph illustrates the consequences of overcrowding at popular surf spots in Lombok. The surfboard belongs to the researcher and the visible damage resulted from a collision with another surfer in an overcrowded surf spot.

Thematic integration with interview findings

The themes that emerged most strongly from the interview coding process include environmental and ocean preservation, overtourism and increasing tourism pressure, which are illustrated in the photography through the physical consequences of overcrowded surf spots and the resulting material waste.

Photography 2: Consequences of overcrowding beaches



Source: Own elaboration

4.2.2 Economic dimension

Data familiarization

The photography shows a tourist sitting on a scooter, arriving at a roadside viewpoint. Two local women are standing next to him, holding several bottles of beer. In the background, many motorbikes are visible, suggesting a popular stopping point.

Reflexive interpretation

The photography reflects local economic activity directly linked to surf tourism. As surfers move between surf spots and popular viewpoints, local community members position themselves along these routes to offer products such as cold beverages.

Thematic integration with interview findings

The t*ouristification* encourages the entrepreneurial spirit of the inhabitants, who adapt to the new reality. At the same time, tourists understand the importance of their contribution and join small business consumption.

Photography 3: Roadside sale of an informal business



Source: Own elaboration

Data familiarization

The photography shows several local men working on the beach, digging into the sand in front of their surf shop. The setting is a beachfront area with small, locally built huts and simple beachside stalls rather than large-scale or luxury developments.

Reflexive interpretation

The image reflects local business expansion within a surf tourism setting. Locals are preparing the foundation for what would become a small beach bar connected to the existing surf shop.

Thematic integration with interview findings

The coding process suggests that tourism development can positively impact local communities as it creates employment opportunities and enables locals to develop and expand small tourism-related businesses, as illustrated in this photograph.

Photography 4: Construction of tent bar by the sea



Source: Own elaboration

4.2.3 Socio-cultural dimension

Data familiarization

The photography illustrates a tourist standing next to his scooter along a public road passing through a village area, in a non-beach public environment. The young man is dressed in beach clothing, with bare upper body.

Reflexive interpretation

The image reflects tourists extending beach behavior into village spaces. While such clothing may be considered appropriate at the beach, it contrasts with the generally dress norms observed within the local community.

Thematic integration with interview findings

One of the unanimous themes among the three groups of interviewees, was the informality of the tourists' dress code, which goes against local traditions and religion.

Photography 5: Man dressed in beach shorts



Source: Own elaboration

Data familiarization

The photography shows a local *warung*, a small Indonesian restaurant, filled with tourists. Several tables are occupied by Western visitors eating traditional Indonesian dishes. The setting appears informal and locally operated rather than part of a Western restaurant chain.

Reflexive interpretation

While capturing the photography, the researcher experienced a sense of enjoyment and collective enthusiasm. Observing tourists genuinely enjoy local Indonesian food reinforced the idea that surf tourism can also create cultural connection and appreciation beyond surfing itself. The atmosphere reflected curiosity and appreciation for local cuisine.

Thematic integration with interview finding

Local cuisine represents an important part of cultural identity in Lombok. Throughout the interview findings, different forms of tourists' cultural interaction and engagement are identified, particularly regarding curiosity towards local customs and traditions. Photography 6 reflects this cultural interaction by showing tourists engaging with Indonesian cuisine in a traditional warung setting, illustrating how local restaurants can function as informal spaces of cultural exchange between locals and visitors.

Photography 6: Cultural blending in a traditional restaurant



Source: Own elaboration

5. Conclusions

This chapter synthesizes the main findings of the study, situates them within the existing literature, and draws out their theoretical and managerial implications. The research was set out to examine how surf tourism in Lombok affects the three dimensions of sustainability environmental, economic, and socio-cultural and to understand whether stakeholder perceptions align with observed tourist behavior. A qualitative grounded theory approach was adopted, combining semi-structured interviews with 31 stakeholders across three groups (tourists, entrepreneurs and inhabitants) and reflexive visual analysis of photographs collected during fieldwork. The findings are discussed below in relation to each of the three research objectives and in dialogue with the theoretical frameworks introduced in Chapter 2.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

The first research objective was to examine the impact of surf tourism across the three TBL dimensions of sustainability. Regarding the environmental dimension, the findings reveal a clear convergence across all three stakeholder groups: waste mismanagement, infrastructure expansion and coastal ecosystem degradation are identified as the most pressing concerns. These results are consistent with Buckley (2002) and Reineman and Ardoin (2019), who document how surf tourism's inherent dependency on healthy coastal ecosystems makes it simultaneously fragile and potentially destructive when poorly governed. Notably, however, this study extends those findings by demonstrating that stakeholders do not attribute environmental degradation primarily to tourist behaviour but rather to systemic failures in destination management, a distinction that resonates with Roman et al. (2022), whose analysis of surf tourism in European destinations similarly highlights governance deficits as the root cause of environmental decline. This finding also aligns with the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014), which identifies governance indicators as foundational to destination sustainability: without effective planning and regulatory structures, environmental pressures intensify regardless of individual tourist awareness.

In economic terms, the findings highlight a dual dynamic of opportunity and inequality. Surf tourism contributes to job creation and local entrepreneurship outcomes that reflect the economic indicators identified in the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014) and the livelihood outcomes described in the Sustainable Livelihoods model (Towner & Davies, 2019). At the same time, stakeholders across all three groups express concern about foreign ownership concentration, rising property prices and the risk of economic leakage. These concerns echo

Zografos and Adams (2015), who document the displacement of local economic agency by foreign investment in Indonesian surf destinations, and Ruttenberg (2023), who describes a pattern whereby surf tourism pioneer areas are progressively colonised by external capital. Crucially, this study adds nuance to these accounts by showing that stakeholders simultaneously hold both positive and critical economic views, rather than adopting a uniformly optimistic or pessimistic stance—an important complexity that more simplified frameworks tend to overlook.

Regarding socio-cultural sustainability, the results reveal a complex process of cultural negotiation rather than straightforward cultural erosion. While Western influence on dress codes and social norms is acknowledged by all three stakeholder groups, local communities demonstrate resilience and selective adaptation actively preserving religious and cultural identity while accommodating tourists' presence. This finding contrasts with more deterministic accounts of cultural commodification in tourism contexts (Canniford, 2005) and aligns more closely with the perspective of Towner and Davies (2019), who argue that community-level responses to tourism are shaped by adaptive livelihood strategies rather than passive submission to external forces. The socio-cultural dynamics observed in Lombok also resemble patterns identified by Towner (2016) in the Mentawai Islands, where local communities engaged in strategic negotiation with surf tourism rather than experiencing wholesale cultural displacement. Importantly, the Muslim cultural context of Lombok, less outward-facing than Bali's Hindu-oriented tourism culture introduces a distinctive dimension in which local communities selectively adapt to tourism development while actively preserving their religious values, representing a perspective that was not captured in existing studies of Indonesian surf destinations, and represents a contribution to the literature in its own right.

Overall, these findings across the three TBL dimensions are consistent with, and in several aspects extend, related research conducted in comparable surf tourism settings. Ruttenberg (2023) and Usher (2024) similarly document stakeholder recognition of surf tourism's economic benefits alongside growing concerns about unregulated growth and loss of local control. Martín and Assenov (2014) highlight that surf tourism stakeholders in different destinations tend to converge on environmental and social concerns even when their economic interests diverge, a pattern confirmed in this study. The findings also resonate with Martin-González et al. (2019), whose comparative study of surf destinations shows that perceptions of sustainability diverge significantly between residents and visitors when tourist volumes are perceived as excessive, a dynamic beginning to emerge in Lombok's southern coast. What

distinguishes the present study is its contextualisation of these dynamics within a Muslim-majority destination that remains comparatively under-researched, and its application of both the SRSI framework and the Sustainable Livelihoods model to a single destination, enabling a more integrated multi-level analysis than previous single-framework studies have permitted.

A further contribution of this study lies in its methodological design. By combining semi-structured interviews with reflexive visual analysis of photographs collected during fieldwork, the research employs a form of qualitative triangulation that strengthens the credibility of its findings. Triangulation, the use of multiple data sources to cross-validate emerging interpretations is widely recognised as a means of enhancing rigour in qualitative research (Bryman, 2016) and remains underutilised in surf tourism studies, where single-method designs predominate (Martin, 2022). The photographic evidence does not merely illustrate the interview data: it independently reinforces the thematic patterns that emerged from the coding process across all three sustainability dimensions. In the environmental dimension, the image of waste buried in the sand at Tanjung Aan beach provides direct visual confirmation of the inadequate waste management identified by all three stakeholder groups as the most pressing environmental concern. In the economic dimension, the roadside beverage sellers and the informal beach bar under construction offer material evidence of the local entrepreneurial initiatives surrounding surf tourism that inhabitants and entrepreneurs described in their interviews. In the socio-cultural dimension, the photograph of a tourist in beach attire walking through a village road visually documents the dress-code tensions that all three groups independently raised as a source of cultural friction. This convergence between verbally expressed perceptions and visually observed realities reinforces the validity of the qualitative findings and suggests that the sustainability challenges identified are not merely subjective impressions but observable features of everyday life in Lombok's surf tourism context. The integration of visual and interview data thus represents a methodological contribution in its own right, and demonstrates the value of documentary visual methods as complementary tools for future research in surf destination sustainability.

The second research objective was to assess the alignment between stakeholder perceptions and actual tourist behaviour. The results suggest a relatively high degree of consistency, particularly in relation to environmental awareness: surf tourists not only express pro-environmental attitudes but also report behavioural practices that reflect those attitudes, such as minimizing waste, avoiding reef damage and supporting local businesses. This finding stands in partial contrast to the 'attitude–behaviour gap' widely documented in sustainable tourism

literature (Buckley, 2002; van Loon & Rianne, 2020), which suggests that tourists frequently fail to translate environmental concern into changed behaviour. The relative alignment observed here is consistent with the profile of surf tourists as an identity-driven subculture in which environmental values are deeply embedded (Stranger, 2011; Reis, 2020), suggesting that this segment may be more resistant to the gap than mass tourists. However, a structural tension remains: carbon-intensive air travel and the infrastructural development stimulated by tourist demand mean that aggregate environmental impact can grow even when individual behaviour is comparatively responsible, a dynamic highlighted by Román et al. (2022) and confirmed by the perceptions of both entrepreneurs and inhabitants interviewed in this study.

The third research objective focused on identifying necessary changes and future risks associated with surf tourism development in Lombok. Stakeholders across all three groups consistently emphasised the need for stronger governance, improved waste management infrastructure, limits on foreign land ownership, and greater community participation in tourism planning. These demands align directly with the governance indicators of the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014), which identify policy coherence, regulatory enforcement and stakeholder involvement as the pillars of sustainable surf destination management. The concern about tourist gentrification: rising property and living costs displacing residents is also reflected in the works of Gössling et al. (2024) and Ruttenberg (2023), who describe analogous processes in other rapidly developing surf destinations. Taken together, these findings underscore that Lombok stands at a critical juncture: the window for implementing preventive governance measures, before the destination reaches the overtourism thresholds already experienced in Bali, appears to be narrowing.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The managerial implication of this research provides valuable insights for all actors involved in the surf tourism process to develop measures aimed at maintaining the environmental, economic, social, and cultural sustainability of the destination. Firstly, for inhabitants it is important to understand tourists' opinions on the different destination's sustainability domains. They can use these findings to advocate for tourist carrying-capacity limits, stricter controls on foreign-owned construction and cultural awareness campaigns delivered through accommodation facilities and public signage. For entrepreneurs, both local and Western, the findings underscore that long-term commercial viability depends on

preserving the environmental and cultural assets that differentiate Lombok from more saturated competitors. This means investing in sustainable business practices, supporting local supply chains and resisting the unregulated expansion by prioritizing smaller-scale tourism models over rapid mass-tourism expansion. For local government and tourism authorities, the study provides a multi-stakeholder evidence base for regulatory action. The governance gaps identified — inadequate waste infrastructure, absent land-ownership controls and unregulated construction and tourism growth, and the lack of tourism quotas— are consistently confirmed across all three stakeholder groups and call for measures grounded in the governance indicators of the SRSI framework (Martín & Assenov, 2014) and the community-centered livelihood strategies of the Sustainable Livelihoods model (Towner & Davies, 2019).

5.3 Limitations

Despite the robustness of the findings, the study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The first limitation is related to the lack of interviews with local government representatives and authorities responsible for local tourism. Despite countless efforts made in this regard, no answers were obtained that would allow us to collect governance testimonies. From the same perspective, it was also not possible to interview managers or owners of large international hotel chains operating in Lombok, which would have made it possible to obtain data on the opinion of major tourism investors. The number of interviews carried out can also be seen as a limitation, although, during the process, the researcher realized that from a certain point onwards, an almost complete convergence in the responses of the three groups of participants was perceived.

5.4 Future Research

Research into surf tourism stakeholder perceptions regarding the sustainability of coastal destinations remains scarce. Building on the limitations identified above, future investigations could expand the sample to include government officials, local tourism representatives and major foreign investors. It would also be valuable to explore how perceptions and behaviors differ across tourist generations. It would also be valuable to explore how sustainability perceptions and tourism behaviors differ across tourist generations, particularly as younger and older tourists may engage differently with local culture, environmental awareness and consumption patterns. Furthermore, future research could apply the same interview framework

to other surf tourism destinations, taking into account their specific sustainability contexts, in order to compare mature and emerging destinations. Finally, complementing the qualitative findings with quantitative data, for instance, surveying tourists before, during and after their stay would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of sustainability perceptions over time.

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