



THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESILIENCE EFFORTS TOWARD A COMPETITIVE TOURISM DESTINATION IN THE CITY OF SEMARANG - CENTRAL JAVA

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Abstract

This article examines the role of human resources (HR) in building resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations in Semarang City. Tourism is important in improving the regional economy, but it faces global challenges, including changes in tourism trends and the pandemic. This research highlights the importance of developing and training competent HR to address these challenges. Using a qualitative approach, the study identifies the role of HR in supporting the sustainability of tourist destinations through innovation, technology, and collaboration among stakeholders. The results show that improving HR quality, effective leadership, and digital technology are key factors in strengthening the competitiveness of Semarang's tourist destinations at national and international levels.

Keywords :

Tourism, HR development; tourism destinations' competitiveness; employee resilience

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most important industries for the improvement of the regional economy, not only the economic driver but also the effective sector to reduce unemployment (Rosalina et al. 2023). Tourism is a field developed by the government as a support for national development as mandated by *Tourism Law No. 10*. Tourism needs to be developed to promote the sharing of business and profit opportunities and to respond to the challenges of changing the lives of the region, the country and the world (Irhamni, M.R and Astuti, W.B 2024). This condition requires resilience or resilience in the face of unexpected situations and can bounce back quickly.

Resilience in the tourism industry is not only interpreted as the ability to survive but also to adapt and develop in the face of these challenges (Azhari et al. 2021). Various aspects, from infrastructure, and services, to effective human resource management (HR), are involved in this. Thus, the development of resilience is made a priority to ensure the sustainability and continuity of the tourism industry (Irhamni, M.R and Astuti, W.B 2024).

In addition to resilience, tourism competitiveness is considered another key factor that determines the success of tourist destinations (El-Aidie, Alseiri, and Khalifa 2021). The competitiveness of tourist destinations is determined by the ability to offer unique and high-quality experiences to tourists while maintaining an

edge in the competitive global market. (Ratnasari et al. 2020). With high competitiveness, tourist destinations can attract more tourists, increase income, and create more employment (Li and Du 2021).

The role of human resources in building resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations is very important (García-Almedia and Gartner 2021). Competent and trained human resources are expected to be able to provide good service, innovate in creating attractive tourist products, and manage crises effectively. Therefore, investment in the development and training of human resources is one of the main strategies for improving the resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations. The existence of human resources (HR) plays an important role in the development of tourism. In some industries, human factors play an important role and are an important factor in success in achieving performance because HR occupies a strategic position in the organization, they need to be mobilized effectively and efficiently to improve efficiency. (Hitt, Carnes, and Xu 2016; Wood, Phan, and Wright 2018).

Semarang as one of the main tourist destinations in Central Java has great potential in developing a competitive tourism sector, both at the national and international levels. The diversity of tourist attractions, ranging from historical, cultural, and natural, to culinary tourism, become an important asset in strengthening the city's appeal. However, there are still various challenges in the development of human resources in the tourism sector in Semarang. Some of these are the lack of proper training, lack of knowledge about global tourism trends, as well as limitations in the application of digital technology to support tourism operations. Therefore, a targeted and strategic effort is needed in the development of human resources to increase the resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations in Semarang.

The importance of human resources in the tourism sector lies in how a destination provides excellent service, Human resources plays a key role in the success of service delivery. (Reisinger, Michael, and Hayes 2019). The main key for tourism and the creative economy to survive during a pandemic is that the human resources of the tourist industry must have the ability to aim for the future (*futurity*) (Wardani 2020); The ability to adapt to digital change both in communicating with the market and in service within the destination (Pratiwi, Hartono, et al. 2020a), Innovation in response to changes in the tourist market (Windi N. R. Wardhani and Widodo 2020) and good collaboration with that sector (Orchiston and Higham 2016). Because, now the people are starting to change, and accompanied by tourism trends that have shifted. The pandemic caused tourism trends to change, such as holidays without much contact with others to stay safe, for example, *staycation* (Pratiwi, Rama, and Sulistiyanti 2021).

This research aims to examine the role of human resources in resilience efforts towards competitive tourist destinations in Semarang, focusing on how human resources can be optimized to face these challenges. Thus, it is expected that the results of this research can contribute to the formulation of a more effective, sustainable, and highly competitive tourism development strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Human Resource Management

The existence of human resources plays an important role in the development of tourism (Islam et al. 2024). Tourism human resources include tourists or tourists and workers. The role of human resources as workers includes those in government agencies, employers who determine the satisfaction and quality of workers, experts and professionals who improve the quality of tourism,

and the people around the tourist area who contribute to the comfort and satisfaction of tourists.

According to Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, human resources related to tourism include various tourist activities supported by facilities and services from the community, entrepreneurs, government, and local governments. Tourism includes all the activities of multidimensional and multi-disciplinary tourism, involving interaction between tourists, local communities, governments, and entrepreneurs. The tourism industry is a collection of businesses that produce goods and/or services to meet the needs of tourists.

Thus, tourism human resources are all human aspects that support tourism activities, both tangible and intangible, to meet the needs of tourists and have a positive impact on the economy, welfare, and environmental and cultural sustainability in the tourist area. Tourism depends on human interaction as tourists and tourist service providers, making the human aspect the main driving force of this industry (Irhamni, M.R and Astuti, W.B 2024).

Human resources are an important factor in advancing the tourism sector because people are a vital resource in most organizations, especially service-based ones (Idriz and Geshkov 2023). In management, HR planning determines the needs of an effective and efficient workforce. Human resource management includes recruitment, training, awarding, and performance assessment (Bakirova Oynura 2022). Human resources management functions include planning, organizing, directing, and controlling, as well as operational functions such as procurement, development, compensation, integration, maintenance, and termination of employment (Dutch 2013). The role of HR management is to ensure a quality workforce that can help realize the organization's vision and goals, and ensure that the organizational functions run in balance and effectively. HR Management is a set, process, and strategic activity designed to support business goals by integrating business and individual needs (Rivai, Gani, and Murfat 2019). So, tourism HR management is a process of managing the workforce in the tourism sector that includes planning, organizing, directing, controlling, procurement, development, compensation, integration, maintenance, and termination of employment to ensure qualified HR meets the needs of tourists and supporting the sustainability and competitiveness of tourist destinations.

Competent human resources, which is a workforce that has good skills, knowledge, and attitude, able to provide quality services to tourists (Khurana and Ataniyazova 2024a) which in turn increases the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists (Truong et al. 2020). Tourist satisfaction is one of the main factors in creating a positive image of the tourist destination and distinguishes it from competitors (Yu and Goulden 2006). In addition, competent human resources are also able to innovate in creating attractive and unique tourist products, which can increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations in the global market (Windi N R Wardhani and Widodo 2020). Thus, competent human resources not only play a role in improving the quality of service but also in the development of effective products and marketing strategies, thus overall increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

Role of Leadership and Management in Resiliency of Tourist Destination

Leadership and management play a central role in building the resilience and competitiveness of tourist destinations (Zhang, Xie, and Huang. 2024; Irhamni, M. R., et al. 2024). Effective leaders begin by formulating a clear vision and adaptive strategy, which allows the destination to face challenges and take advantage of opportunities optimally (Hoang et al. 2021). Quick and appropriate decisions in

crises or market changes maintain operational continuity and minimize negative impacts (Nurhidayati, Wijayanti, and Ratnasari 2020).

Good leadership also focuses on building strong and trained teams, which improves an organization's ability to adapt and compete (Pratiwi and Widodo 2021; Irhamni, M. R., et al. 2024). Efficient resource management, including human resources and infrastructure, maximizes potential and supports innovations that enrich the tourist experience and maintain relevance in the global market (Wardhani 2020). The involvement of various stakeholders in planning and decision-making creates inclusive and sustainable solutions. Leadership with a crisis management plan and a good recovery strategy ensures that destinations can recover quickly and reduce long-term impact (Irhamni, M. R., et al. 2024).

Effective leadership involves planning and implementing a thorough emergency plan, including risk identification, response procedures, and team training for emergencies (Karp 2020). When a crisis such as a natural disaster or a market change occurs, a good adaptation strategy allows the destination to adjust operations quickly and efficiently. It includes flexibility in product offerings, policy and procedure adjustments, as well as transparent communication with travelers and stakeholders. The use of technology to monitor and evaluate crises in real time also supports effective adaptation (Stankov and Gretzel 2020). With a proactive approach to crisis management and good adaptability, tourist destinations can reduce negative impacts and accelerate recovery, while strengthening resilience and competitiveness in the global market.

Communication, Coordination, and Ability to Establish Partnerships

Effective communication and coordination in the management of tourism human resources depends on good networking or networking capabilities (Pratiwi, Hartono, et al. 2020b). In the tourism industry, a strong network allows a variety of parties - including destination managers, service providers, governments, and local communities - to collaborate harmoniously (Wardhani, Purnomo, and Pratiwi 2023). Good communication through the network ensures that information related to policies, procedures, and operational changes is delivered clearly and on time, reducing potential misunderstandings, and increasing transparency and trust among all stakeholders (Banaeianjahromi and Smolander 2019).

Coordination through the network also ensures that various activities, such as training, service standards, and responses to needs and challenges, are carried out with optimal synergy (Benjamin and Kline 2019). The network's capabilities strengthen collaboration and integration between various parties, enabling tourism HR to work synergistically, improve service quality, optimize resource use, and create a satisfying and highly competitive experience (Nguyen, Johnson, and Young 2022). With effective networking, travel destinations can strengthen partnerships, address challenges collectively, and better take advantage of existing opportunities (Zemła 2016).

Innovation and Technology in Increasing Human Resource Capacity

The use of digital technology in training and human resources development has become an important factor in improving competence and efficiency in the tourism industry (Mohamed Battour et al. 2022). Using e-learning platforms, virtual simulations, and mobile applications, training is easily and flexibly accessible, enabling tourism HR to acquire the latest skills and knowledge without geographical restrictions (Tiago et al. 2020). Digital technologies also enable learning tailored to individual needs, such as interactive training modules and video-based materials that facilitate the understanding of complex concepts (Alford and

Jones 2020; Pencarelli 2020a). By utilizing this technology, tourism organizations can ensure that their human resources are constantly evolving and ready for the dynamic challenges of the industry.

Innovation in tourism services supported by trained HR contributes significantly to the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Booyens 2014). Skilled HR can utilize the latest technology to create a more engaging and personalized travel experience (Malheiro 2020). For example, the use of augmented reality (AR) in virtual tours, mobile apps for travel guides, and an efficient online reservation system can improve the visitor experience and make the service more responsive to their needs. This technology not only enriches the travel experience but also improves operational efficiency and customer satisfaction, which in turn improves the reputation and attractiveness of the destination (Ivanov and Webster 2017).

Examples of the application of technology in the management of successful tourist destinations can be found in various global case studies. For example, the city of Barcelona has used a data-driven technology platform to manage the flow of tourists and optimize the city's services. Geospatial information systems and data analytics are used to monitor visitor density, identify behavior patterns, and plan better management strategies. In addition, destinations such as the Singapore Tourism Board use mobile apps and chatbots to provide accurate and responsive information to tourists. The successful application of this technology shows how the integration of digital technology in the management of tourist destinations can improve efficiency, improve the visitor experience, and drive sustainable tourism growth.

Competitiveness of tourist destinations

Competitive destinations are tourist destinations that can provide more value to the destination as a difference from its competitors (Ham, Koo, and Chung 2020; Windi N. R. Wardhani and Widodo 2020); It provides more value to the tourist experience, thus encouraging the intention to share on social media (Wardhani et al. 2020), can adapt to change without leaving the elements of heritage and history (Windi N.R. Wardani 2020), Developing tourism with principles **triple bottom line sustainability** so it doesn't lead to *overtourism* (Windi N.R. Wardani 2020).

The government awarded the Competitiveness Index 10 Destinations of Indonesian Tourism Priority intending to inventory any area that has given high effort and attention to the development of tourism, and areas that are not expected to able to maximize mining so that they are also able to be competitive. The assessment refers to the *global Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (TTCI) World Economic Forum* dan the *United Nations World Organization*, adapted to the conditions in Indonesia. Several other indicators are also applied, including policy support (tourism priorities, regional openness, price competitiveness, environment sustainability), tourism enabler (business environment, security, health and hygiene, human and labor, information technology readiness), infrastructure (airport infrastructure, port, and land infrastructure, tourism service infrastructure), and natural & cultural resources (natural resources and cultural resources).

Currently, Indonesia's tourism competitiveness is ranked in the world's 50th, from the previous position in the 70th. Indonesia continues to strive to be the best, so in 2019 Indonesia is targeted to be in the 30th position by continuously improving weaknesses such as tourism infrastructure, ICT infrastructure, health and hygiene, and accessibility, especially flight connectivity, seat capacity, and direct flights. The competitive strategy of tourism destinations can be achieved by optimizing the role of the strategic functions of the destination, including the capabilities and capacity of human resources (Zacca and Dayan 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with an inductive approach that is descriptive. This qualitative approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of human resources in the field of tourism. This type of research aims to describe in detail the phenomena studied without quantitatively testing the hypothesis.

As a data collection instrument, this research utilizes library studies and field studies. Data collection techniques involve field research to obtain primary data as well as library research to collect secondary data. The combination of these two techniques allows researchers to get more comprehensive and in-depth information about the problem being studied.

The research location is selected with consideration of relevance and support for the research objectives. This research was carried out in Semarang Regency, especially in the Semarang Regency Tourism Office and other related agencies that play a role in the tourism sector. The selection of this location is done to ensure that the data collected reflects the real situation and problems relevant to the development of human resources in the context of tourism in the area.

Methods and indicators of measuring HR performance in the tourism sector involve a systematic approach to assess the extent to which staff can meet organizational standards and goals (Huang and Coelho 2017). Common methods include competency-based assessment, 360-degree evaluation, and performance measurement based on specific KPIs (Key Performance Indicators). Performance indicators that are often applied include customer satisfaction levels, speed and quality of service, and ability to handle crises (Peng and Tzeng 2019). Using this method, tourism organizations can get a thorough picture of HR performance and identify areas that require further improvement or development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Human Resource Tourism Resilience

Tourism resources refer to assets that can be converted into tourism products to meet the recreational demands of tourists and generate income for the destination (Rosalina et al. 2023). In the context of wider tourism, academics suggest the use of "value-added" elements to enhance existing resources, such as natural and cultural resources (Timothy 2019). Natural resources are defined as elements of landscapes and landscapes that exist naturally, while cultural resources are made up of historical and artistic remains that are considered valuable and significant to a group or community (Reflis et al. 2024). Natural and cultural resources can be improved through a combination of tangible elements, such as infrastructure, defined as physical facilities built by humans and facilities that can meet the needs of tourists (Cristiano et al. 2020), or intangible elements, such as experience and service (Kim 2009).

In Semarang, the natural resources and culture of the city are the main tourist forces, including the Old City Area, Lawing Sewu, Marina Beach, and Sam Poo Kong (Irhamni, M. R., et al. 2024). The Old City, for example, as a colonial cultural heritage, has been optimized as a leading tourist destination through building restoration and improved tourist support facilities. Similarly, Lawang Sewu and Sam Poo Kong, which are rich in history and cultural values, have managed to attract tourists through the provision of an interesting tourism experience. Improving the quality of human resources in these locations is very important in improving the competitiveness of the destination because quality service and the ability to adapt

to changing tourist demands will have a significant impact on the level of tourist satisfaction.

As a capability that can develop, employee resilience has similarities with ecological resilience in terms of the need for learning processes and adaptation to changes in the external environment (Amore, Prayag, and Hall 2018). However, in the absence of a theory and supporting evidence, the comparison between these two concepts is not effective in understanding that vulnerability and resilience are interrelated in the context of work (Prayag, Muskat, and Dassanayake 2024a). Employee resilience requires an understanding of the various demands of the job and the recognition that disruptive events vary in frequency, intensity, and duration, which affects resilience capacity (Azhari et al. 2021). Nonetheless, employee resilience can be considered an important resource for dealing with challenging work environments (as resilient employees tend to be better able to cope with stress, recover from adversity, and take advantage of challenges as opportunities to thrive (Chen et al. 2022).

In the case of tourism in Semarang City, especially in strategic locations such as Old City, Lawang Sewu, and Marina Beach, the resilience of human resources in the face of various challenges such as increasing the number of tourists, changing post-pandemic travel patterns, to competition with other destinations, is crucial. Tough tourism HR is expected to be able to innovate and maintain excellent service even amid uncertain conditions. Therefore, the development of human resources resilience in the tourism sector of Semarang City needs to be focused on continuous training, increased capacity for adaptation to digital technology, and crisis management to ensure that this destination remains competitive.

Research on employee resilience in the tourism industry highlights factors such as social capital (Singh, Sihag, and Dhoopar 2023), The effectiveness of crisis leadership, as well as openness and resistance to change (Asamoah Antwi et al. 2024) resilience psychology (Singh et al. 2023) and HR practice ((Asamoah Antwi et al. 2024). Employee resilience is increasingly noticed in the literature of tourism organizations and studies (Hartwig et al. 2020).

Human Resources Challenges and Opportunities in Tourism

The desire to vacation without meeting many others also changed the trend of travel package services. Mass tourism began to be abandoned and switched to private tourism (Jamal and Budke 2020). The tourism industry must start providing exclusive tour packages or mini groups so that tourists feel safer and minimize the potential for virus transmission during the holidays. In Semarang City, the application of private tourism can be seen in various leading tourist destinations, where limited tourism services for small groups began to be applied. Tourists in Semarang also began to offer exclusive packages that are more personal, especially in locations with high historical value, to provide a more intimate and safe experience for tourists.

In terms of tourist destinations, tourism players must take advantage of technological innovations that play an important role in supporting the tourism trends that are shifting during the pandemic, one of which is virtual tourism for online holidays (Pratiwi, Wardhani, and Kusumaningrum 2020). The shifting trend of tourism in Indonesia also has an impact on some restaurant businesses. To survive, of course, the restaurant industry must innovate in line with the shift in behavior and habits of consumers (Pencarelli 2020b). For example, using online food services or takeaway or applying the concept of outdoor dining by applying contactless service in payment.

The shift in tourism trends in Indonesia also has an impact on several restaurant businesses in Semarang City. Restaurants that are usually dependent on tourists, such as in the Simpang Lima and Old City areas, are starting to innovate with online food or takeaway services, as well as applying the concept of outdoor dining with contactless service in payment (Pencarelli, 2020).

Various efforts have been made to save Indonesian tourism. There are three "rescue phases" carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Industry (Kemenparekraf / Baparekraf) namely emergency response, restoration, and normalization (Rusiawan 2020). The Emergency Response phase focuses on health, including the initiation of social protection programs, encouraging increased creativity and productivity during the WFH, improved coordination of the tourism crisis with affected tourist destinations, and recovery preparations. The recovery period is marked by the opening of Indonesian tourist attractions in stages, ranging from the application of the CHSE protocol (cleanliness, health, safety, environmental sustainability) in tourist attractions to supporting the optimization of MICE activities (conferences, incentives, conventions, exhibitions) in Indonesia. The last phase is the normalization phase where in this phase, the Government prepares the destination to implement the CHSE protocol, encourage discounts or promo travel packages, and MICE to attract market interest. The three phases must be implemented in an integrated and collaborative manner with the relevant sectors.

In the tourism industry, the challenges faced by human resources (HR) are very diverse and complex. One of the major challenges is rapid technological change, which requires rapid adaptation of workers to effectively utilize new tools and systems (Khurana and Ataniyazova 2024b). In Semarang, this challenge is evident, especially in terms of the digitization of tourism. Many tourism workers in destinations such as Old City and Lawang Sewu have to adapt to the use of digital technologies, such as online payment systems and digital marketing, to meet the demand of tourists who are increasingly accustomed to digital services.

In addition, the changing market and dynamic tourist trends demand HR to keep up with the latest developments and adjust services according to the changing needs and preferences of tourists (Ngoc Su et al. 2021). The global pandemic is also a significant challenge, affecting operations and demanding new skills in crisis management and health protocols (Prayag, Muskat, and Dassanayake 2024).

However, behind these challenges, there is a great opportunity to improve the capacity and quality of human resources in tourism. With the advancement of technology, HR has the opportunity to improve skills through digital training and e-learning, which can expand their knowledge and expertise in a more flexible and accessible way (Pencarelli 2020a). Another opportunity lies in the development of innovation in tourist services, which can enrich the tourist experience and create a competitive advantage (Gretzel and Stankov 2021). Research and implementation of better HR practices, such as effective leadership and good crisis management, can strengthen HR resilience and performance (Khurana and Ataniyazova 2024b; Irhamni, M. R., et al. 2024).

HR Development and Training Strategy

Training and skills development programs for workers in the tourism sector play an important role in improving the quality of services and the competitiveness of tourist destinations (Viterouli et al. 2023). The program is designed to train employees in a variety of necessary aspects, such as communication skills, customer service management, and the use of the latest technology. This training not only helps workers to adapt to the constantly changing trends and needs of the market but also improves their ability to face the challenges that may arise (Deale

2015). With better skills, workers can provide a more satisfying and adequate travel experience, which in turn can improve the reputation and appeal of tourist destinations.

Formal and non-formal education also has a crucial role in improving the competence of tourism HR. Formal education, such as a program of study at a college or university, provides a foundation of in-depth knowledge and skills about the tourism industry. Meanwhile, non-formal education, such as short courses, seminars, and skill-based training, offers flexibility and the opportunity to acquire practical knowledge relevant to industry needs. These two types of education complement each other and ensure that workers have the skills needed to adapt to change and innovate in their work (Malheiro 2020).

Collaboration between government, industry, and educational institutions is key to the development of human resources in the tourism sector (Wardhani, Purnomo, Pratiwi, et al. 2023). The government can play a role as a facilitator by providing policy, regulation, and financial support for training programs. The industry, on the other hand, can provide practical insights and specific needs that the training must meet, as well as provide an internship or job opportunity for participants. Educational institutions serve as providers of training and educational materials that follow industry standards. This collaboration ensures that the training provided is relevant, up-to-date, and able to meet real needs in the field, thus creating a more skilled and ready workforce to face the demands of the tourism industry.

CONCLUSION

Tourism is considered an important sector to drive economic growth, reduce unemployment, and create business opportunities. In the face of changing global trends and challenges, competent and trained human resources have a vital role to play in ensuring the sustainability of the tourism sector. Semarang City has great potential in terms of diversity of tourist attractions such as Old City, Lawang Sewu, and Sam Poo Kong, but still faces challenges in human resources development, including lack of adequate training and lack of use of digital technology.

Good HR development involves continuous training and adaptation to modern technology, which can improve the quality of service and the attractiveness of tourist destinations. In addition, effective leadership, technological innovation, and collaboration between governments, industries, and educational institutions play a critical role in supporting human resources development. With the right strategy, tourist destinations such as Semarang City are expected to be able to compete at the national and international levels, face the challenges that exist, and create a high-quality tourist experience.

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