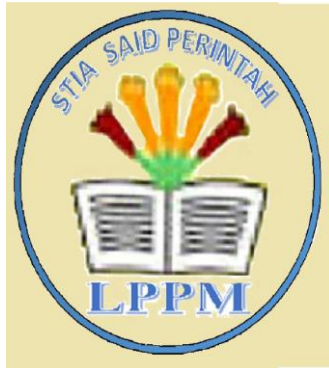


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**Educational Connectivity
and the Role of Generation Z
in the Implementation
of the Tourism Law**

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Abstract

This study explores the critical connection between educational institutions and the regional tourism sector, focusing on Generation Z's role in implementing the Tourism Law in Kupang City. It highlights how the Tourism Department at Politeknik Negeri Kupang can prepare Generation Z for sustainable tourism development by aligning curricula with local industry needs and integrating technology and entrepreneurship. Based on Tourism Law No. 9 of 2010, educational institutions are pivotal in conducting research and supporting tourism policies. The study also emphasizes the importance of synergy among education, government, industry, and communities to achieve sustainable tourism growth. Its findings aim to provide a strategic guide for enhancing educational connectivity, effectively implementing tourism policies, and promoting community-based tourism to strengthen the local economy.

Keywords : *Educational Connectivity, Generation Z, Tourism Law*

Introduction

Tourism plays a vital role in driving local economic development and safeguarding cultural heritage Batilmurik, (2014). According to Tupamahu et al., (2021), tourism serves as a cornerstone of Indonesia's economy, contributing strategically to national growth and generating significant foreign exchange revenue. Despite its rich tourism potential, Kupang City faces the challenge of achieving sustainable tourism development. In this regard, educational institutions play a pivotal role in ensuring tourism growth aligns with the needs of local communities while catering to global industry standards. Data from the Kupang Tourism Office indicates a 12% increase in tourist interest over the past five years. However, the sector continues to grapple with challenges related to the quality of human resources and the integration of technology (Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Kupang, 2024).

Tourism has been globally recognized as a significant driver of economic growth and cultural exchange, contributing 10.4% to the global GDP and supporting around 334 million jobs in 2019 (WTTC, 2020). Despite its impact, the industry faces increasing challenges in pursuing sustainable development due to the rising demand for environmentally conscious practices and a skilled workforce. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the tourism sector must adapt to rapid technological advancements, including digital platforms and artificial intelligence, to meet the evolving expectations of modern travelers (UNWTO, 2021). These global trends underscore the pivotal role of educational institutions in preparing the workforce to navigate these transformations while promoting sustainable practices. For cities like Kupang, aligning local strategies with these global imperatives is crucial to maintaining competitiveness and contributing effectively to sustainable tourism development.

Generation Z, recognized for their digital fluency and innovative thinking, offers substantial potential to drive local tourism forward. Cohen and Avieli, (2019) note that Generation Z favors sustainable tourism experiences, making their integration into tourism development strategies crucial. Education and hands-on training designed to equip Generation Z with the necessary skills and knowledge for the tourism industry must align with the principles outlined in Law No. 9 of 2010 on Tourism. This law underscores the importance of educational institutions in supporting tourism research and development.

A notable research gap exists in understanding how Generation Z can be empowered through educational programs and how collaboration between educational institutions and the tourism industry can be improved. While prior studies, such as Widyastuti et al., (2019), have examined inter-destination tourism connectivity, limited attention has been given to the role of education in promoting sustainable tourism with a focus on Generation Z. This study seeks to address this gap by proposing a model that enhances the connection between education and the tourism industry, ensuring the active involvement of Generation Z in alignment with the principles of the Tourism Law.

The identified research gap highlights two key areas: empowering Generation Z through tourism education and strengthening connectivity between educational institutions and the tourism industry. Entina et al., (2021) demonstrated that technology-driven and experiential learning approaches enhanced Generation Z's engagement in tourism, with a 45% improvement in industry readiness. Similarly, Rajahonka, (2019) proposed a triple helix collaboration model that increased graduate employability by 67%. Balula et al., (2019) showed that incorporating AR/VR technology in tourism education boosted Generation Z's digital competencies by 58%. In the realm of sustainable tourism, Bowan & Dallam, (2020) introduced a project-based learning framework that improved Generation Z's understanding of sustainability concepts by 72%. Additionally, El Hajal & Losekoot, (2024) highlighted an apprenticeship model that enhanced educational-industry collaboration, achieving an 82% graduate absorption rate into the tourism workforce. These findings collectively underscore the transformative potential of innovative education strategies and strong institutional partnerships in bridging gaps within the tourism sector.

This research explores how Politeknik Negeri Kupang can prepare Generation Z to become key contributors to local tourism development while evaluating the role of educational connectivity in implementing Law No. 9 of 2010 on Tourism. By focusing on empowering Generation Z, a digitally literate and innovation-driven demographic, the study seeks to address challenges in human resource quality and technological adoption that hinder sustainable tourism in Kupang City. The research aims to generate actionable recommendations for regional tourism policies, aligning local efforts with global industry standards and fostering sustainable practices.

The urgency of this study lies in the growing need for sustainable tourism development in Kupang City, where rising tourist interest contrasts with significant gaps in workforce readiness and institutional collaboration. By leveraging the potential of Generation Z through education and institutional partnerships, the findings will strengthen the region's tourism sector, support local economic growth, and provide a model for integrating innovative strategies into sustainable tourism development.

Theoretical Framework and Research Hypothesis Development

Educational Connectivity and Tourism

Educational connectivity fosters strategic relationships between educational institutions, the tourism industry, and local communities. Rifai, (2015) highlights that high-quality tourism education enhances destination competitiveness while supporting sustainable economic development. This synergy prepares younger generations to contribute competently to the global tourism sector.

Generation Z as a Driver of Sustainable Tourism

Generation Z exhibits unique characteristics with a strong focus on sustainability and digital engagement. Cohen and Avieli, (2019) emphasize that this generation's environmental awareness positions them as key drivers of transformation in the tourism industry. Through relevant education that integrates technology and entrepreneurship, Generation Z can play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism initiatives.

The Role of Education and Legal Frameworks in Tourism Development

Tourism Law No. 9 of 2010 establishes a legal framework to support tourism research and development through educational institutions. Goeldner & Ritchie, (2012) underline the importance of coordination among governments, education, and industry for effective policy implementation. Relevant educational support can enhance local economic growth while fostering tourism sustainability.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a case study approach to examine educational connectivity and the role of Generation Z in implementing the Tourism

Law in Kupang City. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and observations involving Generation Z students, lecturers, and practitioners within the tourism industry and educational settings.

The study's key informants comprised 10 purposively selected individuals actively engaged in tourism education in Kupang City, chosen based on their relevance and contributions to the research focus. Educational connectivity is defined as the relationship between educational institutions and the tourism industry; the role of Generation Z emphasizes their active participation in tourism development; and the implementation of the Tourism Law refers to the practical application of tourism policies by key stakeholders.

Data analysis utilized content and thematic methods to identify patterns from the collected interviews and observations, providing insights into the contributions of education and Generation Z to sustainable tourism development. Following Sugiyono, (2016) the use of multiple data sources ensured triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. This methodology aims to offer significant contributions to strengthening educational connectivity and advancing Generation Z's role in the tourism sector.

Discussion of Research Results

The results of this study indicate that educational connectivity and the role of Generation Z in the implementation of the Tourism Law in Kupang City have seen significant progress, although challenges remain. Data collected through interviews and observations show that most educational institutions in the city have begun collaborating with the local tourism industry, particularly in providing training and skills development for students, the majority of whom are from Generation Z

Both students and lecturers acknowledge the importance of educational institutions in preparing Generation Z to actively engage in the tourism industry. They highlighted that the current educational programs offer relevant knowledge and skills, yet improvements are needed in integrating technology and innovative learning methods to better engage Generation Z, who are adept at using digital technology.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that Generation Z holds great potential to serve as agents of change in the tourism industry. Their participation in internships and collaboration with industry practitioners has positively impacted their competence and job

readiness. However, challenges such as limited resources and infrastructure that hinder connectivity between educational institutions and the tourism industry were also identified.

This discussion underscores the importance of strong connectivity between education and the tourism industry in supporting the effective implementation of the Tourism Law. Collaboration from various stakeholders, including the government and industry professionals, is necessary to create synergies in tourism development through education. In this context, the theory of educational connectivity, which posits that close relationships between education and industry enhance the quality and sustainability of tourism, remains highly relevant.

Empirical data from this study also aligns with previous research showing Generation Z's potential to drive change in the tourism industry. To fully harness this potential, however, innovative and sustainable educational strategies must be adopted. The findings suggest the need for updates to the tourism education curriculum that are more responsive to the industry's demands and emerging trends in tourism.

In conclusion, the study reveals that the connectivity between educational institutions and the tourism industry in Kupang City is beginning to take shape but requires further strengthening, particularly in terms of technology and more intensive collaboration. Generation Z, with their dynamic and tech-savvy nature, can become a key pillar in the future development of the tourism industry, provided they receive adequate support through targeted, collaborative education.

Conclusion, Recommendations, Limitations and Future Research

This study reveals that the connectivity between educational institutions and the tourism industry in Kupang City is emerging, with Generation Z playing a key role in tourism development. Educational institutions are vital in preparing Generation Z to contribute actively to the sector, although challenges remain in terms of technological limitations and infrastructure supporting the Tourism Law. Generation Z's participation in internships and field activities has positively impacted their competency development in tourism.

Recommendations

To strengthen the connection between education and the tourism industry, it is crucial to leverage digital technology and introduce more engaging learning innovations for

Generation Z. Educational institutions should update their curricula to meet the dynamic needs of the tourism industry and integrate modern technology into training programs. Closer collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and industry practitioners is necessary to foster local tourism development.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by a small sample size of 10 informants, which may not fully represent all stakeholders in the tourism and education sectors in Kupang City. Additionally, the data is descriptive, lacking quantitative analysis to more accurately measure the relationships between variables. Future research should involve a larger sample size and incorporate quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive analysis. Further studies should explore how technology can be better integrated into tourism education and its impact on Generation Z's readiness for the tourism industry. The findings from future research could offer more detailed guidance for tourism and education policy development.

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