



Tourism Entrepreneurship: Empirical Analysis in a Super-Priority Destination in Indonesia

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Received: March 14, 2025

Revised: May 1, 2025

Accepted: May 12, 2025

Online: June 12, 2025

Abstract

This article explores the portrait of tourism entrepreneurship in the context of a super-priority destination. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining a survey of 73 tourism entrepreneurs and an in-depth interview with four entrepreneurs representing the dominant business sectors of food and beverage service, creative business, accommodation, and tourist attraction within the destination. The findings revealed that most businesses were relevant to food and beverage and creative initiatives. They were relatively mature in the tourism business, with the primary motive for the business opportunity being financial benefits. The critical business challenges identified were inadequate marketing prowess, reduction in demand, shortage of human skills and lack of collaboration among stakeholders. In general, the current development of tourism entrepreneurship in this area is in a phase of slight increase. The findings contributed to the enrichment of the literature on tourism entrepreneurship. This study also supported business development, informed policymakers, and promoted sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: *Entrepreneur, Super-Priority Tourism Destination, Tourism Development, Tourism, Tourism Entrepreneurship*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is essential in many developing countries (Pham & Nugroho, 2022). Among Indonesia's top industries, tourism contributed approximately 5.8% of the national GDP in 2023 (WTTC, 2018). In 1970, the government formed the Bali Tourist Development Corporation (BDTC), and Bali Island was selected as a pilot project for tourism development due to its popularity among foreign tourists. While this island played an important role in developing Indonesia as a tourist destination, the government perceived the need to diversify the country's tourism sector and promote other destinations. The government of Indonesia is currently developing the five super-priority destinations to diversify tourism offerings and promote other Indonesian destinations. This initiative is a significant step toward creating a more diverse and competitive tourism industry.

The tourism industry has proven to be a fertile field for entrepreneurial ventures (Özdemir, 2023). Human needs drive tourism activities and desires to travel and entrepreneurship opportunities to respond to complex human needs. In order to understand entrepreneurship within this sector, it is important to understand the industry, which is more complex than other sectors. Entrepreneurship is the process of identifying opportunities and creating and operating businesses and organizations; thus, it is a significant force behind the evolution of tourist destinations (Elia et al., 2020). The type of entrepreneurship involvement in the tourism industry depends on several factors, including the characteristics of entrepreneurs, environmental factors, and the stage of destination development (Sigala, 2020). By understanding these factors, entrepreneurs can better understand their potential and business strategies. In addition, tourism businesses encounter many barriers that hinder their growth.

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Furthermore, they found barriers to financial problems, such as a lack of financial capital to venture into daily business operations and a shortage of knowledge on approaching financial sponsors. By understanding the constraints, tourism businesses can develop strategies to mitigate risks and achieve business success. Many scholars have identified factors that contribute to entrepreneurial success in different industries. The studies include the entrepreneurs' characteristics and personal traits (Palmer et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2024), ability to learn from failure (Liu et al., 2019; Li et al., 2024), and issues related to entrepreneurial businesses (Amouri et al., 2021; Jaim, 2024).

While research on entrepreneurship in general has been significant, studies particularly focused on entrepreneurship in the tourism sector are relatively limited (Solvoll et al., 2015). Along with this small percentage, many researchers have analyzed the portrait of tourism entrepreneurship, covering the characteristics of tourism businesses and challenges. Scholars have concluded that the profiles of entrepreneurs and their business features are regarded as pivotal forces in gaining business success (Lourenço et al., 2024), and business failures come from internal and external factors (Sharma & Knollenberg, 2020; Safari & Das, 2022; Crisologo et al., 2024). Previous studies in tourism entrepreneurship have focused on analysing tourism business profiles and characteristics and the challenges faced in developing tourism businesses. However, a significant gap exists in research that comprehensively integrates the analysis of tourism business profiles, characteristics, challenges, and developments. Given the importance of a holistic understanding of the dynamics of tourism entrepreneurship, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting an empirical analysis of super-priority Indonesian destinations. This study is expected to provide more comprehensive insights into the factors that influence tourism business development and significantly contribute to sustainable tourism entrepreneurship in Indonesia. Therefore, this research attempted to fill in the gap and thus gain a better understanding of how tourism entrepreneurship is characterized and the challenges and development of tourism business activities in super-priority destinations in Indonesia.

The context of the tourist destination in this study is Samosir Island, a case study of Lake Toba, which has been designated a super-priority destination in Indonesia. It is a volcanic paradise island in the middle of Lake Toba, on the island of Sumatera, Indonesia. This island is recognized as Lake Toba's backbone and centre of tourism growth. Several efforts are being made to accelerate Lake Toba's priority destinations, including tourism entrepreneurship. While research on tourism entrepreneurship in Samosir has been contributing to the promotion of tourism growth, there is a need for more in-depth studies that focus on the portrait of the tourism business in this context. The selection of Samosir Island as the object of research in the study is based on several strategic considerations. First, Samosir is an integral part of the Lake Toba super priority destination, which the Indonesian government designates as a focus of national tourism development. This status signifies great potential for significant investments in infrastructure development and tourism promotion in the region. Second, Samosir has a unique Batak Toba cultural heritage and natural landscapes, making it a strong tourist attraction. The presence of Lake Toba and its rich cultural heritage creates a dynamic tourism entrepreneurship ecosystem, with businesses ranging from homestays and restaurants to tour providers and handicrafts. Third, despite their great potential, tourism entrepreneurs in Samosir face various challenges, including limited accessibility, inadequate infrastructure and intense competition. The empirical analysis in Samosir is expected to provide in-depth insights into the profile, characteristics, challenges and development of tourism businesses in super-priority destinations and provide recommendations for developing sustainable tourism entrepreneurship.

Given the background explained, this study aims to present a portrait of tourism entrepreneurship from the perspective of tourism owners or managers in the Lake Toba area, with

the objectives as follows: 1) identify the profile of tourism entrepreneurs and their business features, 2) describe the business challenges faced by tourism business owners/managers, and 3) analyze the tourism entrepreneurship development before and after Lake Toba was selected as a super-priority destination. The study results provide helpful information for both theory development and practice. By providing a complete portrait of tourism entrepreneurship, this research can contribute to a comprehensive and contextual theoretical framework development that can inform policy decisions, help the success of tourism entrepreneurs in a super-priority zone, and guide future research. From a practical view, this study provides insights for diverse stakeholders. By understanding the picture of tourism entrepreneurship, the findings can help policymakers and governments identify the needs and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the tourism areas when designing programs and regulations. The findings can also guide investors toward venture opportunities in super-priority destinations. Detailed information on tourism entrepreneurship can encourage entrepreneurs to build partnerships and knowledge sharing within a super-priority destination. This understanding can enlighten the development of programs and strategies to support a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Indonesia's super-priority destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite extensive studies related to tourism entrepreneurship, the theoretical concept of tourism entrepreneurship is complex (Alrawadieh et al., 2021; Manalu et al., 2024). The extant literature on tourism entrepreneurship has addressed various issues. At the micro level, previous studies have analyzed the motivations of tourism entrepreneurs to venture into tourism businesses (Wang et al., 2019; Fu et al., 2022). At the meso level, the investigations highlight the roles of tourism entrepreneurs in tourism destinations (Nordbø, 2022; Hajarrahmah et al., 2024) and the impact of tourism enterprises on the local community (Aquino, 2022; Zeng et al., 2024). At the macro level, these studies delve into several issues, such as how entrepreneurs endorse subsectors within the tourism-related sector (Ray & Mohapatra, 2023) and how to help tourism entrepreneurs (Page et al., 2017). However, more attention and understanding are still needed to explore the issue of how tourism entrepreneurship is portrayed in tourist destinations, as these two areas are interrelated. Tourism business depends on destination offerings, and destination development depends on the productive existence of entrepreneurial activities. Thus, this study investigates the portrait analysis of tourism entrepreneurship in a super-priority Indonesian destination.

Studies have found the importance of identifying the profiles of the firm owner/manager and their business features, one of which found that the involvement of entrepreneurs in the tourism industry is linked to the characteristics of the entrepreneur (Jaafar et al., 2015; Tajeddini et al., 2017). The most important elements of the demographic profile of tourism entrepreneurs are age, gender, experience, marital status, and motives for venturing into the business. Furthermore, the business characteristics are in the form of enterprise features, such as the type of business, duration of establishing a business, and mode of business. Some studies have argued that business characteristics correlate positively with business growth. For instance, education determines business opportunities and performance (He et al., 2024). Regarding the findings of academic scholars, they stated that the characteristics, including the profiles of business owners and operators, are regarded as a vital indicator of the success of the tourism business and industry (Agyeiwaah, 2019; Cunca et al., 2020).

Scholars have found various reasons for business failures, such as low entry barriers to the tourism business, which have made small and medium enterprises dominant, which place challenges on the funding and competence of the owners and managers (Mandl et al., 2016). Business failure is a complex phenomenon emerging from the interaction of internal weaknesses

within the business and external environmental conditions (Safari & Das, 2022; Crisologo et al., 2024). Also, Sharma & Knollenberg (2020) investigated that there are varied reasons for the firm failure, namely a shortage of internal the adaption to the external environment, which can lead to business failures—the barriers to business lead to business performance. However, the impeding factors are different in the distinct spatial scopes.

The tourism industry, which is related to change, development, innovation, and management, is associated with entrepreneurship (Jaafar et al., 2015; Güzel et al., 2021). In other words, entrepreneurship is a crucial driver of meeting expanding needs and expectations in the face of changing tourist demands. Considering its importance in the tourist destination, entrepreneurship in tourism is expected to develop in terms of quality and quantity. In Indonesia, the sustainability program for tourism is prioritized by speeding up the development of five super-priority tourist destinations. The government prioritizes speeding up the development of five super-priority tourist destinations, one of which is Lake Toba in North Sumatra. The development of tourism entrepreneurial activities is a driving force for the competitiveness of this programme. To create a business culture, tourism entrepreneurship requires integrating social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions. The following elements of tourism business climate require a flexible balance (McGehee & Kline, 2008): physical infrastructure, financial infrastructure, human capital, business support services, education and training assistance, governance, community, quality of life, and General Context.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used descriptive research to portray tourism entrepreneurship in the selected objects comprehensively. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for data collection to avoid any bias relevant to specific methods and to understand a complex social phenomenon. The data were collected using a questionnaire survey and an interview on the Samosir site from April 2022 to February 2023. In the first stage, a quantitative survey-based method was used for data collection. The target population of this study consisted of tourism entrepreneurs who operate businesses in the central tourism districts of Samosir Regency. The exact total number of tourism entrepreneurs in these particular areas is not available due to a combination of several factors, including the existence of a significant informal tourism sector with limited formal registration, potentially decentralized registration processes across various local government bodies, and the dynamic nature of businesses with frequent entries and exits. Furthermore, up-to-date registries for tourism entrepreneurs within these focused districts may not exist in a centralized format.

To overcome these limitations and ensure a diverse representation of tourism businesses within the study areas, the Regency Tourism and Culture Office distributed the questionnaires through recommendations and facilitation, leveraging their local knowledge and networks to reach a relevant cross-section of entrepreneurs. The questionnaires were distributed (online and in person) to 100 business owners/managers venturing into the tourism business. However, 27 questionnaires were unusable due to participants' unwillingness to participate in the survey and incompletely filled-out questions. Thus, the total number of responses was 73 persons. The sufficiency of the sample size for a descriptive study aiming to explore a comprehensive portrait of tourism entrepreneurship is supported by Fink's (2009) point that a sample exceeding 50 is often adequate for describing the characteristics of a group, specifically when dealing with relatively homogeneous populations or when the main goal is to identify the characteristics rather than make precise statistical inferences about a larger population. Given the focus on the study object and the challenges in determining the exact population size, a sample of 73 entrepreneurs provides a reasonable basis for identifying the key entrepreneurship characteristics and challenges within the accessible population (Cresswell & Plano, 2011). Furthermore, efforts were made to ensure a

diversity of businesses within the accessible population in these central districts.

The questionnaire, developed by the authors, covered three sections: the profiles of entrepreneurs and their business characteristics, business challenges, and entrepreneurship development before and after Lake Toba was selected as a super-priority destination. The authors developed the questionnaire to cover the profiles of entrepreneurs, business challenges, and conditions of entrepreneurship before and after Lake Toba was selected as a super-priority destination. The understanding of entrepreneurship adopted the entrepreneurial elements identified by [McGehee and Kline \(2008\)](#): physical infrastructure, financial infrastructure, human resources, education and assistance, governance, business support services, organizational capacity, marketing, community and cultural norms and general contexts.

The respondents indicated their business characteristics and challenges in the questionnaire by selecting and describing the answer options provided. For the questions about business conditions and development, the participants were selected from a three-point Likert scale: 1 (decrease/stagnant), 2 (no change/similar condition), and 3 (increase). After the survey, the interview was administered to four participants, purposefully selected from the dominant business sectors within the study area: food and beverage, accommodation, creative business, and tourist attractions. The purpose of the interview was to obtain more detailed elaborations on their survey responses, particularly focusing on the characteristics of their ventures (e.g., "Could you explain your tourism business in detail?"), the challenges they faced (e.g., "What are the challenges you have encountered?"), Moreover, the development of their businesses (e.g., "How has the tourism business development changed since Lake Toba became a super priority destination?"). During the interviews, the notes were taken in shorthand and tape-recorded with permission, and each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes. All the data from the questionnaires were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to generate percentages and medians. The transcriptions were rigorously compared with shorthand notes and audio recordings to evaluate accuracy. Detailed elaborations from the interview data supported the presentation of percentage and median results.

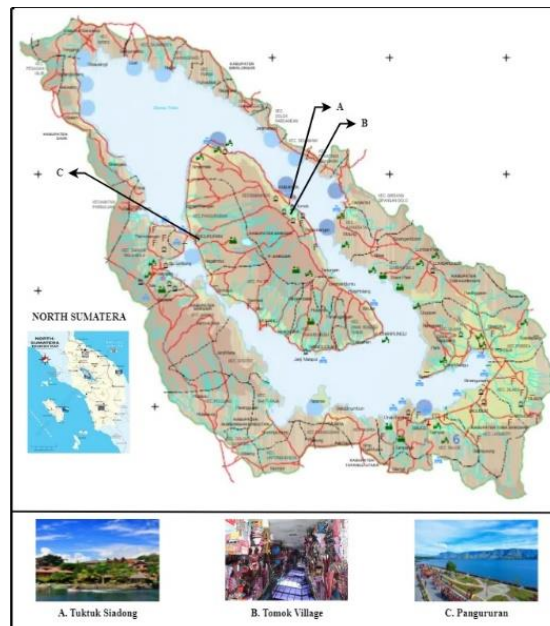


Figure 1. Study Site

Samosir Regency is on Lake Toba in North Sumatra, Indonesia, and its capital is Pangururan. As Lake Toba evolves into a super-priority national tourist destination, Samosir was selected for

significant tourism growth driven by active entrepreneurship. Tourism in the region began in the 1960s-1970s with Parapat as the initial hub, later expanding to Samosir Island, specifically Tuktuk and Tomok, which became key arrival points. Tomok served as a cultural gateway with attractions like the Batak Museum and traditional houses, while nearby Tuktuk offered a welcoming rest stop. Now, as a super-priority destination, Samosir focuses on the Simanindo (including Tuktuk and Tomok) and Pangururan districts, witnessing a diversification and increase in tourism businesses such as themed cafes, varied accommodations, expanded ferry ports, and diverse dining options, with the study focusing on these three key areas. These three sites were selected as the key areas for samosir's super-priority destination.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism Entrepreneurs' Profiles and Business Characteristics

Identifying the profile of tourism business owners and their business characteristics is essential for understanding the factors that contribute to the success of tourism ventures. In this study, the entrepreneurs' profiles (n=73) were analyzed based on gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, business motives, and prior experience. Concurrently, the business characteristics were examined by identifying business type, size, establishment year, and offered products/services. The demographic profiles of the tourism business owners and managers and their business features are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Characteristics of The Owners and Managers

Description	Sample Size (n=73)	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	38	57.1
Female	35	47.9
<i>Age</i>		
46-55	26	35.6
36-45	15	20.5
More than or equal to 56	13	17.8
26-35	10	13.7
Less than or equal to 25	9	12.3
<i>Attending training after starting the business</i>		
Rarely	29	39.7
Often	23	31.5
Never	21	28.8
<i>Entrepreneurship Experience</i>		
No	46	63
Yes	27	36
<i>Motives involved in business</i>		
Business Opportunity for Financial Benefits	32	43.8
Business Capability	28	38.4
Freedom	10	13.7
Work Termination	1	1.4
No other option	2	2.7
Others	2	2.7

Source: Survey Data

Table 2. Characteristics of The Business

Description	Sample Size (n = 73)	%
Tourism Business		
Food and beverage services	19	26.0%
Creative Business	19	26.0%
Accommodation	18	24.7%
Tourist Attraction	5	6.8%
Tour Guide Service	4	5.5%
Transportation	3	4.1%
Entertainment and Recreation	2	2.7%
Water Tourism Services	1	1.4%
Tourism Area Services	1	1.4%
Tourism Travel	1	1.4%
Tourism Consulting Services	-	-
Number of Years in Tourism Business		
More than 10	36	49.3%
Less than or equal to 3	24	32.9%
7-10	8	11.0%
4-6	5	6.8%
Mode of Operation		
The sole owner of business	56	76.7%
Joint owner/partner	17	23.3%
Number of Employees (in person)		
Less than or equal to 4	60	82.2%
5-19	10	13.7%
20-99	3	4.1%

Source: Survey Data

In-depth interviews with key participants from four dominant business sectors within the study area provided a detailed exploration and contextual understanding of the survey findings. The characteristics of the entrepreneurs and their businesses are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Characteristics of Entrepreneurs

Respondent	Business Sector	Gender	Age (year)
Respondent 1	Food and beverage products	Male	55
Respondent 2	Creative Business	Male	53
Respondent 3	Accommodation	Female	51
Respondent 4	Tourist Attraction	Female	49

Source: Survey Data

Characteristics of owners and managers

As shown in Table 1, most owners/managers (57.1%) were male, which is not surprising, considering the cultural norm of the regency applying a patriarchal system. This finding also reflects the impact of local culture where the male acts as the leader of the family and decision makers. Interestingly, the number of female entrepreneurs differs slightly (47.9 %). This information indicates that females in this regency have a promising potential to develop tourism as entrepreneurs. The results also revealed that the average age of owners/managers of tourism ventures was between 26 and 55 years old, reflecting quite a mature person opening their own

businesses. The young generation was also found, as the participants were less than 25 years old (12.3%). This number indicates that tourist destinations will open up business opportunities for this age.

Another interesting result is that 63% of respondents did not have experience in the tourism business, but this did not impede them from operating their venture. Admittedly, 36% of the participants had worked in the tourism business before starting on their current ventures. They worked in tourism areas in accommodation, food and drink, entertainment, and tour guide services. Although most respondents had yet to experience the tourism business, they rarely attended tourism-related training (39.7%) that could improve their ability to run their businesses. Their major reason is the funding limitation, in which most of the money obtained is spent to maintain their venture's existence. Even so, they always expect training from the government and academic support. However, the 'often' frequency of attending training still prevails with the percentage (31.5%). The numbers have increased recently due to the program for super-priority destinations.

When asked about the motives for opening the ventures, the respondents expressed various reasons. As shown in Table 1, most participants strove to engage in a business opportunity for financial benefit. Samosir Island, which is very close to Lake Toba, has tourism business potential due to its cultural uniqueness and authenticity. Infrastructure support aligns with government policy to form leading destinations that attract tourists. Subsequently, it creates many opportunities for the local community to establish businesses that fulfill the tourist desires. In addition, as freedom and autonomy are entrepreneurial characteristics, the participants responded that their reason for opening a tourism business is to be independent and desire to be their own boss (13.7%). They prefer to work without other interference. The other reason given by a few participants was work termination with no other option for work.

Characteristics of The Tourism Business

As presented in Table 2, the tourism business on this site has been developing, as indicated by the establishment of various tourism ventures. The two most significant segments in this sector are the food and beverage and creative business (each 26%), followed by the accommodation sector (24.7%). The tourism sector combines food and beverage, creative businesses, and accommodation groups, collectively making this sector's largest segment. In addition, the creative industry is the second largest business segment in this tourist destination. The forms of creative business found were souvenirs and crafts offering innovative cultural products and local performing arts, such as tor-tor dance, symbolizing the identity of the Batak tribe as a large tribe on this island.

Regarding the length of operation, most ventures have been in operation for more than 10 years, at a percentage of 49.3%. Unsurprisingly, business in this destination evolved in the 1970s, and the current ventures are based on family businesses. The children born into a family of business owners are expected to continue the business, and the sustainability depends on whether they want to be entrepreneurs. However, it is interesting to highlight that the second largest operational experience is labelled as a nascent or new venture in operation for less than three years (32.9%). This result explains the reason for Lake Toba's potential business as a super-priority destination. Furthermore, when the mode of operation was figured out, the findings showed that 76.7 % of participants were business owners, and the remaining 23.3%, were joint owners.

Regarding the number of persons employed, the tourism business is dominated by micro, small, and medium enterprises. This finding supports previous studies that have stated that the tourism sector is primarily identified by micro, medium, and small businesses (Peters et al., 2018). The low-cost entrance dominates small businesses. The local community needs more funds to venture into the business, which impacts the small number of staff required to run their daily business activities. Generally, they hire part-time workers during high seasons, such as during

school semester breaks and local religious holidays.

Business Challenges Faced by Entrepreneurs in The Tourism Sector

The business challenges were assessed in terms of marketing skills, financial constraints, demand fluctuations, human capital availability, collaboration efforts, digital support, the supportive environment, and other relevant aspects. The surveyed entrepreneurs reported various challenges hindering the performance and growth of their tourism ventures (Table 4. From the table, the five most critical business challenges identified by the owners/managers were: lack of marketing support and prowess (23.3%), financial constraints (18.2%), reduced demand (18.2%), insufficient human capital (11.4%), and limited collaboration with stakeholders including the government, academia, media, and the wider community (10.8%).

Table 4. Summary of Challenges in The Tourism Business

Business Challenges	% of businesses
Marketing prowess	23.3
Financial constraints	18.2
Reduction in demand	18.2
Lack of human capital	11.4
Lack of collaboration (government, academics, media, and society)	10.8
Lack of digital support	9.7
Lack of a supportive and clean environment	7.4
Other: infrastructure, materials	1.1
N = 73 businesses	100.0

Source: Survey Data

Business challenges are common barriers faced by business proprietors in the tourism destination. In this study, most respondents agreed that a lack of marketing prowess and support made it challenging to sustain a business. Recently employed marketing tools include social media, word-of-mouth, and government assistance. The Internet infrastructure has allowed companies to share their products and services through online media. However, their lack of engaging content is a constraint. They also expected more from government assistance in promoting products and services in each tourist destination.

The constraints of funding and reduction in demand were the most crucial problems (each 18.2%) after marketing. The financial barrier is a perennial problem for small business owners. In this context, most of those sampled financed their operations with personal savings, loans from formal banking, relatives/family, suppliers, informal moneylenders, and advanced payment from customers. This condition is supported by the respondent's statements such as,

"I use my funds to establish and operate the daily business activities, the revenue obtained is enough and even less to pay the following expenses or other new items, it exists as it is without hoping more expansion due to limited fund" - Respondent 2.

Following the conditions tourism owners face, the government and other financial supporters provided loan programs, one of which is called People Business Credit (KUR), with lower bank interest rates. However, although various programs are being offered to owners, many have not been able to obtain banking loans. Furthermore, respondents claimed the drop in tourist spending was due to the novel coronavirus, drastically reducing tourism demand.

The respondents also expressed their crucial challenge related to the lack of human capital.

In this study, most participants had family businesses with less tourism management experience. These conditions stress the need to have skills that affect business growth. During the interview, the study classified the skills needed: technical skills such as oral communication and technology. The second skill is business management skills, such as human relations, marketing, and negotiation. The third skill is entrepreneurial skills, which are vital for identifying opportunities, such as emotional and creative skills.

The next barrier is the lack of collaboration with other stakeholders, such as the government, academics, the community, and the media. Most respondents claimed they needed more government assistance to develop a tourism business. Among the government-relevant problems encountered by the respondents was the lack of program plans for training owners/managers. Most of the training did not align with the needs of the owners. Another challenge highlighted by the government was a lack of coordination of government rules and policies. The statement is similar to the respondents' responses:

"The updated regulations should be informed to us and the government should approach us whether the rules are suitable to us or not" - Respondent 1

"The specific rules and the programs were seldom informed to us" - Respondent 2

The respondents also stressed that other actors, such as academics, the local community and the media, should support the development of tourist businesses. Considering the barriers to tourism businesses, this study also found other challenges, such as a lack of digital support, a lack of clean environment and infrastructure, and difficulty obtaining materials.

Development of Tourism Entrepreneurship

To portray the climate of entrepreneurship, the authors employed the categories of tourism entrepreneurship described by [McGehee and Kline \(2008\)](#), namely, physical infrastructure, financial capital, coordination between businesspersons and other stakeholders, human resources, organizational capacity, and marketing. The questionnaires were distributed to the participants, asking about the current development of each entrepreneurial element compared to the condition before the super-priority destination. Each participant selected one of three options provided: option 1, meaning 'decrease'; option 2, meaning 'similar condition'; and option 3, meaning 'increase'. The data survey results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Tourism Business Development

Description	Median
Physical Infrastructure	3
Financial Capital	
Profit and Revenue	2
Fund Sponsor & Borrowing Process	3
Variance of Product & Service	3
Venture Expansion	2
Human Capital	2
Marketing Engagement	3
Other Involvement	
Government	3
Academics	2
Local Community	2

Source: Survey Data

Infrastructure is considered essential to support an entrepreneurial climate (Audretsch & Lehman, 2016), and the availability of a facility is a determinant influencing tourists' visits that should be prepared and maintained for tourists' satisfaction. Based on the survey data, tourism business infrastructure has been increasing in key tourism areas compared to the era before super-priority destinations. This is also supported by the respondents' responses,

"With the selection of Lake Toba's super-priority, the increased numbers for infrastructure and accessibility have shown progress" - Respondent 1

"The facilities are being built for the tourism development" - Respondent 3

The government and private sector have shown progress in accelerating super-priority destinations, especially the tourist business, as driving factors supporting tourism development. Regarding financial infrastructure, there was no significant increase in profitability and revenue. After the pandemic recovery, tourists have gradually visited tourist destinations, revealing good news for entrepreneurship. They also looked forward to the government's participation in promoting the destination and businesses. Regarding access to finance, the information and borrowing processes have shown progress. The respondents are informed of various funding from banks, and the process is more straightforward now, as the respondent stated,

"When I wanted to borrow money to run my business, the bankers helped me proceed the process, which is easier than that of the old borrowing system" - Respondent 4

From the point of view of internal business activities, the survey data showed that products and services could be considered slightly more innovative compared to the previous era. One possible reason for this development is that the changes tourists demand are more experiential. For instance, a homestay is an extension of accommodation that allows a tourist to experience local culture and lifestyles. In addition, the variation in services has also increased in terms of payment methods, where tourists can choose payment methods that are more practical for travelling. The forms of payment are cash, transfer, QRIS, and credit cards.

Although the overall survey results showed that human capital remained similar in this current era, a slight variation was noted. In particular, the training given to the tourism business participants showed a slight increase in numbers related to the instruction by the current Indonesian president regarding the need for training to increase human resource quality in terms of work culture, hospitality service, cleanliness, culture, and local product marketing. Although the number of training sessions increased, they considered that some aspects needed further development. Specifically, training should be consistently evaluated to determine the implementation and progress of the training.

Table 5 shows how marketing engagement has recently increased with the use of technology to promote products and services and attract customers through social media. This is consistent with the response,

"We are also running our venture based on technology development, such as the applications" - Respondent 3

The other form of marketing increase is the implementation of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (CHSE). Compared to the last time, marketing in the tourism business

was often overpassed. The owners or managers were occupied with other operational functions, and the ventures were limited because of financial resources and time constraints.

From the survey data, the respondents agreed that they have yet to see a significant change in the local community and academics, even when this Island was selected as a key tourism for destination priority. Government support increased regarding the number of infrastructures and programs, which respondents expected to be more active in monitoring each implemented program. The contributions of academics have recently made no difference. Academic support, such as research, facility, and training, is similar. The respondents also suggested that more studies and training are needed for business development. The local community is helpful to daily business operations, such as local culture guidance, land renting, and selling.

In general, the development of current tourism entrepreneurship in Samosir shows scant growth, and it can be considered to be in progress in that the level of recent development to prepare for a super-priority destination is kept in check. This development, however, could be tempered by the programs implemented for developing tourism entrepreneurship. Indeed, the actions and participation of related stakeholders in entrepreneurship are highly required to develop and sustain the performance of tourism entrepreneurship. In summary, the findings relevant to this study's portrait of tourism entrepreneurship are visualized in Figure 2.

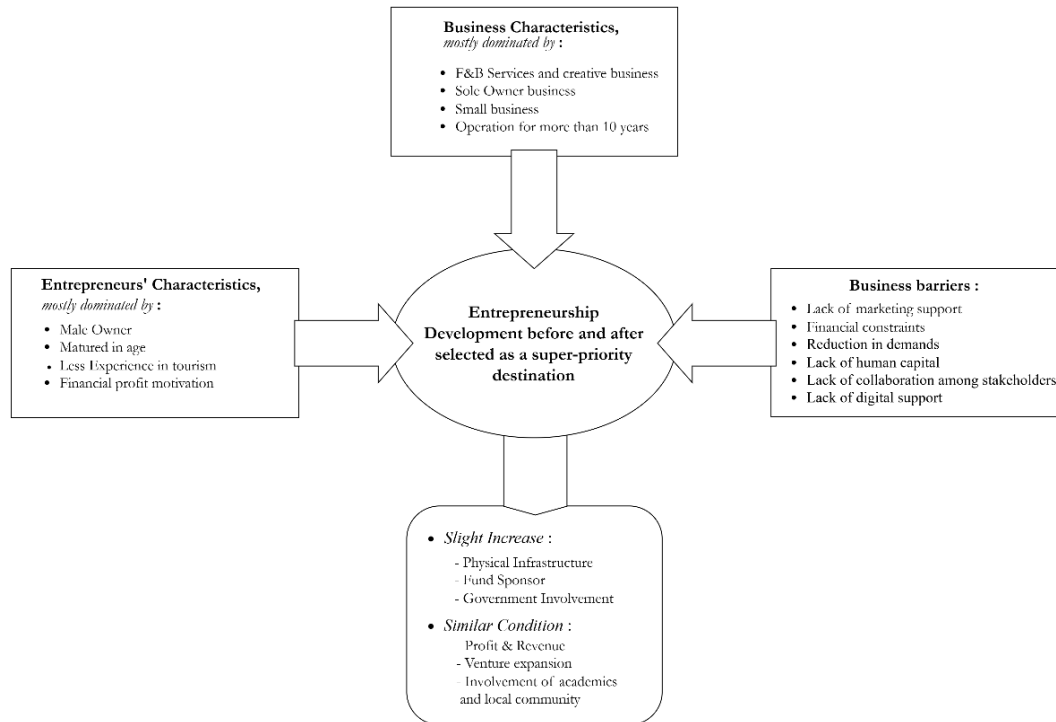


Figure 2. The Portrait of Tourism Entrepreneurship in the Study Site

Drawing on the analysis results, several interesting facts may be discussed in line with the study's objectives, namely the profile and tourism business characteristics, challenges and current development, which are similar to previous studies. First, we examine the characteristics of the tourism business in terms of the motives for starting the respective businesses. The study revealed various motivations for founding the businesses: the need for income, freedom, the desire to be his/her own boss, employment of business capability, and opportunities. The classic model of Maslow's hierarchy of human needs can summarise the different reasons. For some people, starting a business is an action of fulfilling lower-level human needs through financial security.

In contrast, for others, it is a means of satisfying middle to higher human needs, such as prestige, seeking freedom, being one's boss, and lifestyle. Since the top reason for venturing into a business in this study setting in a developing country is financial security, this is in line with the statement arguing that the motivation for starting a business with higher levels of human needs can be found in developed countries. Furthermore, following the uniqueness of tourism, which is closer to lifestyle, [Bredvold & Skålen \(2016\)](#) stated that an entrepreneurial or lifestyle venture often initiates the enterprise.

The majority of food and beverage and creative businesses in this study, alongside the significant accommodation sector, highlighted the diverse nature of the local tourism economy. This trend is in line with broader trends in tourism, where culinary and cultural offerings are increasingly central to destination attractions ([McKercher & du Cros, 2020](#)). The strong existence of creative industries, primarily in souvenirs and performing arts such as the Tor-Tor dance, emphasized the rich local cultural identity, a key attraction for tourists who seek authentic experiences. This emphasis on cultural products and performances as a central tourism element is crucial for sustainable tourism development because it promotes cultural preservation while providing economic benefits ([Timothy & Nyaupane, 2019](#)). Many tourism ventures, operating for over ten years, showed the established nature of tourism on Samosir Island, tracing back to the 1970s. The prevalence of family businesses, in which continuity is expected through generational succession, highlights the dominant traditional business structures in the region. This pattern aligns with research on family businesses in tourism, which often highlights the value of legacy and family ties ([Getz & Carlsen, 2018](#)). Most micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the study site correspond to global patterns, where small-scale businesses often identify tourism ([Peters et al., 2018](#)). The dominant percentage of owner-operated businesses further emphasized the entrepreneurial spirit of the local community but also indicated the need for support in business management and expansion.

Second, the characteristics of tourism entrepreneurs and business constraints are associated with an enterprise's growth. The studies showed that the characteristics of small business owners or managers are a key indicator of success in the tourism industry ([Agyeiwaah, 2019](#); [Cunca et al., 2020](#)). For instance, most of the tourism businesses in this study are small enterprises with minimum capital, and the owners are commonly families. In many cases, small businesses seldom allocate a budget to marketing and promotion, often depending on word-of-mouth promotion and developing relationships with the existing customers. Due to this characteristic, business owners often do not understand the intricacies of marketing management. The lack of marketing skills and support highlights the value of effective marketing strategies in tourism. The findings align with research emphasizing the role of digital marketing and government support in promoting tourism destinations ([Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2015](#)). The need for more governmental marketing support also aligns with the study on destination management organizations and their role in supporting local businesses ([Dredge & Jenkins, 2019](#)).

Furthermore, financial constraints and demand reduction are common challenges for small businesses in developing countries. The issue of accessing loans indicated the need for more tailored financial support and simpler processes. The lack of human capital was another significant issue, primarily due to the prevalence of family-owned businesses with limited management experience. This is consistent with the research emphasizing the need for skills development for business growth ([Baum & Hai, 2019](#)). The lack of collaboration with stakeholders further hindered business development. The participants' need for better coordination and training programmes highlighted the relevance of effective governance and stakeholder engagement. This is consistent with the need for collaborative tourism planning and policy implementation ([Hall, 2019](#)). The significant issues explained highly necessitated comprehensive and integrated strategies to

support the sustainable growth of the tourism business.

Furthermore, the development of tourism entrepreneurship reveals a mixed picture of progress since the island's designation as a super-priority destination. Significant development increases in physical infrastructure align with infrastructure's recognised importance in enhancing entrepreneurial environments (Audretsch & Lehmann, 2016). Improving facilities and accessibility are crucial for tourism businesses, increasing tourist satisfaction and supporting business operations. However, financial support, specifically profitability and revenue, showed no significant increase at the study site. Progress in access to finance, facilitated by simple borrowing processes, is a positive development. Internal business activities, particularly product and service innovation, showed slight improvements driven by evolving tourist demand for experiential tourism. Adopting homestays and diverse payment methods indicated a response to changing preferences. Human capital development indicated a slight increase in training development, indicating government efforts to increase service quality (Baum & Hai, 2019). Despite these developments, challenges remain. The participants highlighted the need for more active government monitoring of programs and increased engagement from the other stakeholders.

The final discussion outlines the solutions to the recent portrait of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship has gained significant importance in tourism because it forms a core force behind tourist destinations. Given its influence, entrepreneurship requires a supportive environment for growth. Remarkably, the development of entrepreneurship is not only determined by the work of individual entrepreneurs but also by the whole business environment that builds the supporting network, which is referred to as the ecosystem. The tourism sector is conceived as a job and income engine, but the study showed that tourism entrepreneurship lacks innovation and entrepreneurial activities. The aforementioned portrait prompts the question of what revival strategies could be. The entrepreneurial ecosystem can grant rise to tourism revival and growth because it can describe how high-growth entrepreneurship turns up. Samosir Island, as examined in this research, can thrive as Lake Toba's super-priority destination, and a strong tourism entrepreneurship ecosystem is fundamental to developing its potential as a super-priority area. A robust ecosystem empowers entrepreneurs and generates productive tourism entrepreneurship and tourism growth.

In the end, as a super-priority destination, this study makes theoretical and practical contributions to tourism entrepreneurship and destination development. From the practical contributions, the findings directly contribute to the manifestation of the government's guidance to work together to create added value for Lake Toba tourist destinations. The development of a super-priority destination needs to understand the perceptions of entrepreneurs toward the "super priority" image so that the stakeholders have the same vision and mission, bringing the destination to an international arena through packaging resources, products and services, and marketing practices to attract tourists. In addition, the results of this study stated that most tourism businesses need marketing skills and tools to improve their performance; this study brings understanding and acts as a mediator in building perceptions of the stakeholders' roles in accelerating destination development. This study also provides insights for diverse stakeholders. By understanding the picture of tourism entrepreneurship, the findings can help policymakers and governments identify the needs and challenges faced by entrepreneurs in the tourism industry when designing programs and regulations. The findings can also guide investors toward venture opportunities in super-priority destinations. Detailed information on tourism entrepreneurship can encourage entrepreneurs to build partnerships and knowledge sharing within a super-priority destination.

Furthermore, this study makes theoretical contributions to tourism entrepreneurship and tourism destination management in various key areas. First, the findings can explain entrepreneurs' specific motivations and challenges in a super-priority destination. Understanding how entrepreneurs operate under these circumstances can provide insights into current tourism

entrepreneurship theories. This study also explores the characteristics of a super-priority destination that can form the entrepreneurship ecosystem for tourism ventures, such as government regulations, infrastructure, resources, and networks. These insights can help develop models for supporting tourism entrepreneurship in various destination contexts. The findings contribute to sustainable entrepreneurship theories in the tourism sector. In addition, more literature on the comprehensive portrait of the tourism business, including the profiles of the owners or managers and their business features, the problems and the development stage, is required. Thus, the results are crucial to conducting relevant studies on tourism entrepreneurship. Overall, by giving a complete portrait of tourism entrepreneurship, this research can contribute to a comprehensive and contextual theoretical framework development that can inform policy decisions, help the success of tourism entrepreneurs in a super-priority zone, and guide future research.

CONCLUSIONS

This descriptive study uncovers the profile of tourism business owners and the characteristics of their businesses, the problems and challenges encountered by tourism business owners when expanding their businesses, and the current development of tourism business in a super-priority destination in Indonesia. About the identification of the owners' profiles and the characteristics of the business, the study found that the tourism business has been expanding in quantity, as indicated by the emergence of various tourism ventures, with the majority of businesses being in the food & beverage services and creative business sectors, followed by the accommodation sector. The ventures have been in operation for over ten years and are primarily dominated by micro and small enterprises because the business opportunity is a financial benefit. They are generally operated without prior specific experience pertinent to tourism and business exposure. Developed for a super-priority destination, tourism entrepreneurship encounters critical problems and challenges: inadequate marketing support and prowess, financial constraints, demand reduction, human capital shortage and lack of collaboration with other stakeholders, such as the government, academics, media and society. As one of the tourism areas for Lake Toba's priority destination, the results also highlighted the development of tourism entrepreneurship by comparing the real situations occurring before and after the lake was selected as a super-priority destination. The study found that development is regarded through a process viewed at a level that includes a slight increase in physical infrastructure, internal business activities, and government programs.

This study also highlights the contributions of theoretical and practical standpoints. The results of this study make practical or industrial contributions to related stakeholders, namely, as a reference to create added value for Lake Toba tourist destinations. By providing a complete picture of tourism entrepreneurship in a super-priority destination, the results can guide investors toward venture opportunities in a super-priority destination. Detailed information on tourism entrepreneurship can encourage entrepreneurs to build partnerships and knowledge sharing within a super-priority destination. Overall, studying the portrait of tourism entrepreneurship can benefit numerous stakeholders in establishing sustainable and productive tourism entrepreneurship and the tourism industry. The portrait of tourism entrepreneurship: This research can contribute to tourism entrepreneurship and destination management in various key areas, namely tourism entrepreneurship theories and the expansion of tourism entrepreneurship research. Overall, by giving a more comprehensive portrait of tourism entrepreneurship, this research can contribute to the development of a complete theoretical framework that can inform policy decisions and help the success of tourism entrepreneurs in a super-priority area.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this study provide new and meaningful information to sporadic literature related to leisure and tourism entrepreneurship in emerging countries, particularly in the super-priority destination of Indonesia. However, some study limitations can build an impetus for future research. The sample of this study only included tourism businesses operating in Samosir Island, Lake Toba; tourism entrepreneurship in other selected super-priority destinations in Indonesia was not covered because the entrepreneurial conditions, including business challenges, tourism business characteristics, and development, may vary across different areas. In addition, the authors only explored entrepreneurship from the perspective of tourism owners and managers, without covering the other stakeholders that impact entrepreneurial performance and activities. Given the lack of exploring tourism entrepreneurship, particularly in a super-priority destination, the comparative analysis in the same context in different regencies in the Lake Toba area would be more beneficial for relevant stakeholders, namely policymakers and business practitioners. Lastly, this article is a preliminary study for future work investigating the tourism entrepreneurial ecosystem because it sheds light on the perspectives of interrelated actors in developing entrepreneurship and tourism.

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