

## ATTRactions, ACTivities AND ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT FOR RELIGIOUS TOURISM DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN SOIBADA, TIMOR-LESTE

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### Abstract

Every year, especially in May and October, thousands of Catholics come on pilgrimage to the Sagrado Coracao de Jesus Church and the Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Aitara on Aitara Hill with various Catholic religious activities in Soibada. In the development of religious tourism destinations, planning and assessment are needed using indicators of attractions, activities, and accessibility of religious tourism. This study aims to explore the potential for developing tourist areas in Soibada for the development of religious tourism through indicators of attractions and religious activities that have existed so far. This study uses some of the data from the research used to prepare the strategic plan of the ATR-TL (Association of Religious Tourism of Timor-Leste) in 2022 and is analyzed using a quantitative approach, SWOT analysis as a form of assessment and evaluation with the intended indicators. The results of this study are: Soibada as a tourist destination has strengths, many authentic advantages, and uniqueness that must be conserved and are very possible for the development and sustainability of religious tourism in Soibada, Manatuto Municipality and Timor-Leste in general. Planning and development of religious tourism destinations in Soibada must maintain and improve the strength and opportunity factors, on the other hand must also pay attention to the elements of weakness and threat.

**Keywords:** Development planning, Tourist destinations, Religious tourism, Attractions, Activities, Accessibility.

### A. INTRODUCTION

Every year, particularly in May and October, thousands of people make a pilgrimage to the Sagrado Coracao de Jesus Church and participate in the Nossa Senhora de Aitara procession, which starts at the Chapel on Aitara Hill and ends at the Church. The Sagrado Coracao de Jesus Church hosts an overnight Adoration, followed by another procession from the Church to Aitara Hill, and the pilgrimage concludes with a large mass after the procession. The Sagrado Coracao de Jesus Church and the Nossa Senhora de Aitara Chapel in Soibada are key cultural landmarks for Catholics in Timor-Leste, having been part of Catholic tradition for over two centuries. The growth and development of the tourism sector, especially religious tourism, in Timor-Leste have been significant, making the planning of religious tourism destinations crucial. Religious tourism sites in Timor-Leste, particularly in the Municipio Manatuto area, Posto Administrativo Soibada, have been established for more than 100 years. However, the religious tourism activities in Soibada align with the arrival and growth of the Catholic church mission there. Observations by researchers have shown that these religious tourism attractions are accompanied by various religious activities, such as personal prayers, grand masses, special masses for healing the sick, candlelight processions,

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and cross processions, involving both pilgrims and local residents. Previous studies highlight that Timor-Leste, with its stunning natural landscapes, unique culture, history, and religious heritage, offers significant support for the development of tourism, including religious tourism (Almeida, Martins, & Talaia, 2023). Geographically, 38.17% of Timor-Leste, covering 140.50 km<sup>2</sup>, is an area with tourism potential (Xaiver et al, 2020). The Portuguese colonial history began when they landed in Lifau - Oecusse in 1511-1512 (Braz, 2014), and the Catholic church missionary work carried out by the Dominican and Jesuit congregations began in 1780 (Pinheiro, 2015). In Soibada, this Catholic tradition was strengthened by the presence of female missionaries from the Canossiana congregation since November 9, 1879 and operating since March 7, 1880 by opening a school for girls in Dili, and the Dominican Friars of Rosario since June 25, 1953 (Pinheiro, 2015).

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following is some literature and previous research results from various religious destinations, several religions, especially those related to the planning of the development of religious tourism destinations with indicators of attractions (Attraction), activities (Activities), and accessibility (Accessibilities).

### **Religious Tourism**

Several previous studies have explored various theories and concepts related to religious tourism, examining different types and forms within the cultural contexts of the countries studied. For example, research conducted by Pazhou and Fallahi (2023) in Iran developed a model for religious tourism, identifying it as a central phenomenon shaped by causal, contextual, and intervening factors. This central phenomenon influences strategies for promoting religious tourism, driven by the economic, cultural, and social development of Kermanshah Province, Iran (Pazhouhan & Fallahi, 2023). Unlike other forms of tourism, religious tourism stands apart in its purpose, motivation, and destinations, often involving travel for religious purposes, commonly known as pilgrimage. The distinctive nature of religious tourism is shaped by the desire to fulfill religious needs, influenced by factors like beliefs, travel arrangements, transportation, seasons, and social interactions between hosts and guests. In essence, religious tourism is driven by the intention or purpose of travel for religious reasons (Demissie, 2023).

Demissie (2023) further emphasized that religious tourism destinations are created around activities where individuals or groups visit sacred sites, take part in spiritual celebrations, and engage in religious practices. The key factors influencing tourists and pilgrims when choosing a holy site are deeply tied to the site's religious significance, which includes its physical attributes, sacred character, buildings, monuments, and the events and rituals associated with the location (Demissie, 2023). Additionally, earlier research by Buhalis (2002) indicated that religious tourism is driven by destinations offering products that cater to cultural backgrounds (specific religions), the purpose of the visit, and the activities related to religious tourism itself (Buhalis, 2002). Other scholars have built on the idea that religious tourism destinations maintain a positive image, which is essential for marketers and helps foster emotional connections with visitors (Hassan et al., 2022). Pilgrims traveling to religious tourism destinations contribute to a wide range of diverse tourism experiences. Since religious tourism encompasses various types of travel (e.g., pilgrimages, retreats, visits to monasteries and holy places, cultural and heritage tourism, etc.), managing these sites is complex. Therefore, every management model must include effective planning and development strategies that meet both tourist needs and local religious activities at the destination (Piva, Cerutti, & Raj, 2019).

Furthermore, the outcomes of visits to religious tourism destinations encompass various aspects of emotional, epistemic and social values that can be identified using (qualitative) values such as “feeling good”, relaxation, enjoyment, getting out of the routine environment, freedom, aesthetic value, challenge, sense of belonging, novelty and knowledge (including new knowledge and experiences for children in the travel group), social interaction with family, friends and other tourists, and prestige (Dias, Correia, & Lopez, 2013). The development of religious tourism destinations is greatly influenced by the motivation of religious/ spiritual or secular goals, which influence visitor behavior at religious tourism destinations. In religious tourism destinations, attractions are at the center of the process, and identifying their potential value is essential. Thus, understanding the concept of attractions in developing religious destinations is essential to ensure the socioeconomic contribution of religious tourism and empower local communities while maintaining tourist satisfaction and protecting the religious attractions themselves (Zarb, 2020 in Demissie 2023). In particular, the relationship between the recognition of religious heritage as a product and the tourism product development plan is needed, especially development and planning that involves the interests of tourists and pilgrims (Demissie, 2023).

In recent years, spiritual tourism has seen rapid growth, becoming an important sector within global tourism. Religious tourism, a unique category within this field, encompasses various activities, including pilgrimages, visits to sacred sites, participation in religious festivals, and engagement in religious missions. Historically, traveling to holy sites is recognized as one of the earliest forms of human tourism. Religious heritage sites are of great cultural and spiritual importance, as they embody the traditions, beliefs, and values of different religious communities (Aulet & Vidal, 2018) in (Kandil, 2024). "Holy sites" are defined as locations of religious significance to specific faith groups, such as places of worship, cemeteries, and temples. These historic religious sites provide evidence of the development of various civilizations and offer valuable insights into the lifestyles connected to religious rituals (Kandil, 2024). This research focuses on Posto Administrativu Soibada, located in the Municipality of Manatuto, Timor-Leste, a religious tourism destination for Catholics. Its historical and cultural landmarks include the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church, the National Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora de Aitara Chapel, the Cross on Mount Manlala, and the tombs of Catholic missionaries. The goal of this study is to bring attention to lesser-known religious tourism resources, which are often neglected by tourism planners, tourists, and pilgrims, but are crucial for the sustainable development of religious tourism in Timor-Leste.

### **Attraction**

Previous research in Kermanshah Province, Iran, has revealed that with 16,550 holy sites and monuments, the region holds considerable potential for attracting religious tourists. The "Attraction of Religious Tourism Destinations" model highlights religious and welfare attractions as key "causal conditions," emphasizing the necessity of developing religious tourism in the area (Pazhouhan & Fallahi, 2023). Future research intends to explore more sophisticated methods for analyzing tourist data from cultural or heritage sites along the Ignatian Way. This would provide a deeper understanding of human mobility in the region and investigate how cultural encounters influence tourist behavior, in line with Reisinger and Turner's (2004) ideas. As awareness of the Ignatian Way increases, the profile of pilgrims may change, as the original study participants were mainly associated with the Society of Jesus, but this may evolve with a more diverse group of pilgrims. Moreover, the opportunity for travelers to engage in multipurpose activities allows them to combine leisure with other interests, such as education or health, in a sustainable environment (Esteban, 2005). Unlike traditional pilgrims, many modern travelers are motivated by sports and cultural interests

rather than religious ones. They may walk, cycle, or drive the route out of curiosity, stopping at monuments along the way. Consequently, the motivations for sacred travel are diverse, with visitors attracted to religious sites not just for spiritual reasons but also for cultural or heritage tourism experiences that are marketed for consumption (Timothy and Boyd, 2003; Galzacorta et al., 2016).

The increasing focus on well-being experiences at travel destinations is significant, especially since the roots of modern mass tourism can be traced back to religious pilgrimages (mental well-being) and the perceived health benefits of spas, seawater, and the generally good air quality found in coastal locations (Walton, 1983). A conceptual model for understanding motivations to visit holy places as tourism destinations was developed, with the survey instrument (questionnaire) designed based on a literature review of motivations, religious tourism, and holy places. Motivation is a multidimensional concept, as tourists typically aim to fulfill a variety of needs simultaneously (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). To assess tourists' motivations for visiting holy sites, sixty specific attributes were used. Although not all religious sites are considered holy places (Riviera, Shani & Severt, 2009), the study focused on three religious tourism destinations that are also regarded as holy places: Fátima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain), and Jerusalem (Israel). If data on daily passenger numbers is available, such as for the past five years for a specific destination, it can be used to estimate the breakdown of monthly overnight stays into daily stays. These estimates can then be aggregated into weekly data if needed. For future years, given a known calendar (including religious holidays) and economic growth rates, daily passenger numbers can be predicted, which in turn helps forecast overnight stays by day, week, and month. A challenge in Denmark's sub-national overnight stay statistics is that data for cottage holidays, a major accommodation type in most provinces outside the capital, is only published monthly at the NUTS2 level, covering just five regions (Dias et al., 2013).

Tourism development can be operationalized in accordance with the research results of Bahiyah C et al (2018), namely infrastructure development and increasing tourist attractions to optimize tourism potential. The development of border tourism through the construction of complete and quality infrastructure is one of the benchmarks of a country's development (Sari UC and Rahman B, 2019). Wini as one of the main crossing gateways from and to the Oecusse District of the Republica Democrtatica de Timor Leste (RDTL) has a lot of potential to be developed as cross-border tourism because it has several tourist attractions such as Tanjung Bastian Beach, Wini Beach, and the Manufonu Mountains. Other tourism that is developing in Wini is culinary tourism and tourist attractions. There are several negative impacts on the environment including environmental damage (vandalism), poor cleanliness and sanitation, declining air and water quality, increasing noise and air pollution, trees and fields turning into tourist attractions, reduced open space, and poor maintenance of plants and animals (Sunlu U in Pramanik and Ingkadijaya, 2017) (Taena, Kase, & Afoan, 2022).

Destinations offer a mix of tourism products and services, which are consumed under the brand name of the destination. Leiper (1995, p. 87) explains that a destination is a place to which people travel and where they choose to stay for a while to experience certain features or characteristics—a perceived attraction. Attractions (natural, man-made, artificial, purpose-built, heritage, special events). A visitor management technique in theme parks that diverts people from crowded attractions to less crowded ones by using a central story/attraction. London for example offers a variety of heritage attractions as well as entertainment opportunities such as theatre, concerts, bars, themed restaurants, discos, etc. The appeal of the lower end of the market is inevitable and as a consequence, there is no alternative strategy. In this case, minimizing further social and environmental damage and efforts to improve the surrounding environment must also be a primary objective.

Macroeconomic changes have a major influence on destination pricing and consumer appeal. (Buhalis, 2000)

### **Activity**

Previous research results from studies conducted in religious tourism destinations in the Polish cities of Warsaw and Mazovia have shown that religious holy places attract tourists who are not only oriented towards spiritual experiences, but also oriented towards cultural tourism. Pilgrims come with the following goals: (1) primarily to pray, contemplate, participate in religious ceremonies, Catholic church ceremonies (pilgrims, usually participating in organized trips); (2) in addition to spiritual motives, trips with the motive of sightseeing, getting to know the history, architecture of holy places (cultural and religious tourism, cognitive), getting to know the monuments located around the holy place, visiting relatives or shopping; (3) tourists who visit holy places with the motive only for the purpose of learning about culture, without religious motives (cultural tourism), usually they only get access around or outside the chapel, outside the route of the Way of the Cross for cultural and sports activities, holy place museums, libraries, amphitheaters, green spaces and natural environment, other buildings of interest to tourists, tours to the surrounding area. (Gojybieska, Ostrowska-Tryzno, & Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2020). Religious tourism activities are closely related to the attractions at the religious tourism destination itself. history and culture of the local community. From previous research on religious tourism in Uganda, there are annual pilgrimage activities, weekly prayers, celebration events according to a certain liturgical calendar, retreats, meditation, visiting museums. These various activities can be carried out at the destination site where 22 Catholic martyrs were killed in 1885 and 1886, the martyrs were beatified by the Pope in 1920, then canonized in 1964 at the Catholic Church of St. Mary's Rubaga Cathedral in Kampala city, the main Cathedral Church built since 1914 - 1924 as the first home for the African Catholic Bishop (Archbishop Joseph Kiwanka 1899 - 1966 (Ayorekire, Obua, Mugizi, & Byaruhanga, 2020).

Tourism activities in religious tourism destinations are not only carried out by visitors or pilgrims, these tourism activities also involve local residents, therefore local residents can also receive sociocultural, economic and environmental benefits or impacts. Religious tourism includes pilgrimage activities, trips to holy places and other religious-related trips such as visits to religious ceremonies, church meetings and other religious-related conferences and organized activities, which can be held periodically have a very large influence on the overall development of the site by involving local residents. Religious tourism in general and pilgrims, in particular, have a very large influence on the development of the local population around the religious site in question. The local culture generated in connection with the development of religious tourism can create cultural interaction and understanding through which some useful cultural values and qualities can be exchanged. Social benefits related to cultural interaction, cultural exchange (Lin et al., 2021), education of each other and improvement of the way of life of local people are inevitable in tourism destinations (Bayih, 2019). Tourist activities carried out by tourists are also influenced by the natural geographical resources available at tourist destinations. Timor-Leste has a competitive advantage and a special tourism market in certain segments to meet the interests and needs of different tourists. This special tourism market in Timor-Leste is related to diving and snorkeling tourism activities (69%), cruise tourism beach activities (51%), visiting historical sites (39%), cultural activities including religious tourism (32%) and hiking (27%) these recreational activities are the most popular among tourists (Berno, Rajalingam, Miranda, & Ximenes, 2022), ecotourism, and culinary and coffee tourism and enjoying organic coffee (Mendonça, Leonor, Carvalho, Dami, & Henriques, 2023).

Bayih's (2019) research shows that tourism activities involving both tourists and local residents can generate economic benefits for the community, contributing to economic growth in religious tourism destinations. Other studies indicate that 62% of workers in the hotel and hospitality sector are women, with an average income of \$2,100 per year, slightly lower than other sectors. This highlights how tourism can create synergy between culture, history, natural resources, and community involvement, benefiting Timor-Leste's economy (Berno et al., 2022; Bayih, 2019). Lin et al. (2023) found that combining local religious customs, ecological environments, and agricultural products in rural areas can attract religious visitors and tourists, creating business, employment, and healthcare opportunities. However, the development of tourism in Taiwan's temples faces challenges due to low cooperation between managers, as most temple cultural institutions are privately funded and lack effective communication, leading to poor tourism services (Lin et al., 2021). Despite the potential for rural economic development, progress has been slow, with many industries underdeveloped. While there is awareness of the importance of ecological conservation, there is a strong desire to continue developing rural cultural tourism by integrating religious customs, ecology, and agricultural products to attract tourists and create opportunities for business, employment, and improved healthcare. However, the lack of cooperation and poor public facilities and transportation hinder development.

### **Accessibility**

The concept of accessibility is the entire transportation system consisting of routes, terminals and vehicles. Furthermore, the existence of tourist destinations including religious tourism effectively means that tourism products including transportation systems for each potential tourist are available, and are very subjective and highly dependent on their image and expectations of the destination in question. Understanding tourism products and facilities that support or complement tourism activities is very important in the context of marketing tourism products and destinations (Buhalis, 2002). However, the products at each tourist destination produce tourism products for a region consisting of the entire range of facilities and services offered locally, plus all socio-cultural resources, the environment, and public goods, including intangible elements such as customer interaction and participation and accessibility and the physical environment (Buhalis, 2000). Several previous studies have highlighted the strong connection between tourism activities and the accessibility of tourist destinations. Lin et al. (2021) noted that visits to Buddhist temples in Taiwan are significantly affected by factors such as development planning at tourist destinations, the cooperation among destination managers, the quality of public facilities, efficient public transportation, integration of tourism as a specialized industry, entrepreneurship within the tourism sector, job opportunities, healthcare standards, the effectiveness of village development, and other public amenities. Research has also shown that ease of accessibility is a social externality resulting from cross-border tourism development, which leads to changes in social relations, the transformation of social institutions, and reduced local community ownership of natural resources. Other impacts of tourism development include environmental damage and shifts in community models, values, and norms, all of which are shaped by socio-cultural factors. The sustainability of the socio-cultural life of host communities, as well as their social and economic well-being, is significantly affected by tourism development, including the improvement of accessibility and the equitable distribution of transportation infrastructure (Taena et al., 2022).

Previous research by Dias et al (2013) stated that tourist satisfaction and consumer perception variables can be measured through four variables (Event promotion, Accessibility, Information boards and Parking). Tourist satisfaction can also be measured through frequently used destination image attributes, namely: culture and history; landscape, services

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(shopping, accommodation, food, and transportation), entertainment, relaxation, climate (pleasant weather), price (cost, value for money), sports, security (personal safety), local people's attitudes towards visitors, special events and activities, accessibility (information available), adventure, wildlife, proximity to other destinations, and special animals, natural beauty, variety of activities offered to tourists, mountains as the main attraction and possibilities for hiking and downhill biking, shopping, dining, and entertainment, destination accessibility, fishing facilities, spas, and swimming pools, and shopping. In addition to accessibility facilities, tourist satisfaction can also be measured using the scale of time spent before the trip to search for information, plan, and book tour packages, and investment in equipment is the most important input of own resources (Dias et al., 2013).

Previous research on accessibility and transportation facilities in Spain, particularly at the Santiago Compostela pilgrimage site and the development of the Society of Jesus, revealed that tourists often seek new experiences in nature tourism, trekking, and cycling, avoiding overly crowded destinations. Many of these visitors are sports enthusiasts, with some seeking spiritual experiences and others motivated by non-spiritual pursuits. They typically travel to the destination by bicycle, taking a train from Barcelona to Loyola or accessing parts of the route by bike (Galzacorta et al., 2016). Additionally, Darcy (2020) emphasized that tourist accessibility should be evaluated based on several dimensions that facilitate social participation, including: (1) mobility, (2) sensory-auditory, (3) sensory-vision, (4) cognitive/learning/communication, and (5) environmental sensitivity (e.g., asthma, chemical sensitivities). This approach focuses on enabling social participation, particularly for individuals with disabilities or the elderly (Dwyer & Darcy, 2020). Furthermore, Goÿbieska et al. (2020) argued that creating accessible religious tourism destinations and travel experiences ensures that all tourists, regardless of their physical, sensory, or cognitive abilities, can enjoy these sites. Accessible environments and services not only improve the quality of religious tourism products but also generate more job opportunities, including for individuals with disabilities. Therefore, accessibility should be a key element in any responsible and sustainable tourism strategy.

It is essential that tourists have the freedom to visit any destination they desire, with infrastructure, facilities, information, and services being accessible to everyone, regardless of disabilities, various forms of impairment, family situations, or age. This highlights the belief of the UNWTO that accessibility to tourism facilities, products, and services for all should be a core component of any responsible and sustainable tourism policy, as outlined in the Recommendation on Accessible Tourism for All (2014). Research and experiences from Poland in 2016, particularly during the World Youth Day celebrations, led to the creation of the 'Accessible Shrine Card' (ASC), which enhances accessibility to religious sites for individuals with various disabilities. This includes the addition of ramps in historical buildings such as the Shrine of Our Lady of Grace in the Old Town, the Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy, and shrines in Lewiczyn and Rokitno, providing safer and more comfortable access for people with disabilities. Specially marked paths assist wheelchair users by guiding them to external ramps and ensuring safe movement around the sites. However, certain challenges remain in places like museums, shrines, and chapels located in basements, where pilgrims with disabilities, those using walking aids, tourists with sensory impairments, or those with cognitive, mental, or age-related difficulties still face barriers. Additionally, travelers with temporary disabilities (such as recovering from an injury), those carrying heavy loads, or individuals with physical and mental impairments may still struggle to access certain locations. Accessibility improvements at transportation stations and terminals are also crucial for facilitating access to these religious sites for all pilgrims. (Goÿbieska et al., 2020).

Other research conducted in several developed countries has highlighted a significant conflict between conservationists and the tourism industry regarding accessibility. Conservationists advocate for stricter environmental protection and severe limits on tourism growth, while tourism professionals push for the expansion of facilities, resistance to access restrictions for tourists wanting to enjoy scenic outdoor recreation spots, and improvements in local transportation infrastructure. This includes enhancing non-auto transportation options, such as bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, consolidating air transport hubs in accessible community areas, and upgrading public transportation services to meet local needs, including timely schedules, fare information, and passenger services for bus routes connecting to other provinces (Theobald, 2005). This research introduces a new approach to developing religious tourism destinations, focusing on tourist destinations using the 2A indicators: Attractions and Activities, as opposed to previous research which used the broader 6A model (Attraction, Activity, Accessibility, Amenities, Ancillary services, and Availability of Tour Packages) developed by tourism experts (Buhalis, 2000). By integrating indicators like Community Involvement and Marketing, as identified in Vong's (2017) research in Timor-Leste, this study aims to specifically apply these indicators to religious tourism destinations in small island regions. In essence, the research will evaluate the development of religious tourism destinations using these three key indicators.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Religious Tourism Destination Development Plan in Soibada Timor-Leste

### C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Previous research on the development of religious tourism is based on the theory of migration flows (including tourist travel) which are influenced by pull factors and push factors (Lee, 1966), Crompton, (1979); Pearce and Butler, (1993) in (Xing & Dangerfield, 2010). Where the relationship between the development of religious tourism destinations with push factors and pull factors are analyzed holistically, so as to obtain a picture that considers the conditions of the religious tourism destination itself, the flow of tourists, in multi-creation. The analysis commonly used for this purpose is the SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) with a specific quantitative approach to measure sustainable tourism development (Xing & Dangerfield, 2010). Previous research has used SWOT analysis on 325 tourist attractions in Bandar Lampung City that provide Religious Tourism activities with the aim of: developing a strategy for developing Bandar Lampung religious tourism within the scope of Politics, Economy, Social, Technology, Environment, and Law. The analysis method that describes the SWOT elements examines: (1) strengths: are internal attributes and resources that support success. (2) weaknesses: refer to any attributes and resources that hinder positive outcomes. (3) Opportunities: are external factors that can be utilized or used by an entity for its benefit. (4) threats: are external factors that can endanger the achievement of the entity. Furthermore, SWOT elements are typically



square in shape divided into four quadrants, with each representing one of the explicit elements. (Ali, Maharani, & Untari, 2019).

This SWOT analysis method is also used to examine the perceptions of actors and the benefits of religious tourism, socio-religious and economic benefits and can produce (1) policies and (2) planning, (3) comprehensive institutional arrangements, (4) resource management, to guide actor coordination, infrastructure and facility development, product diversification, sustainable financing and (5) attractions at several religious tourism sites and destinations that have existed since 1880 in Uganda (Ayorekire et al., 2020). The SWOT analysis method has also been used in previous research on the development of the Provincial Tourism Strategic Area (KSPP) on Pulau Merah Beach in Banyumas Regency. The research aims to: (1) increase the number of tourists every year with a sustainable tourism development strategy that also involves the surrounding community to maintain environmental conditions so that they remain sustainable, (2) formulate sustainable marine tourism development policies using a qualitative approach and 10 informants. (Parmawati, Pangestuti, & Hardyansah, 2020). This study used 274 respondents and a quantitative survey conducted on local residents and pilgrims who were willing and qualified in this survey.

#### D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that Soibada as a religious tourism destination has provided an opportunity for religious tourists (pilgrims) who are Catholic to carry out religious activities with an orientation towards spiritual experiences, including: (1) mainly prayer, contemplation, participating in religious ceremonies, Catholic church ceremonies at the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church, or at the Santuario Aitara Chapel, the Way of the Cross or the procession of the Virgin Mary from the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church to the Aitara Chapel, (usually pilgrims participating in organized trips); (2) Other non-spiritual tourism activities are sightseeing trips, getting to know the history, architecture of holy places, cultural tourism, getting to know the monuments located around holy places, visiting the historical monument of the residence of national hero Nicolao Lobato, visiting the ancient school of Nuno Alves Pereira. These religious activities are carried out in the religious tourism attraction area at the Soibada destination, every year thousands of people come on pilgrimage especially in May and October. These religious tourism activities are very attractive to tourists, the same activities have also occurred in religious tourism destinations in Poland, the cities of Warsaw and Mazovia as in previous studies by (Ayorekire et al., 2020; Bayih, 2019; Goyybieska et al., 2020; Mendonça et al., 2023). Strength and Weakness Analysis for indicators of tourist destinations, attractions, activities, and accessibility of religious tourism in Soibada.

Table 1. Strength and Weakness Analysis for indicators of tourist destinations, attractions, activities, and accessibility of religious tourism in Soibada.

| No | Indicator                          | Internal factor  |   |
|----|------------------------------------|--|---|
|    |                                    | Strenght (Strengths)   | Weaknesses  |
| 1  | Destination Area Religious Tourism | There are 94 - 100% of samples who stated that: (1) There is a location as a tourist destination, (2) There are places to visit as religious tourism such as the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church, (3) Santuario Nossa Senhora de Aitara, (4) The cemetery of missionaries, (5) The cross on the peak of Mount Manlala. | 72.4% of respondents stated that in this location, there are no actors or religious leaders who can be visited. |

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|    |                 |   |  |
|----|-----------------|---|--|
| 2. | Attraction      | <p>There were 98 - 100% of respondents stating that in Soibada there are religious tourism attractions in the form of: (1) the old church of the Sagrda Coracao de Jesus; (2) the Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Aitara on Aitara hill; (3) the Cross on the peak of Mount Manlala; (4) The tombs of the missionaries; (5) The tombs of the Soibada families; 65% of respondents stated that in Soibada there are cultural tourism attractions in the form of (6) the Old School Building "Nuno Alvares Pereira"; (7) There were 98 - 100% of respondents stating that in Soibada there are religious tourism attractions in the form of: (1) the old church of the Sagrda Coracao de Jesus; (2) the Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Aitara on Aitara hill; (3) the Cross on the peak of Mount Manlala; (4) Indicator Home of National Hero "Nicolau Lobato"</p> | <p>There were 65% of respondents stating that (1) All the spiritual tourism sites have not been integrated due to the wide area covered, and the road to the cross on the Manlala mountain peak is very difficult and steep. There were 75% of respondents who answered that (2) The cultural tourism site of the Old School Building and the House of the National Heroes' Heritage has not (not) been equipped with various information and collections of historical objects, and functions as a museum of the history of the struggle.</p> |
| 3. | Activity        | <p>There are 97 - 100% of respondents stating that pilgrims or tourists can carry out religious activities including: (1) Pilgrimage; (2) Mass; (3) Rosary prayer, Stations of the Cross prayer, personal prayer; (4) Procession; (5) Contemplation; (6) Giving alms; (7) Visiting the graves of missionaries; There are 65% of respondents stating that apart from religious activities, they can also carry out other activities (8) Visiting ancient school sites; (9) Visiting historical sites of the homes of national heroes.</p>  | <p>There are 78% of respondents who answered that: there has been no determination of the calendar of spiritual tourism activity events; daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.</p>   |
| 4. | (Accessibility) | <p>There are 100% of respondents who answered that the religious tourism destination in Soibada can be accessed at any time, free entry for all ages of visitors, including visitors with special needs (disabilities). It can be accessed by land transportation, car, motorcycle, bicycle, horse riding, or walking.</p>  | <p>80% of respondents have answered that there is no terminal for land transportation, public transportation is still very limited. and car parking. 92% of respondents answered that there is no tourism information center and guides with multilingual skills.</p>  |

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However, Soibada as a religious tourism destination still has weaknesses, 72% of respondents stated that in Soibada there are no religious actors who can attract religious tourists to visit the religious destination. Comparing the results of observations from the same study at the Santo Antonio Baucau Cathedral Church destination, the religious figure or actor that can be visited is the first Bishop of Baucau, namely Mgr. Dom Basilio do Nascimento who is buried in the Cathedral Church. Tourist attractions in the form of tombs of important figures or actors in the Catholic Church attract many Catholics and tourists to come, stop by with prayer activities in the church and or just visit the tomb. Even some people who visit and pray to God through the holiness of Bishop Mgr. Dom Basilio do Nascimento gave testimony, experiencing various miracles in their lives. Several tombs of previous missionaries around the courtyard of the Coracao de Jesus church are poorly maintained, less well-known, less publicized, specifically there is no written history about them.

Research has shown that this religious tourism destination in Soibada also has adequate accessibility and transportation facilities, which allow pilgrims to get access at any time, free entry, can be done on foot and have experience in nature tourism, trekking, and cyclists who seek something new, less crowded, and have a spiritual experience, as do religious tourists in the tourist destination of Santiago Compostela in Spain (Galzacorta et al., 2016). This study has shown a weakness that in religious tourism destinations, especially the procession route from the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus church to the Santuario Kapela Nossa Senhora de Aitara or vice versa, there is no special route for visitors, tourists or pilgrims with special needs or certain disabilities, for children or the elderly as found in previous research by (Dwyer & Darcy, 2020) in Australia. Thus, this study can recommend that in order to increase the accessibility value, the managers of religious tourism destinations in Soibada should plan special route procession facilities for tourists or visitors with special needs or certain disabilities, for children or the elderly. The results of this study indicate that Soibada as a religious tourism destination has the opportunity to be a famous religious destination since ancient times, with the main attractions being Catholicism in the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church, the Chapel of the Santuario Nossa Senhora de Aitara, the Cross on the Peak of Mount Manlala. Meanwhile, as a tourist destination, Soibada also has non-religious attractions including the ancient school building of Nuno Alves Perreira, the antique house of the Canossiana Sisters' dormitory, the historical tour of the house of the independence hero Nicolau Lobato, and the beautiful scenery of the river with clean and fast-flowing water. However, Soibada as a religious tourism destination still has a serious threat, namely the construction of religious tourism sites with the same theme even though each tourist destination has its own uniqueness, for that the managers of religious tourism destinations in Soibada must continue to maintain the uniqueness and authenticity must be maintained and applied in the form of conservation of tourist destinations, conservation (purity) of religious activities that have so far become the brand of Soibada as a Catholic religious tourism destination in Timor-Leste. A very good opportunity is the various religious activities that can be done by religious tourists (pilgrims) who are Catholic to carry out religious activities with an orientation towards spiritual experience, including: (1) mainly prayer, contemplation, participating in religious ceremonies, processions and the Way of the Cross, mass ceremonies in the Catholic church at the Sagrada Coracao de Jesus Church (sacrament mass for the healing of the sick), or candlelight processions from and to the Chapel of the Santuario Aitara, usually pilgrims participating in organized trips); Various attractions and religious tourism activities carried out either individually or in groups are an opportunity to attract as many tourists (pilgrims) as possible.

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Table 2. Analysis of Opportunities and Threats for indicators of tourist destinations, attractions, activities, and accessibility of religious tourism in Soibada.

| No | Indicator                          | Internal factor   |   |
|----|------------------------------------|---|---|
|    |                                    | Opportunities   | Threats   |
| 1  | Destination Area Religious Tourism | 70% of respondents answered that Soibada is one of the religious tourism destinations that has been famous since ancient times, and currently more and more tourists are coming for pilgrimage (especially during the month of Mary, or during school holidays).  | There are 30% of respondents who answered that: There are religious tourism destinations in other places with the same topic.   |
| 2. | Attraction                         | There were 45% of respondents who answered that it was still possible to add various attractions that support religious tourism attractions, for example building a statue of 14 points of the story of the Lord's passion on the Way of the Cross from the Sagrada Corasaun de Jesus church to the Chapel of Nossa Senhora De Aitara on Aitara hill.<br>Hero "Nicolau Lobato"  | There were 20% of respondents who answered that there was a possibility that tourists who came could damage the authenticity of the structure of buildings, paintings, statues that were very old, beautiful and respected. |
| 3. | Activity                           | There were 80% of respondents who answered that: (1) Destination Area Accessibility (Accessibility) Religious Tourism at night. Threats There are 30% of respondents who answered that: There are religious tourism destinations in other places with the same topic. 60% Economically, this religious tourism destination will have 60% fewer visitors because they will not get additional income from the tourist information center, tour guides, entrance fee facilities for visitors, and terminal and parking facilities for their vehicles. transportation they use, and parking fees. Tourists who come for pilgrimage, prayer can come at all times, all week, all month and year. (2) Activities There are 43% of respondents answered that they need a the Sagrada Coração de Jesus, (3) Mass in the Aitara Chapel<br>Chapel can be done at all times. 100% of respondents stated | There are 78% of respondents who answered that: there has been no determination of the calendar of spiritual tourism activity events; daily, weekly, monthly, yearly.   |

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|    |                 |   |  |
|----|-----------------|---|--|
| 4. | (Accessibility) | There are 100% of respondents who answered that the religious tourism destination in Soibada can be accessed at any time, free entry for all ages of visitors, including visitors with special needs (disabilities). It can be accessed by land transportation, car, motorcycle, bicycle, horse riding, or walking. | 80% of respondents have answered that there is no terminal for land transportation, public transportation is still very limited. and car parking. 92% of respondents answered that there is no tourism information center and guides with multilingual skills. |
|----|-----------------|---|--|

Other tourism activities that are not spiritually motivated, are sightseeing trips, learning about history, architecture of holy places, cultural tourism, learning about monuments located around holy places, visiting the historical monument of the residence of national hero Nicolao Lobato, visiting the ancient school of Nuno Alves Pereira. These religious activities are carried out in the religious tourism attraction area at the Soibada destination, every year thousands of people come on pilgrimage especially in May and October. These religious tourism activities are very interesting for tourists, the same activities have also occurred in religious tourism destinations in Poland, the cities of Warsaw and Mazovia as research has shown. The mapping results in the SWOT quadrant show external factors showing the Opportunity (O) value (from 40% for attractions, 60% for Accessibility, 70% for tourist destinations, and 80% for attractions) and Threats (T) ranging from (20% on attractions, 30% religious tourism destinations, 40% on activities, and 60% accessibility). The strategy that can be applied based on this analysis is the Concentric Diversification Strategy. This strategy focuses on adding products and services related to tourism destinations, which uses the Weakness and Threat (WT) components.

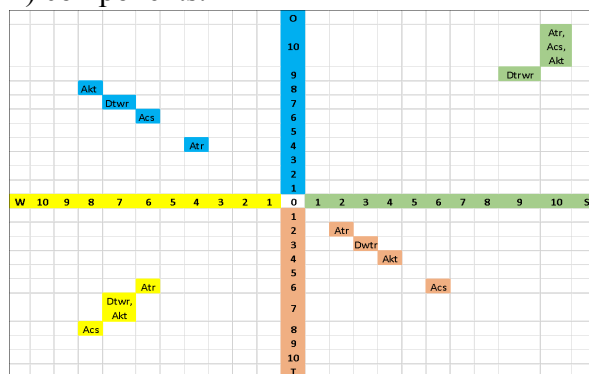


Figure 2. SWOT indicator quadrant of tourist destinations, attractions, activities, and accessibility of religious tourism in Soibada.

This strategy will overcome weaknesses and minimize threats in Soibada as a religious destination, by doing several things in the planning strategy, namely improving human resources, providing education to the community, and negotiating with other interested parties in the destination.

**E. CONCLUSION**

The results of this study can be concluded as follows Soibada as a religious tourism destination has advantages or potential strengths in religious attractions, namely: The Sagrada Coarao de Jesus church, the National Sanctuary of Nossa Senhora de Airata Chapel on Aitara hill, the Cross on the top of Manlala mountain. The potential strength of non-religious attractions are: the old school building of Nuno Alves Perreira, the dormitory for girls of the

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Canossiana Sisters, the ancient tombs of several Catholic missionaries, and the residence of the hero President Nicolau Lobato. Soibada as a religious tourism destination has the advantage or potential of religious activity power in the form of personal prayer, large mass, special mass for the healing of the sick which takes place at the Sagrada Coarao de Jesus church. Religious tourism activities are candlelight processions (if held in the afternoon or evening), the way of the cross from the Sagrada Coarao de Jesus Church to the National Sanctuary of the Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Airata on Aitara Hill or vice versa. Climbing the peak of Mount Manlala to reach the cross. Ø All of the attractions and religious tourism activities above can be accessed at any time, and many pilgrims come on weekends, Easter and Christmas holidays, especially during May and October as months of respect and tradition in the Catholic church for the devotion of the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" and "Mother Mary". The modes of transportation to reach Soibada are by car, bus, motorbike, paddle bike, walking or horseback riding. Some weaknesses and threats to Soibada as a religious tourism destination are: the existence of new religious tourism destinations being built in other places with the same topic, no religious actors, no tour guides to accompany pilgrims, no integrated tourism information center, no bus terminal, adequate parking space. Soibada's opportunity as a religious tourism destination is to maintain the authenticity and conservation of religious and non-religious tourism attractions and activities.

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