



Transformation of local tourism through sustainable business model for Moncongos water tourism based on innovation and community empowerment

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ABSTRACT

Background: Moncongos Water Tourism, located in Kuningan Regency, West Java, is a premier destination that relies on white-water rafting as its main attraction. However, the fluctuation of river water discharge during the dry season poses a significant challenge in maintaining the sustainability of tourism at this location. This research aims to develop a sustainable business model that addresses dependence on natural conditions by introducing innovative tourism products, empowering local communities, and implementing effective marketing strategies. **Method:** This study uses a qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory approach to examine the challenges and opportunities in Moncongos water tourism, focusing on the environmental, social, and economic factors affecting its sustainability. **Findings:** Innovations like flying fox, rappelling, camping, grape cultivation, Mocongos Cafe, and an MSME bazaar engage the local community in roles such as tour guides and small business owners, boosting the economy and fostering ownership. Digital marketing, including social media and influencer strategies, effectively attracts younger tourists seeking authentic experiences. **Conclusion:** Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa menggabungkan inovasi produk, pemberdayaan masyarakat, dan pemasaran digital dapat meningkatkan keberlanjutan wisata air Moncongos, yang memberi manfaat bagi ekonomi lokal dan pelestarian lingkungan. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This research shows that the combination of product innovation, community empowerment, and digital marketing can enhance the sustainability and attractiveness of Moncongos tourism. This sustainable business model is expected to be applicable to other tourist destinations facing similar challenges. With this approach, Moncongos not only becomes an attractive destination but also supports the local economy and environmental preservation.

KEYWORDS: water tourism; Moncongos; sustainable business model; product innovation; community empowerment; digital marketing.

1. Introduction

Local tourism plays an important role in boosting the regional economy while preserving the local natural and cultural wealth. In Indonesia, the tourism sector significantly contributes to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), creates jobs, and strengthens local cultural identity (Kusumowardani et al., 2022). One form of tourism that continues to develop is nature-based tourism or ecotourism. Ecotourism not only offers natural beauty but also provides authentic experiences to tourists, such as interactions with

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local communities and introductions to local traditions. Moncongos Water Tourism in Kuningan, West Java, is one of the destinations with great potential in combining nature tourism with sustainability.

The Moncongos water tourism is located in Sukaimut Village, Garawangi District, Kuningan Regency, West Java, which is known for its stunning natural wealth. This location has a main attraction in the form of a clear and rocky river flow, ideal for rafting activities, which has become one of the main activities that attract tourists. The Cisanggarung River is surrounded by lush green trees, creating a pristine and tranquil natural atmosphere. The natural beauty of Moncongos is also supported by the presence of untouched forests, as well as various flora and fauna typical of mountainous regions, making it a top choice for visitors who want to enjoy ecotourism and nature adventures. In addition, Moncongos also serves as an area that supports the livelihoods of the local community, most of whom work in the agriculture and trade sectors. The villages around Moncongos also feel the direct impact of tourism activities, with many residents involved in tourism management, such as white-water rafting guides, meal package providers, and other tourism managers. Although it has great potential, the sustainability of this destination faces significant challenges, one of which is the decrease in river water flow during the dry season, which disrupts rafting activities and impacts the tourism sector.

Moncongos water tourism is known as a premier destination offering water-based activities, such as rafting. This location attracts tourists thanks to its clear river currents and pristine natural scenery. However, like many other nature-based destinations, Moncongos faces significant challenges regarding the sustainability of its natural resources. One of the main issues faced is the fluctuation of river water flow, especially during the dry season. As previously explained, when the water flow recedes, the rafting activity, which is the main attraction of this tourism, cannot be conducted. This issue not only affects tourist satisfaction but also the income of the local community that relies on tourism activities. Therefore, it is important to design a business model that not only relies on the river's water conditions but also innovates to address these issues and enhance tourist attraction throughout the year.

In the global context, sustainability has become a major issue in tourism management. According to Gretz et al. (2017), tourist destinations need to adopt a business model that is not only oriented towards economic profit but also considers environmental and social aspects. This is important to maintain the long-term appeal of tourist destinations while preserving the natural resources that are the main capital of tourism (Kawuryan et al., 2022). Moncongos water tourism can serve as an example of how the concept of sustainable tourism can be integrated into the management of local destinations to address environmental challenges such as the decrease in river water flow.

Previous research shows that the development of community-based tourism has a positive impact on enhancing the sustainability of tourist destinations (Ahmed & Saleh, 2017). This model not only increases local community participation in tourism management but also gives them control over the generated income. In Moncongos, the implementation of this model can support the local community in seeking innovative solutions to seasonal challenges such as drought (Kurniawan, 2024). In addition, community-based management also encourages the development of new tourist attractions that are relevant to local conditions, extends the tourist season, and creates new experiences for visitors.

The sustainability-based approach in Moncongos is not only relevant for addressing environmental challenges but also important in attracting the attention of tourists who are increasingly aware of sustainability issues. Studies show that modern travelers, especially the younger generation, tend to choose destinations that offer authentic experiences while also supporting environmental preservation. (Fowler et al., 2018). Therefore, the integration of sustainability values in the management of Moncongos can become an additional attraction that enhances its competitiveness in the tourism market.

The development of a sustainable business model for Moncongos water tourism not only focuses on economic aspects but also involves innovation and the empowerment of the local community. Through the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) and Business Model Canvas

(BMC) approaches, this research aims to design solutions that can address the main challenges in Moncongos, such as fluctuations in river water discharge during the dry season. In addition, this research also aims to identify the potential development of new tourist attractions that can provide added value for tourists and the local community, while still preserving environmental sustainability. According to Szromek (2021), Sustainable business models in tourism are essential for balancing economic growth with environmental conservation and social equity.

The development of a sustainable business model is highly relevant and adaptive for Moncongos water tourism. With the challenge of fluctuating river water levels hindering main activities such as rafting, this research offers a more comprehensive approach to ensuring the operational sustainability of tourism. This business model will be designed to create value for tourists through the development of new attractions that are relevant to environmental conditions while also attracting a wider tourism market. In addition, this model is also expected to support the appeal of Moncongos as a nature-based tourist destination in Kuningan, West Java.

The aspect of sustainability is a main pillar in this research, both from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. By integrating innovation into destination management, this research aims to identify and develop potential tourist attractions that can be carried out during the dry season without disrupting the local ecosystem. This also includes the exploration of tourist activities that do not depend on the river flow, so that tourists still have reasons to visit Moncongos throughout the year. In this way, this research not only focuses on diversifying tourist attractions but also supports the preservation of the environment, which is the main attraction of Moncongos. Integrating sustainability into tourism management requires innovative approaches that can address environmental challenges while promoting local economic growth (Putra dan colleagues, 2020).

In addition, the empowerment of local communities is involved in the management and development of the destination. The community is the main stakeholder that plays a role in maintaining the sustainability of tourism. Therefore, the proposed business model will provide space for the local community to actively engage, both in the creation of new attractions, operational management, and tourism marketing. This approach is expected to enhance the welfare of the local community, strengthen social connectivity, and create a sense of ownership towards the tourist destination.

This research also aims to contribute to the academic literature on sustainable business models in the tourism sector. By utilizing the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) and Business Model Canvas (BMC) approaches, this research aims to develop a practical framework that can be applied to other tourist destinations facing similar challenges. The results of this research are expected to provide strategic recommendations to the Moncongos tourism managers, local government, and other parties involved in the development of sustainable tourism (Hien et al., 2023). In addition, this research opens up opportunities to expand academic discussions on innovations in community-based tourism destination management (Sarabia-Molina, 2022).

Although many studies have discussed the importance of sustainability in tourism management, research focusing on the development of sustainability-based business models for local tourist destinations like Moncongos is still limited. This research offers a new contribution by integrating theoretical approaches such as VPC and BMC to address the specific issues faced by Moncongos. The main problem in Moncongos is the high dependence on water-based activities, such as rafting, which can only be done during the rainy season. When the dry season arrives, these activities come to a halt due to the drastically reduced river water flow. This causes a decrease in the number of tourist visits and income for the local community that relies on the tourism sector (Sari et al., 2020). In addition, there have been no integrated efforts to develop alternative tourist attractions that can be enjoyed during the dry season (Rujita, 2020).

Through this research, it is hoped that innovative solutions can be found to address these seasonal challenges, while also creating a business model that can enhance the sustainability of tourist destinations. This model not only offers added value to tourists but

also provides direct benefits to the local community through empowerment and their active involvement in destination management. Thus, this research has two main contributions: first, offering practical solutions to address the specific environmental challenges in Moncongos; second, developing a business model that can serve as an example for other tourist destinations with similar characteristics.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive and exploratory research design. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable researchers to understand deeper perspectives and experiences related to the challenges and opportunities present in Moncongos water tourism, as case studies allow researchers to delve deeply into phenomena occurring in specific contexts, namely water-based nature tourism with seasonal challenges such as reduced water flow during the dry season. The main focus of this research is to understand the dynamics between environmental, social, and economic factors that influence the sustainability of tourism in Moncongos. This qualitative approach provides the flexibility to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of various stakeholders, including tourists, local communities, and tourism managers. The main focus of this research is to understand the dynamics between environmental, social, and economic factors that influence the sustainability of tourism in Moncongos. This qualitative approach provides the flexibility to explore the experiences, perceptions, and strategies of various stakeholders, including tourists, local communities, and tourism managers.

This research aims to gather qualitative information about the potential innovations in sustainable business models that can be applied in Moncongos. Through observation, interviews, and focus group discussions, we will explore various aspects related to tourism management, environmental impact, and local community participation in the development of tourism in Moncongos. Additionally, this research also employs case study methods to examine how the proposed solutions can be implemented in the real conditions of Moncongos (Shabrina et al., 2024).

During the research, data were collected through in-depth interview techniques with key informants who were purposively sampled, including tourism managers, community members directly involved in tourism activities, and other relevant parties. In addition, field observations were conducted to observe direct interactions between tourists and the local community, as well as to identify the potential for developing tourist attractions that can be implemented year-round, addressing the dependency on river water conditions (Shabrina et al., 2024). This design allows researchers to obtain a holistic understanding of the sustainability of Moncongos tourism, including the challenges faced and the solutions that have been or can be implemented.

In this research design, the researchers also use document analysis as part of the data collection process. The documents analyzed include tourism management reports, tourist visit data, and local government policies related to tourism development. This document analysis provides further insight into the existing strategic plans, the obstacles faced in tourism management, and the potential for developing sustainable business models in Moncongos. All collected data will be systematically analyzed using thematic analysis techniques to produce findings that can contribute to the development of adaptive and sustainable tourism business models in Moncongos.

This research was conducted in the Moncongos water tourism area, located in Sukaimut Village, Garawangi District, Kuningan Regency, West Java. This tourist attraction is known as one of the popular nature-based destinations, especially during the rainy season, because main activities such as white-water rafting can be done in the clear Cisanggarung River. Idrus et al. (2024) highlights the importance of commitment to ecosystem conservation in supporting nature-based tourism ecosystems such as Moncongos. This research involves various subjects, ranging from tourists who have visited Moncongos, local communities involved in tourism management, and service providers or parties directly related to this tourism. Seatiawan and Tirtadidjaja (2024) emphasized that

managing the quality of tourist attractions can increase tourist interest in visiting destinations such as Moncongos. The research subjects were purposively selected, considering specific criteria such as experience and direct involvement in the management of Moncongos or knowledge about the potential development of tourism attractions.

To collect data, this research employs several main techniques. The first technique is participatory observation, where the researchers are directly involved in tourism activities, especially during the dry season to monitor water flow and activities available to tourists. Zainuddin et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of local community involvement in tourism management to ensure the sustainability of tourist destinations such as Moncongos. This observation helps us obtain a more accurate picture of the field conditions, the needs of tourists, and the challenges faced by the Moncongos water tourism. In addition, the researchers will also conduct in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as tourists, local communities, tourism managers, and local government officials. These interviews aim to delve deeper into tourists' experiences, new ideas for attraction development, and the community's desires regarding tourism sustainability (McKibbin, 2007). Wulandari & Sugianto (2023) discuss the impact of climate change on nature tourism and adaptation strategies, which are relevant in understanding the challenges of the dry season on Moncongos tourism. This method was chosen because it allows researchers to obtain more accurate and relevant data in understanding the issues in Moncongos.

Data collection in this research was conducted using three main methods: in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants selected through purposive sampling, including tourism managers, local communities involved in tourism activities, and tourists who have visited Moncongos. Zainuddin et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of local experience and knowledge in managing tourist destinations. These interviews aimed to explore their perceptions regarding the challenges faced by Moncongos tourism, particularly related to water discharge fluctuations, as well as to obtain information about innovations that have been or can be implemented in tourism management. These interviews are also designed to understand how the local community is involved in tourism management and how they view the potential sustainability of the tourism (Jones et al., 2020).

In addition to interviews, field observations were conducted to directly observe the dynamics occurring in Moncongos, including interactions between tourists and the community, as well as activities carried out by tourism managers. These observations were conducted during various periods, both in the dry and rainy seasons, to obtain a comprehensive picture of the differences in tourism operations. Wulandari & Sugianto (2023) highlight adaptation strategies to address the impacts of climate change on nature tourism, which are relevant for Moncongos water tourism. In addition, document analysis is used to assess the tourism management policies implemented, including financial reports, tourist visit data, and existing development plans. Data collection through observation and documents provides a richer context, which can help understand the various factors affecting the sustainability of Moncongos water tourism comprehensively.

After the data has been collected, the next step is to analyze the qualitative data. This research uses a content analysis approach to explore and identify relevant patterns, themes, and contexts related to sustainable business models in Moncongos. This analysis is conducted using specialized software, such as NVivo or Atlas.ti, which helps categorize interview data, observation results, and information obtained from written sources into more structured and easily analyzable groups. Endratno et al., (2023) emphasized the importance of utilizing software in managing qualitative data analysis to ensure accurate and detailed results. Through this analysis, we will identify key factors that influence the sustainability of tourism in Moncongos, as well as develop a business model that is suitable for local conditions. This process will ensure that the results obtained are not only accurate but also detailed and relevant. The results of the analysis are used to formulate a sustainable business model based on the Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) and Business Model Canvas approaches. (BMC). This process helps researchers understand the relationship between tourist needs, the potential for new products or services, and the role of the local community

in managing tourism in Moncongos. Izati, (2024) shows that the 4A concept analysis can identify the needs and challenges faced in developing sustainable tourist attractions.

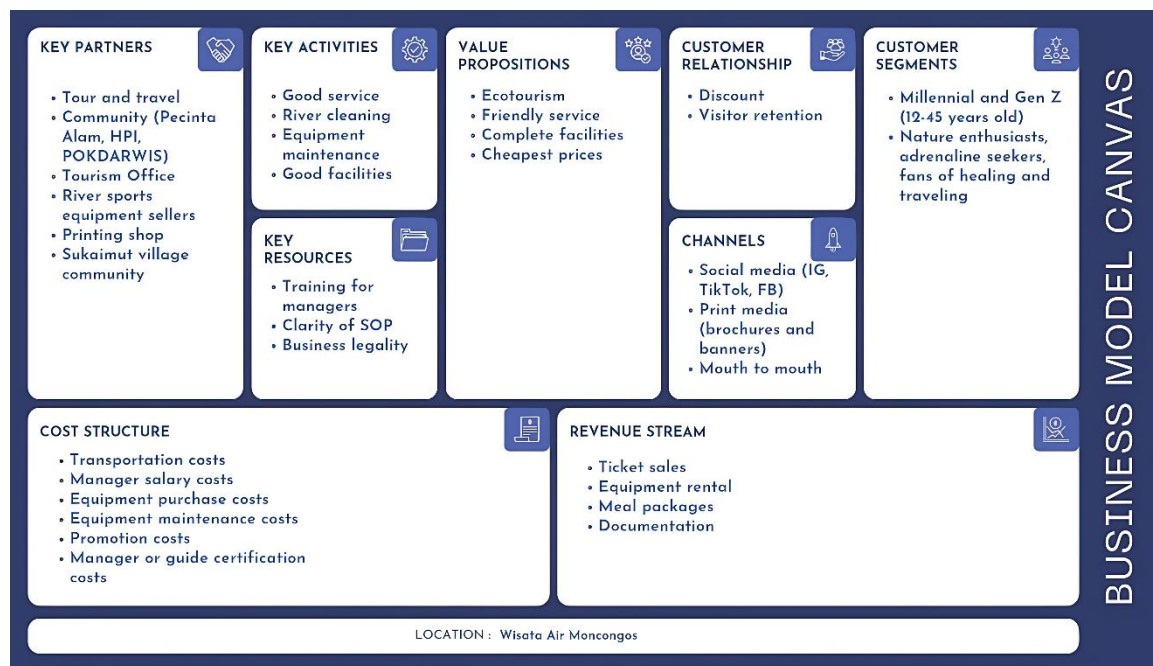


Fig. 1. BMC Moncongos water tourism

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 New product or service innovations

In order to diversify tourism products and enhance the appeal of Moncongos Water Tourism, several new innovations have been introduced to attract tourists throughout the year, particularly to address the challenges that arise during the dry season. One of the main innovations is the addition of adventure activities such as flying fox and rappelling. The flying fox in Moncongos is designed to cross rivers and traverse valleys, providing a thrilling gliding experience with stunning natural views. These activities not only rely on the natural beauty but also add variety to the experiences for tourists who want to enjoy an adventure that is safe yet full of challenges. Meanwhile, rappelling, which involves descending cliffs, takes advantage of the hilly contours and cliffs around Moncongos. This activity provides a physical challenge while also utilizing the natural landscape of Moncongos and offering an alternative activity that remains exciting even when the river's water level is low.

The next innovation is the development of a camping area around Moncongos, which provides a longer stay experience for tourists who want to enjoy the natural atmosphere more intensively. This camping area is designed to support nature tourism with eco-friendly facilities, such as tents made from recycled materials and environmentally friendly toilets (Go et al., 2020). The main advantage of camping activities is their ability to attract tourists who prefer an open natural atmosphere without requiring access to abundant water resources, allowing tourists to visit Moncongos year-round (Rachmawati et al., 2021). This camping experience also provides an opportunity for tourists to engage in activities such as hiking, enjoying sunsets, or observing local flora and fauna, which adds value for tourists interested in ecotourism and outdoor activities.

In addition to adventure and camping activities, Moncongos also introduced grape cultivation as a unique product innovation relevant to the soil characteristics around this destination. Through the grape cultivation program, tourists can not only observe the grape planting process but also directly participate in plant maintenance and harvesting (Susanto & Hartono, 2021). This program allows visitors to gain new knowledge about organic farming techniques and the benefits of grapes in the local context (Wijaya, 2022). Another

unique aspect is that tourists can purchase local grape seedlings produced by local farmers. These grape seedlings are sold in Moncongos and can serve as souvenirs that leave a lasting impression on tourists. In addition, this program also supports the economic sustainability of the local community by increasing the income of farmers and vineyard managers.

To enhance the culinary experience, Moncongos also opened Mocongos Cafe, a cafe that serves various local dishes made with ingredients sourced directly from local farmers. Mocongos Cafe serves as a resting place for tourists after a day of activities, while also offering a signature menu that introduces the unique flavors of Moncongos. The menu ranges from snacks to main courses, all using organic and fresh ingredients from the surrounding area, introducing visitors to traditional cuisine based on local ingredients. This café also serves as a social interaction hub for tourists and the local community, creating a space where culture and tradition can be shared, while also providing economic opportunities for the village community that manages the café.

As part of the strategy to support local SMEs, Moncongos regularly holds SME bazaars that involve small business operators from the surrounding village. This bazaar provides a platform for local artisans, farmers, and micro-entrepreneurs to promote their products to tourists. The products offered are very diverse, ranging from handicrafts, clothing, to processed foods typical of Moncongos that cannot be found elsewhere. This activity has a positive impact not only on the economy but also introduces local culture to tourists. By combining a bazaar and unique nature tourism experiences, Moncongos not only attracts visitors for recreational purposes but also introduces the potential of local products that can be marketed more widely. These innovations not only address the issue of seasonal fluctuations but also enrich the tourist experience, creating a diversity of products that can be enjoyed by various groups of visitors.

3.2 Community empowerment

The empowerment of the local community at Moncongos Water Tourism plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability and success of this destination. The local community is not only involved in daily management but also given strategic roles in the development of new tourism products and services (Rachmawati et al., 2021). For example, villagers with knowledge of the surrounding nature are involved as tour guides for activities such as flying fox, rappelling, and camping. These tour guides are given special training to ensure they can provide a safe and informative experience for tourists (Hardani et al., 2024). This role not only helps improve the quality of tourism services but also creates sustainable job opportunities for the village community, enhancing their skills in the tourism industry.

In addition, the local community is also directly involved in the management of Mocongos Cafe, which has now become one of the important facilities in Moncongos. Starting from managing the cafe, selecting ingredients, to serving dishes, everything is done by the local residents. The owners or managers of the cafes mostly come from the surrounding villages, ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are directly felt by the community. This café also serves dishes made with local ingredients sourced from farmers around Moncongos, supporting the local farmers' economy while introducing regional cuisine to tourists. This shows how tourism can create a mutually beneficial symbiosis between various local economic sectors, such as agriculture and accommodation.

Furthermore, local farmers are also involved in the grape cultivation program, which has become a new attraction in Moncongos. This program teaches farmers about modern, environmentally friendly, and organic farming techniques, enhancing their knowledge of more sustainable agriculture. Farmers involved in grape cultivation not only earn income from the sale of the produced grape seedlings but also gain opportunities to expand their market through tourists interested in buying local grape seedlings. Additionally, this program opens up opportunities for farmers to diversify their sources of income, which were previously limited to traditional agricultural products. Thus, the empowerment of these grape farmers also contributes to building the economic resilience of the village community.

In terms of marketing local products, the regularly held UMKM bazaar in Moncongos provides a very important platform for micro, small, and medium enterprises (UMKM) to promote and sell their products to tourists. This bazaar is attended by local artisans who sell handicrafts, processed foods, and other unique products. Community participation in the bazaar allows them to tap into the tourism market potential that comes to Moncongos, which was previously difficult to access. In addition, with the presence of the bazaar, MSME actors can also share experiences and develop a broader business network, both with fellow local entrepreneurs and with tourists interested in local products. This activity not only helps them increase their income but also introduces local culture to visitors from various regions.

Lastly, in terms of providing food for tourists, local communities with cooking skills or those who supply traditional village food products are given the opportunity to provide meal packages offered in Moncongos. These meal packages, based on local cuisine, not only create an authentic culinary experience for tourists but also provide additional income for the participating communities. From food suppliers to food servers, all these steps involve the active participation of the village community, which enhances their sense of ownership of the tourist destination and strengthens social bonds within the community. The success of community empowerment in Moncongos serves as evidence that sustainable tourism can bring direct benefits to the local community, reduce dependence on natural resources alone, and create more diverse economic opportunities.

3.3 Tourist attraction

To increase the number of tourist visits to Moncongos Water Tourism, various digital marketing and promotional strategies are implemented by leveraging the power of social media as the main communication channel (Yuan et al., 2022). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok play a crucial role in promoting the natural beauty of Moncongos and the various adventure activities offered, including rafting, flying fox, rappelling, and camping (Rui, & Zhenyu, 2024). By using these platforms, Moncongos is able to reach a wider audience, especially young people who are active on social media and tend to seek unique and authentic travel experiences. Through engaging posts of images, videos, and stories, Moncongos can showcase the natural beauty and new facilities available, attracting tourists to visit this location.

Interesting content shared on social media is not just ordinary photos or videos, but also includes storytelling elements that spark tourists' interest. For example, stories about thrilling white-water rafting adventures on the Moncongos River or camping experiences under a starry night sky can create narratives that evoke emotions. The addition of relevant and location-based hashtags (#MoncongosAdventure, #EcoTourismMoncongos, #ExploreMoncongos) further increases the visibility of this destination on social media, helping potential visitors find information more easily. This engaging content can also build an online community around Moncongos, encouraging tourists to share their experiences and promote the destination organically.

Collaboration with influencers and vloggers also plays a strategic role in attracting tourists to Moncongos. By selecting influencers with relevant audiences, especially those interested in nature tourism and adventure, Moncongos can introduce itself to their followers who are already interested in similar types of tourism. Influencers who visit Moncongos and share their experiences through videos and posts on social media can have a significant impact in attracting the attention of potential tourists (Runtikno et al., 2023). Reviews or recommendations from trusted influencers can enhance the credibility of Moncongos as a worthwhile tourist destination, providing a sense of trust for new travelers who may not be familiar with this place beforehand.

To further expand their reach, Moncongos also implements various incentive-based marketing techniques, such as offering discounts, giveaways, and promotions through referral codes. Discounts are offered on certain tour packages, such as group or family packages, to attract more visitors who want to enjoy nature tourism experiences with their

loved ones at more affordable prices. Giveaways such as free tickets or travel experience packages are one way to increase visitor participation in Moncongos' promotional campaigns. This giveaway program is often conducted through social media with certain conditions, such as following the Moncongos account, sharing posts, or including specific hashtags, thereby increasing interaction and online exposure for Moncongos.

Referral codes are also used as a way to motivate tourists who have visited Moncongos to recommend this destination to their friends or family. Every time someone makes a booking using a referral code from a previous visitor, whether an old or new tourist, the code giver will receive benefits such as discounts or certain gifts. This strategy serves to expand Moncongos' reach in a more personal way, as recommendations from friends or family are often more trusted by potential tourists. This also creates a sense of community and loyalty towards the destination, where tourists feel appreciated for their contributions in attracting new visitors.

Moncongos also utilizes special features on social media to further enhance audience engagement, such as creating interactive content, for example through quizzes, polls, or challenges that can be followed by followers on those platforms. These features not only entertain the audience but also facilitate direct interaction with them, creating a more immersive experience with the destination. Additionally, Moncongos actively responds to comments and messages from followers, creating two-way communication that leads to a more personal relationship between the tour operators and potential visitors. In this way, Moncongos can build a reputation as a destination that cares for visitors and is open to communication, which in turn enhances the destination's appeal.

Through a series of digital marketing strategies, Moncongos has not only succeeded in attracting local tourists but also tourists from outside the region. By leveraging modern technology and social media-based marketing, Moncongos is able to effectively convey messages about the experiences offered to a larger audience, and by providing incentives such as discounts and giveaways, tourists are more inclined to plan a visit. All these strategies support the growth of Moncongos as a more sustainable tourist destination, introducing various new products and experiences that can be enjoyed year-round, while significantly expanding market reach (Pinontoan & Lestari, 2020).

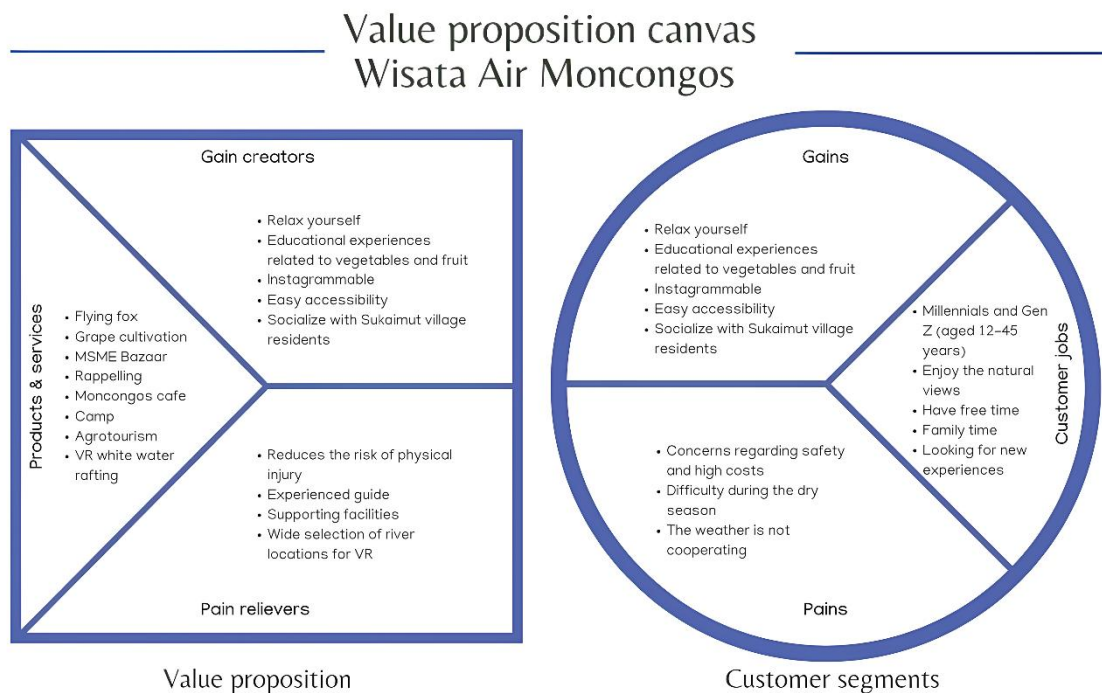


Fig. 2. Value proposition canvas

3.4 Theoretical discussion

This research aligns with theories developed in the literature on sustainable tourism and community empowerment, which emphasize the importance of a community-based approach in managing tourist destinations. According to Gretz et al. (2017), the sustainability of tourist destinations does not only depend on the management of natural resources but also on the active involvement of local communities in all aspects of tourism. Community empowerment in this regard is very important, as the local community is the main actor in maintaining the sustainability and attractiveness of tourism. The findings of this study confirm this, where the Moncongos community is involved in various initiatives, ranging from tour guides to managing cafes and MSME bazaars. Community involvement not only enhances local welfare but also creates a sense of ownership of the destination, which in turn improves the sustainability of tourism itself.

Moreover, the innovation of tourist products that do not solely rely on natural resources, such as the introduction of activities like flying fox, rappelling, camping, and grape cultivation, is in line with the concept proposed by Ahmed & Saleh. (2017). They argue that tourism sustainability can be achieved through the diversification of tourist products that can operate in various environmental conditions. Adventure activities such as flying fox and rappelling that do not rely on water are examples of how Moncongos can face seasonal challenges and maintain their appeal to tourists. This innovation allows Moncongos to reduce dependence on river conditions that only permit rafting during the rainy season, while also providing a tourist alternative that can be enjoyed year-round.

In the context of sustainability, Moncongos' approach, which integrates aspects of ecotourism and local economic empowerment with UMKM bazaars and Mocongos Cafe, also contributes to sustainable economic development. According to research by Fowler et al. (2018), successful ecotourism not only considers environmental sustainability but also involves the community in efforts to enhance income and skills. The MSME activities held in Moncongos not only provide opportunities for the community to market local products but also introduce tourists to local culture, traditional cuisine, and handicrafts (Pigg & Bradshaw, 2003). Thus, the management of tourism in Moncongos can serve as a model that combines the creative economy with ecotourism, facilitating local economic development while preserving natural conservation.

Lastly, digital marketing through social media and collaboration with influencers and bloggers used by Moncongos to enhance its visibility and appeal is also supported by the latest marketing theories. According to research by Kermani et al. (2020), digital marketing using influencers and social media platforms can increase trust and attract the attention of the younger market segment, which is more inclined to choose authentic and nature-based experiences. By using strategies such as discounts, giveaways, and referral codes, Moncongos successfully increased interaction with a wider audience, encouraging them to visit and share their travel experiences. This is in line with the findings of research by Joe et al. (2019), which show that social media-based approaches are very effective in introducing tourist destinations that prioritize sustainability and authentic experiences. This marketing innovation has made a significant contribution to increasing the number of visits and building a positive image of Moncongos as a sustainable tourist destination.

Moncongos has introduced an integrated agrotourism program in the hilly area surrounding the destination, called Agrotourism at Moncongos Hill. This agrotourism aims to provide a unique experience for tourists, where they can directly engage in various agricultural activities, such as planting and harvesting. Some of the main attractions include grapes, strawberries, and organic vegetables. Tourists who come with family or educational groups can take advantage of this program to learn about sustainable farming techniques while enjoying the fresh rural atmosphere. Each visitor will be guided by local farmers who have been trained to explain important processes in agriculture, while also sharing insights about the economic and ecological benefits of organic farming.

Bukit Moncongos is designed in such a way to support this agrotourism concept with tourist-friendly facilities. The beautiful hiking trails allow visitors to thoroughly explore the

garden area while enjoying the natural panorama from the hilltop. In addition, several gazebos have been built in strategic locations to provide resting spots for tourists who want to enjoy the view or have a picnic in the middle of the garden. Along the trail, tourists can also find educational points in the form of information boards that explain the types of cultivated plants, their benefits, and their care techniques. With these facilities, Agrowisata Bukit Moncongos not only offers a recreational experience but also a strong educational element, making it an ideal attraction for tourists from various backgrounds.

This agritourism not only benefits tourists but also supports the local economy, especially the farmers who manage the gardens. Farmers are given training to manage their gardens as part of the tourist attraction, including how to sell their harvests such as fresh grapes or grape seedlings as souvenirs. The results of this agritourism also help increase farmers' income while expanding their market through direct interaction with tourists. Additionally, these activities provide new job opportunities, such as tour guides, farm workers, and facility managers. Thus, Agrowisata in Bukit Moncongos serves as a model for community empowerment that integrates the tourism and agriculture sectors to create sustainable economic benefits.

To address the challenges of fluctuating river water levels that affect rafting activities, Moncongos has introduced a technology-based innovation in the form of Virtual Reality (VR) for rafting tourism. This technology allows tourists to experience the thrilling sensation of white-water rafting without actually being on a rubber boat. By using VR devices, tourists can enjoy highly realistic visual and audio simulations, creating an experience akin to navigating the rapids of the Moncongos River with an intensity close to real conditions. This simulation is designed to include elements such as the roar of water, boat jolts, and views along the river course, providing a captivating and immersive experience for visitors.

This VR station is installed in the main tourist area of Moncongos, making it one of the modern attractions that capture the attention of tourists, especially the younger generation interested in advanced technology. This station is equipped with high-quality VR devices, a comfortable simulation area, and operators who assist tourists in using the devices. Each VR rafting session is designed with a specific duration, allowing tourists to experience a journey through various levels of rapids difficulty without physical risk. This technology also allows visitors with physical limitations or those who are too young to still enjoy the thrill of white-water rafting in a safe and exciting way.

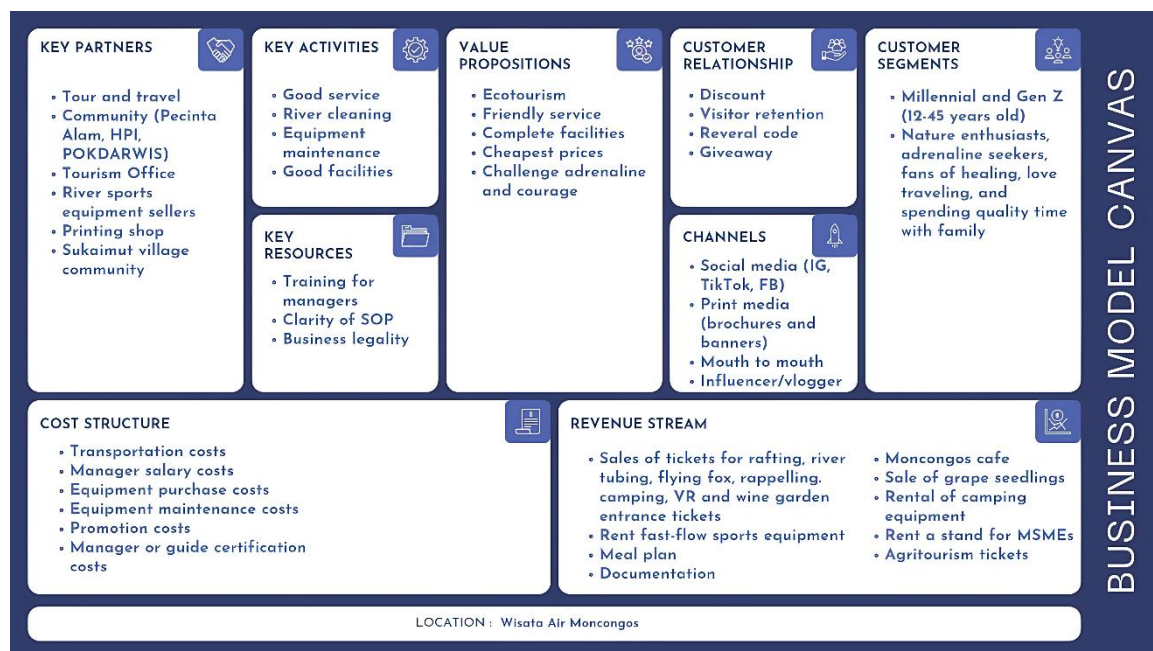


Fig. 3. BMC new Moncongos water tourism

Besides being an entertaining attraction, VR for rafting tourism also serves as a promotional tool for Moncongos. The simulation offered includes the original scenery and rapids of the Moncongos river, which can attract visitors to try real white-water rafting when the river conditions allow. Tourists who try this experience often share their experiences on social media, which in turn helps increase the visibility of this destination. Thus, VR technology not only addresses seasonal challenges but also contributes to a broader destination marketing strategy, making Moncongos a tourist destination that combines traditional experiences with modern innovation.

The presence of this VR innovation also expands Moncongos' appeal to new segments of tourists, such as visitors interested in technology, families wanting to try child-friendly attractions, or educational tour groups wanting to learn about the application of technology in tourism. By integrating modern technology such as VR, Moncongos not only maintains its appeal during the dry season but also introduces a technology-based tourism concept that adds value for visitors. This innovation places Moncongos at the forefront of local tourist destinations that adapt to current tourism needs and trends, strengthening its position as a sustainable and innovative destination.

4. Conclusions

This research successfully identified various innovations implemented at Moncongos Water Tourism to enhance the sustainability and attractiveness of the tourist destination. Product innovations such as flying fox, rappelling, camping, grape cultivation, Mocongos Cafe, and UMKM bazaars not only provide interesting alternatives that reduce dependence on river conditions but also offer a more diverse and appealing tourist experience. The diversification of these tourism products allows Moncongos to operate year-round, overcoming seasonal challenges such as reduced water flow during the dry season, and introducing tourists to the unique natural and cultural heritage.

Empowering the local community is key to the sustainable management of Moncongos tourism. The community is directly involved in various aspects of management, from being tour guides, managing Mocongos Cafe, to being entrepreneurs at the UMKM bazaar. Their involvement not only increases local economic income but also strengthens the sense of ownership and responsibility towards the preservation of the destination. Thus, community empowerment plays a crucial role in creating a tourism model that is not only economically beneficial but also supports the preservation of Moncongos' culture and nature.

Effective digital marketing has also proven to enhance the appeal of Moncongos as a tourist destination. Through the use of social media and collaboration with influencers, Moncongos successfully attracted the attention of tourists, especially the younger generation who prefer authentic and nature-based travel experiences. Discount offers, giveaways, and referral codes also support the marketing strategy to expand reach and attract more visitors. This shows that proper digital marketing can be a very effective tool in introducing sustainable tourist destinations to a wider audience. Overall, this research shows that tourism sustainability in Moncongos can be achieved through product innovation, community empowerment, and effective marketing. Innovation in tourism products that not only rely on natural factors but also involve the local community in their management becomes the main foundation in building sustainable tourism. By integrating these three elements, Moncongos can become a model tourist destination that not only attracts visitors but also contributes to local economic welfare and environmental preservation.

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Author Contribution

D.R.N. conducted in-depth interviews with local communities in Moncongos, coded interview data, and analyzed emerging themes. Contribute to the introduction by providing context about the importance of community participation in sustainable tourism development. F.S. conduct a comprehensive literature review on sustainable tourism, especially related to community empowerment and digital marketing. Designing an analytical framework to measure the impact of community empowerment on tourism sustainability in Moncongos. I.P.S building statistical models to analyze the relationship between various variables, such as community participation levels, local income, and tourist satisfaction. Contribute to the results section by presenting quantitative findings that support the main argument of the research. M.E.W provides direction in selecting research methodology, assists in compiling research proposals, and provides constructive feedback during the manuscript writing process. Responsible for ensuring the quality and integrity of research. Dr. Yanneri Elfa Kiswara Rahmantya, M.M, provides guidance and assists students in publishing research results in scientific journals

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Research on the potential for natural tourism in Air Moncongos Tourism, such as white water rafting, flying fox and rappelling, is fully funded by the village and does not involve external funds.

Ethical Review Board Statement

Because this research focuses more on natural aspects and does not involve humans or animals, approval from an ethics board is not required.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable, because this research does not involve human participation.

Data Availability Statement

Data related to natural tourism potential in Moncongos, such as visitor data, satisfaction levels and environmental data, will be managed carefully and transparently. However, certain data such as personal visitor data will be kept confidential. Requests for data access regarding the natural tourism potential of Moncongos will be evaluated based on research objectives, level of data confidentiality, and applicable regulations.

Data that is confidential or belongs to the village, such as financial data and tourism development strategies, will not be shared. Data related to the natural tourism potential of Moncongos will be stored as long as necessary for research, tourism development and compliance with applicable regulations. Moncongos water tourism implements a strong security system to protect visitor data and research data from unauthorized access. Research regarding the potential for developing virtual reality (VR)-based tourism in Air Moncongos Tourism, such as virtual tours of tourist areas and simulations of white water rafting activities, is still in its early stages. Data related to grape cultivation around the Moncongos tourist area will be used to analyze the potential for developing agrotourism and agricultural education.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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