

Ecotheology: A Solution to Improve the Tourism Industry and Help Create a Golden Indonesia by 2045

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia faces significant challenges in balancing economic growth in the tourism sector with environmental preservation to achieve the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. This study aims to explore the concept of ecotheology as a fundamental solution to advancing sustainable tourism. Ecotheology offers an approach that integrates spiritual and theological values with ecological responsibility, viewing nature not merely as an economic commodity but as a sacred heritage to be preserved. Using qualitative methods and literature studies, this article analyzes how the internalization of ecotheological values in tourism policy can mitigate the negative impacts of mass tourism and environmental degradation. The results of the study indicate that ecotheology can create an ethnically based tourism model that not only increases the industry's global competitiveness but also ensures the resilience of natural resources for future generations. The implementation of ecotheology in the national tourism strategy is predicted to be an important pillar in realizing a prosperous, independent, and sustainable Golden Indonesia 2045.

Keywords: Ecotheology, Tourism Industry, Golden Indonesia 2045, Sustainable Development, Environmental Ethics.

Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the world, contributing significantly to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For Indonesia, tourism is not merely a supporting sector, but a strategic instrument for national development, employing millions of workers and driving regional economies [1]. However, this rapid growth has brought contradictory consequences. The phenomena of *overtourism* and uncontrolled land exploitation have triggered ecosystem degradation, waste accumulation, and biodiversity loss in various prime destinations [2].

These environmental issues are often rooted in a radical anthropocentric paradigm, in which humans are considered the absolute rulers of the universe, entitled to exploit resources for short-term material gain. In the tourism industry, nature is often reduced to a mere object of consumption. Without a paradigm shift from mere economic profit to spiritual and ecological sustainability, Indonesia's tourism industry is at risk of structural collapse before it reaches its peak [3].

Heading towards 2045, Indonesia envisions becoming a sovereign, advanced, just, and prosperous nation, exactly one century after its independence. One of the main pillars of the Golden Indonesia 2045 Vision is sustainable development and environmental preservation [4]. Achieving developed nation status is measured not only by economic growth figures but also by the quality of the environment passed on to future generations [5].

The tourism industry is projected to be a primary foreign exchange earner under this vision. However,

significant challenges arise when conventional tourism patterns continue to dominate [6]. If Indonesia continues to rely on environmentally damaging tourism, by 2045, instead of becoming a developed nation, Indonesia will face a crippling ecological crisis. Therefore, a new approach is needed that goes deeper than the mere technical concept of "green tourism," one that touches the roots of human belief and ethics toward nature [7].

The tourism industry is projected to be a major foreign exchange earner under this vision. However, significant challenges arise when conventional tourism patterns continue to dominate. If Indonesia continues to rely on environmentally damaging tourism, by 2045, instead of becoming a developed nation, Indonesia will face a crippling ecological crisis. Therefore, a new approach is needed that goes deeper than the mere technical concept of "green tourism," one that touches the roots of human belief and ethics toward nature [8].

Ecotheology emerged as a response to the crisis in the relationship between humans and their environment. Etymologically, ecotheology combines "ecology" (the study of the earth's household) and "theology" (the study of divinity). This concept emphasizes that environmental responsibility is an integral part of faith and devotion to God (White, 1967; Gottlieb, 2006). In Indonesia's deeply religious society, an approach grounded in divine values has greater persuasive power than legal regulations alone.

Ecotheology teaches that nature is a sacred creation with intrinsic value that must be respected. In the tourism industry, applying ecotheology means changing the perspective of managers, tourists, and local communities. Tourist destinations are no longer viewed as "money factories," but rather as "sacred spaces" where people encounter the beauty of God's creation. This approach encourages ethical tourism practices, such as spiritually based waste management, protecting wildlife as fellow living creatures, and developing infrastructure that harmonizes with the natural landscape [9].

Integrating ecotheology into Indonesia's tourism industry offers several strategic advantages. First, economically, the global tourism market is increasingly shifting toward *conscious travel*, or travelers seeking meaning and environmental responsibility. By adopting ecotheological principles, Indonesia can position itself as a leading global destination offering spiritually meaningful and ecologically responsible travel experiences [10].

Second, socially, ecotheology strengthens local wisdom (*indigenous wisdom*) found throughout the archipelago. Many indigenous communities in Indonesia have long practiced traditional forms of ecotheology to protect their forests and seas through traditions such as *Sasi* in Maluku or *Nyepi* in Bali. Elevating these values to the national policy level will accelerate the achievement of sustainable development targets [1].

Third, ecotheology serves as a bridge to achieving Golden Indonesia 2045. By preserving nature through a moral-theological approach, the tourism industry will have long-term resilience. Protected natural resources will remain a productive economic asset until 2045 and beyond, ensuring that Indonesia's progress is not at the expense of its ecosystems. Although the concept of ecotheology has developed within the religious academic realm, its specific implementation as a solution for the tourism industry toward Golden Indonesia 2045 remains very limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining how ecotheological values can be transformed into practical strategies for national tourism management [11].

The primary objective of this research is to formulate an ecotheology-based tourism framework that can improve the quality of Indonesia's tourism industry and serve as a supporting pillar for the sustainable vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. Thus, ecotheology is no longer merely a theoretical discourse but a concrete solution to the nation's ecological and economic challenges.

Research Methods

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to explore deep philosophical ideas, concepts, and values regarding ecotheology and its relevance to tourism industry policy [12]. The researcher not only describes the current tourism phenomenon, but also conducts a critical interpretation of how environmental theology can be a structural solution for the vision of Golden Indonesia 2045. The paradigm underlying this study is interpretivism, which views that the reality of sustainable development is not only built through statistical numbers, but through the construction of human values and ethics towards nature [13].

Data Collection Method: Library Research

The data collection method used in this research was a systematic literature review. Researchers conducted an in-depth search of various written documents relevant to the topic under study. Data was collected from various credible sources, categorized as follows [14]: 1). Primary Documents: Includes official government documents such as the "Golden Indonesia 2045" vision text from Bappenas, the Tourism Law, and the strategic plan of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. 2). Theological and Philosophical Texts: Includes religious literature (holy scriptures, encyclicals, or fatwas related to the environment) and pioneering works in the field of ecotheology. 3). Secondary Data: Includes reputable scientific journal articles, sustainable tourism marketing textbooks, international environmental organization reports, and the latest news on ecological conditions in Indonesian tourist destinations.

Literacy Search and Selection Procedures

To ensure validity and objectivity, a literature search was conducted across academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and the Garuda Portal using the following keywords: "Ecotheology", "Sustainable Tourism Indonesia", "Golden Indonesia 2045", and "Environmental Ethics". The inclusion criteria were limited to literature published between 2010 and 2024 to ensure the data's relevance to modern tourism trends, except for fundamental theological texts that are timeless [15].

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis techniques. The analysis procedure was carried out through four systematic stages [16]: 1). Data Reduction: Researchers filtered thousands of pieces of information from the literature to focus on points directly related to the integration of ecotheology and the tourism industry. 2). Categorization: Data is grouped into major themes, such as: (a) Tourism ecological crisis, (b) Basic principles of ecotheology, (c) Implementation strategies in tourist destinations, and (d) Projected achievements in 2045. 3). Data Display: Presents relationships between themes in the form of logical narratives and conceptual frameworks that connect spiritual values with public policy. 4). Drawing Conclusions and Verification: Formulating concrete solutions in the form of ecotheology-based tourism models and conducting cross-verification (source triangulation) to ensure that the arguments constructed have a strong theoretical basis.

Research Thinking Framework

This research builds a framework that connects the ecological crisis of tourism (as a problem) with ecotheology (as an analytical tool and solution) to produce output in the form of quality tourism that will become a pillar of Golden Indonesia 2045. By using comparative analysis, researchers compare current tourism policies with the ideals of ecotheology-based tourism to identify common ground that can be incorporated in national policies [17].

Result And Discussion

Research Results

Based on a literature analysis of national tourism policies and ecotheological principles, three main pillars were found that link religious environmental ethics with the sustainability of the tourism industry in Indonesia.

Deconstructing the Anthropocentric Paradigm in National Tourism

The document review results show that the current Indonesian tourism model is still dominated by an anthropocentric approach, where nature is viewed as an instrument for satisfying human needs and achieving macroeconomic targets (GDP and foreign exchange). Data shows that the pursuit of tourist quantity (*mass tourism*) often ignores environmental carrying *capacity*. Research findings identify that ecotheology offers a deconstruction of this paradigm by introducing the concept of ecological theocentrism. In this view, nature does not belong to humans to exploit, but rather belongs to God entrusted to humans as managers (*stewards/caliphs*).

Principles of Ecotheology in the Indonesian Context

The results of the synthesis of the dominant religious values in Indonesia (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) show that there is harmony in viewing nature as a sacred entity: 1). Islam: The concept of *Khalifah fi al-ard* (God's representative on earth) emphasizes the responsibility of maintaining the balance of nature (*mizan*). 2). Christian/Catholic: The mandate to care for the garden of the earth and the concept of "Laudato Si" (Pope Francis) about caring for "our common home". 3). Hindu/Buddhist: The concept of *Tri Hita Karana* in Bali and the value of *Ahimsa*, which emphasizes harmony between humans, God, and the underworld.

These principles have proven to be a strong moral foundation for changing the behavior of tourists and managers from consumptive to contributory.

Relevance to the Vision of Golden Indonesia 2045

An analysis of the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045 document demonstrates that natural resource sustainability is an absolute prerequisite for national resilience. The study reveals that without integrating ecotheological values, the tourism economy's 2045 target will be hampered by the extremely high environmental restoration costs *resulting* from current ecosystem damage.

Ecotheology as the "Soft Power" of Tourism Marketing

Discussions on ecotheology extend beyond ethics and hold strategic value in global tourism marketing. Future travelers (particularly Gen Z and Alpha, who will dominate the market by 2045) tend to choose destinations with strong ethical and spiritual values [3]. Indonesia, with its religious identity, has an opportunity to market "Spiritual Ecotourism."

Not just conventional religious tourism (pilgrimage), but tourism that integrates natural experiences with spiritual reflection on the majesty of creation. This will enhance Indonesia's international tourism value proposition, distinguishing it from neighboring destinations that may offer only physical luxury without the depth of meaning.

Policy Transformation: From Regulation to Internalization

Environmental regulations often fail in practice because they are perceived as an administrative burden. This discussion emphasizes the role of ecotheology in internalizing values when local communities and business's view maintaining clean beaches or forests as a form of worship, compliance with environmental regulations will emerge organically without the need for strict, repressive oversight.

Practical implementation can be: 1). Ethics-Based Tourism Certification: Adding spiritual-ecological concern indicators to tourism industry standardization. 2). Tourism Education Curriculum: Integrating ecotheological narratives into tour guide materials *so* that they can convey conservation messages as religious moral messages.

Ensuring the Sustainability of Indonesia Emas 2045

Achieving Indonesia Emas 2045 requires strong "social capital." Ecotheology provides this capital by uniting Indonesia's religious diversity under a single mission: Saving Mother Earth. In the context of tourism, this means ensuring that Indonesia's natural assets (such as Raja Ampat, Labuan Bajo, and Lake Toba) remain intact and valuable until 2045.

This discussion emphasized that ecotheology is a preventative solution. Compared to spending trillions to address future ecological disasters, investing in ecotheology-based character education today is far more efficient. The number of hotels built will not measure the success of the tourism industry in 2045, but by the sustainability of Indonesia's natural environment, capable of independently supporting the well-being of its people.

Conclusion

Based on the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that ecotheology is not merely a concept of religious discourse, but rather a fundamental and paradigmatic solution for transforming the tourism industry in Indonesia. The core findings of this research emphasize that the failure of sustainable tourism practices is often rooted in an anthropocentric perspective that views nature merely as a commodity.

Ecotheology offers a shift toward ecological theocentrism, in which nature conservation is understood as a form of spiritual responsibility and devotion to God.

The integration of ecotheological values into the tourism industry is a crucial pillar for realizing the Golden Indonesia Vision 2045. By preserving the beauty and sacredness of nature through a foundation of religious ethics, Indonesia not only ensures the long-term sustainability of its tourism assets but also creates a unique competitive edge in a global market that increasingly values ethical values. Without a strong moral foundation for managing nature, the ambition to achieve economic growth by 2045 risks collapse due to an unaddressed ecological crisis.

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