



## The role of the ASEAN tourism forum (ATF) in supporting Indonesian tourism

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.52465/jogasto.v1i1.147>

### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received Feb 15, 2023

Revised Feb 20, 2023

Accepted Feb 27, 2023

#### Keywords:

ASEAN tourism forum

ATF

Tourism

Tourism fForum

Role

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in supporting tourism in Indonesia. Research methods are carried out qualitatively by collecting data through literature studies. The analysis uses Miles Huberman's analysis which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results showed that the ATF had played a role in the development of tourism in Indonesia. Some of the roles that have been carried out by ATF are (1) ATF acts as a tourism promoter (Tourism Marketing Strategic (ATMS) to market the Wonderful Indonesia brand), (2) ATF acts as an investment cooperation forum (promotion of Indonesian tourism investment), (3) ATF acts as a tourism standardization forum (standards for green hotels, Food and Beverage, Public Restroom, Homestay, Ecotourism, and Tourism Heritage), (4) ATF plays a role in increasing tourist visits in Indonesia by giving awards for the best destinations to boost the prestige of Indonesian tourism, and (5) ATF organizing TRAVEX (Travel Exchange) to boost economically profitable transactions.

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## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is known for its variety of tourist destinations, culture, art, biodiversity, and so on that are worthy of being visited by domestic and foreign tourists. Along with the development of tourism, the introduction of the Indonesian region is intended for domestic tourists and foreign countries. Initially, only Bali was known to tourists, especially foreign tourists. Visitors are more familiar with Bali than Indonesia, even though Bali is part of Indonesia. According to a lecturer and researcher at the Sustainable Tourism Study Program at Padjajaran University, Dr. Evi Novianti, M. Si, foreign tourists are more familiar with Bali than Indonesia because Indonesia's core tourism is in Bali. Judging from its

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history, Bali was promoted during the colonization of the Dutch East Indies, namely to the 1920-the 1930s, the golden era of the tourism world. Bali, with its cultural and religious diversity, can blend into its own characteristics that become a tourist attraction [1].

Over time, the world began to get to know Indonesia with all its tourism potential. This increases tourist visits to Indonesia, both domestic and foreign tourists. Based on BPS data, foreign tourists visiting Indonesia come from countries on the Asian continent, the Americas, the Middle East, the European mainland, the Oceania region, and Africa [2]. Tourism also experienced a golden age and became a leading sector with high visits because it provided economic benefits. Lukito (2022) [3] stated that the tourism industry is a collaboration of tourist destinations or objects, infrastructure for visiting local tourists, hotels, and restaurants. The collaboration increased local revenues and levied taxes. The tourism industry can provide considerable deviation for the country, the most significant contributor to GRDP, increase regional income, open and expand employment, overcome unemployment, and reduce poverty.

Ananda (2023) [4], Special Staff of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, explained that from 2013-2019 the tourism sector's contribution to the national economy has continued to climb. In 2019, the tourism sector's contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) was 4.8% (up 0.30 points compared to the previous year). Indonesia's tourism sector is also the mainstay of the country's foreign exchange, as shown at the close of the 2018 book, by contributing to foreign exchange reaching more than USD 19.2 billion. The rapid progress of the Indonesian tourism sector is also shown through increased competitiveness in 2019. The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report released by the WEF (World Economic Forum) in 2019 shows that the ranking of Indonesia's tourism competitiveness index in the world has increased from 42nd in 2017 to 40th in 2019.

Tourism experienced the opposite condition when the Covid-19 pandemic officially entered Indonesia on March 2, 2020 [5]. The tourism sector began to slump due to various social distancing policies and travel access closures that caused tourists to be unable to visit. Significant losses were also experienced by multiple businesses that collaborated in the tourism sector, such as hotels and inns, restaurants, accommodation businesses, and so on, to cut off the reach of tourists to tourist objects. Reporting from Liputan6.com (2021) [6], the Chairman of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kadin), Arsjad Rasjid, stated that the tourism sector suffered losses of more than IDR 10 trillion during the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, data from the UN tourism agency (UNWTO), the loss of the tourism sector globally amounted to 2.0 trillion US dollars (IDR 28.6 Quadrillion) in lost revenue in 2021 [7].

The tourism sector began to open with the new normal era gradually. Slowly the tourist attractions were opened, albeit on a limited basis. Until mid-2022, tourism began to open without social restrictions anymore. In addition to the opening of various tourism objects, tourism-related activities have also started to be carried out, such as exhibitions, training (business incubation), MICE events (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions), and so on. One of the international events just in the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) will be held on February 2-5, 2023, at the Jogja Expo Center (JEC) Yogyakarta.

ATF is the ASEAN region's largest tourism event, routinely carried out annually [7]. ATF is a forum for cooperation between ASEAN member states in tourism. The purpose of establishing the ATF is to promote countries' tourism in ASEAN as a single destination region [8]. The concept of a single destination was chosen considering that competition in the field of tourism is no longer between countries but rather competition between regional regions [9].

Based on this, ATF is a medium for ASEAN member countries to develop and promote tourism to be better known internationally, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because, in the ATF event, many delegates discussed strategizing with each other in tourism promotion. ATF also has a great opportunity because this event was not only attended by delegations of ATF and ASEAN members but also several partner countries such as ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, Korea, China), India, Russia, and several other international organizations such as UNWTO, PATA, WTTC, ASEANTA, and US-ABC [7]. Indonesia can use the ATF event to be better known regionally and internationally. Based on the description above, this study aims to analyze the role of ATF in supporting tourism in Indonesia.

## **2. Method**

This study uses qualitative descriptive research, namely exploration and deepening activities regarding individual or group problems. According to Sugiyono (2016) [10], qualitative research is a method to examine objects' condition naturally, where the researcher is the key instrument.

Data collection is carried out with documentation through literature studies such as research journals, books, national news sites, and other tourism-related documents that can be accessed online. The data analysis in this study uses Miles Huberman's analysis which includes data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and concluding.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1. Overview of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF)**

ASEAN established the ATF as a regional cooperation that seeks to promote the ASEAN region as a tourist destination [11]. The objectives of the ATF are to:

- a. Promoting ASEAN as an attractive and multi-faceted destination.
- b. Creating and raising awareness that ASEAN is a competitive destination region in Asia Pacific.
- c. Attract many tourists to each ASEAN member state or a combination of countries.
- d. Promoting ASEAN internal tourist travel.
- e. Strengthening cooperation between sectors in the ASEAN tourism industry [12].

The ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) in 2023 will be held at the Jogja Expo Center in Yogyakarta on February 2-5, 2023. The event carries the theme "ASEAN: A Journey to Wonderful Destinations." The theme represents the main expectations of the tourism sector in developing major regional and international tourist destinations and strengthening ASEAN's position as an accelerator of economic growth and job creation [13].

This ATF event is the most significant event held in Indonesia after the Covid-19 pandemic. The implementation of ATF in Indonesia is in line with the recovery carried out by the government in the tourism sector. The tourism sector is a crucial sector to be restored immediately because of the advantages of the sector, namely [14]:

- a. Creating business opportunities  
The arrival of tourists requires services to provide the needs, wants, and expectations of tourists so that various fields of work can be opened to meet the needs of these tourists.
- b. Increasing employment opportunities.  
The construction of hotels, restaurants and other tourism-related fields requires a lot of human resources/employees.
- c. Increasing income while accelerating the distribution of people's income due to the multiplier effect of relatively large tourist expenditures.

- d. Increase government tax revenues and local levies. Every tourist shopping is subject to tax in the amount according to applicable government regulations.
- e. Increasing national income or Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- f. Encouraging increased investment from the tourism industry sector and other economic sectors.

The government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, has carried out 6 (six) steps to restore the tourism sector and the creative economy, namely [15]:

- a. Preparing tourist destinations
- b. Building a connectivity infrastructure that is competitive with other countries.
- c. Implementing and monitoring of the implementation of the CHSE protocol in the regions.
- d. Creating and building tourist attractions.
- e. Improving the quality of human resources in the creative economy workforce.
- f. Increasing the quantity and quality of creative economy products

Connectivity with other countries is through the ATF, which is the largest annual tourism event in the ASEAN region with 10 ASEAN member states, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The ATF was attended by leading industry policymakers, practitioners, and suppliers of ASEAN-based tourism products and services. The ATF includes dialogue among tourism government agencies, private sector organizations, and travel exchanges (TRAVEX) among ASEAN exhibitors and international buyers from major travel markets [16].

### **3.2. The Role of the ATF**

As a forum that houses ASEAN countries in the tourism sector, ATF has various essential roles for its member countries in the tourism sector.

Budi (2016) [17] divided the role of the ASEAN Tourism Forum into several types, namely as a tourism promoter, as an investment cooperation forum, and as a forum for tourism standardization:

#### **a. ATF's role as a tourism promoter**

Tourism promotion is developed based on the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) realized in the ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategic (ATMS). Each ASEAN member state, including Indonesia, is responsible for developing and marketing areas that can become destinations and attractions for tourists in Indonesia. ASEAN (2015) [18] emphasized ATSP 2016-2025 includes:

##### **1) Tourism Competitiveness**

The global competitiveness survey reveals that ASEAN's natural and cultural heritage is one of its main competitive strengths. The main drawbacks are infrastructure and business environment, regulatory framework, and human resources. Developing quality tourism destinations and products is still a major challenge for ASEAN.

The weak performance of the less developed member states is reflected in the asymmetrical nature of the distribution of tourism flows in the region. Therefore, the challenge is to improve the tourism sector's competitiveness in the affected member states to produce a more inclusive distribution of benefits relative to factors such as population and resource capacity.

Thus, the focus areas to improve competitiveness are marketing, product development, investment, quality tourism, human resources, connectivity, infrastructure, and travel facilitation.

##### **2) Sustainable and Inclusive Tourism**

Focus areas for inclusive and sustainable tourism include (a) *upgrading community participation*, (b) *safety, security, and protection of assets*, and (3) *environment and climate change*.

a) Upgrading community participation

Among the various service industries, tourism offers excellent potential to contribute to the overall goal of regional poverty alleviation as rural areas, and the communities living in them are often the main focus of tourism activities such as sightseeing of natural and cultural areas, trekking, river and beach recreation and sports, and so on.

Tourism, if developed in an inclusive policy and goal framework, is thus able to contribute new economic opportunities to rural communities located far away in ASEAN. A more inclusive tourism pattern in ASEAN, a key goal of ASEAN's post-2015 tourism vision, requires that marginalized communities be more involved in the tourism economy, directly or indirectly. These engagements can be: directly where the community provides services such as homestays or guided trips to the surrounding natural heritage sites, or indirectly where the community provides input into the tourism supply chain such as the production of vegetables and fruits for restaurants and the production of cultural objects to be sold as tourist souvenirs.

b) Safety security, and protection of assets

Safety and security are important components of a quality and sustainable competitive tourist destination. Safety must be ensured in using tourism facilities and services, especially transportation services, accommodation, and tourist operations, while security against crime, terrorism, and armed conflict must be provided. Although tourism safety and security is carried out at the national level by Member States, the lack of a consistent policy approach and affirmative strategy towards improving and securing the safety and security of visitors may affect the ability to position the region as a single global destination.

ASEAN tourism relies heavily on the appeal of its unique natural and cultural heritage resources, many of which are globally recognized, including 11 natural heritage sites and 17 cultural heritage sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The rapid growth of domestic and international tourism will likely put increasing pressure on ASEAN's limited heritage resources. The heritage reported in the competitiveness survey is one of ASEAN's main competitive forces. It is imperative that ASEAN's heritage is protected, its attractiveness is enhanced, and its benefits are directed toward local communities.

**b. ATF's role as a forum for investment cooperation**

The tourism investment program is by holding the ASEAN Tourism Investment Forum (ATIF), held twice a year, with the creation of the ASEAN Tourism Investment Guide and several other activities.

**c. The role of the ATF as a forum for the standardization of tourism**

To increase quality tourism and to realize ASEAN as an international class tourist destination, ASEAN has compiled standards for green hotels, Food and beverages, Public Restrooms, Homestays, Ecotourism, and Tourism Heritage.

One of the most established ASEAN Tourism Standards in the Tourism Industry is the Green Hotel Standard. To improve the international standard for hotel facilities and services, ASEAN established the Green Hotel Standard, which includes aspects of environmental management, the efficiency of energy and water use, the impact on the community at the hotel location, and the use of raw materials and supplies from within the country and from the local area. To advance this program, ASEAN held the ASEAN Green Hotel Award to advance hotels in the ASEAN region. The ASEAN Green Hotel Award has been held every 2 (two) years, from 2008 until now.

#### **d. ATF's role in increasing tourist visits in Indonesia**

ASEAN, as an international organization, plays a role by providing ATF as a forum for cooperation for ASEAN member states in the field of tourism and also as a means of communication and guidance for its member states to discuss the condition of tourism, as well as a place where members formulate and implement their programs.

The influence of the ASEAN Tourism Forum is very clearly seen in developing the tourism industry in every country in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia. Since joining the largest tourism cooperation in Southeast Asia, Indonesia has experienced very good tourism growth. This is inseparable from the influence of the ATF, in which there is an M-ATM agenda, namely a meeting where tourism ministers in the ASEAN region exchange ideas to improve the tourism industry. Since Indonesia joined the ATF, tourist visits have proven to increase yearly. Indonesia's promotion in the country and abroad has successfully attracted tourists from various countries.

Wahyuni (2018) [19] detailed some of the ATF's roles, including:

##### **a. ATF creates ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategic (ATMS) to market the Wonderful Indonesia brand**

ASEAN Tourism Marketing Strategic is one of the strategies made by ASEAN to market its region, including Indonesia. Through the ATMS strategy, each member country will be responsible for developing products and attractions by creating tour packages, including Indonesia [20].

This marketing strategy begins with introducing ASEAN branding, namely "Southeast Asia Feel the Warmth," as a symbol of ASEAN Single Destination, which then contains a sub-tagline of each member country that depicts the characteristics of their respective country's tourism. The slogan/tagline of Indonesian tourism is "Wonderful Indonesia."

Wonderful Indonesia has been a slogan since January 2011 as an international marketing campaign directed by the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Tourism. This campaign replaced the "Visit Indonesia Year" campaign that had been in use since 1991. The Wonderful Indonesia concept highlights Indonesia's natural beauty, culture, society, and existing values to generate foreign exchange [19].

##### **b. ATF assists in Indonesian Air Connectivity connectivity**

Dalam perkembangannya, konektivitas perhubungan udara telah disiapkan untuk mendukung pariwisata, salah satunya Yogyakarta International Airport (Yogyakarta) dan Bandara Internasional Lombok Zainuddin Abdul Majid (Nusa Tenggara Barat) [21]. In supporting ATF 2023, Batik Air airlines opened flight routes from Yogyakarta to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) [22].

##### **c. ATF organizes TRAVEX (Travel Exchange)**

ASEAN, as a joint tourist destination, further strengthens Indonesia's superior position in terms of cultural and natural potential. Indonesia benefits from joint promotions because of better tourist destinations. Indonesia's partnership with ASEAN countries in tourism promotion because Indonesia is not strong enough to be independent in terms of tourism promotion [19].

Travel The value of business customer (B2C) transactions during ATF 2023 reached IDR 8.12 billion. This value exceeds the previously set target of IDR 2 billion – IDR 3 billion [22].

##### **d. Giving awards for the best destinations to boost the prestige of Indonesian tourism**

ATF awards the best destinations selected based on certain categories and assessments to give appreciation to countries or regions that can improve the quality of their tourist destinations.

In ATF 2023, as many as 20 awards were received during the ATF 2023 Closing Ceremony, which took place on March 5, 2023, at the Marriott Hotel Yogyakarta, namely:

- 1) For the category of The 2nd ASEAN Public Toilet Award 2023 – 2024, won by the manager of Soekarno Hatta International Airport, Bali Safari and Marine Park, Sasak Ende Traditional Tourism Village (Sade), the manager of Kuta Beach and The Berawa.
- 2) The 2nd ASEAN Spa Service Award 2023 – 2025 category goes to Gaya Spa Wellness Wolter Monginsidi, Ayana Resort Bali, Revivo Wellness Resort Bali, Acqua Spa, and Apurva Spa Kempinski Bali.
- 3) In the 3rd ASEAN Community Tourism Award 2023 – 2025 category, the award was given to Petingsari Tourism Village, Wisara Pemuteran Village, Wae Rebo Tourism Village and Tamansari Tourism Village, and Silokek Tourism Village.
- 4) The 4th ASEAN Homestay Award 2023 – 2025, Indonesia received an award for the hard work of the managers of Nginglof Tourism Village, Dieng Kulon Tourism Village, Nusa Tourism Village, Malangga Tourism Village, and Undisan Tourism Village [23].

The award proves that it was achieved not because of the government's assessment but was directly assessed by the ATF. In this event, the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy (Menparekraf), Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, handed Laos the ATF leadership relay.

#### **e. ATF is useful for the promotion of Indonesian tourism investment**

ATF is a regional cooperation that seeks to promote the ASEAN region as one of the tourist destinations. ATF is also the key to developing tourism in ASEAN countries. Its promotions can make ASEAN countries tourist destinations famous for their hospitality and cultural diversity.

The ATF can function as a means or medium for Indonesia to attract outside investors to invest or cooperate in tourism development in Indonesia.

Meetings at ATF events can encourage collaboration between ASEAN Member states and Plus Three and India and also Russia: 26th Meeting of ASEAN Tourism Ministers 22nd ASEAN Plus Tourism Ministers' Meeting - 10th ASEAN Ministers of Tourism Meeting 2nd ASEAN NTO Meeting of Ministers - India 42nd ASEAN-India Meeting of ASEAN NGOs 29th ASEAN-Russia Tourism Consultation Meeting ASEAN Tourism Awards Ceremony [16].

Indonesia's joining the ATF provides an advantage for Indonesia because Indonesia has weaknesses in the promotion. The Indonesian government is also less than optimal in marketing its tourism products, so it must increase marketing and branding efforts of its tourism products abroad to bring in foreign tourists [24].

ATF also plays a strategic role and benefits the Indonesian tourism sector. Compared to other ASEAN countries, Indonesia's tourism potential is the most [24]. Indonesia has very diverse natural and cultural resources that other countries do not have. The wealth of natural resources and cultural diversity are factors that attract tourists to visit. However, Indonesia is still unable to maintain the sustainability of nature. This can be seen from significant natural damage in Indonesia, such as forest fires, and the near extinction of various protected animals (such as orangutans) for unhealthy business purposes [25].

It can be seen that ATF has played an essential role in the development and promotion of tourism in Indonesia. ATF has introduced tourist destinations in Indonesia to the international world so that they are increasingly known to the world. This increases foreign tourist visits, contributing to Indonesia's

foreign exchange and the economic sector. Even with the event held, there are mutually beneficial transactions (TRAVEX), especially for Indonesia.

#### 4. Conclusion

The ASEAN international event, the ASEAN Tourism Forum, has played a role in the development of tourism in Indonesia. Some of the roles that have been carried out by ATF are (1) ATF acts as a tourism promoter (Tourism Marketing Strategic (ATMS) to market the Wonderful Indonesia brand), (2) ATF acts as an investment cooperation forum (promotion of Indonesian tourism investment), (3) ATF acts as a tourism standardization forum (standards for green hotels, Food and Beverage, Public Restroom, Homestay, Ecotourism, and Tourism Heritage), (4) ATF plays a role in increasing tourist visits in Indonesia by giving awards for the best destinations to boost the prestige of Indonesian tourism, and (5) ATF organizing TRAVEX (Travel Exchange) to boost economically profitable transactions. The suggestion that is an input in Indonesian tourism is to increase awareness and awareness in maintaining natural resources that are maintained and preserved to achieve sustainable tourism.

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