

HIGH EXPERIENCE, LIMITED INFRASTRUCTURE: TOURIST EXPERIENCE IN A SMALL-ISLAND RELIGIOUS HERITAGE DESTINATION (MANSINAM ISLAND, INDONESIA)

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Abstract

This study examines how tourist experiences reflect the heritage value of Mansinam Island, a small-island religious heritage destination in Papua Barat, Indonesia. Despite the growing literature on heritage tourism and tourist experience, limited attention has been given to small-island contexts characterized by strong symbolic value but constrained infrastructure. Addressing this gap, this research adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach to explore how experiential value is constructed in such settings. Data were collected from 40 international cruise tourists through structured questionnaires and short semi-structured interviews. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha ($\alpha > 0.70$), while content validity was ensured through expert review. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to capture both measurable patterns and deeper experiential meanings. The findings reveal that tourist experience in Mansinam Island is shaped by a dual structure consisting of nature-based experience (45%) and socio-cultural dimensions (40%), including cultural interaction, emotional responses, and engagement with local communities. The results also show consistently high levels of satisfaction, indicating the presence of memorable tourism experiences. However, a significant gap exists between experiential quality and infrastructural readiness, particularly in basic facilities and interpretive services. This study proposes the concept of a "high-experience, limited-infrastructure destination" to explain how destinations with limited physical development can still generate strong experiential value through social interaction and cultural meaning-making. The findings contribute to the advancement of religious heritage tourism literature and highlight the importance of community-based experiential development in small-island tourism contexts.

Keywords: *Tourist Experience; Religious Heritage Tourism; Small Island Tourism; Community-Based Tourism; Memorable Tourism Experience*

INTRODUCTION

Heritage tourism has experienced significant growth over the past decades as tourists increasingly seek destinations that offer historical depth, cultural identity, and symbolic meaning. In this context, tourism is no longer viewed merely as a recreational activity, but as a medium through which visitors engage with the history, traditions, and identity of a place. Cultural heritage tourism, therefore, is commonly defined as travel motivated by the desire to learn, discover, and experience both tangible and intangible cultural attributes embedded within a destination (Paananen & Minoia, 2019). Alongside this development, the emergence of the experience economy has positioned tourist experience as a central element in determining destination value. Tourist experience is inherently subjective and constructed through cognitive, emotional, and social interactions between visitors and the destination environment (Kromidha et al., 2023; Magrivos et al., 2021). In heritage settings, these experiences are often intensified by symbolic meanings and narratives associated with historical and religious sites, making such destinations particularly relevant for experiential tourism studies. Religious heritage tourism represents a specific form of heritage tourism in which spiritual, historical, and cultural values intersect. Unlike conventional tourism, this form of tourism involves not only physical visitation but also deeper processes of reflection, meaning-making, and emotional engagement. Visitors are not merely observers; they actively interpret and internalize the significance of the site through interaction with cultural narratives and local communities (Davari & Jang, 2024). In small-island contexts, however, the development of religious heritage tourism presents unique challenges. Small islands are often characterized by limited space, fragile ecosystems, and constrained infrastructure, which can restrict tourism development. At the same time, these destinations frequently possess strong cultural identity and historical

significance that can enhance experiential value (Andrade et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021). This creates a paradox in which destinations may offer rich experiential value despite infrastructural limitations. Mansinam Island, located in Papua Barat, Indonesia, exemplifies this condition. As the historical site marking the arrival of Christianity in Papua in 1855, the island holds strong symbolic and spiritual significance. In recent years, it has also become a port-of-call destination for international cruise tourists visiting Manokwari. These tourists typically spend a limited amount of time on the island, making the quality of experience during short visits particularly crucial in shaping destination perception and future recommendation (Atasoy, 2025).

Despite its importance, scholarly attention to tourist experience in small-island religious heritage destinations such as Mansinam remains limited. Existing studies on heritage tourism have largely focused on urban or large-scale heritage destinations, while research on tourist experience in small-island contexts is still underdeveloped. Moreover, previous studies tend to emphasize either physical attributes of destinations or general experiential dimensions, without explicitly examining how experiential value is constructed in environments with infrastructural constraints. Therefore, there remains a critical gap in understanding how tourist experiences are formed and interpreted in small-island religious heritage destinations characterized by strong symbolic value but limited infrastructure. This study addresses this gap by examining how tourist experiences in Mansinam Island reflect its heritage value and by identifying the structural dimensions of those experiences.

Specifically, this research aims to:

1. Identify the key dimensions of tourist experience in Mansinam Island
2. Analyze how these experiences contribute to the perceived value of the destination as a religious heritage tourism site.

By doing so, this study contributes to the advancement of literature on tourist experience and religious heritage tourism, particularly within the context of small-island destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism refers to travel activities motivated by the desire to experience places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the past and present of a community. It encompasses both tangible elements, such as monuments and historical sites, and intangible aspects, including traditions, narratives, and cultural practices (Paananen & Minoia, 2019). In contemporary tourism studies, heritage tourism is increasingly understood not only as a form of cultural consumption but also as a process of meaning-making, where tourists actively interpret and engage with the historical and symbolic value of a destination. Recent studies emphasize that the success of heritage tourism is not solely determined by the physical preservation of sites, but also by the effectiveness of interpretation and storytelling. Visitors seek experiences that allow them to connect emotionally and cognitively with the heritage being presented (Koutsis & Stratigea, 2021). This shift highlights the importance of experiential dimensions in heritage tourism, moving beyond static observation toward interactive engagement. However, most existing studies focus on urban or large-scale heritage destinations, where infrastructure, accessibility, and interpretive systems are relatively well developed. As a result, there is limited understanding of how heritage tourism operates in small-scale or peripheral contexts, particularly in small-island destinations where resources and infrastructure are constrained.

Religious Heritage Tourism

Religious heritage tourism represents a specific intersection between heritage tourism and spiritual travel. It involves visits to sites that hold religious, historical, and symbolic significance, where tourists may seek not only knowledge but also spiritual reflection and emotional connection (Davari & Jang, 2024). Unlike traditional pilgrimage, which is primarily motivated by religious devotion, religious heritage tourism accommodates a broader range of motivations, including cultural curiosity, historical interest, and experiential engagement. This diversity of motivations creates a complex experiential structure, where not all visitors interpret the destination in purely spiritual terms. Recent literature suggests that the value of religious heritage tourism lies in its ability to facilitate meaning-making through interaction with sacred spaces, narratives, and local communities (Kaya et al., 2022). In this context, authenticity is not only derived from the physical site but also from the social and cultural processes that shape visitor experience. Nevertheless, existing research tends to focus on well-established religious destinations, such as major pilgrimage sites, leaving smaller and less-developed locations underexplored. In particular, there is a lack of empirical studies examining how religious heritage tourism is experienced in small-island settings, where symbolic value may be high but infrastructural support is limited.

Tourist Experience

Tourist experience has become a central concept in tourism research, particularly within the framework of the experience economy. It refers to the subjective perception formed through interactions between tourists and various elements of the destination, including physical environment, activities, and social encounters (Kromidha et al., 2023). Contemporary studies conceptualize tourist experience as multidimensional, involving cognitive, emotional, sensory, and social components. Experience is constructed through the interaction between three key elements: the physical surroundings, other people, and the individual's internal meaning-making process (Ebejer et al., 2020). This perspective shifts the focus from destination attributes to relational dynamics.

Furthermore, the concept of memorable tourism experience highlights that experiences that evoke strong emotional responses and exceed expectations are more likely to influence tourist satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Magrizos et al., 2021). These experiences are often co-created through interaction, rather than passively consumed. Despite these advances, most studies on tourist experience are conducted in well-developed destinations. There is still limited understanding of how experience is constructed in contexts where infrastructure is minimal but social and cultural interaction is strong. This gap is particularly relevant for small-island destinations.

Small Island Tourism and Sustainability

Small islands present unique opportunities and challenges for tourism development. On one hand, they often possess rich cultural identity, historical significance, and natural beauty that can enhance experiential value. On the other hand, they face constraints related to limited land, fragile ecosystems, and inadequate infrastructure (Andrade et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2021). Sustainable tourism has been widely promoted as an approach to balance economic benefits with environmental and cultural preservation in such contexts. In small-island tourism, sustainability is closely linked to community involvement, resource management, and the protection of cultural heritage. Recent studies highlight that in resource-limited destinations, experiential value may rely more heavily on intangible factors such as social interaction, authenticity, and cultural engagement. This suggests that infrastructure, while important, may not be the sole determinant of tourist satisfaction.

Research Gap and Conceptual Positioning

Based on the literature above, three key gaps can be identified. First, there is limited research on tourist experience in small-island religious heritage destinations. Second, existing studies tend to separate experiential analysis from infrastructural conditions, without examining their interaction. Third, the role of social and cultural interaction in compensating for infrastructural limitations remains underexplored. To address these gaps, this study positions tourist experience as the primary analytical lens to understand how value is constructed in a small-island religious heritage destination. By focusing on Mansinam Island, this research aims to explore how experiential dimensions emerge within a context characterized by strong symbolic meaning and limited infrastructure. This positioning provides the foundation for proposing a new conceptual understanding of tourism development in such contexts, particularly through the notion of a "high-experience, limited-infrastructure destination."

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach to explore tourist experiences in Mansinam Island as a religious heritage tourism destination. This design integrates qualitative insights with quantitative descriptive support, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of both measurable patterns and deeper experiential meanings. The qualitative component is emphasized to capture subjective dimensions of tourist experience, including perception, emotion, and meaning-making, which are central to tourism experience research (O.Nyumba et al., 2018; Yuli, 2024). The quantitative component, on the other hand, provides descriptive validation of emerging patterns through frequency and percentage distributions (Batari & Junaid, 2025).

Research Site

The study was conducted on Mansinam Island, located in Teluk Doreri, Manokwari Regency, Papua Barat, Indonesia. The island holds strong historical and religious significance as the site where Christianity was first introduced to Papua in 1855. In addition to its symbolic value, Mansinam Island has recently emerged as a port-of-call destination for international cruise tourists visiting Manokwari.

Participants and Sampling

The participants of this study were international cruise tourists visiting Mansinam Island. Based on cruise manifest data, a total of 108 tourists visited the island during the research period. From this population, 40 tourists were selected as respondents.

A purposive sampling technique was employed, with the following criteria:

1. International tourists visiting Mansinam Island,
2. having participated in at least one activity on the island,
3. willingness to provide responses during the limited visitation time.

This approach was considered appropriate given the time constraints associated with cruise tourism.

Data Collection

Data were collected using three main techniques: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and structured questionnaires. Participant observation was conducted by directly engaging in tourism activities alongside visitors, enabling the researcher to observe interactions between tourists, local communities, and the destination environment. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with selected respondents to explore their perceptions and experiences in greater depth. Due to time limitations, interviews were conducted in a flexible and concise manner without disrupting tourist activities. Structured questionnaires were distributed to capture general perceptions, satisfaction levels, and key experiential elements. The combination of these methods allowed for data triangulation and increased the robustness of findings.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure the quality of the research instrument, both validity and reliability were assessed. Content validity was established through expert judgment involving two tourism academics and one professional tour guide, who evaluated the relevance and clarity of questionnaire items. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha for key perception indicators, resulting in a coefficient above 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis supported by descriptive statistics. The qualitative analysis followed several stages:

1. data transcription,
2. open coding to identify key ideas,
3. categorization of codes into experiential dimensions,
4. identification of overarching themes representing tourist experience.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distributions, to support the interpretation of qualitative findings.

Research Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the number of respondents is relatively limited and dominated by a specific demographic group, which may affect generalizability. Second, data were collected within a short visitation period, which may reflect immediate impressions rather than long-term evaluations. These limitations are considered when interpreting the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings through an integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to explain how tourist experiences are structured in Mansinam Island as a religious heritage tourism destination.

1. Respondent Profile

The analysis shows that the tourist profile is relatively homogeneous. Of the 40 respondents, 92.5% were from Australia, while the remaining respondents were from the United States (5%) and New Zealand (2.5%). In terms of age, the majority of respondents fall into the mature traveler category, with 67.5% aged between 61–75 years and 27.5% above 75 years old. This means that 95% of respondents are over 60 years old. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with 55% female and 45% male. This profile indicates that the visitors represent a segment of mature international tourists who tend to seek meaningful, reflective, and culturally enriched experiences. This demographic context is important in interpreting the structure of tourist experience observed in this study.

2. Overall Satisfaction and Perceived Experience

The findings indicate consistently high levels of satisfaction among respondents. The mean scores for both satisfaction and recommendation reach the maximum value (5.0), suggesting that the destination meets and even exceeds tourist expectations. In addition, all respondents (100%) reported experiencing an unexpected positive impression during their visit. This suggests that the experience provided by the destination goes beyond initial expectations and may be categorized as a memorable tourism experience. However, the absence of variation in responses also indicates a potential limitation in measurement sensitivity or response bias. Therefore, while the results strongly indicate positive experiences, they should be interpreted with caution.

3. Structure of Tourist Experience

The analysis reveals that tourist experience in Mansinam Island is structured into two dominant dimensions. First, nature-based experience accounts for 45% of responses, including elements such as coastal scenery, fresh air, and the tranquil atmosphere of the island. These findings confirm that the physical environment remains a primary attraction for visitors. Second, socio-cultural experience contributes 40% of the overall experience. This includes cultural performances (15%), interaction with local communities (12.5%), and emotional responses such as feelings of peace and reflection (12.5%). These results indicate that tourist experience in Mansinam Island is dualistic in nature, combining environmental appreciation with social and emotional engagement. Rather than functioning independently, these dimensions interact to form a holistic experience.

4. Cultural Interaction as Embedded Experience

Although only 12.5% of respondents explicitly identified cultural interaction as their primary experience, qualitative analysis shows that such interactions are embedded within multiple experiential dimensions. Tourists reported participation in cultural performances, informal conversations with local residents, and guided storytelling sessions. These interactions contribute to the personalization of the experience and enhance emotional engagement. This suggests that cultural interaction is not always perceived as a standalone category but operates implicitly as a supporting layer that enriches other forms of experience.

5. Identified Constraints and Destination Limitations

Despite the overall positive experience, respondents identified several limitations related to infrastructure and destination management. A total of 55% of respondents highlighted the need for improvement in basic facilities, particularly sanitation and cleanliness. Additionally, 20% pointed out the lack of interpretive information, which affects their ability to fully understand the historical and cultural significance of the destination. Other concerns include time management during visits (12.5%) and minor safety issues.

These findings indicate a clear gap between experiential quality and infrastructural readiness.

6. Synthesis of Findings

Based on the integrated analysis, the findings can be summarized into four key points:

1. Tourist experience is dominated by nature-based elements but significantly enriched by socio-cultural dimensions.
2. The destination generates consistently high levels of satisfaction and memorable experiences.
3. Cultural interaction functions as an embedded experiential component rather than a dominant standalone factor.
4. There is a clear mismatch between high experiential value and limited infrastructural support.

Taken together, these findings support the conceptualization of Mansinam Island as a "high-experience, limited-infrastructure destination," where experiential strength is driven primarily by social interaction, cultural meaning, and environmental context rather than physical development.

DISCUSSION

This section interprets the empirical findings by engaging them with the theoretical lenses introduced in the literature review, namely tourist experience, religious heritage tourism, and small-island tourism. The discussion advances the argument that experiential value in Mansinam Island is constructed through the interaction of environmental, social, and symbolic dimensions, rather than being primarily dependent on infrastructural completeness. This interpretation is consistent with the qualitative-dominant mixed-methods design, where descriptive patterns are explained through thematic meaning-making.

1. Dual Structure of Experience: Nature and Socio-Cultural Meaning

The results demonstrate that tourist experience in Mansinam Island is structured by two dominant yet interrelated dimensions: nature-based experience (45%) and socio-cultural experience (40%). This finding substantiates the multidimensional view of tourist experience, where perception is shaped through interactions with physical surroundings, social actors, and internal meaning-making processes (Ebejer et al., 2020; Kromidha et al., 2023). However, the present study extends prior work in two important ways. First, it shows that in small-island contexts, environmental attributes function as an entry point to experience, while socio-cultural elements deepen and personalize that experience. In other words, the natural setting attracts attention, but the social and cultural layers convert attention into meaning. Second, the near-equivalent contribution of socio-cultural dimensions challenges a common bias in heritage tourism studies that prioritize physical authenticity over relational authenticity. From a religious heritage perspective, this dual structure also indicates that sacred value is not only embedded in physical symbols (e.g., monuments or historical sites) but is co-produced through narratives, interactions, and emotional responses. This aligns with the argument that heritage value is socially constructed rather than inherently fixed (Davari & Jang, 2024).

2. Cultural Interaction as a Mechanism of Meaning-Making

Although only a minority of respondents explicitly identified cultural interaction as their primary experience, qualitative evidence reveals that such interaction operates as an underlying mechanism across multiple experiential dimensions. Tourists reported engagement in cultural performances, informal conversations, and guided storytelling, which collectively contributed to deeper understanding and emotional resonance. This finding supports the concept of cultural mediation, where experience is facilitated through access to physical, cognitive, and social dimensions (Weiler & Yu, 2008). In Mansinam Island, local guides and community members act as mediators who translate historical and spiritual meanings into accessible narratives. The experience is therefore not passively consumed but actively co-created, consistent with the shift from tourists as observers to co-creators of experience (Weiler & Black, 2015). Importantly, the embedded nature of cultural interaction suggests that its influence may be underestimated in quantitative reporting if measured only as a standalone category. This highlights a methodological implication: experiential components that operate implicitly require qualitative approaches to be fully captured. Thus, the mixed-methods design employed in this study is not merely complementary but necessary for revealing hidden layers of experience.

3. Emotional Intensity and Memorable Tourism Experience

The uniformly high satisfaction scores and the universal presence of unexpected positive impressions indicate that Mansinam Island generates experiences that can be categorized as memorable tourism experiences (MTE). Such experiences are characterized by emotional intensity, novelty, and personal significance, which are known to influence satisfaction and future behavioral intentions (Magrizos et al., 2021). In this study, emotional responses such as feelings of peace, reflection, and connection emerge not only from the natural environment but also from social and symbolic interactions. This finding reinforces the argument that memorable experiences are holistic, involving cognitive, affective, and social dimensions simultaneously. Nevertheless, the absence of response variability requires careful interpretation. It may reflect genuine experiential strength, but it may also indicate ceiling effects or social desirability bias in data collection. By acknowledging this limitation, the study maintains analytical rigor while preserving the validity of its core interpretation.

4. Experience–Infrastructure Gap: Reframing Development Assumptions

One of the most significant findings of this study is the clear gap between high experiential value and limited infrastructural readiness. While respondents reported strong positive experiences, more than half identified deficiencies in basic facilities and interpretive services. Conventional tourism development models often assume that infrastructure is a prerequisite for quality experience. However, the present findings challenge this assumption by demonstrating that experiential value can be generated independently of, or even in spite of, infrastructural limitations. This does not imply that infrastructure is unimportant, but rather that its role is conditional and context-dependent. In small-island settings such as Mansinam, where development resources are limited, experiential strength appears to derive from intangible assets, including social interaction, cultural authenticity, and symbolic meaning (Hermawan, 2022). This observation aligns with studies on small-island tourism that emphasize the role of identity and community in shaping tourism value (Khan et al., 2021; Andrade et al., 2021), but goes further by empirically illustrating how these factors compensate for infrastructural gaps. At the same time, the findings do not

romanticize infrastructural limitations. The identified deficiencies, particularly in sanitation and interpretation, indicate that improvements are necessary to sustain and enhance visitor experience. Therefore, the experience–infrastructure relationship should be understood as a dynamic balance rather than a trade-off.

5. Conceptual Contribution: High-Experience, Limited-Infrastructure Destination

Building on the empirical findings, this study proposes the concept of a “high-experience, limited-infrastructure destination.” This concept captures a specific condition in which destinations with constrained physical development are still capable of producing high-quality, meaningful tourist experiences. Unlike traditional models that prioritize infrastructural investment as the primary driver of tourism development, this concept emphasizes the role of social interaction, cultural mediation, and symbolic value in generating experiential quality. It suggests that experiential intensity can function as an alternative pathway to destination competitiveness, particularly in peripheral or resource-limited contexts. This conceptual contribution extends existing literature in three ways. First, it integrates insights from tourist experience and small-island tourism into a unified framework. Second, it highlights the compensatory role of intangible factors in experience formation. Third, it provides a basis for rethinking development strategies in destinations where large-scale infrastructure expansion is neither feasible nor desirable.

6. Implications for Sustainable and Community-Based Tourism

The findings have important implications for sustainable tourism development. In Mansinam Island, experiential value is closely linked to community involvement, cultural practices, and the preservation of symbolic meaning. This indicates that sustainability is not only an environmental concern but also a socio-cultural process. The strong role of local communities in shaping tourist experience supports the relevance of community-based tourism (CBT) approaches. By positioning communities as active participants rather than passive beneficiaries, CBT can enhance both experiential quality and local empowerment. From a practical perspective, development strategies should focus on two complementary directions:

1. targeted improvement of essential infrastructure, particularly sanitation and interpretive services,
2. strengthening community capacity in guiding, storytelling, and cultural presentation.

This dual approach ensures that infrastructural upgrades do not undermine the authenticity and relational dynamics that constitute the core of the destination’s value.

7. Integrative Synthesis

Taken together, the discussion demonstrates that tourist experience in Mansinam Island is not a simple reflection of destination attributes, but the outcome of complex interactions between environment, society, and meaning. The findings confirm that in small-island religious heritage contexts, experiential value is primarily constructed through relational and symbolic processes rather than material conditions. This synthesis provides a coherent bridge to the conclusion, where the implications of these findings are articulated in relation to theory, practice, and future research.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how tourist experiences reflect the heritage value of Mansinam Island as a small-island religious heritage destination. Drawing on a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, the findings demonstrate that tourist experience in Mansinam is not solely determined by physical attributes of the destination, but is constructed through the interaction of environmental, social, and symbolic dimensions. Empirically, the results reveal a dual structure of experience in which nature-based elements attract initial attention, while socio-cultural interaction and emotional engagement deepen and personalize the experience. The consistently high levels of satisfaction and the presence of unexpected positive impressions indicate that the destination generates memorable tourism experiences despite its infrastructural limitations.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by proposing the concept of a “high-experience, limited-infrastructure destination.” This concept challenges conventional assumptions that position infrastructure as the primary driver of tourist satisfaction, and instead highlights the role of social interaction, cultural mediation, and symbolic meaning in shaping experiential value. In doing so, the study extends the understanding of tourist experience within the context of small-island and religious heritage tourism, where intangible factors play a critical role.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that tourism development in Mansinam Island should adopt a balanced approach that combines targeted infrastructure improvement with the preservation and strengthening of community-based experiential elements. Investments in basic facilities, particularly sanitation and interpretive services, are necessary to enhance visitor comfort, while efforts to empower local communities in guiding, storytelling, and cultural presentation are essential to maintain the authenticity and depth of the tourist experience. This study also highlights the importance of recognizing experiential strength as a strategic asset in peripheral and resource-limited destinations. Rather than pursuing large-scale infrastructural development that may compromise local identity, policymakers and practitioners should consider approaches that leverage social and cultural capital as key drivers of destination competitiveness.

Nevertheless, this study is subject to several limitations. The relatively small and homogeneous sample, dominated by mature international tourists, may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, data were collected within a short visitation period, which may capture immediate impressions rather than long-term evaluations. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by incorporating more diverse tourist segments and examining the perspectives of local communities, governance structures, and stakeholder dynamics. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how experiential value interacts with management practices and sustainable tourism development in small-island contexts.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Mansinam Island possesses strong potential as a religious heritage tourism destination, not because of its infrastructural capacity, but because of its ability to generate meaningful, emotionally rich, and socially mediated tourist experiences. This insight reinforces the importance of rethinking tourism development strategies in small-island destinations by prioritizing experiential quality alongside sustainable and community-based approaches.

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