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# Defending Social and Ecological Space: A Critical Analysis of the Documentary Film *Dragon for Sale* and Premium Tourism on Komodo Island, Indonesia

## Abstract

This research examines the controversy surrounding premium tourism development in Labuan Bajo. It specifically focuses on the eviction of the Ata Modo community from Komodo Island, as depicted in the documentary *Dragon for Sale*. The documentary is both a cinematic work and a journalistic report that documents real-life socio-political issues. Using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study examines the tension between government-driven tourism policies and the rights of local communities. It delves into the government's plans for tourism development around Komodo dragons, highlighting the adverse impacts on local communities, including displacement and loss of cultural identity. The findings underscore the conflict and deprivation of community rights, emphasising the exclusion of local voices from decision-making and calling for more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable tourism policies.

**Keywords:** documentary film, “*Dragon for Sale*”, ecological space, Komodo Island, super-premium tourism

## 1. Introduction

The development of super-premium tourism on Komodo Island has sparked local protests over concerns about its socio-environmental impacts. The Indonesian government has designated Komodo National Park as a super-premium destination, raising questions about the program's implementation and its implications for community welfare and sustainability (Batul et al., 2023). Tourism management in Komodo National Park largely follows an ecotourism approach (Hidyarko et al., 2021), aiming to balance conservation and tourism. Still, it also presents immediate socio-environmental challenges (Sianipar & Suryawan, 2024). Research shows that tourism activities can lead to negative impacts, such as pollution and altered tourist behaviour, including on Padar Island (Cordova et al., 2021).

Efforts to protect Komodo Island's unique biodiversity have been highlighted through community-based conservation programs. However, concerns about overtourism and its detrimental effects have prompted protests and calls for alternative governance and management strategies. In response to public protests, the government faces increasing pressure to address public demands and maintain stability (Wei et al., 2020). These protests underscore the necessity of community participation and the importance of conservative planning for sustainable tourism destinations, particularly in mitigating overcrowding and environmental degradation (Araya López, 2021; Spadaro et al., 2023).

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The documentary vividly illustrates these challenges by depicting the complex relationship between Komodo Island's local customs and the Komodo. The film highlights the impending eviction of local communities due to government plans to develop a super-premium tourist attraction. This narrative emphasises the clash between tourism development and the preservation of cultural and ecological traditions. In this context, the importance of specialist-driven tourism, as highlighted in the literature, becomes evident. Such tourism aims to empower local communities to preserve traditions and protect cultural identities (Purnawati & Qorib, 2024), unlike conventional tourism, which often commodifies traditional culture for mass consumption.

Understanding residents' perceptions is critical in prioritising tourism over traditional practices (Chang et al., 2018), as evidenced in local studies on community well-being. Community perceptions of conservation efforts, particularly regarding Komodo dragons in Riung National Park (Blegur et al., 2020), are critical to ensuring sustainability and protecting endangered species. Conservation initiatives, such as the monitoring camera project (Purwandana et al., 2021) and genetic studies, are crucial for the survival of this species amid environmental and demographic challenges.

Understanding the government's premium tourism agenda is essential, especially amid widespread discourses. This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore how language and power interact in communication. CDA goes beyond analysing linguistic structures to focus on how power, ideology, and domination are produced and sustained through discourse (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015). It is beneficial in contexts such as racism, sexism, and the media, where discourse both perpetuates and challenges dominant ideologies. CDA highlights the connection between linguistic elements and broader social factors, revealing how language shapes public perceptions, influences social action, and exercises power and social inequality (Jeftić, 2020).

Teun A. van Dijk, a leading figure in CDA, extended this approach by introducing a socio-cognitive dimension that analyses the underlying cognitive structures of discourse, known as “mental models” (Abdel-Raheem, 2020), which shape how individuals process and interpret discourse based on their experiences and knowledge. Van Dijk's work emphasises the importance of understanding macro- and micro-structures in texts, focusing on themes, topics, word choice, and syntax to uncover how power and ideology operate in discourse, thereby reinforcing social relations and perpetuating dominant ideologies (Hjelm, 2021).

This lens of analysis becomes particularly relevant when examining the tourism industry, a significant economic driver for many regions that often brings complexities and challenges, especially when it clashes with conservation and cultural interests. Research by Coroş et al. (2017) and Coria and Calfucura (2012) indicates that developing super-premium tourist destinations in populated areas often generates tensions, as local communities may feel threatened by potential displacement and the erosion of their cultural identity and traditions. These conflicts illustrate the inherent tension between pursuing economic growth through tourism and protecting local populations' rights, integrity, environment, and cultural heritage. The literature emphasises the growing importance of sustainable tourism as a framework for addressing these conflicts, underscoring the necessity of tourism development that meets the needs of current tourists while preserving opportunities for future generations (Mariam et al., 2024; Walas et al., 2024).

The tradition of resource management promoted by specialist tourism raises concerns about the commodification of cultural heritage. The documentary highlights the displacement of local traditions for a super-premium tourist attraction, emphasising the need for sustainable tourism that respects Indigenous cultures and protects endangered species, as tourism should not sacrifice the community (Hoogendoorn, 2024). The film depicts the Ata Modo people's resistance to relocation plans, as they believe their coexistence with Komodo dragons poses no threat to them. In contrast, the government's conservation plan continues to face opposition.

This research engages with the controversy surrounding premium tourism development in Labuan Bajo, particularly the displacement of the Ata Modo community as portrayed in the documentary. It explores the

discourse, the filmmakers' social cognition, and the socio-political context shaping the film. Specifically, the research focuses on three research questions (RQ):

*RQ 1: How does the government's policy on the development of premium tourism in Labuan Bajo affect the local community, especially the Ata Modo community?*

*RQ 2: What form of resistance does the Ata Modo community put up against the policy of relocation and tourism development on Komodo Island?*

*RQ 3: How does the policy of premium tourism development affect the behaviour of tourists and the socio-economic impact on the local community in Labuan Bajo?*

By addressing these questions, the study foregrounds the competing narratives surrounding Komodo Island's development, focusing on how language and representation in the film reflect power structures and ideologies. Through its focus on documentary representation, this research aims to highlight how global tourism agendas translate on the ground. It calls for greater recognition of local voices in tourism planning and advocates for more just, inclusive, and sustainable development policies in Labuan Bajo.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a methodological approach that focuses on the intricate relationships between language and power across various texts and forms of communication. CDA goes beyond merely analysing linguistic structures, emphasising how power, ideology, and domination are produced, reproduced, and maintained through discourse (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015). This approach seeks to uncover the hidden mechanisms of power that influence social dynamics and to challenge existing power structures (Rosdiana et al., 2023). By examining discourse within social and political contexts, CDA reveals how social power and inequality are exercised through language (Sujito et al., 2019).

CDA connects linguistic elements to broader social factors, such as conflict and politics, revealing how discourse defends or challenges power structures and shapes public perception (Nur, 2019). It is essential for understanding ideologies in contexts like racism, sexism, and media, showing how language either perpetuates or resists dominance. Teun A. van Dijk builds on this by analysing cognitive structures, or “mental models,” which explain how individuals process discourse based on their experiences, reinforcing dominant ideologies (Kujundžić, 2019). His approach examines both macro and micro structures within texts—focusing on themes, topics, and linguistic choices—demonstrating how language can reinforce or contest power structures (Jeftić, 2020). This approach underscores the importance of looking beyond surface content to uncover how power and ideology function within discourse and how alternative perspectives can challenge dominant narratives.

### 2.2. Premium tourism

Premium tourism, often referred to as luxury tourism, is distinguished by several core attributes, including exclusivity, personalisation, and a high standard of service across all aspects of the travel experience (Kwortnik, 2003). This sector aims to provide affluent travellers with tailored, unique, and immersive experiences that extend beyond conventional tourism (Garay et al., 2018). The primary components of premium tourism encompass luxurious accommodations, high-end transportation, fine dining, and bespoke experiences, each of which contributes to a holistic, high-end travel offering (Hjalager, 2007). These elements are meticulously designed to cater to travellers who value experiences that emphasise privacy, comfort, and cultural authenticity, thus meeting the evolving demands of this growing market segment (Richards, 2011).

Premium tourism emphasises luxurious accommodations, including boutique hotels, private villas, and high-end resorts with prime locations, sophisticated designs, and exceptional service. It also features high-end transportation options such as first-class flights, private jets, luxury car rentals, and yacht charters, enhancing comfort and convenience (Batul et al., 2023). Culinary experiences, like Michelin-starred dining, exclusive wine tastings, and private chefs, complement personalised travel experiences. Tailored activities, such as private tours and exclusive cultural events, further elevate the sector. Central to premium tourism are privacy, comfort, and authenticity, with travellers seeking seclusion and genuine local experiences. However, this sector faces challenges such as environmental sustainability, cultural commodification, and socioeconomic disparities. Since the experiences offered are often artificial, the interaction with residents may not meet travellers' expectations for authentic engagement (Luna-Cortés, 2021).

### 3. Research methods

This research takes a qualitative approach, using Teun A. van Dijk's discourse analysis to examine the connections among text, social cognition, and social context as portrayed in Dandhy Laksono's documentary *Dragon for Sale*. Moving away from computational methods, it focuses on theoretical analysis rather than numerical data, drawing on frameworks developed by scholars such as Denzin and Lincoln (2009). The 68-minute film, produced by Ekspedisi Indonesia Baru, Sunspirit, and Friends of Flores, is the primary data source. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a trusted tool for exploring power, language, and representation, this study investigates how the documentary reveals the socio-political dynamics of tourism, offering critical insights into the struggles and resistance local communities face. Through CDA, the film becomes a powerful medium for understanding the interplay between tourism policies and regional realities, further cementing the relevance of documentary analysis in capturing social truths.

#### 3.1. Data collection methods

The documentary was selected for its thorough depiction of the socio-political issues surrounding the "10 New Bali" development project, addressing environmental degradation, forced displacement, and community resistance to tourism policies (Rumpia, 2024). Its international recognition, through screenings at prominent universities and discussions at global forums, underscores its importance as a critical text for understanding the broader impacts of state-driven tourism initiatives. The data collection process involves transcribing the entire film to facilitate a detailed analysis of both verbal and visual elements. Each scene is carefully reviewed to identify significant themes, dialogue, and interactions that reveal the power dynamics and resistance strategies of local communities. A table summarising the relevant scenes for this study follows.

**Table 1**  
*Data on film scenes and themes analysed*

Scene	Description of the scene	Main theme	Analytical focus
1	Daily life of local communities on Komodo Island	Coexistence with Komodo dragons	Human-environment interaction and traditional conservation methods
2	Government justification for relocation	Displacement under the guise of conservation	Language of authority and legitimisation of policy
3	Febianto's injury from a Komodo attack	Resistance to relocation despite risks	Identity and attachment to ancestral land
4	Protest against tourism land concessions	Community resistance against corporate takeovers	Power struggle and land rights activism
5	Komodo Festival as cultural preservation	Cultural resistance through rituals	Symbolic acts of cultural identity and protest
6	Debates with government officials	Questioning land ownership claims	Legitimacy of legal frameworks and local rights
7	Farmers' expectations of tourism	Economic impacts on local agriculture	Critique of economic narratives in development discourse

**Table 1 (continued)**

8	Conflict with investors	Negotiations and economic disparity	Economic inequality and systemic exclusion
9	Local art as a form of resistance	Music and traditions used to express dissent	Art as a tool for social commentary and resistance
10	Interviews on sustainability concepts	Different views of sustainability	Indigenous vs. state-defined sustainability models
11	Impact of geothermal projects on water sources	Environmental degradation linked to tourism	Environmental justice and resource management

This structured approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of how the documentary depicts the various dimensions of socio-political conflict, resistance, and cultural preservation in response to tourism policies.

### 3.2. Data analysis and interpretation

The data analysis uses van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, focusing on three stages: macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure. Each stage uncovers different elements of the film's narrative, structure, and language, providing a comprehensive understanding of the documentary's power dynamics, resistance, and socio-political conflicts. The CDA process is summarised in Table 2 below.

**Table 2**  
**CDA process table**

CDA layer	Description	Key focus
Macrostructure analysis	Identifies central themes, such as super-premium tourism development, local resistance, and socio-economic impacts.	Themes of commodification, resistance, and socio-economic consequences.
Superstructure analysis	Examines how the film's narrative is organised, focusing on visual and verbal elements that build the storyline.	Structure of narrative: scene sequencing, visual symbolism, and storyline flow.
Microstructure analysis	Analyses linguistic elements like word choice, metaphors, and rhetoric to uncover narratives of power and resistance.	Language patterns: metaphors, rhetorical devices, and socio-political discourse.

This table illustrates the step-by-step CDA analysis, highlighting the focus areas at each level. By examining these layers, the research aims to reveal the deeper narratives embedded in the documentary and explore how language and visuals contribute to power dynamics, cultural commodification, and community resistance.

## 4. Results

The application of Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the study of the documentary film can explore the layered narrative in its depiction of the socio-political landscape of Komodo Island. (van Dijk, 1995; van Dijk, 2015). This approach breaks down the film's narrative into macro-, super-, and microstructure layers, allowing a thorough dissection of the discourse surrounding premium tourism and the resistance of the Ata Modo community. The data analysis in this study is organised into ten distinct stages, each corresponding to an aspect of the film's narrative, linguistic features, and social context. By structuring the discourse analysis this way, the study aims to uncover the dynamics of commodification, local resistance, and the film's socio-economic implications.

**Table 3**  
**Structure of discourse building in the documentary**

Stage	Structure (Main theme)	Superstructure (Text organisation)	Structure micro (Elements linguistics)	Social cognition	Social context
1	Introductory and premium tourism themes	Introduction: Introduction to Komodo Island and life in the Ata Modo community	Metaphor about life side by side; sentence narrative Forgive background	Understanding the human-komodo dragon relationship and the beginnings of premium tourism policy	Introduction: About the importance of Komodo Island as a Komodo habitat and a place where the Ata Modo people live
2	Premium tourism concept	Table of Contents: Explanation of the concept of premium tourism and the reasons behind the policy state	Technical and academic terms about the research underpinning the premium tourism policy	Realise the impact of a potential first-class tourism policy aimed at the community from the local	Policy background in premium tourism and the academic research supporting it
3	Fenan's travels and observations	Content: Fenan goes to Komodo Island and observes the activity there	The sentence is descriptive and narrative, describing Fenan's travels and observations	Processing information about: Life on Komodo Island	Fenan changed his mind about tourists after seeing first-hand life on Komodo Island
4	Daily life on Komodo Island	Contents: Overview of daily life, Ancestral Modo community, and interactions with Komodo dragons	Visual description of life in society and interactions with Komodo dragons	observe human-komodo interaction directly	Ata Modo people live side by side with the Komodo dragons and confront them with the challenge of politics from premium tourism
5	Demonstration resident refuses relocation	Content: The show displacement of Ata Modo residents who refuse to perform	Active sentences show the direct actions of citizens in demonstrations; the expression is emotional in protest	Realising injustice and rejection towards community displacement	Demonstration Citizens are resisting policies of the government that they believe are harming them
6	Impact of tourism programs on agriculture and cooperatives	Content: Impact of economic and social policy on agriculture, premium tourism, local and cooperative	Interviews with farmers and cooperative heads, their views on premium tourism	Identify the impact of local policies on the economy	Policy premium tourism impacts the sector of Agriculture and cooperatives on Komodo Island
7	Life side by side with Komodo dragons	Context: Story about a boy who loses his arm because a Komodo dragon bit him, but his family still refused to relocate	Story use according to personal sentence narrative; Definition about biting Komodo dragons and family reactions	Discover the personal experience of living side by side with Komodo dragons	The connection between humans and dragons is complicated by the people's determination to stay together on their island
8	Protecting culture	Content: Annual festival organised by the Ata Modo community to protect cultures and promote coexistence demonstrations	Ceremonial language style in festival descriptions; use the term culture and traditions	Understand the importance of protecting local culture for society	Cultural festivals endeavour to preserve the heritage of the community while affirming their culture in their presence
9	Dispute between the company's tourism and the public's land rights public	Table of Contents: Description of the concession granted to the company for the development of tourism in National Parks	Technical terms related to the use of data and facts to profit from the concession; companies and concession permits	Digging out the blow to land rights over the trade of local people	The concession of company-owned land for road construction has sparked a dispute between the business and indigenous rights groups.
10	Daily life and rejection of the geothermal project	Conclusion: An overview of the challenges practically encountered in everyday life in society, and the rejection of geothermal projects	The sentence rejects argumentative and emotional geothermal projects, challenging the definition as a practical electricity and water issue	Identify the efforts facing the community in major projects	Geothermal projects are considered harmful to the community and the environment, resulting in the emergence of resistance from residents

Table 3 demonstrates how the documentary effectively combines linguistic and visual elements to highlight the socio-political issues on Komodo Island, particularly community resistance to top-down development policies. At the macrostructure level, it identifies themes of commodification, resistance, and socio-economic impact, exposing power imbalances and environmental exploitation. The superstructural analysis critiques

the ideologies of premium tourism, focusing on the struggles of local communities. The microstructural analysis reveals the documentary's use of metaphors, rhetoric, and descriptive language to convey resistance and power dynamics. It not only depicts immediate challenges but also serves as a tool to raise awareness and advocate for indigenous rights and sustainable development. Ultimately, the film emphasises the need for community-based approaches in tourism, suggesting that documentaries play a vital role in shaping public discourse and policy on sustainable development and social justice.

## 5. Discussion

The documentary offers a powerful portrayal of local communities resisting the government's plan to relocate residents for premium tourism development, shedding light on the social conflicts between the government and the people. It explores the community's fight to protect their land and cultural heritage, highlighting the impact of power dynamics on their lives. The film critiques the government's tourism policies, revealing their negative consequences on local livelihoods and social structures. It also compares tourist preferences across regions, particularly Labuan Bajo, emphasising how Komodo Island's unique history and culture shape its tourism landscape.

### 5.1. Government discourse on the economy and conservation

This documentary series highlights how the Indonesian government's discourse around developing Labuan Bajo as a premium tourist destination emphasises economic priorities and exclusivity in tourism policy (Public Relations Office of the Indonesian Presidential Office, 2022). The focus shifts from increasing visitor numbers to encouraging tourists to spend more and stay longer, aligning with broader tourism trends that prioritise high-spending, high-value tourists over volume. This approach aims to capitalise on tourism as a driver of economic growth by targeting fewer, wealthier tourists who can make a significant contribution to both the local and national economies.

However, this economically driven approach inevitably entails certain contradictions, particularly when the government seeks to link these economic goals with environmental protection. By restricting access to Komodo Island and charging a high entry fee of IDR 3,700,000 per person (previously only IDR 250,000 for foreign tourists), the government places the preservation of nature behind a paywall that inherently excludes those without sufficient financial means. This echoes the concerns raised by MacCannell (2002), who argues that tourism, when commodified to this extent, often leads to the exclusion of natural resources, making them accessible only to those who can afford a market-driven form of conservation.

The tensions between conservation and the commodification of nature are even more evident when considering the broader implications of the government's pricing strategy. As Hall (2010) points out, the tourism industry's increasing reliance on high-end, exclusive products leads to the privatisation of natural sites, turning these public goods into luxury commodities for the few. This model not only raises ethical concerns about accessibility but also risks reinforcing global inequalities, with wealthier individuals from outside the region reaping the benefits of natural resources that local communities can no longer access.

Sandiaga Uno, Indonesia's Minister of Tourism, also emphasises the need to limit the number of tourists to protect Komodo's ecosystem from degradation. This emphasis on conservation appears to fit within a broader eco-tourism discourse, where sustainability is positioned as a core value of tourism development. However, as Jafari and Scott (2014) argue, such models often serve as guides to economic growth, in which environmental concerns are framed as secondary to the goal of generating profit. Here, the Indonesian government presents conservation and economic growth as complementary forces, but in practice, the policy prioritises financial returns over long-term ecological health.

Furthering this narrative, the Public Relations Office of the Indonesian Presidential Office (2022) outlines the President's vision to transform Labuan Bajo into a premium tourist destination. Key initiatives include

regional planning, airport expansion, and infrastructure improvements to position Labuan Bajo as a world-class tourism hub. While the government's stated goal is to improve the quality of life for local communities, the emphasis on aligning the region with international standards signals a more profound commitment to global tourism trends (Ozturk et al., 2022). In this context, the government's engagement with local MSMEs and its human resource training initiatives seem more like afterthoughts, designed to support the larger tourism economy rather than to ensure an equitable distribution of economic benefits to local populations.

Despite these concerns, the government has integrated sustainability into the tourism development framework. The President's focus on waste management and the availability of raw water demonstrates an acknowledgment of the need for sustainable infrastructure in tourism. However, Scheyvens (2002) notes that sustainable tourism requires more than just infrastructure development—it necessitates a shift toward inclusive models that genuinely empower local communities rather than prioritising large-scale economic ventures that marginalise them.

## 5.2. Community resistance to government policies

The Indonesian government's promotion of super premium tourism on Komodo Island has sparked significant social conflict, particularly with the Ata Modo community, due to plans to relocate and close the island, threatening their customary rights and survival. While the government frames this development as a conservation and job creation effort, it overlooks the Ata Modo community's deep historical connection to the island and its environment (Pranata et al., 2021). A documentary highlighting community resistance underscores the tension between economic development and local rights. In this narrative, the government positions itself as the key actor in national progress, often portraying local communities as obstacles or victims while neglecting Ata Modo's long-standing role in managing the national park and their collective rights.

Rejection of this policy stems from the realisation that they are not empowered in the decision-making process, further exacerbating distrust of the government. The lack of clear communication from the government regarding the relocation plan and closure policy, which has been disseminated through the media without official explanation, has further exacerbated this social tension. Behind the development discourse, the disparity between economic goals and the social impact on the community is evident. This documentary illustrates how this tourism policy threatens people's livelihoods and changes their social and cultural order.

For example, one local watermelon farmer who initially supported tourism development felt disadvantaged by increased competition from traders outside the area, leading to market injustice. This imbalance illustrates the divergence of interests between policymakers who see tourism as a source of state revenue and local communities who feel marginalised (Hickman & Hoffman, 2011). This indicates that although this policy is claimed to be a solution to economic development, its social impact is broader and longer-lasting, potentially damaging the social sustainability of local communities.

Government discourse emphasising sustainable development and ecological conservation. However, justified from an environmental perspective, often clashes with the views of local communities that prioritise social justice and their rights as legal owners of land and natural resources. The closure of Komodo Island, which is claimed to be a conservation effort, risks damaging the spiritual and social relationships of the Ata Modo community with their land, which has been an inseparable part of their identity for centuries. Therefore, government decisions prioritise economic and ecological interests without involving the community in decision-making, thereby neglecting their rights.

This conflict reflects how government policies are often seen as authoritarian actions that fail to consider community participation (Durga Prasad et al., 2023). This pattern has persisted since the era of the previous authoritarian government (Karlsson et al., 2002). Furthermore, this development policy touches on a deeper cultural dimension, often neglected in modern tourism discourse. By transforming Komodo Island

into a premium tourism destination, the government risks damaging local traditions and eroding the cultural diversity of the Ata Modo community.

In this context, the Ata Modo community's resistance to the policy is not only about the economy but also about protecting cultural heritage and rights to customary land. This documentary effectively raises this issue in a humanistic way, depicting the community's hope for positive change that involves them in a more inclusive, equitable development process (Pearson et al., 2023).

### 5.3. Complexity development premium tourism

Understanding policy trends influencing tourist behaviour is crucial for destination managers, particularly in areas like Labuan Bajo, Flores, which is being developed as a super-premium tourism destination. Tourists have the right to express their opinions and preferences regarding tourist attractions, and these views can significantly impact the success of tourism development projects (Lee et al., 2020). The ongoing development of Komodo Island and the extensive renovations in Labuan Bajo highlight the need for a deep understanding of tourist behaviour, especially when targeting premium visitors. To effectively cater to these premium tourists, Labuan Bajo must recognise the differences in behaviour and preferences among different premium market segments. As a result, the design and execution of marketing and promotional strategies are critical to ensuring that Labuan Bajo's communication and marketing efforts align with the goals of attracting and retaining premium tourists (Kimbu & Ngoasong, 2015).

The documentary's release delves into tensions arising from differing tourist preferences between Labuan Bajo and other regions, underscoring the complexity of tourist behaviour. Tourists have varying preferences when selecting tourist facilities, influenced by factors such as destination, travel duration, and travel companions (Wang et al., 2021). For instance, accommodation preferences are shaped by the destination and the length of stay. In contrast, preferences for dining and shopping are influenced by travel companions and the tour duration, respectively.

The documentary also presents the perspectives of foreign travellers on the development of super-premium tourism in Labuan Bajo and the ongoing controversy over Komodo Island. The rising international ticket prices and the competitive landscape of tourist attractions across Indonesia have raised concerns. While Indonesia remains a top destination for global travellers, there is uncertainty regarding the pricing of tourist tickets on Komodo Island. This uncertainty has led many local and foreign travellers to question the planned super-premium tourism development, with concerns extending beyond ticket prices to the broader implications for the Ancestral Modo community within the tourism management ecosystem.

The influx of foreign tourists has benefited the Ata Modo community economically, yet the resurgence of tourism has introduced uncertainty, particularly regarding ticket pricing at the State's premier tourist attractions. The documentary reflects this tension, showing how high-ticket prices contribute to indecision and amplify the debate over perceived value and potential obstacles for tourists. This highlights the significant role of economic factors in tourist decision-making. Additionally, the documentary suggests that internal environmental factors at Komodo Island influence tourist choices. According to Coria and Calfucura (2012), identifying these dominant factors can help stakeholders develop marketing strategies that align with tourists' needs, particularly local travellers. The documentary questions the impact of super-premium tourism on ticket prices and the broader implications for the area.

The documentary effectively explores the complex social issues surrounding tourism development in Ata Modo Village, highlighting the conflict between the government and the local community. The film captures the community's resistance to the proposed closure of Komodo Island, showcasing their determination, love for their home, and Indigenous status. They challenge the government's land ownership claims, question the fairness of their treatment, and express doubts about the conservation rationale. The film also illustrates the

negative economic impact of premium tourism, exemplified by a local farmer who, initially supportive, later felt disadvantaged by competition from non-local vendors. The documentary serves as a powerful commentary on the socio-economic and cultural impacts of tourism, emphasising the need for development that respects local perspectives, preserves cultural heritage, and ensures equitable economic benefits.

## 6. Research limitations

This research has several limitations that need to be considered. First, media text analysis in tourism studies remains uncommon, which may make the approach unfamiliar to some. Instead of collecting primary data from local communities or tourism industry players, the study focuses on analysing documentary narratives, which limits the depth of insight into the actual impacts of tourism. The critical discourse approach may also introduce bias, especially since the films already take a crucial stance on government policies. Finally, the research is based solely on one medium, and incorporating other sources, such as government reports or additional case studies, could have provided a more well-rounded perspective on the topic.

## 7. Conclusion and recommendations

The documentary reveals the development's significant environmental and socio-economic impacts, with the government's emphasis on commercial gain overlooking ecological and social imbalances. The resettlement plan faces strong opposition, disregards the community's rights to their land and cultural heritage, and threatens environmental sustainability and the Komodo dragon's habitat. This highlights the injustice of states' unilateral decisions that exacerbate social and economic inequalities. The findings underscore the need for a more inclusive approach to tourism development that integrates local perspectives and ensures that economic and social benefits are shared.

Future research should focus on tourism management models that incorporate local input and ensure equitable distribution of development benefits. Additionally, studies on the long-term social and economic effects of premium tourism—especially regarding cultural preservation and economic opportunities—are crucial for respecting local heritage. Research on the role of media, particularly documentary films, in influencing public opinion and government policy can also offer insights into how media can advocate for sustainable tourism. It is recommended that the government review current policies to prioritise community engagement, cultural heritage, and the socio-economic well-being of residents.

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