TOPONYMY PERSPECTIVE OF TOURIST DESTINATION NAMING IN NORTH NIAS REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias Regency. The objectives of this study are to identify the dominant and minority types of toponymy used in naming tourist destinations and to explain the factors influencing these naming patterns. Data was collected through field observations, semi-structured interviews with local informants who knew about the historical and cultural background of place names, and photographic documentation. George R. Stewart's (1954) classification of place names, which divides toponyms into nine types, was used to analyze the data collected. The results show that descriptive names are the most common category in the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias, primarily reflecting physical and natural characteristics such as sand color, wave conditions, landforms, and unique natural phenomena. Other categories, such as possessive, incident, commemorative, and manufactured names, appear in smaller proportions. These findings indicate that local communities prioritize clarity, familiarity, and environmental observation when choosing names for tourist sites, while social memory, ownership, historical events, and marketing factors play secondary roles. By emphasizing the role of toponymy in preserving local identity and supporting culturally based tourism development, this study contributes to linguistic and tourism studies.

Keywords: Toponymy, Tourism Destination, Place Names, North Nias.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the largest sectors in the global economy. Godovykh (2025) states that in an academic context, tourism is known as a multidimensional phenomenon that not only involves tourist travel but also has an impact on community welfare and local development. This means that tourism is currently seen as an activity that not only involves tourist travel but also has social, economic, and developmental impacts on local communities. However, tourism is not only about the economic sector, but also about cultural and linguistic phenomena that can reflect the uniqueness and identity of a region. Supported by a statement from Rastitianti (2024), the linguistic landscape in the context of tourism shows how language and signage reflect the social and cultural identity that exists in tourist destinations.

Tourism development encompasses many elements, one of which is the naming of tourist attractions. The name given to a destination is very important because it represents cultural values, historical background, and the relationship between the local community and its environment. Through the name of a place, tourists are indirectly introduced to the cultural identity and local wisdom of an area. The brand identity of a destination is shaped by the habitus of a place, which is characterized by symbols, meanings, attributes, and behaviors that represent the experience of that place (Hana, 2021). Every tourist has a perception of the identity of a tourist attraction they visit. Various names play an important role in guiding and shaping tourists' perceptions of the identity of the places they visit (Caiazzo, 2020). This proves that the naming of a tourist attraction is also important in attracting tourists to come and visit.

The linguistic study of place names is known as toponymy. Toponymy, as a branch of onomastics, encompasses research into the origins, history, and culture of a particular location through its name, which reflects the intellectual intelligence and cultural tendencies of the local community (Silalahi, 2024). Toponymy shows how language is used to label a place and also how these labels can describe the cultural, social, and, of course, environmental aspects of a community. The naming of a place often serves as linguistic evidence of the characteristics of the surrounding nature, historical events, and cultural traditions that are preserved through names. In tourism, toponymy plays an important role because the names of tourist attractions or sites are not chosen randomly. The study of toponymy in the field of tourism shows that the names of tourist attractions are not determined randomly or arbitrarily, but are related to the physical characteristics of the area, the history of the region, and the cultural traditions of the local community (Ayuningtias, 2024). Thus, the names of tourist locations can be analyzed to reveal deeper cultural narratives and social values embedded in the local community.

Nias Island has the appeal of natural tourist destinations. Nias Island has a variety of charming beaches characterized by clear blue sea water and clean white sandy shores. These beaches are perfect for various activities such as swimming, relaxing, and various water sports (Ziliwu, 2024). This is especially true in North Nias, which is known for its many tourist destinations. In addition to these attractions, North Nias also has unique tourist attractions named after the Nias language and local cultural expressions. A number of tourist attractions in North Nias, such as Karasangadulo (which literally means egg-laying stone), reveal local language expressions and unique cultural meanings embedded in the names of locations, reflecting the characteristics of nature and cultural interpretations by the local community (Zai, 2024).

However, despite the rapid growth of tourism in North Nias, the meanings and classifications of tourist location names have not been systematically documented or analyzed. Most of these names are only known to the local community, while visitors are often unaware of their cultural and historical significance. This lack of documentation poses a risk to the preservation of linguistic heritage, especially amid the modernization and commercialization of the tourism sector. To address this issue, this study applies George R. Stewart's (1954) toponymic classification, which divides place names into nine categories: descriptive names, possessive names, incident names, commemorative names, euphemistic names, manufactured names, shift names, folk etymologies, and mistake names. This classification offers a comprehensive analytical framework for analyzing the linguistic and cultural patterns underlying the naming of tourist locations.

Using George R. Stewart's typology, this study aims to identify dominant and rare categories of place names in the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias. The distribution of these toponymic categories shows how local communities prioritize certain aspects of the natural environment, local history, and cultural values in the process of naming locations. The dominance of certain categories may indicate a strong connection to physical features or cultural traditions, while the existence of minority categories may indicate external influences or specific historical conditions. This study is guided by three core questions. First, this study seeks to identify which categories of place names are more prevalent in the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias. Second, it seeks to determine which categories of place names are in the minority. Finally, this study aims to explore the factors that cause certain toponymic categories to be dominant while others are in the minority or rarely used in the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias.

Therefore, this study aims to describe the names of tourist attractions in North Nias based on toponymic analysis using a qualitative-descriptive approach. Through the

application of the nine categories of place names proposed by George R. Stewart, this study is expected to contribute to linguistic studies, tourism studies, and cultural preservation, as well as provide a perspective that supports the development of culturally rich tourism and reveals the identity of North Nias as a destination.

METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design with the aim of describing and understanding the phenomenon of naming tourist attractions in North Nias based on toponymy. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to present a complete picture of the phenomenon as experienced and understood by the community, without manipulating variables or testing hypotheses. Villamin (2024) emphasize that this approach aims to offer a deep understanding of phenomena based on the experiences and perspectives of participants, while Furidha (2023) reveals that descriptive qualitative research is a research method that utilizes qualitative data to describe research results in detail. The descriptive qualitative approach allows researchers to describe facts, meanings, and interpretations in depth through the use of language and narrative. This study focuses on understanding the meaning of tourist destination names and their relationship with the culture, history, and local identity of the people of North Nias. Thus, this approach is considered most appropriate for revealing the local values contained in the toponymy of tourist attractions without changing the conditions being studied.

The data collection technique used in this study was semi-structured interviews. This interview method was chosen because it offers a balance between structure and flexibility in data collection. Ruslin (2022) explain that semi-structured interviews use a set of main questions that can be expanded with additional questions based on the informant's answers. In this study, interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information about the origins, meanings, and contexts of the names of tourist destinations in North Nias.

In addition to interviews, observation was used as a data collection method to understand the research context directly. According to Crowe (2024), observation is a qualitative data collection technique that allows researchers to interact directly with the research environment to capture events and contextual details as they occur. In this study, observations were made to assess the physical conditions, natural environment, and cultural elements present at tourist sites related to the naming of these areas. Documentation techniques also serve as supporting research data. Documentation includes the collection of data in the form of photographs. Documentation data serves to reinforce and validate data obtained from interviews and observations, thereby helping researchers gain a more comprehensive understanding of the object being studied.

Data processing in this study was assisted by NVivo software to organize and analyze qualitative data in a structured manner. NVivo was used to organize interview data, observation results, and documentation through coding and theme grouping. Allsop (2022) stated that NVivo assists in orderly and in-depth qualitative analysis, while Hartono (2025) emphasized that the use of NVivo improves the efficiency and accuracy of analysis with its data coding, grouping, and visualization features. Therefore, the use of NVivo supports researchers in describing the toponymy of tourist sites in North Nias in a detailed and structured manner.

RESULTS

Toponymy, or the study of place names, is a field of science that examines the origins, meanings, and functions of names given to locations by communities, as well as

how these names reflect the cultural, social, historical, and environmental relationships of a community. Putri, Afria, and Fardinal (2024) state that toponymy studies explain how each region or place gets its name from its inhabitants and incorporates local cultural meanings in the context of ethnolinguistic naming. Additionally, Resticka, Nurdiyanto, and Marahayu (2023) emphasize that toponymy is the identity of a place that arises from the reciprocal relationship between the community and its environment, reflecting the unique characteristics of a location based on natural phenomena or cultural practices. Other studies indicate that toponymy not only functions as a geographical marker but also as a reflection of the linguistic structure and cultural values of the community that named it.

1. Types of Toponimy

Stewart (1954, as cited in Ismatova, 2021) was one of the first researchers to classify place names systematically, publishing "A Classification of Place Names" in Names. There are 9 categories of place name classification based on George's toponymic study, namely:

2. Descriptive Names

Descriptive names are place names that originate from permanent or semi-permanent characteristics of the place. These names are given based on things that can be immediately recognized by someone who comes to that place, such as shape, color, sound, smell, location, or its relationship to other places.

3. Possessive Names

Possessive names are place names given because of the perceived ownership of a place by a person, group of people, or specific creature.

Incident Names

Incident names are place names given based on a specific event or incident that occurred in or near that place.

4. Commemorative Names

Commemorative names are place names given by taking an existing name (the name of a person, place, famous figure, or historical name) and reusing it for a new place for the purpose of paying tribute or at least preserving the old name because it is considered important.

5. Euphemistic Names

Euphemistic names are place names given with reference to the future, not to past or present conditions. These names describe places in an idealistic, rather than realistic, manner.

6. Manufactured Names

Manufactured names are place names that are deliberately created by modifying or combining letters, sounds, or parts of words from existing names. These names do not directly derive from the meaning of the words, but from the process of word formation.

7. Shift Names

Name shifts are place names that arise due to the transfer of a specific element (usually a determiner) from one place name to another nearby place name, with a different type of place element (generic name). In essence, one element of the name "moves" to several nearby geographical objects.

8. Folk Etymologies

Folk etymologies are a process of place naming that occurs when old names (often from foreign or local languages) change form due to mishearing, misunderstanding, sound adjustment, or wordplay, resulting in new forms of names that feel more familiar to

speakers of the new language. Although in theory only "changing" the old name, these changes are often so significant that the results can be considered new names.

9. Mistake Names

Mistake names are place names that arise due to pure error, not because of a specific naming intention, description, warning, or symbolic logic.

Finding

This study aims to identify the most dominant and least used types of toponymy in the naming of tourist attractions in North Nias Regency, as well as to explain the factors that cause a type of toponymy to become majority or minority. To obtain accurate data, the researcher conducted field observations by visiting tourist sites in North Nias and conducting in-depth interviews with informants who had knowledge about the history and background of the naming of these tourist sites. The following is a detailed list of tourist site names in North Nias Regency along with their classifications.

Table 1: Names of Tourism Spot in North Nias and their classification

No	Names of Tourism	Adress	Types of Tourism
1.	SAITI Mega Resort	Kecamatan Sawo	Recreational Tourism
2.	Turedowi Beach		Recreational Tourism
3.	Mangrove Teluk Ba		Ecotourism
4.	Asi Walo Beach		Recreational Tourism
1.	Pasir Putih Beach	Kecamatan Afulu	Recreational Tourism
2.	Pasir Merah Beach		Recreational Tourism
3.	Sawakete		Recreational Tourism
4.	Turedawola Beach		Recreational Tourism
1.	Fofola Indah Beach	Kecamatan Tuhemberua	Recreational Tourism
2.	Marisa Beach		Recreational Tourism
1.	Kara Sangadulo Nature Tourism Object	Kecamatan Alasa	Ecotourism
2.	Luaha Ndroi Waterfall		Ecotourism
1.	Lafau Indah Beach	Kecamatan Lahewa	Recreational Tourism

Based on the table above, Sawo District has four tourist destinations, three of which are recreational tourism, namely SAITI Mega Resort, Turedowi Beach, and Asi Walo Beach. The other destination is an ecotourism site, namely Mangrove Teluk Ba. Furthermore, Afulu District also has four tourist destinations, all of which are classified as recreational tourism, namely Pasir Putih Beach, Pasir Merah Beach, Sawakete, and Turedawola Beach. In Tuhemberua District, there are two tourist destinations, both of which are also classified as recreational tourism, namely Fofola Indah Beach and Marisa Beach. Meanwhile, Alasa District has two tourist destinations classified under the Ecotourism category, namely Kara Sangadulo Nature Tourism Object and Luaha Ndroi Waterfall. Lahewa District has one tourist destination classified under the Recreational Tourism category, namely Lafau Indah Beach.

After elaboration based on the results of interviews with local people at each tourist destination, each location was then classified based on toponymy, as shown in the following diagram.

Diagram 1: Cclassification of toponymy
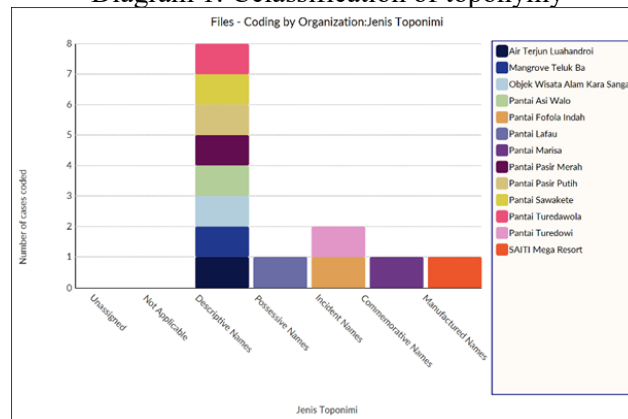
The diagram shows the grouping of toponymy types in the naming of tourist attractions in North Nias. Based on the diagram, it can be seen that Descriptive Names are the most dominant category, with a total of eight tourist attractions, namely Luaha Ndroi Waterfall, Teluk Ba Mangrove, Kara Sangadulo Nature Tourism Object, Asi Walo Beach, Pasir Merah Beach, Pasir Putih Beach, Sawakete Beach, and Turedawola Beach. The dominance of this category shows that the naming of tourist attractions is generally based on physical characteristics and natural conditions that can be observed directly.

Furthermore, the Possessive Names category is represented by only one tourist attraction, namely Lafau Indah Beach, which reflects the connection between the place name and the region or community that owns it. In the Incident Names category, the diagram shows two tourist attractions, namely Fofola Indah Beach and Turedowi Beach, whose names are related to certain events or incidents in the past.

The Commemorative Names category also includes only one tourist attraction, namely Marisa Beach, which was given as a form of respect or remembrance for a certain figure. Meanwhile, the Manufactured Names category is represented by one tourist attraction, namely SAITI Mega Resort, whose name is the result of engineering or word construction to form the identity of the tourist attraction.

Overall, this diagram shows that the naming of tourist attractions in the study area is more influenced by descriptive aspects of nature, while other types of toponymy appear in relatively limited numbers.

SAITI Mega Resort

Based on the interview results, the informant explained that the name SAITI was derived from combining the initial letters of the founding family members' names. The letter S was taken from the name of the first child, A came from the wife's name, and I was the first letter of the informant's own name. All of these elements were then combined to form the word SAITI. In addition to being a family acronym, the name SAITI is also symbolically interpreted as representing charm and charisma, reflecting the character of the tourist attraction as an interesting, prominent location that is oriented towards becoming the center of attention for visitors. This naming indicates that SAITI Mega Resort is an example of a manufactured toponym that was deliberately constructed to build identity and tourist appeal.

The naming of this tourist attraction was based on considerations of convenience and simplicity, as is also common practice in various other types of businesses, such as in the fisheries, marine, and trade sectors, which often use children's names or elements of ownership according to the wishes of the owner. In this case, the name SAITI was chosen because it is simpler, easier to pronounce, and more quickly recognized by the public than the full name SAITI Mega Resort. The short name is considered easier to remember and

more effective in disseminating information, especially in the context of popularity and promotion, so it is considered suitable as the identity of a tourist attraction.

Turedowi Beach

According to informants, this area was originally known as Anebula. The name is related to the history of granting land to the ancestors of the local community as a form of appreciation for the assistance they had provided. In the process of determining the boundaries of the area, the ancestors were given the opportunity to throw an object from the coast towards the forest; the distance of the throw determined the boundaries of the area that was then given to them as their place of residence. However, over time, the name Anebula was considered no longer appropriate for the conditions and experiences of the community in the area.

At that time, the area was still a forest and inhabited by many birds known by the local community as towi-towi birds. Whenever people came or visited the area, the birds would often swarm around the visitors, causing discomfort and disturbance. Based on this experience, the community decided to change the name of the area from Anebula to Turedowi, which refers to the towi-towi birds that often approached people who came to the place.

Interestingly, according to local belief, after the name change, the towi-towi birds no longer swarmed visitors. Since then, the area has been known as Turedowi, and similar incidents have never been experienced again when there are visitors or newcomers. The Turedowi area itself is part of the former Anebula region, spanning approximately half a kilometer from the coastline inland. This name change occurred shortly after the establishment of the local village, around two years after Indonesia gained independence.

Turedawola Beach

Based on the interview results, the name Turedawola Beach clearly reflects the natural characteristics and physical conditions of the location, particularly in relation to the strength of the waves and the impact of large ocean waves. Informants explained that waves are the most prominent feature compared to other natural elements, such as the color of the sea water or the shape of the rocks, and therefore form the main basis for the naming of this beach.

Since ancient times, the local community has known and remembered this beach for its large and powerful waves, which are even considered challenging for boats, making waves the main identity of the beach. The name Turedawola comes from the Nias regional language, where the word ture means push or impact, while dawola means big waves. Thus, Turedawola can be interpreted as a place where big waves crash. This name has been used for a long time by the local community and has not changed to this day. Informants also stated that descriptive names such as Turedawola are easy for tourists to understand and remember because they directly describe the natural conditions of the beach, even allowing tourists to imagine the character of the location before visiting.

In addition, the local community views this name as a representation of the natural identity of the North Nias region. The name Turedawola Beach arose naturally, based on the life experiences of a community that depends on the sea, so that the use of physical characteristics as the basis for naming is considered practical, communicative, and safe, and is the reason why descriptive toponymy is commonly found in the naming of tourist attractions in this region.

Sawakete Beach

Based on the interview results, Sawakete Beach was named based on the physical conditions and natural characteristics of the beach. Informants explained that the most prominent feature is the calm and shallow sea water, so this beach has long been known as

a relatively safe location for swimming or other activities on the seashore. These characteristics are the main features of the beach and were used as the basis for its name. The name Sawakete comes from the Nias regional language, where sawa means beach or seashore and kete means small or shallow, so Sawakete is interpreted as a beach with calm or shallow waters. This name has been used for generations by the local community and has not changed to this day. Informants also stated that descriptive names such as Sawakete are easy for tourists to understand and remember because they directly represent the natural conditions of the beach. For the local community, this name not only describes the naturalness of the beach, but also forms part of the local identity and custom of naming places based on easily recognizable physical characteristics.

Pantai Pasir Putih

Based on the interview results, the naming of Pasir Putih Beach falls under the category of descriptive toponymy because it directly describes the main physical characteristic of the beach, namely the clean white color of the sand. The color of the sand is considered the most prominent and representative characteristic because it gives the impression of cleanliness, brightness, and exoticism, as well as being the main attraction of the beach. Although it uses Indonesian and does not originate from the Nias regional language, the name Pantai Pasir Putih is easily understood by the community and tourists because it corresponds to the physical conditions that can be observed directly. This name has been used naturally by the community for a long time without undergoing any official changes, mainly because of its communicative nature and ease of acceptance by visitors. Informants also stated that naming based on physical characteristics like this makes it easier for tourists to recognize the character of a place without needing additional explanations, and is considered to represent the identity of the natural beauty of the North Nias coast. The dominance of descriptive names is due to the ease of conveying information, their simplicity, memorability, and ability to be passed down orally, although in some cases this has begun to shift with the emergence of commercial names for tourism marketing purposes.

Pantai Pasir Merah

Based on the interview results, the naming of Pasir Merah Beach falls under the category of descriptive toponymy because it directly reflects the main physical characteristic of the beach, namely the reddish or pinkish color of the sand. This sand color is considered the most prominent and representative feature because it is easily observable and serves as the main attraction that distinguishes this beach from other beaches on Nias Island. Although it uses Indonesian, the Nias community understands and uses this name from generation to generation without any official changes, as it corresponds to the actual physical conditions. This descriptive name makes it easy for tourists to visually recognize the character of the beach and remember it quickly. In addition, the unique color of the sand has become a symbol of the region's natural identity and a source of pride for the local community, thus reinforcing the dominant use of physical characteristics in the naming of tourist attractions in North Nias.

Marisa Beach

Based on the interview results, the naming of Marisa Beach falls under the category of commemorative names because the name of this beach was chosen to honor or commemorate someone who once stopped at this location. According to one local figure, this beach was named "Marisa" because in the past there were foreign ships that were forced to stop in these waters due to large waves during their voyage. One of the passengers on the ship was a woman named Marisa, and this name was then immortalized for the beach. This fact is reinforced by the narrator's experience of still seeing foreign

ships and several foreigners in the sea around the beach when he was a child. This naming shows a motive of respect and remembrance for certain events or figures that had a temporary connection with the location.

Lafau Indah Beach

Penamaan Pantai Lafau Indah termasuk dalam kategori possessive names, karena nama pantai diambil dari nama kampung tempat pantai tersebut berada, yaitu kampung Lafau. Kampung ini awalnya merupakan bagian dari kampung Sihene Asi, dan keberadaan kampung Lafau tercatat sejak tahun 1955 menurut dokumen sejarah setempat. Nama pantai ini mengikuti nama kampung untuk menegaskan kepemilikan dan keterkaitan lokasi dengan masyarakat lokal. Pantai ini memiliki lokasi yang relatif panjang dan dapat dilihat secara langsung dari kawasan sekitar, serta dikelola secara bersama oleh warga setempat tanpa pengelola resmi. Penamaan ini mencerminkan hubungan kepemilikan komunitas lokal terhadap kawasan pantai dan identitas desa.

Fofola Indah Beach

The naming of Fofola Indah Beach falls under the category of incident names, because the name of this beach comes from the name of the river that flows into the sea at that location, namely the Fofola River. The naming of this river is related to an incident in the early days when the area was still a forest. When the area was cleared by the community, a river was discovered, and in the Nias language, "La Fofo" means to clean. Therefore, the river was named Fofola to commemorate the moment of discovery during the clearing. The name of the beach was then taken from the name of the river and the word "Indah" was added to make it sound more attractive, thus forming the name Fofola Indah Beach. This naming process shows how a local event or incident can influence the naming of tourist attractions, reflecting the connection between human experience and geographical identity.

Asi Walo Beach

The naming of Asi Walo Beach falls under the category of descriptive names, as the name of this beach directly describes the physical characteristics of the location. The main element used as the basis for the name is the shape of the beach itself, which is a bay. The name of the local village, Teluk Bengkuang, was used as the initial reference, and the word "teluk" was translated into the Nias language as Walo. The emphasis on the shape of the bay is considered the most representative because it stands out as the main geographical feature and indicates common activities, such as the large number of ships or boats that stop there during waves or storms. Thus, the name Asi Walo makes it easier for the community and tourists to recognize the physical conditions of the beach while reflecting the natural identity of the area.

Kara Sangadulo Nature Tourism Object

The name Kara Sangadulo falls into the category of descriptive names, as it directly describes the unique natural features of this place. In Indonesian, Kara Sangadulo means "Egg Rock," which refers to a geological phenomenon at this location, where a large rock has protrusions that slowly separate from the main rock and form small round rocks. This natural uniqueness is a distinctive feature of the tourist attraction and the main reason for its name. In addition, the local community also believes that this rock had spiritual value in the past, which adds to its importance in the context of local culture. Thus, the name Kara Sangadulo clearly represents the physical characteristics and natural uniqueness that make it a tourist attraction.

Mangrove Teluk Ba

The name Mangrove Forest falls under the category of descriptive names, as it clearly describes the physical and environmental characteristics of the location. This

destination has a fairly large mangrove forest, so the community and government of Sisarahili Teluk Siabang village agreed to make this area a tourist attraction. The name reflects the dominant geographical and vegetation conditions, namely mangrove trees. In addition, this area borders a bay-shaped sea, allowing visitors to swim or explore by boat. Thus, this name accurately represents the natural uniqueness and tourist appeal of the location.

Luahandroi Waterfall

The naming of Luahandroi Waterfall falls under the category of descriptive names, as it clearly represents the physical characteristics of the waterfall. The name Luahandroi was given because the water flows continuously and forms tiers resembling steps. This waterfall is approximately 17 meters high, with pools at each tier varying in depth from 50 cm to 5 meters. The clear water and continuous flow are the main characteristics, so this name accurately describes the physical conditions and natural uniqueness of the location, while also making it easy for visitors to recognize and remember it.

Discussion

Based on the results of interviews with sources in various tourist attractions in North Nias, it is possible to identify a few naming patterns that represent different toponymy categories. Luahandroi Waterfall, White Sand Beach, Red Sand Beach, Sawakete Beach, Turedawola Beach, Asi Walo Beach, Kara Sangadulo, and Teluk Siabang Mangrove Forest are among the most common names for tourist attractions in this area. These names are typically given based on physical characteristics or natural conditions that are most unsettling, such as the color of the sand, the bay, the current of the waves, or unique phenomena like "spawning rocks" in Kara Sangadulo. This suggests that the local community tends to maintain tourist attractions in a natural manner based on careful observation of the surrounding area, which makes it easier for locals and visitors to visit and appreciate the location. This descriptive dominance factor is also related to the community's daily activities, which are very practical and informative.

Conversely, some tourist places use possessive names, such as Lafau Indah Beach, which is derived from the name of the beach being kampung. This kind of name highlights the relationship between local communities and the surrounding area, as well as village identity or ownership. In other instances, incident names such as Turedowi Beach and Fofola Indah Beach are the result of specific events or conditions that occurred in the location in question, such as interactions with Towi-Towi birds or the process of gathering land from the community.

A further category, Commemorative Names, such as Marisa Beach, demonstrates the naming of a place in memory of a person, even if that person is not the owner. The importance of social memory or recognition in the naming process is highlighted by this. In contrast, the ingenuity of naming produces Manufactured Names, such as the SAITI Mega Resort, by combining the initials of family members to create a new, personalized name that has symbolic significance.

According to this analysis, there are three major factors that influence how tourist sites are named in North Nias: the natural or physical environment (descriptive), social ties and community identity (possessive or commemorative), and creativity or marketing plan (manufactured). The descriptive name category can be seen as a useful approach used by the community to communicate more effectively and convey straightforward information about the features of the area, while the remaining categories are a representation of social values, history, or branding.

Overall, the findings imply that the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias serves as a means of both geographical identification and representation of the connection

between people and the environment, the local history, and specific cultural and symbolic features.

Earlier studies on toponimy have demonstrated that place names represent the connection between a community and its environment and carry local cultural values (Resticka, Nurdiyanto, & Marahayu, 2023; Putri, Afria, & Fardinal, 2024). The physical and historical features of the name of the tourist community were also identified by research conducted in Madura (Ikawati & Ekawati, 2023). This study, however, stands out because it concentrates specifically on the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias, which highlights the dominance of Descriptive Names based on the natural features of the area and minority variations such as Possessive, Incident, Commemorative, and Manufactured Names. This discovery enriches the study of toponomy by revealing that, in addition to historical and cultural considerations, communicative, familiar, and memorable features also contribute to the dominance of particular types of toponomy in the tourist industry.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that descriptive toponymy, which reflects the physical and natural characteristics of the environment, is the dominant factor influencing the naming of tourist destinations in North Nias Regency. Descriptive names are preferred because they are practical, easy to understand, and effective in conveying information about a place to both visitors and local communities. Minority toponymic categories, including possessive, incident, commemorative, and manufactured names, represent social relationships, historical experiences, cultural memory, and creative or marketing considerations. Overall, place names function not only as geographical identifiers but also as representations of the relationship between communities, their environment, and their cultural values.

For future research, it is recommended to include a wider range of tourist destinations and conduct comparative studies across different regions of Nias and other parts of Indonesia. Future studies may also apply quantitative approaches or examine tourist perceptions to explore how toponymy influences destination image and tourist interest. Furthermore, local governments and tourism stakeholders are encouraged to document and preserve traditional place names as part of efforts to protect cultural heritage and promote sustainable tourism development.

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