



## *Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability of Cultural Tourism: A Qualitative Study of Malin Kundang Stone Tourism at Air Manis Beach, Padang*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the existence of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism in the competition of tourism destinations in West Sumatra through a field study in the Air Manis Beach area, Padang City. The presence of various new tourist destinations based on natural tourism and modern visual spots creates a competitive dynamic that influences tourist visit patterns. Therefore, it is important to examine how tourist destinations based on local legends and culture can maintain their existence amidst the diversity of new tourism that introduces its beauty. The author uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a field study method. Data were obtained through direct observation, interviews with traders, local residents, and tourists. The results of the study indicate that, first, the existence of Batu Malin Kundang rests on the strength of cultural values and legends that have historical legitimacy in the Minangkabau community, second, the main attraction of this destination lies in the symbolic and educational aspects that distinguish it from new tourist destinations that are more oriented towards visual trends, third, the shortcomings of Batu Malin Kundang tourism lie in the innovation side, less active digital promotion, less clean facilities, relatively expensive game rental prices, and rampant extortion. These conditions ultimately become challenges in increasing competitiveness with other tourism.

**Keywords:** Tourism Existence, Destination Competitiveness, Cultural Tourism, Malin Kundang Stone, West Sumatra Tourism

**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis eksistensi Wisata Batu Malin Kundang dalam persaingan destinasi pariwisata di Sumatera Barat melalui studi lapangan di kawasan Pantai Air Manis, Kota Padang. Hadirnya berbagai destinasi wisata baru yang berbasis wisata alam, dan spot visual modern menciptakan dinamika persaingan yang memengaruhi pola kunjungan para wisatawan. Maka, penting untuk mengkaji bagaimana destinasi wisata berbasis legenda dan budaya lokal dapat mempertahankan keberadaannya di tengah beragamnya wisata baru yang memperkenalkan keindahannya. penulis menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi lapangan. Data diperoleh melalui observasi langsung, wawancara dengan pedagang, masyarakat sekitar, dan wisatawan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa, pertama, eksistensi Batu Malin Kundang bertumpu pada kekuatan nilai budaya dan legenda yang memiliki legitimasi historis dalam masyarakat Minangkabau, kedua, daya tarik utama destinasi ini terletak pada aspek simbolik dan edukatif yang membedakannya dari destinasi wisata baru yang lebih berorientasi pada tren visual, ketiga, kekurangan wisata Batu Malin Kundang terletak dari sisi inovasi, promosi digital yang kurang aktif, fasilitas yang kurang bersih, harga sewa permainan yang tergolong mahal, dan maraknya aksi pungli. Kondisi inilah yang pada akhirnya menjadi tantangan dalam meningkatkan daya saing dengan wisata lain.

**Kata Kunci:** Eksistensi Wisata, Daya Saing Destinasi, Wisata Budaya, Batu Malin Kundang, Pariwisata Sumatera Barat.

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**To cite this article:** Putra, A. ., Fitria, Y. ., Afnita, N. ., & Nasrul, F. . (2026). Destination Competitiveness and Sustainability of Cultural Tourism: A Qualitative Study of Malin Kundang Stone Tourism at Air Manis Beach, Padang. *Dampeng: Journal of Art, Heritage and Culture*, 2(1), 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.70742/dampeng.v2i1.565>

Received:  
March 3, 2026

Accepted:  
April 3, 2026

Published:  
April 3, 2026

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## Introduction

Tourism is a vital sector for the Indonesian economy. With its diverse natural resources and cultural heritage, the country offers a wide range of attractive tourist destinations (Pandu Pamungkas, 2025). Tourism currently appears to be undergoing a broader transformation, aiming to increase the number of visits, positively impacting the local economy and tourism itself (I Made Suyasa et al., 2025). Furthermore, it's important to understand that the tourism sector offers an opportunity to attract and attract foreign tourists to Indonesia (Tri Amanat, 2019). West Sumatra is one of Indonesia's provinces rich in natural resources and tourist attractions.

West Sumatra Province boasts a diverse tourism landscape, and its development has shown significant dynamics in recent years. This is evidenced by the emergence of various new tourist destinations with unique and diverse concepts, ranging from natural attractions and man-made attractions to modern, visual-based attractions that appeal to a wide range of audiences. This situation creates an increasingly competitive and innovative climate between destinations. Similarly, Padang City boasts a diverse range of tourist attractions, attracting tourists from various backgrounds. These visits are inseparable from the natural charm of Padang City, which borders the Indian Ocean, is surrounded by hills, and boasts beaches such as Taplau, Bungus, and Air Manis Beach (Indri Astuti Maulana et al., 2025).

Tourist visits to West Sumatra throughout 2025 exceeded the target with more than 21 million people, driven by international events, with the target increasing to 23.2 million in 2026. Padang City became the main destination with 5.3 million tourists in 2025 and targeting 5.7 million in 2026. The following is the data on tourist visits to West Sumatra 2025-2026 (sumatra.bisnis.com, 2025):

1. 2025 (Realization):
  - a. Total Visits: Reached more than 21 million tourists, exceeding the established target, driven by the Christmas and New Year holidays and the international event calendar.
  - b. Foreign Tourists (Wisman): In July 2025, 7,674 visits were recorded through Minangkabau International Airport (BIM). September 2025 recorded an increase, dominated by foreign tourists from Malaysia (7,677 people).
  - c. Domestic Tourists (Wisnus): September 2025 recorded 1,682,017 trips, with Padang City as the main destination (440,335 trips).
  - d. Year-End Decline: Visits in December 2025 decreased to 404,437 due to flooding (hantaran.co, 2025).
2. 2026 (Target):
  - a. Main Target: The West Sumatra government is targeting 23.2 million domestic tourists and 90,337 international tourists by 2026.
  - b. Strategy: Launching seven events under the 2026 Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN) program, including the Hoyak Tabuik Piaman Cultural Charm and the Minangkabau Festival.
3. Padang City Tourism 2025-2026:
  - a. 2025 Realization: Padang successfully attracted 5.3 million tourists.
  - b. 2026 Target: The Padang City Government aims to increase tourist visits to 5.7 million (RRI.co.id, 2025).

Amidst this development, the existence of tourist destinations based on local legends and culture faces its own challenges. One destination with strong historical and

symbolic value is Batu Malin Kundang, located in the Air Manis Beach area of Padang City. This tourist attraction is known as a representation of the Malin Kundang folk legend, which is deeply rooted in Minangkabau culture and has become part of the region's cultural identity. This situation illustrates that Padang City has become a gateway for both domestic and international tourists (Riki Ruspianda, 2019). However, recently the Batu Malin Kundang tourist attraction has begun to face issues and problems which have resulted in a decline in tourist interest in visiting.

If we look at history, the Malin Kundang stone tour is one of the famous legendary tours in its time which has many learning, moral and educational values. Although it is only a fairy tale, the legend of Malin Kundang is still an interesting phenomenon to study, even replicas of the Malin Kundang stone can still be found today. The fundamental problem that is important in this author's writing is the still rampant various problems at tourist locations that make tourists start to decrease, are reluctant to visit and create a negative image for tourism in Padang City, among the problems encountered in the field such as the rampant extortion by some youths to tourists, expensive entrance ticket prices, unreasonable game service rates and the lack of cleanliness of the tourist location. As conveyed by one of the visitors at the Malin Kundang stone tourist location that:

"The location is nice and beautiful, only the entrance ticket and game fees are very high" (Mrs. Y, Visitor, November 10, 2025).

One of the traders who is also a resident of the area said that:

"The naughty actions of several local youths have disappointed us, resulting in a decrease in the turnover of the merchandise we sell. We hope this does not continue for too long." (Mr. I, Trader, December 17, 2025).

Another challenge is the increasing number of new tourist attractions emerging in several areas of West Sumatra, which has impacted the Malin Kundang stone tourism. This situation has significantly impacted the number of tourists and the existence of Malin Kundang stone in the current modern era. Therefore, this presents a challenge for all Malin Kundang stone tourism managers to ensure its continued existence amidst the proliferation of new tourist attractions in West Sumatra.

A study conducted by Fernando & Adil Mubarak (2021) entitled "The Impact of Pedestrian Development at Air Manis Beach, Padang City, on Tourist Visits to the Batu Malin Kundang Beach Tourist Attraction" shows that tourist visits to Air Manis Beach have fluctuated in recent years, or can be said to be unstable. In 2019, there was a decline in tourist visits, which of course resulted in a decline in Regional Original Income (PAD) from the tourism sector. This was caused by an increase in ticket prices in accordance with the latest government regulations. Furthermore, the issue of cleanliness of the Air Manis Beach tourist area is a constant complaint from visitors. The method used was qualitative with descriptive analysis.

Furthermore, research by Fitriani Dewi (2024) entitled Analysis of Facilities Development Needs for Air Padang Beach Tourism Object. Other Thesis, Muhammadiyah University of West Sumatra, shows that the research shows the need for facility development consists of three indicators, namely: main facilities (ATV rental) less comfortable for tourists due to low human resources and not yet implementing Sapta Pesona, supporting facilities (accommodation, eating places, and shopping places/souvenir shops) and complementary facilities (toilets/changing rooms, mosques/prayer rooms and parking lots, information centers and signposts), overall the facilities needed by tourists are information center facilities and signposts. The condition of the main facilities (ATV) is in good condition and well maintained, the condition of supporting facilities is in good condition (homestay), in fairly good condition, namely: eating places, and shopping places/souvenir shops. Complementary facilities in good condition are: prayer rooms and

parking lots, the condition of toilets/changing rooms is not good. The method used is a qualitative descriptive method by conducting interviews with informants from the Padang City Tourism Office and tourists.

The objectives of this research include: first, to convey to the public that the Malin Kundang stone tourism has a history that is closely linked to moral and ethical values, second, to see how the competition and competitiveness with the newest tourism in Padang City and West Sumatra, third, to see how the strategy is to maintain and develop the Malin Kundang stone tourism amidst the proliferation of various tourism in Padang City and West Sumatra, fourth, to see what obstacles and problems exist at the location that are complaints for visiting tourists.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to see how the existence of Malin Kundang stone tourism is amidst the circulation of new tourist locations in West Sumatra and what steps the Malin Kundang stone tourism managers are taking to restore tourists' trust to enliven Malin Kundang stone tourism again like before.

## **Method**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon of the existence of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism amidst the competition for tourism destinations in West Sumatra. This approach was chosen because it can provide an in-depth, factual, and systematic picture of conditions on the ground. Researchers went directly to the location at Air Manis Beach, Padang City, to observe tourist interactions, the physical condition of the tourist attraction, and management strategies implemented by the local government and community. Data were obtained through direct observation in the Air Manis Beach area and in-depth interviews with local vendors, local residents, and tourists.

## **Results and Discussion**

Padang City is one of the oldest cities on the west coast of the Indian Ocean. More than 60 percent of Padang City is mountainous and covered by protected forests. The mountainous area extends to the east and south of the city. Famous hills in Padang City include Bukik Lampu, Gunung Padang, Bukik Gado-Gado, and Bukik Pengambiran. In addition to the mainland, Padang City has 19 islands, the largest of which is Bintangur Island with an area of 56.78 hectares, then Sikuai Island in Bungus Teluk Kabung District with an area of 48.12 hectares, then Toran Island in South Padang District with an area of 33.67 hectares. Padang City has a coastline of 68,128 km<sup>2</sup>. The city has 11 districts, the largest of which is Koto Tangah District with an area of 232.25 km<sup>2</sup> (Siti Ayu Surinanda et al., 2022).

### **1. Overview and Latest Conditions of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism**

Malin Kundang Beach is a natural tourist attraction in West Sumatra, located in Air Manis Village, South Padang District, and is managed by the Padang City Tourism and Culture Office (DISPARBUD). Situated in a densely populated residential area, the beach is easily accessible to visitors.

Moreover, the construction of a new road through Mount Padang has made access to Air Manis Beach easier. The Air Manis Beach tourist area attracts quite a lot of visitors on weekends and holidays, attracting not only domestic visitors but also many international visitors who come to see and enjoy the beach's beauty, and many even try surfing.

Air Manis Beach is one of the quite famous tourist attractions in West Sumatra, not without reason, this is because Air Manis Beach has the attraction of beautiful beach views, but not only the beauty of the beach is presented, but there is a main

prima donna that attracts visitors to come here, namely the Malin Kundang stone monument which is already widely known by the people of West Sumatra, not only that, outside West Sumatra, many people already know about this Malin Kundang stone, how could it not be, the Malin Kundang stone holds a legendary story, namely the story of a child who was disobedient to his parents and then cursed to become a stone (Fernando et al., 2021).

## **2. The existence of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism is based on the strength of cultural values and legends which have historical legitimacy in Minangkabau society.**

Tourism can be defined as a journey from one place to another, undertaken to refresh the mind or take time off from the busyness of daily activities. The types of travel can vary, including visits to natural attractions, religious sites, sports venues, and so on (Muhammad Husni, 2024). Of the many tourist attractions in West Sumatra, one with moral and historical value that is widely known is the Malin Kundang stone.

The Malin Kundang folktale tells of a child who, after wandering away from home, becomes disobedient to his mother and no longer considers her a parent. This ultimately leads to Malin Kundang being cursed by his mother to turn into stone. Although only a story, the history of the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction offers numerous educational and moral values, serving as a guide for all groups (Edy Suisno, 2022).

The story of the Malin Kundang stone, which has become a famous tourist attraction in West Sumatra, actually contains several elements, including magical, mystical, and supernatural elements. These elements are what make the Malin Kundang stone increasingly attractive to tourists, especially those from outside Padang and West Sumatra (Henni Julia Citra Sitorus et al., 2024).

## **3. Analysis of Destination Competition in West Sumatra**

Tourism is a strategic sector that plays a vital role in driving the national and global economy. In addition to boosting state revenues, this sector also directly impacts community welfare through job creation, increased income, and regional economic turnover, including for communities living near tourist attractions in West Sumatra (Rafidah et al., 2025). Furthermore, the Minangkabau culture, with its philosophy of Adat Basandi Syarak, Syarak Basandi Kitabullah, is a unique attraction, enriching the tourist experience through traditions, traditional house architecture, culinary delights, and performing arts. This combination makes West Sumatra a region with a competitive advantage in the tourism sector (Annisatur Rahma et al., 2026).

One striking aspect of West Sumatra Province is its diverse tourism potential, which rivals that of other regions. A wide variety of tourist destinations can be easily found in West Sumatra (Irvan Wariski et al., 2023). To survive in an increasingly competitive climate, each destination must have a comprehensive management strategy. This strategy encompasses planning, organization, decision-making, and comprehensive evaluation of operations and services offered. The principles of effective tourism destination management balance economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects.

## **4. Strategy to Maintain the Existence of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism**

Maintaining a tourism destination is certainly crucial as new destinations emerge, introducing their own unique beauty. This is a serious matter for maintaining the tourism industry's existence in today's modern era. Tourists will be willing to visit if the surrounding environment and community are welcoming and friendly, which

naturally has a positive impact on tourists (Mardian et al., 2024). To maintain competitiveness in the tourism sector, optimal management strategies must be implemented, including resource management, marketing, facility development, and local community involvement (Kklesyia Venny Herlianti et al., 2022).

As one of the destinations in Padang City, the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction located at Air Manis Beach is a tourist spot with historical value, thanks to the existence of the world-famous legend of Malin Kundang. The pristine nature of Air Manis Beach provides a unique atmosphere for visitors who want to unwind from a long day and enjoy the beach. Air Manis Beach is known for its colossal story of Malin Kundang, which attracts tourists to Manis Beach. However, this colossal story must be given a platform to become a place of education and marine tourism that has an impact on the surrounding community and also the Regional Original Income of Padang City (Ahmad Vajri Rahman, 2023).

In relation to the many inputs and seeing the conditions where the number of tourists visiting the Batu Malin Kundang tourist attraction is decreasing, someone who did not want to be named and who is also part of the tourist management at the location said that:

"Malin Kundang stone tourism is still the choice of many tourists, but we realize that there are still many shortcomings in providing comfort for people who visit here, regarding mistakes and problems that have occurred, we have made it a lesson, hopefully tourists can trust and want to come here again like before" (Mr. R, Manager of Malin Kundang Stone Tourism, Interview, December 19, 2025).

One of the traders and also a local resident at the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction also had time to explain the future strategy so that the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction can exist again, he said that:

"Managers must ensure the comfort of tourists, as complaints have been frequent, particularly regarding parking fees and extortion. If these issues persist, this tourist attraction will become unattractive and the local economy will be devastated. Therefore, we hope that managers and the community will consider how to restore this tourist attraction to its former glory." (Mrs. M, Trader at the Tourist Attraction, Interview, December 19, 2025).

## **5. Obstacles and Challenges to the Existence of Batu Malin Kundang Tourism**

The Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction has become a popular tourist destination, and Padang City has seen year-on-year growth, positively impacting local revenue (Rini Zumaida et al., 2022). However, in recent years, issues and controversy have emerged, including rampant extortion, thugs, exorbitant rental fees for amusement parks, and unreasonable entrance fees. As one local resident acknowledged the prevalence of these issues, he said:

"We admit that people have started to be reluctant to come here, because of several extortion and thuggery incidents, this condition is very detrimental to our residents who depend on their livelihoods to sell in this tourist area" (Mrs. R, Local Resident, Interview, December 24, 2025).

One of the residents who still lives in Padang City also had an unpleasant experience at the Malin Kundang tourist location, he said that:

"I was once asked to pay twice when I wanted to enter the gate to a tourist location, even though I know that wherever you go to a tourist location, you only pay once. This time I was asked twice and it felt like I was being forced, so I'm

reluctant to come here again, even though I still live and reside not far from this tourist location" (Mrs. M, Padang Resident, December 16, 2025).

This condition was also acknowledged by one of the local community leaders who was furious with the actions that took place against visitors to the Batu Malin Kundang tourist attraction, he said:

"I originally live here, and was furious when I heard the news that several young people and indigenous people were involved in problems by extorting visitors and asking for donations under the pretext of fees, I think this is what makes outsiders reluctant to come here" (Mr. L, Community Leader, December 1, 2025).

The author also had the opportunity to meet with students who had previously conducted research on the Malin Kundang stone tourist site, he said that:

"The research results found that the weaknesses experienced by tourists at Air Manis Padang Beach are: lack of play areas for toddlers and children, lack of information about Air Manis Padang Beach, traders who do not regularly close the Malin Kundang stone object, local people are not friendly to tourists, there are many extortions around Air Manis Padang Beach, parking is not organized and security is not maintained" (T, Student, December 20, 2025).

From the conditions and explanations above, it's clear that fundamental problems with the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction persist, ultimately discouraging tourists from visiting and impacting the local economy. If this situation is left unchecked and without further evaluation, the Malin Kundang stone tourist attraction will struggle to compete with other tourist attractions in West Sumatra, especially with newer attractions that are increasingly showcasing their beauty.

## Conclusion

Malin Kundang Stone tourism must continue, despite being surrounded by various new tourist attractions in Padang City and West Sumatra. The strength and advantage of this tourism destination lies in its positive values, including moral, ethical, and educational values. This is something that must be maintained by all tourism managers to ensure continued tourist interest. Managers and the local community must jointly evaluate and improve the tourist location by reinforcing various aspects, including cleanliness, vendor service to tourists, entrance fees, and the prevention of thuggery. The hope is that Malin Kundang Stone will remain a viable and competitive tourist destination in the long term, maintaining its appeal and serving as a learning platform for parents on the importance of instilling ethical values.

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