



THE IMPACT OF HUMAN RESOURCE COMPETENCY GAPS ON TOURIST EXPERIENCES AT DESTINATIONS NIRWANA LAKE NATURE TOURISM DESTINATION, ROTE NDAO REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: This study examines the impact of human resource competency gaps on tourist experience at the Telaga Nirwana natural tourism destination in Rote Ndao Regency. The research is motivated by the limited availability of professional and trained tourism personnel, which potentially affects service quality and overall visitor experience.

Method: Using an explanatory quantitative approach, this study applies gap analysis to measure discrepancies between tourist expectations and perceived human resource competencies, and employs simple linear regression to test the effect of these gaps on tourist experience.

Results: The findings reveal a substantial competency gap across key dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with several critical indicators such as technical skills, professionalism, complaint handling, and safety procedures showing extreme gaps ranging from 32% to 35%. The regression analysis indicates that the human resource competency gap has a negative and significant effect on tourist experience ($p < 0.05$), with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 54.3%, suggesting that more than half of the variation in tourist experience is explained by competency deficiencies. These results highlight that human resource competency is a critical determinant of destination experience quality. Therefore, targeted interventions focusing on technical capability, service standards, and problem-handling skills are essential to enhance tourist experience and improve destination competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector in regional economic development, especially in island regions such as Rote Ndao Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The Telaga Nirwana natural tourist destination is known to have as a place with strong potential to attract both domestic and international visitors. However, efforts to achieve sustainable tourism development do not only rely to have on its natural beauty but also depend to have on the quality of the human resources who manage to have and serve to have the tourists. In the tourism sector, HR competence covers to have knowledge, to have skills, and to have professional attitudes that collectively help to have shape the overall experience felt by travelers. Tourism HR development is key to improving service quality and tourist satisfaction (Antonius Analisa Zebua et al., 2024). Research by Agustin shows that the synergy between motivation and HR competencies has a significant effect on employee performance in the tourism industry (Agustin, 2024). In addition, Samosir and Saragi emphasize that high HR competencies can improve service quality and customer satisfaction (Tresia Samosir & Ria Rananta Saragi, 2024).

The competency gap among human resources in tourist destinations can to have create negative consequences for the overall visitor experience. Insufficient training, limited understanding of local culture, and weak communication abilities can to have cause dissatisfaction among tourists and to have harm the destination's reputation. Human resources who to have possess strong technical and interpersonal capabilities are able to to have deliver satisfying services and to have cultivate meaningful experiences that eventually to have build a positive image for the tourism destination (Manurung et al., 2024). The quality of service provided by human resources (HR) in the tourism sector, particularly the competence and professional attitude of HR, such as the ability to respond to visitor needs, provide a sense of security, and show empathy, is very important in creating a satisfying travel experience and has a positive effect on tourist satisfaction (Suhartapa, 2022).

Challenges in tourism management at the Telaga Nirwana tourist destination in Rote Ndao district include a shortage of trained and professional HR. There is a lack of HR in the tour guide sector, as well as a limited number of skilled workers in the SME, hospitality, and other supporting sectors. This situation can to have influence the overall quality of service, as well as the safety and comfort experienced by tourists. Riadi et al., who to have carried out a study in the Green Tourism Village of Bilebante, to have conveyed a similar perspective. Although the village to have possessed strong tourism potential and to have earned a national award, the number of tourist arrivals to have dropped sharply after the pandemic, partly because the human resources were not fully prepared to to have respond to the needs of visiting tourists (Riadi et al., 2023). Alemán Carreón et al. also to have emphasized that tourists from different cultural backgrounds often come with varying expectations, which in turn to have demand deeper understanding and specific competencies from the human resources working in the tourism sector (Carreón et al., 2021).

A positive tourist experience largely depends on how visitors to have interact with the human resources present at the destination. Warm service, clear and accurate information, and quick responsiveness to what tourists need all to have serve as key indicators when assessing a destination's overall quality. Al-Msallam to have explained that good service delivered by human resources has been shown to to have reduce negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness, thereby helping to have maintain tourist satisfaction. The competence of human resources indirectly becomes a key factor in creating a satisfying travel experience and increasing visitor loyalty to the destination (Al-Msallam, 2020). In addition, a study by Kemboi and Jairus shows that the performance attributes of tour guides affect tourist satisfaction in the North Rift region of Kenya (Kemboi & Jairus, 2018).

Based on the above description, this study aims to answer the following questions: 1) What are the competency gaps experienced by tourism human resources at Telaga Nirwana in terms of knowledge, skills, and service attitude? 2) What is the experience of tourists visiting Telaga Nirwana? 3) To what extent do competency gaps affect tourist satisfaction at the Telaga Nirwana tourist destination?

Despite the growing body of literature on tourism human resource management, a critical research gap persists: the majority of existing studies examine HR competency either as a general organisational performance variable (Manurung et al., 2024; Tajuddin et al., 2023) or within the narrow lens of service quality satisfaction indices (Firdausi et al., 2025; Aksal et al., 2025), without empirically quantifying the competency deficit itself as a direct predictor of tourist experience. Research conducted in the Indonesian 3T (remote, frontier, and underdeveloped) regional context is particularly sparse; Ibrahim et al. (2024) and Ibrahim, Y. et al. (2024) have identified the structural problem of HR

unpreparedness in such regions, yet neither study operationalises the gap variable through a combined Gap Analysis and regression framework. Furthermore, prior studies that employ the Parasuraman et al. (1985) SERVQUAL gap model predominantly measure service quality at the aggregate level, thereby obscuring which specific competency dimensions knowledge, skills, or attitude exert the most destructive pressure on tourist experience. This analytical blind spot is particularly consequential in peripheral destinations such as Telaga Nirwana, where heterogeneous tourist expectations (Carreón et al., 2021) intersect with severe HR capacity constraints, rendering blanket policy prescriptions both imprecise and inefficient.

This study addresses the identified gap through three distinct scholarly contributions. First, it advances an integrated methodological approach by operationalising HR competency gap as a quantitatively derived independent variable, computed as the arithmetic difference between tourist expectations and perceptions across 19 disaggregated competency indicators, and subsequently subjecting this variable to Simple Linear Regression analysis. This design moves beyond descriptive gap reporting toward causal explanation, producing empirically testable evidence of the direction and magnitude of the gap's effect on tourist experience. Second, this research generates context-specific evidence from the Telaga Nirwana destination in Rote Ndao Regency, a geographically marginalised 3T region that remains systematically underrepresented in the tourism HR literature, thereby enriching the theoretical applicability of the competency-experience nexus beyond urban and well-resourced tourism contexts. Third, by decomposing the competency gap across three theoretically grounded dimensions knowledge, skills, and attitude, the study produces granular diagnostic evidence that enables destination managers to design prioritised, evidence-based interventions rather than generic training programmes. In doing so, this research responds directly to calls by Ritchie and Crouch (2000) and Kim and In (2013) for greater precision in identifying the human resource determinants of destination competitiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Competency of Tourism Destination Management Human Resources

Human resource competency is widely recognized as a critical determinant of service quality and experiential outcomes in the tourism sector. Within service-dominant contexts such as tourism destinations, human resources function as the primary interface between the destination and visitors, making their competencies a key driver of perceived value and overall tourist experience. Competency is therefore not merely an individual attribute, but a strategic resource that directly influences how services are delivered and evaluated. (Manurung et al., 2024). Tourism HRD development is key to improving service quality and tourist satisfaction. HRD competency is measured through three main dimensions that are integrated with each other, namely knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Conceptually, human resource competency is commonly framed as an integrated construct consisting of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, which collectively shape service performance. These three dimensions operate in a complementary manner, where deficiencies in one dimension may undermine the effectiveness of the others. This integrative perspective is particularly relevant in tourism, where service delivery involves both technical execution and emotional interaction (Jusdiana Ahmad et al., 2024). The knowledge dimension refers to the extent to which human resources possess and are able to apply relevant theoretical and contextual understanding. In tourism settings, this includes not only general information about the destination but also deeper insights into local culture, history, and operational procedures. Adequate knowledge enables service providers to function as credible information sources and cultural interpreters, thereby enhancing the cognitive aspect of tourist experience. Conversely, insufficient knowledge—particularly in areas such as safety procedures and service standards—can reduce trust and create uncertainty, ultimately diminishing the perceived quality of the experience (Suhartapa, 2022).

The skills dimension encompasses both technical and interpersonal capabilities required to deliver services effectively. In high-contact service environments, interpersonal skills such as communication, responsiveness, and problem-solving play a crucial role in shaping tourists' real-time evaluations. At the same time, technical skills especially those related to operational execution and complaint handling are essential in ensuring service reliability and consistency. The interaction between these skill sets determines whether human resources are able to translate their knowledge into tangible service performance. Weaknesses in this dimension often become more visible during critical service encounters, where the inability to respond appropriately can lead to negative experiential outcomes (Sari et al., 2020). In the tourism sector, interpersonal skills have a direct impact on how visitors evaluate their

interactions with industry professionals (Claire et al., 2019). Good verbal communication skills and complaint handling skills enable human resources to resolve problems efficiently, which is a key component of service quality (Manurung et al., 2024). Improving technical and managerial skills is necessary to ensure professional performance (Jusdiana Ahmad et al., 2024). Adequate skills, particularly in communication and handling critical complaints, are functional factors that enable HR to transform knowledge into real service actions, which will ultimately build a positive reputation for the tourist destination.

The attitude dimension represents the affective and behavioral orientation of human resources during service interactions. This includes fundamental service attitudes such as friendliness, politeness, and empathy, as well as performance-related attributes such as professionalism, initiative, and work motivation. While basic attitudes contribute to creating a positive emotional atmosphere, higher-order attitudes such as professionalism and proactive behavior are essential in delivering service beyond minimum expectations. These attitudinal elements are particularly important in tourism, as they influence not only satisfaction but also emotional responses and memory formation associated with the experience (Al-Msallam, 2020).

From a theoretical standpoint, the effectiveness of these competency dimensions is ultimately evaluated through the lens of tourist expectations. When the competencies demonstrated by human resources fall below expected standards, a discrepancy emerges between expected and perceived performance. This discrepancy, conceptualized as a competency gap, becomes a critical mechanism through which human resource deficiencies translate into negative tourist experiences. Therefore, understanding human resource competency in tourism should not only focus on its components, but also on how well these components align with tourist expectations in actual service encounters.

Tourist Experience and Satisfaction

Tourist experience represents the primary outcome of tourism activities and reflects how visitors perceive, interpret, and emotionally respond to their interactions during a visit. It is a multidimensional construct that encompasses both functional aspects (such as facilities and attractions) and technical aspects (such as service delivery, communication, and responsiveness). In tourism settings, human resources play a central role as the main point of contact, making their performance a key determinant in shaping the overall experience. Prior studies indicate that the technical dimension particularly interaction quality and service delivery has a stronger influence on the formation of memorable and emotionally significant experiences (Manurung et al., 2024). In the modern tourism era, the evaluation of tourist experiences is dominated by emotional aspects and interactions.

The formation of tourist experience is closely linked to the comparison between expectations and perceived performance. When service delivery meets or exceeds expectations, a positive experience is created; conversely, when performance falls below expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs, leading to unfavorable experiential outcomes (Al-Msallam, 2020). In this context, tourist satisfaction can be understood as part of the evaluative process embedded within the broader experience. Therefore, the quality of tourist experience is fundamentally determined by how well service interactions, especially those involving human resources, align with tourist expectations, making any discrepancy between the two a critical factor influencing the overall experience.

Competency Gap

The concept of competency gap refers to the discrepancy between the level of human resource competency expected by tourists and the level of competency actually perceived during service encounters. This concept is grounded in the expectation–perception framework, where service quality is evaluated based on how well performance aligns with prior expectations (Firdausi et al., 2025). In the context of tourism, this gap is operationalized as the difference between expectation scores and perception scores, making it a measurable indicator of service performance effectiveness.

A competency gap emerges when human resources fail to demonstrate the required levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes expected by tourists. Such discrepancies are particularly critical in tourism services, where interactions are direct, dynamic, and experience-driven. Deficiencies in key competency areas such as technical ability, communication, responsiveness, and professionalism, can lead to negative evaluations, especially in dimensions related to assurance and empathy (Marswandi et al., 2024). As a result, even when basic service elements are present, the inability to meet expected standards can significantly reduce perceived service quality.

From an analytical perspective, the competency gap serves as a diagnostic and predictive construct. It not only identifies the extent of mismatch between expectations and performance but also explains the potential for service failure and negative experiential outcomes (Aksal et al., 2025). A larger gap indicates a higher level of disconfirmation, which increases the likelihood of dissatisfaction and poor tourist experience. Therefore, the competency gap is not merely a descriptive metric, but a critical explanatory variable that links human resource performance to the quality of tourist experience.

Impact of Gaps

The impact of competency gaps in tourism services is primarily manifested through the mechanism of negative disconfirmation, where perceived performance falls below tourist expectations. This condition directly reduces perceived service quality and undermines the overall tourist experience (Alana & Putro, 2020). The effect becomes particularly critical in high-contact service environments, where interactions between tourists and human resources serve as the main basis for evaluation. In such contexts, even small discrepancies in performance can significantly influence how the experience is perceived and remembered.

The consequences of competency gaps are most evident during critical service encounters, often referred to as “moments of truth,” where service quality is tested under real conditions. Gaps in technical competencies such as safety procedures and complaint handling combined with deficiencies in attitudinal aspects like responsiveness and empathy, tend to produce strong negative evaluations. (Novitaningtyas et al., 2024). These failures not only disrupt the service process but also generate negative emotional responses, which play a central role in shaping unfavorable tourist experiences.

From a broader perspective, persistent competency gaps lead to cumulative negative outcomes at both the individual and destination levels. At the individual level, they reduce experiential value and weaken overall satisfaction, while at the destination level, they contribute to a decline in destination image and revisit intention (Aksal et al., 2025). This indicates that the impact of competency gaps extends beyond immediate service failure, affecting long-term competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations.

Previous Study and Hypothesis

Research on human resource competency in the tourism sector has shown significant achievements in various local and global contexts. In general, previous research results show that human resource competency plays a central role in determining the quality of tourism services and has a direct impact on tourist satisfaction and experience.

A study by Lin et al. in the context of Taiwan found that the quality of service provided by human resources, particularly tour guides, has a direct influence on tourists' intention to revisit, making human resources one of the main pillars of tourism destination sustainability (Lin et al., 2018). In Indonesia, Ibrahim, R. researched the role of human resource competencies in shark tourism management in Botubarani, Gorontalo. He found that the lack of technical and institutional management training led to visitor dissatisfaction, even though the tourism potential was very high (R. Ibrahim et al., 2024). Research by Tajudin et al. in Kolaka Regency also highlights the importance of basic tourism knowledge and service skills for local tourism agency employees. It emphasizes the need for periodic competency evaluations to ensure the readiness of the tourism bureaucracy in supporting the growth of local destinations (Tajuddin et al., 2023). This is also echoed by Ibrahim, Y, who revealed that one of the main obstacles in the development of community-based tourism in Indonesia is the limited competence of local tourism actors, especially in 3T areas (Y. Ibrahim et al., 2024).

All previous studies have consistently emphasized the central role of human resource competencies in determining the quality of tourist experiences and satisfaction, as well as identifying the phenomenon of competency gaps as a major predictor of dissatisfaction. The most recent research also confirms that overall service quality, which is greatly influenced by human resource competency, has a positive and significant effect on satisfaction (Firdausi et al., 2025). In other words, human resource competency gaps directly cause a Customer Gap, which is the gap between tourist expectations and their perception of the service they receive.

Based on the literature review and theoretical framework, this study tests the hypothesis that the failure of human resources to meet tourist expectations will have a negative impact on the perceived experience.

H_0 : There is no significant effect between HR Competency Gap and Tourist Experience at Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination.

H_a : There is a negative and significant effect between HR Competency Gap and Tourist Experience at Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology design was developed to answer the research questions and test the proposed hypotheses empirically. The research approach used is quantitative, which is operated through explanatory *research*. This approach was chosen because it aims to objectively measure and explain the cause-and-effect relationship (influence) between the independent variable, namely HR Competency Gap (X), and the dependent variable, namely Tourist Experience (Y), through statistical analysis. The research analysis framework adheres to the *Gap Analysis* model to form independent variables, followed by Simple Linear Regression Analysis to test the hypothesis regarding the negative impact of this gap on tourist experience. The quantitative approach ensures that the findings are accurate, empirically testable, and generalizable to provide strong data-driven recommendations for destination managers.

The research to have taken place at the Telaga Nirwana Nature Tourism destination, situated in Oeseli Village, Southwest Rote District, Rote Ndao Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The choice of this location is considered highly relevant, as Rote Ndao is categorized as a border region (3T), where tourism development commonly to have faces challenges related to human resource quality and accessibility. The fieldwork itself was carried out over a span of five months, to have running from June to November 2025

The population in this study consisted of tourists who to have visited Telaga Nirwana within a specific timeframe. The sample selection was to have carried out using an accidental sampling technique This technique was chosen because the tourist population is dynamic and difficult to predict. *Accidental Sampling* allows researchers to select sample units at random, namely tourists who are willing to fill out a questionnaire during or after their visit. The number of samples collected in this study was 112 tourists, who were key subjects in providing assessments of human resource competencies and their overall experience.

This study used two main variables measured through the *Gap Analysis* method and actual experience measurement. The Independent Variable (X) is the HR Competency Gap, which is indirectly formed from the calculation of the difference between tourist Expectations and Perceptions. This variable includes 19 indicators divided into three dimensions of competency: Knowledge, Skills, and Attitude. Meanwhile, the Dependent Variable (Y) is Tourist Experience, which is a direct measurement of the level of satisfaction/experience felt by tourists, measured using the same 19 indicators, but in the context of assessing the actual experience received. Measurements of these two variables were conducted through a Closed Questionnaire (Survey), using a Likert Scale (1 - 5) to measure tourist expectations, perceptions, and experiences. To ensure the accuracy of the instruments, Instrument Testing was conducted, which included Validity Testing (to ensure that the instruments measured the correct concepts) and Reliability Testing using Cronbach's Alpha (to ensure the consistency of the measurement results). The use of valid and reliable instruments is very important, especially since Variable X (Gap) is the result of a difference calculation that requires high accuracy to avoid methodological bias.

The data in this study was collected using the main instrument, a Closed Questionnaire (Survey), which was specifically designed to capture three types of essential data required in the *Service Quality Gap* and Tourist Experience framework. First, the Tourist Expectations Questionnaire serves to collect data on tourists' ideal expectations regarding the level of human resource competence (knowledge, skills, and attitude) that they should receive at Telaga Nirwana. Second, the Tourist Perception Questionnaire is used to record tourists' actual assessments of the human resource competence that they actually received or felt during their visit. The data from these two questionnaires is crucial because it is a prerequisite for calculating the Human Resource Competency Gap Variable (X). Finally, the Tourist Experience Questionnaire is designed to collect data on overall satisfaction or experience (Y), which serves as the dependent variable in testing the impact of the gap. These three types of questionnaires, although measured using the same 19- t indicators, have different and integrated measurement functions to support systematic regression analysis.

The final stage is the data analysis stage. The data analysis stage is a crucial step in processing the quantitative data collected and testing the research hypothesis. The data obtained will be analyzed in a systematic stage. First, a descriptive analysis is performed. This analysis is used to describe the basic data profile, namely the HR competency profile (expectations and perceptions) and tourist experiences. Percentage, mean, standard deviation, and data categorization calculations are performed for each indicator that measures variable X (Competency Gap) and variable Y (Tourist Experience). The results present the actual condition of human resources and the level of satisfaction felt. Second, a Gap Analysis is performed. This analysis is the core method for forming independent variables. This analysis aims to calculate the quantitative difference between what tourists expect and what they perceive (receive) from human resource services. Equation Model: The gap is calculated as variable X with the formula, $X = \text{Expectations} - \text{Perceptions}$. The result, Gap Value (Expectations – Perceptions), will be the independent variable used in the hypothesis test. A negative value indicates that perception is better than expectation (*Positive Disconfirmation*), while a positive value indicates that perception is lower than expectation (*Negative Disconfirmation/Gap*). The third is the Prerequisite Analysis Test. This statistical test is conducted before hypothesis testing to ensure that the regression model used is valid and meets statistical assumptions. a) Normality Test. This test aims to ensure that the regression model residual data is normally distributed, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, where the data is considered normal if the Significance value (Sig.) is greater than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). b) Linearity Test. This test aims to ensure that there is a significant linear relationship between the Human Resource Competency Gap variable (X) and Tourist Experience (Y), using the ANOVA Test, where the model is considered linear if *the Deviation from Linearity* (Sig.) value is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$. c) Heteroscedasticity Test. This test aims to ensure that there is no deviation in the variance of the residuals in the regression model (the variance must be constant/homoscedasticity), using the Glejser Test, where the model is considered free of heteroscedasticity if the (Sig.) value of the independent variable is greater than $\alpha = 0.05$. The fourth is the Hypothesis Test (Simple Linear Regression Analysis). Using Simple Linear Regression Analysis using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software version 29. This analysis aims to test the effect of HR Competency Gap (X) on Tourist Experience (Y) and determine the magnitude of the effect. Regression Equation Model: $Y = a + bX + e$, where Y = Tourist Experience; a = Constant; b = Regression Coefficient; X = Human Resource Competency Gap; e = *Error term*.

Decisions regarding the results of the Hypothesis Test (t-test) are made based on the following criteria: The Alternative Hypothesis (Ha) is accepted if 1) the Significance Value (Sig.) or *P-Value* is less than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$); 2) The Regression Coefficient (b) is negative (in accordance with the hypothesis stating *that the greater the gap, the worse the experience*). In addition to hypothesis testing, the Coefficient of Determination (R2) will be calculated to determine how much the X variable contributes to explaining the Y variable.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Competency Gap in Tourism Human Resources at Telaga Nirwana

The following is a description of the research data on expectations, perceptions, and analysis of the gap between the two in relation to the competency of human resources managing the Telaga Nirwana tourist destination in Rote Ndao Regency.

Table 1
Analysis Results of the Gap Between Tourists' Expectations and Perceptions Regarding the Competency of Tourism Destination Management Human Resources at Telaga Nirwana, Rote Ndao Regency

No	Assessment Indicators	Expectations	Perception	Gap (%)	Category
1	Local Cultural Knowledge	84	69	15	Low
2	Destination Information Knowledge	85	68	17	Low
3	Destination History Knowledge	79	54	25	High
4	Tourism Product Knowledge	67	35	32	Extreme
5	Knowledge of Safety Procedures	61	32	29	Very High
6	Knowledge of Service Standards	64	36	28	High
7	Verbal Communication Skills	83	64	19	Low
8	Nonverbal Communication Skills	65	44	21	Moderate
9	Information Explanation Skills	83	64	19	Low
10	Complaint Handling Skills	63	31	32	Very High
11	Quick Response Skills	63	41	22	Moderate

12	Interpersonal Skills	84	67	17	Low
13	Task-Related Technical Skills	70	35	35	Extreme
14	Friendliness	90	61	29	Very High
15	Politeness	86	62	24	Tall
16	Empathy	84	65	19	Low
17	Professionalism	70	36	34	Extreme
18	Initiative	63	39	24	In progress
19	Service Motivation	63	36	27	High

Source: Researcher's Findings

Based on the research data in Table 1 above, information is known about expectations, perceptions, and gap analysis between the two regarding the competence of human resources managing the Telaga Nirwana tourist destination in Rote Ndao Regency.

Tourist Expectations of the Competence of Human Resources Managing the Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination in Rote Ndao Regency

The results of this study indicate that tourist expectations regarding the human resources managing Telaga Nirwana are quite high, particularly in aspects directly related to emotional experiences and interpersonal interactions. Of the 19 competency indicators, 9 indicators are in the Very High category, while the other 10 indicators are in the High category. This indicates that tourist expectations are quite high in several key areas. The highest percentage is in Friendliness (90%), confirming that friendliness is the most crucial factor that tourists expect the most. Conversely, several aspects such as Knowledge of Safety Procedures (61%), Complaint Handling Skills (63%), and Service Motivation (63%) have the lowest percentages.

The knowledge aspect as a whole shows fairly high expectations, but with striking variations. Tourists to have show exceptionally high expectations regarding Local Cultural Knowledge (84%) and Destination Information Knowledge (85%). This situation to have underscores how important it is for human resources to to have function as cultural and informational ambassadors who are capable of to have offer deeper understanding about the destination. However, expectations related to more technical and operational competencies—such as Tourism Product Knowledge (67%), Service Standard Knowledge (64%), and Safety Procedure Knowledge (61%)—although still categorized as High, to have receive comparatively lower scores.

The skill component is divided into interaction skills and response-based or technical skills. Abilities that are directly connected to delivering information and engaging personally—such as Verbal Communication Skills (83%), Information Explanation Skills (83%), and Interpersonal Skills (84%)—to have fall into the Very High category, showing that tourists to have place strong expectations on HR’s capability to to have interact and to have educate. However, expectations for skills that are more responsive and problem-solving in nature—such as Non-Verbal Communication Skills (65%), Complaint Handling Skills (63%), and Quick Response Skills (63%)—to have remain in the High category but with noticeably lower percentages.

Attitude emerges as the strongest aspect of human resources at Telaga Nirwana, with most indicators to have reaching the Very High category. Friendliness (90%), Politeness (86%), and Empathy (84%) to have recorded the highest levels of expectation among visitors. However, expectations tied to attitudes involving initiative and professional performance—namely Professionalism (70%), Initiative (63%), and Service Motivation (63%)—to have fall within the High category

Tourist Perceptions of the Competence of Telaga Nirwana Tourism Destination Management Human Resources in Rote Ndao Regency

Tourists' perceptions of the competence of Telaga Nirwana management personnel are still relatively low, with the majority of indicators falling into the Fair to Poor categories. Of the 19 competency indicators, only 9 indicators achieved the Good category, while the remaining 10 indicators fell into the Fair and Poor categories. The worst perceptions were in the areas of Complaint Handling Skills (31%) and Safety Procedure Knowledge (32%), indicating that the performance of human resources in critical and technical situations needs to be improved. Meanwhile, the best perceptions were in the interpersonal aspect, namely Interpersonal Skills (67%), underlining that the current strength of human resources lies in their ability to interact well.

Tourists' perceptions of HR Knowledge aspects showed varying results, but tended to be weak in technical and operational knowledge. The best perceptions were in Local Culture Knowledge (69%) and Destination Information Knowledge (68%), both in the Good category, confirming that HR is considered quite capable as a source of general

and cultural information. However, human resource performance is rated as Poor in Tourism Product Knowledge (35%), Safety Procedure Knowledge (32%), and Service Standard Knowledge (36%). These very low ratings indicate that tourists feel that human resources lack mastery of the details of the products/services offered, are weak in basic safety knowledge, and are inconsistent or do not understand the service standards that should be provided. Performance in Destination History Knowledge (54%) is rated as Fairly Good, indicating that there is room to deepen mastery of historical material.

Skill aspects tend to be divided between basic communication skills, which are considered Good, and response/technical skills, which are rated as Not Good. Skills related to direct interaction, such as Verbal Communication Skills (64%), Information Explanation Skills (64%), and Interpersonal Skills (67%) are rated as Good, indicating that human resources are able to communicate and interact adequately. However, direct assessments plummeted for critical and problem-solving skills, with Complaint Handling Skills (31%) rated as Poor, the lowest indicator in the entire study. In addition, Task-Related Technical Skills (35%) were also rated as Poor. Meanwhile, Non-Verbal Communication Skills (44%) were rated as Fair. This indicates that although human resources can speak well, they are very weak in managing and resolving problems that arise and are not yet proficient in their technical operational tasks.

The Attitude aspect was generally rated better than other aspects, although it was still in the Good category and not Very Good. Attitude indicators that are directly tied to front-line service—such as Empathy (65%), Politeness (62%), and Friendliness (61%)—were to have rated as Good. This shows that human resources generally to have display a pleasant and courteous manner when to have interacting with visitors. However, tourists' perceptions of attitudes that to have reflect performance and initiative fall into the Not Good category, including Professionalism (36%), Initiative (39%), and Service Motivation (36%). These low scores to have indicate that tourists to have view the human resources as not to have demonstrating a professional work ethic, to have lacking initiative to to have assist or to have improve services, and to have showing low motivation to to have serve. This condition confirms that a friendly basic attitude has not been balanced with a professional and proactive work attitude.

Analysis of the Gap between Tourists' Expectations and Perceptions of the Competence of Human Resources Managing the Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination in Rote Ndao Regency

The gap analysis in the table above shows a severe deficit in service quality across almost all indicators, evidenced by an average gap score above 15%. In general, although tourists expect friendly and knowledgeable human resources (high Expectation score), they feel that human resources are very weak in operational, technical, and problem-handling aspects (very low Perception score).

In detail, the results of *the Gap Analysis* above are grouped based on gap intervals from 15% to 35%, showing a clear distribution of where the most severe failures in human resource performance occur.

Low Gap (15%-19%)

This is the area where staff performance is considered closest to tourist expectations. Although there is still a gap, the issues are not critical. This is shown in the indicators of Local Cultural Knowledge (15%), Interpersonal Skills (17%), Destination Information Knowledge (17%), Empathy (19%), Verbal Communication Skills (19%), and Information Explanation Skills (19%). The implication is that the main strength of human resources lies in their ability to be friendly *hosts* with basic knowledge. They are able to communicate verbally, show empathy, and provide general information about the destination and its culture quite well. Improvements here are *fine-tuning* to achieve exceptional performance.

Moderate Gap (20% - 23%)

In this category, HR performance is adequate but requires focused improvement to close the gap. This moderate gap is indicated in the Non-Verbal Communication Skills (21%) and Quick Response Skills (22%) indicators. The implications of this gap are that human resources are considered poor in non-verbal communication (body language, expressions) and slow in responding to situations or questions. This area is a bridge between basic communication skills (low category) and complaint handling (extreme category).

High Gap (24% - 27%)

The gap in this category shows that tourist expectations are not being met significantly. This gap is shown in the indicators of Politeness (24%), Initiative (24%), Knowledge of Destination History (25%), and Service Motivation (27%). The implications of this gap are that the quality of service provided by human resources is considered passive. Although still considered friendly (compared to the extreme gap), they lack initiative to serve beyond the minimum standards and lack motivation. Additionally, their mastery of destination history is considered insufficiently in-depth.

Very High Gap (28% - 31%)

The indicators in this category are critical issues that cause great dissatisfaction, especially since they cover crucial aspects such as friendliness and safety. This gap is reflected in the Friendliness indicator (29%), Safety Procedure Knowledge (29%), and Service Standard Knowledge (28%). The implication is that even though Friendliness has the highest expectation score, its low perception level creates a substantial gap, suggesting that a simple smile does not necessarily translate into a satisfying service experience. Very low ratings for Safety and Service Standards indicate serious operational risks and inconsistencies in the provision of basic services.

Extreme Gap (32% - 35%)

This area covers indicators with the largest gaps and requires immediate and radical intervention, as tourist perceptions are far from expectations. This gap is evident in the indicators of Task-Related Technical Skills (35%), Professionalism (34%), Complaint Handling Skills (32%), and Tourism Product Knowledge (32%). The implications of this gap are systemic failures in core performance and service quality. Human resources are deemed incompetent in performing daily technical tasks, unable to handle problems (complaints), and lacking mastery of the products they manage. The lack of professionalism indicates that the issue is not only a lack of ability but also a lack of a serious work ethic.

Visitor Experience Regarding the Competence of Tourism Destination Management Human Resources

The results of the study on tourist experiences regarding the human resources of the Telaga Nirwana Tourism Destination are presented in the following table:

Table 2
Tourist Experiences Regarding the Competence of Human Resources Managing the Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination
Rote Ndao Regency

No	Assessment Indicator	f (%)	Category
1	Local Cultural Knowledge	59	Fairly Satisfied
2	Destination Information Knowledge	63	Satisfied
3	Destination History Knowledge	50	Fairly Satisfied
4	Knowledge of Tourism Products	30	Not Satisfied
5	Safety Procedure Knowledge	29	Not Satisfied
6	Knowledge of Service Standards	27	Not Satisfied
7	Verbal Communication Skills	53	Satisfied
8	Nonverbal Communication Skills	42	Fairly Satisfied
9	Information Explanation Skills	61	Satisfied
10	Complaint Handling Skills	30	Not Satisfied
11	Quick Response Skills	38	Not Satisfied
12	Interpersonal Skills	61	Satisfied
13	Task-Related Technical Skills	29	Less Satisfied
14	Friendliness	62	Satisfied
15	Politeness	63	Satisfied
16	Empathy	62	Satisfied
17	Professionalism	33	Not Satisfied
18	Initiative	35	Not Satisfied
19	Service Motivation	32	Not Satisfied

Source: Researcher's Findings

Overall, the findings of this study reveal that tourist satisfaction with the competence of personnel managing Telaga Nirwana remains in the low to moderate range. Most indicators (12 dari 19) fall within the Dissatisfied or Fairly Satisfied categories, while only seven indicators reach the Satisfied category. This situation shows that the real experience felt by tourists is still far from optimal. The highest satisfaction was obtained in the aspects of Politeness (63%) and Destination Information Knowledge (63%), indicating that human resources are quite successful in basic interactions and conveying general information. Conversely, the lowest satisfaction was achieved in Safety Procedure Knowledge (29%) and Task-Related Technical Skills (29%), confirming that operational, technical, and safety aspects are the biggest sources of dissatisfaction for tourists.

Tourist satisfaction with HR Knowledge aspects shows that they are Satisfied with HR's ability to share Destination Information Knowledge (63%) and Quite Satisfied with Local Cultural Knowledge (59%) and Destination History Knowledge (50%). This means that HR is considered capable of providing general insights about tourist attractions. However, satisfaction levels drop dramatically when it comes to procedural and commercial knowledge, with all three indicators falling into the Dissatisfied category: Tourism Product Knowledge (30%), Safety Procedure Knowledge (29%), and Service Standard Knowledge (27%). This low level of satisfaction is very concerning because it shows that tourists feel that human resources do not have in-depth knowledge of what they are selling, are unable to guarantee safety, and do not provide consistent service in accordance with standards.

In terms of Skills, tourist satisfaction is divided between basic interaction skills, which are rated as Satisfied, and problem-solving/handling skills, which are rated as Dissatisfied. Tourists are Satisfied with Interpersonal Skills (61%) and Information Explanation Skills (61%). However, they are only Moderately Satisfied with Verbal Communication Skills (53%) and Non-Verbal Communication Skills (42%). Skills related to problem solving and technical skills received the lowest ratings, namely Dissatisfied: Complaint Handling Skills (30%), Quick Response Skills (38%), and Task-Related Technical Skills (29%). This indicates that although human resources have a good foundation for interaction, they are very ineffective, slow, and incompetent in handling urgent situations, complaints, or daily technical tasks, which directly damages the positive experience of tourists.

The Attitude dimension to have presented mixed outcomes, in which basic attitudes were to have rated positively, while proactive and professional attitudes were to have evaluated poorly. Tourists to have felt Satisfied with fundamental attitudes such as Politeness (63%), Friendliness (62%), and Empathy (62%). This suggests that human resources to have succeeded in to have creating an emotionally pleasant atmosphere. However, satisfaction levels regarding attitudes that to have reflect performance, initiative, and work ethic fall into the Dissatisfied category: Professionalism (33%), Service Motivation (32%), and Initiative (35%). These low ratings to have indicate that although human resources to have appear polite, they do not to have act proactively, to have lack the motivation to to have enhance service quality, and do not to have exhibit the professionalism expected, ultimately to have resulting in a passive and unimpressive experience for tourists.

The Impact of HR Competency Gaps on Tourist Experience at Telaga Nirwana Tourist Destination in Rote Ndao Regency.

Linearity Test

Table 3
Linearity Test Results

ANOVA Table			Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Tourist Experience * Human Resource Competency Gap	Between Groups	(Combined)	2791.991	12	232,666	1,414	.350
		Linearity	2,053.520	1	2,053.520	12,481	.012
		Deviation from Linearity	738.471	11	67,134	.408	.906
	Within Groups	987,167	6	164,528			
Total			3,779,158	18			

Source: SPSS 29

The results of the linearity test using the ANOVA test method show a deviation from linearity sig. value of 0.906, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a linear relationship between HR Competency Gap and Tourist Experience.

Normality Test

Table 4
Normality Test Results

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			Unstandardized Residual
N			19
Normal Parameters ^{a, b}	Mean		.000000
	Std. Deviation		9.79125863
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		.131
	Positive		.131
	Negative		-.103
Test Statistic			.131
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c			.200 ^d
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^c	Sig.		.517
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.504
		Upper Bound	.530

Source: SPSS 29

The normality test using the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* method yielded an *Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)* value of 0.200, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data in this study are normally distributed.

Heteroscedasticity Test

Table 5
Heteroscedasticity Test Results

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.789	5.836		.992	.335
	Human Resource Competency Gap	.075	.230	.078	.324	.750

a. Dependent Variable: abs_RES

Source: SPSS 29

The results of the heteroscedasticity test using the *Glejser test* method show that the significance value (Sig.) for the Human Resource Gap variable is 0.750, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no heteroscedasticity in the regression model.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6
Hypothesis Test Results

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	87.876	9.763		9,001	.001
	Human Resource Competency Gap	-1,732	.385	-.737	-4,498	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Experience

Source: SPSS 29

The results of the hypothesis test using Simple Linear Regression Analysis obtained a significance value (sig.) or p-value for the Human Resource Gap Variable of 0.001. This result is smaller than the significance level or (alpha)

of 0.05. Thus, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that the competency gap of tourism destination managers affects the tourist experience at the Telaga Nirwana Tourism Destination in Rote Ndao Regency.

This decision statistically proves that there is a valid causal relationship (influence) between the level of gap perceived by tourists between expectations and perceptions of human resource competence, and the quality of the experience felt by tourists at the destination. Practically speaking, the greater the gap in human resource competence, the worse the experience felt by tourists.

The tourist experience is measured by the overall interactions and results they obtain. When there is a large gap, especially in critical aspects (as seen in the previous analysis: complaint handling, technical, and safety), the perceived quality of service will decline. The gap that arises between expectations and perceptions is often referred to as the *Service Quality Gap*. Customer satisfaction (including tourist experience) is a direct function of the difference between what is expected and what is received. If this *gap* is large, satisfaction/experience will be low (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Tourists are not only looking for physical products, but also emotional experiences. Significant gaps (e.g., high expectations of hospitality but low actual hospitality, or expected initiatives that are not present) create negative disconfirmation. Grönroos states that the total tourist experience includes *functional* dimensions (what is received, e.g., facilities) and technical dimensions (how services are delivered, e.g., human resource interactions) (Grönroos, 2000). It is the gap in the technical dimension (human resource competence and attitude) that most strongly shapes negative memories and emotions about the overall experience.

The results of this study strongly confirm that in order to improve the tourist experience at Telaga Nirwana, the main focus must be shifted to closing the human resource competency gap. Physical infrastructure development alone will not be effective if the competencies of its managers are unable to support it. Lee Kim and Nam In, in their study on tourism human resources, emphasize that human resource competencies, especially *soft skills* (attitude, communication, empathy) and *hard skills* (technical knowledge of the destination), are *key driving factors* for the success of the destination experience (Kim & In, 2013). When these competencies are lacking, the competitiveness of the destination is threatened.

This significant influence validates the urgency to immediately address the critical areas identified by the previous *Gap Analysis* (e.g., Complaint Handling Skills and Safety Procedure Knowledge). The gap in human resource competencies is a major *bottleneck* that prevents Telaga Nirwana from providing a superior tourism experience. Training and development programs must focus on transforming HR competencies from merely 'friendly' to 'professional, proactive, and technically competent' to reduce the p-value and tangibly enhance the quality of the tourist experience.

Table 7
Coefficient of Determination (R²)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	.737 ^a	.543	.517	10.075

a. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Competency Gap
Source: SPSS 29

Based on *the model summary output* in the simple linear regression model above, it is known that the Coefficient of Determination (R²) value is 0.543. This coefficient of determination (R²) value explains that the contribution of the HR Competency Gap variable to the tourist experience is 54.3%, while the remaining 45.7% is explained by other variables not examined in this study. Since more than half of the variation in tourist experience is explained by this gap, the HR Competency Gap is a dominant factor that must be addressed by destination managers to improve the overall quality of experience.

An R² value exceeding 50% emphasizes that the most efficient and rapid improvement efforts are to focus resources on closing the human resource gap. Although other variables (45.7%) are important, human resources are

variables that *can be directly controlled* by destination management and have been proven to have the most significant impact on the final results.

Research on *Destination Competitiveness* by Ritchie and Crouch often highlights that *management effectiveness* and *quality of human resources* are determining factors of competitiveness that can compensate for deficiencies in physical attributes. This means that competent human resources can save the experience even if the infrastructure is not perfect (Marswandi et al., 2024; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

The result of $R^2 = 54.3\%$ needs to be interpreted together with the earlier significance finding ($p = 0.001$). The Significance Value (p) to have confirms that the relationship is statistically valid and not due to chance. At the same time, the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) to have illustrates how strong the influence is. When these two outcomes are to have combined, they to have produce a solid conclusion that the HR Competency Gap does not only to have impact the Tourist Experience in a significant way but also to have stands as the primary and most dominant factor that to have shapes that experience.

CONCLUSION

The gap analysis reveals a severe deficit in service quality (average Gap $> 15\%$), where tourists have high expectations for friendly and knowledgeable HR, but their perceptions are very low, especially in operational, technical, and problem-handling aspects. Although HR has basic strengths in general information knowledge and interpersonal friendliness (Low Gap 15%-19%), the most severe systemic failure occurs in the Extreme Gap indicators (32%-35%), which include Task-Related Technical Skills, Professionalism, Complaint Handling, and Tourism Product Knowledge, requiring immediate and radical intervention to address critical tourist dissatisfaction.

The results of the study show that tourist satisfaction with the competence of Telaga Nirwana's human resources tends to be low to moderate, with the majority of indicators falling into the Not Satisfied or Moderately Satisfied categories. Although human resources are considered successful in basic interactions, politeness, and delivery of general information (Highest Satisfaction: Politeness and Destination Information Knowledge, 63%), the biggest and most critical source of dissatisfaction lies in operational, technical, procedural, and safety aspects, as evidenced by the lowest satisfaction in Safety Procedure Knowledge (29%) and Task-Related Technical Skills (29%), as well as low ratings in Complaint Handling Skills and Professionalism, which overall indicate serious weaknesses in the core competencies and work ethic of human resources in ensuring competent and safe services.

The results of simple linear regression analysis significantly prove that the competency gap of tourism destination management human resources has a real effect on the tourist experience at Telaga Nirwana. This relationship is also dominant and strong, as evidenced by a Coefficient of Determination value of 54.3%, which indicates that more than half of the variation in the quality of tourist experience is explained by the deficit between expectations and perceptions of human resource competence (*Service Quality Gap*). Therefore, to improve tourist experience and destination competitiveness, the main and most efficient focus for managers is to immediately intervene to close the competency gap in human resources, particularly in technical, operational, and problem-handling aspects, as human resources have proven to be a key driver of overall experience success.

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