

Breaking Down the Barriers: Rethinking Government's Role in Indonesian Tourism Destination Development

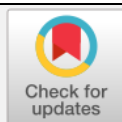
Ahmad Hudaiby Galih Kusumah *, 

Indonesia University of Education, 40154, Bandung, West Java Province, Indonesia

* Corresponding Author: galih@upi.edu

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ABSTRACT

Stakeholder involvement is essential to destination development. They may serve as catalysts or impediments to the growth of tourist sites. This study explores the barriers to tourism destination development associated with the role of local tourism authorities. A qualitative approach, employing semi-structured interviews, was utilized to examine the root causes of these challenges. Sixteen stakeholders, including ten government officials responsible for regional tourism development and six community leaders, were selected as informants in this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The investigation revealed four main barriers to destination development from government agencies. There are bureaucratic hurdles, contrived program activities, overlapping roles of local governments, and the community's misconceptions about the government's role in destination development. These factors collectively hinder the successful implementation of government-led tourism programs. The study suggests that understanding and addressing these barriers are vital to fostering a progressive, sustainable, competitive tourist destination. On a practical level, the findings can help policymakers redesign their strategies to create more community-centric programs, clearly define roles, and manage community expectations. Conceptually, this study expands the existing literature on the role of government and bureaucracy in developing tourist destinations. The study highlights the importance of a participatory approach that engages all stakeholders in the planning and implementation tourism policies and programs.

Keywords: Bureaucratic Hurdles; Community Perception; Governmental Barriers; Tourism Destination Development; Tourism Policy-Making

1. Introduction

Governmental institutions significantly influence regional tourist destinations' progression and growth, controlling authoritative decisions and financial resources. However, these entities are often perceived as lagging, struggling to adapt to the swift evolutionary pace of the tourism industry, especially when compared to the agility and effectiveness of private institutions in decision-making and program execution. The perceived inertia and difficulties encountered by the government necessitate exploring the hindrances that ultimately impact the successful implementation of their launched programs.

Previous research has illuminated the government's role in various aspects of tourism development, such as stimulating the advancement of community-based destinations (Glaser et al., 1997), advocating for the enhancement of human resources in tourism (Fayos-Sola & Jafari, 1997), and prompting the tourism sector towards the practice of sustainable tourism (Dredge et al., 2011). Despite these insights, a dearth of focused studies exists on the government's main barriers when implementing pro-community and pro-sustainable tourism destination development programs.

The current study aims to explore understanding these impediments and elucidate their effects on fostering a progressive, sustainable, and competitive tourist destination. The questions mainly relate to tourism actors' non-physical challenges when developing destinations, especially in urban or rural destinations. This research aspires to contribute recommendations for policymakers, offering insights into the aspects that hinder governmental institutions in the planning and execution of regional tourism destination development initiatives. The implications of this study extend to enhancing the government's capacity to meet the challenges that come with the development of sustainable and competitive tourism destinations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptualizing Governance Management: Definitions and Consequences

Obstacles and challenges permeating the sphere of tourism policy formulation are not exclusively the result of external governmental factors. Indeed, these hindrances can also stem from sub-optimal governance management. Good governance management is contingent upon several pivotal factors, encompassing transparency, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness to the populace's needs. Transparency is a linchpin of good governance, fostering citizens' understanding and evaluation of governmental decision-making procedures and outcomes (OECD, 2017). Open communication channels, information available to the general public, technology-enabled data exchange, and decision distribution are all ways to achieve transparency.

However, transparency in isolation is insufficient. Accountability is another critical facet of superior governance management, holding governments responsible for their actions and internal and external decisions (World Bank, 2004). Procedures like audits, performance reviews, and independent supervisory bodies can maintain accountability. Additionally, efficiency in governance management pertains to the optimal utilization of resources for attaining desired outcomes. Governments ought to be committed to reducing waste and enhancing the effectiveness of their policies and initiatives (OECD, 2017). Effective policy can be achieved through performance evaluation, data-driven decision-making, and continual improvement procedures.

Effectiveness, closely allied with efficiency, refers to the government's capacity to realize defined goals and objectives (World Bank, 2004). Program effectiveness can be enhanced by

setting clear objectives, monitoring progress, and recalibrating strategies as necessary to ensure success. Finally comes responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. Good governance must respond to fluctuating situations and address the issues and priorities of their constituents (OECD, 2017). Public discussions, participatory decision-making, and regular feedback can inform citizens' needs. If a government fails to uphold the principles of good governance management as detailed above, the obstacles and challenges encountered during policy implementation could become detrimental and disrupt public service provision. This condition also extends to tourism-related policies. Therefore, implementing the principles can serve as an indicator for assessing governmental success.

2.2. Efficiency and Effectiveness of Governmental Programs

Various strategies, such as performance management, e-government, public-private partnerships, and decentralization, can actualize efficiency and effectiveness in governance management. These strategies are crucial in attaining optimal governance outcomes and can be implemented in various ways. Implementing a performance management system can aid the government in setting clear objectives, tracking progress, and holding public officials accountable for the outcomes (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2007). In the tourism sector, this involves establishing performance indicators such as the number of tourists, tourism revenue, and tourist satisfaction levels. Progress can be monitored periodically, and performance data can be employed to inform decision-making and resource allocation (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Moreover, information and communication technology (ICT) can augment government efficiency and effectiveness by streamlining processes, curtailing bureaucracy, and promoting transparency (Dunleavy, 2005). In tourism, e-government initiatives can incorporate online services such as ticket and accommodation booking, e-procurement for service provider contracts, and open data platforms offering information about tourist spots and attractions. Collaboration with the private sector can assist governments in harnessing resources, expertise, and innovation to deliver public services more efficiently and effectively (Hodge & Greve, 2007). In the tourism sector, PPP can take the form of outsourcing services like tourism destination management, joint ventures in tourism infrastructure development, and concessions for tourism service operations.

Decentralizing decision-making and service provision to lower tiers of government can bolster efficiency and effectiveness by bringing governance closer to the citizens, spurring local innovation, and fostering competition among local governments (Oates, 1972). In tourism policy, decentralization can manifest as fiscal decentralization, which grants regions autonomy to manage and utilize tourism revenues; administrative decentralization, which provides regions flexibility in managing tourist destinations; and political decentralization, which involves local communities in decision-making processes regarding tourism development in their area.

2.3. Crafting Tourism Policies

Formulating a tourism policy necessitates an encompassing approach, considering various economic, social, environmental, and cultural factors. The inaugural step in sculpting a tourism policy is establishing the principal objectives of the policy. These key objectives could be promoting sustainable tourism, amplifying local communities' income, or preserving cultural heritage (Bramwell & Lane, 2013). Another pivotal step in the policy-making process is the engagement of stakeholders. The strategy and action plan are set into motion upon formulating the policy, ensuring their needs and apprehensions are adequately addressed (Bramwell &

Lane, 2013). Based on the objectives and situational analysis, strategies and action plans can be constructed to attain the desired outcomes. These could encompass marketing campaigns, infrastructure development, and capacity-building initiatives (Morrison, 2018).

Upon policy formulation, the strategy and action plan are set into motion. Resources such as funding and personnel are allocated to guarantee successful execution (Bramwell & Lane, 2013). Furthermore, policy implementation progress is regularly monitored, and its effectiveness is evaluated concerning the defined objectives. These steps help identify areas for improvement and make the necessary amendments (Morrison, 2018). Tourism policies should undergo periodic reviews and updates to ensure they continue to be relevant and efficacious in addressing the evolving needs and challenges of the tourism industry (Bramwell & Lane, 2013). Collectively, this paper provides detailed guidance on designing efficient tourism policies, underpinning a holistic approach and stakeholder engagement.

2.4. Societal Impact of Tourism Policies

Tourism policies' impact on communities can swing positively and negatively. The perceived impact depends on the particular policy and its implementation context. Positive impacts may encapsulate economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange, while negative impacts could comprise environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social inequality.

Economic growth and job creation are often hailed as primary benefits of tourism policy. Policies supporting sustainable tourism development can instigate increased income and employment opportunities for locals. For instance, policies fostering the development of local businesses and services, like accommodation, eateries, and tour operators, can stimulate economic growth and generate new jobs (Bramwell & Lane, 2013). Cultural exchange is another advantage of tourism policy. Policies promoting cultural preservation and encouraging intercultural understanding can foster positive interactions between tourists and local communities (Besculides et al., 2002). The exchange can lead to a heightened appreciation for local traditions, customs, and values and opportunities for cultural exchange and learning. However, tourism policies can also exert a negative impact on society. Environmental degradation is a significant worry, as policies encouraging mass tourism can result in the misuse of natural resources, pollution, and habitat destruction (Gössling et al., 2012). To mitigate the impacts, policies should underscore sustainable tourism practices and prioritize safeguarding natural and cultural resources.

Cultural commodification is another potential downside of tourism policy. When policies prioritize economic gains over cultural preservation, local traditions and customs may be commercialized and exploited for tourist consumption. This commodification could lead to a loss of cultural authenticity and damage the community's identity. Lastly, tourism policies can contribute to social inequality. When policies disproportionately benefit specific societal segments, such as business owners or foreign investors, they can intensify existing social divisions and breed resentment among residents (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008).

3. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach to scrutinize the implementation of policies and the evolution of tourism destinations. The informants chosen for this research encompass government officials, representatives from local governments overseeing tourism, and community leaders engaged in the tourism sector, frequently participating in policy execution.

The informant pool in this study was composed of 16 individuals, of which 10 were representatives from the government, including local government staff members and employees across several regions. The remaining six were community leaders actively involved in tourism-related governmental activities within their specific regions.

In this study, data collection methods were employed in the form of exhaustive interviews conducted with each informant. The interviews were conducted individually, each lasting approximately 15 to 20 minutes. These interviews were the primary data gathering to address the research questions. The data collected from each informant was subjected to rigorous content analysis. This analysis aimed to identify and categorize the interviews' key themes, patterns, and insights. By systematically examining the content of the interviews, the researchers were able to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

The content analysis results were cross-checked and corroborated with relevant sources to ensure the study's validity and reliability. This process involved comparing the analysis findings with existing literature, expert opinions, and other credible sources of information. By doing so, the researchers could establish the credibility and robustness of their findings. Overall, the combination of exhaustive interviews, content analysis, and corroboration with relevant sources formed a comprehensive approach to data collection and analysis in this study. This methodological approach allowed for a thorough exploration of the research questions and ensured the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

4. Results and Discussion

The investigation identified four primary obstacles and challenges associated with the policies concerning regional destination development. These are 1) the stratified bureaucratic methodology, 2) contrived program initiatives, 3) the government's dual role of acting as a regulator and program executor, and 4) the community's perception of the local government's role and programs in advancing tourist destinations.

4.1. Bureaucratic Hurdles

The bureaucratic elements present significant challenges to destination development, spanning all levels of government, from central to provincial and regional. These challenges arise from a lack of alignment in the direction of goals and development plans across different government strata (Morrison, 2018). Moreover, the lack of a practical and adaptable coordination line necessitates conducting coordination activities after the planning phase, exacerbating the challenges. Local governments find it challenging to align with the developmental course charted by the provincial government due to conflicting developmental directions or the absence of clearly defined boundaries concerning the management and evolution of destinations by central, provincial, and local governments. As a result, destination development objectives often go unfulfilled, as each layer of government operates its program, which sometimes is not mutually supportive (Johnston et al., 2017). The bureaucratic process is further tangled when it is infused with political elements (Morss et al., 2019). Political disparities at each level pose hurdles to coordination, and the political climate within regions directly impacts the bureaucratic process (Arancibia-Carvajal et al., 2022). Officials responsible for destination development often execute programs and activities deviating from their original intent due to a shift in catering to political interests.

A recurrent bureaucratic issue is that regional government institutions adopt a more pragmatic perspective instead of concentrating on extensive outcomes and societal impacts (Abdala et al., 2020; Häyrynen, 2015). An example of this is their emphasis on maximizing the

budget of a planned program. This approach could form a roadblock in achieving the supposed objectives, as the focus is more on budget consumption than the desired outcomes. A notable positive stride in Indonesia's modus operandi of regional development is the implementation of Musrembang (Deliberations for Development Planning). This community meeting serves as a forum for stakeholders to deliberate and agree upon the design of priority programs for regional development. In these activities, representatives from the community and local governments convene to discuss community demands related to implementing government programs deemed necessary by the community (Aminah, 2022). However, in practice, Musrembang activities often devolve into compromises on budget absorption, losing focus on executing programs that bring the most significant benefits to the community.

4.2. Contrived Program Activities

A primary stumbling block in formulating regional destination policies is the creation of contrived activity programs by local tourism authorities. These initiatives, especially in the tourism sphere, might seem encouraging theoretically, yet they falter in generating a favorable societal impact during execution (Dašić et al., 2020; Jie & Yanan, 2021). Multiple factors contribute to this issue. Firstly, a practical term of reference is rarely devised. More often than not, these frameworks are rehashed versions of previous iterations, leading to conflicting aims and inappropriate guidelines for administering regional targets. Besides, local government functionaries are proclive to prioritize budget expenditure over achieving desired results. They are more concerned about unutilized funds than unachievable goals.

Moreover, contrived program development materializes when numerous local government officials sculpt initiatives based on personal preferences, disregarding the community's needs. This commonplace practice shuns data and factual information, relying solely on personal understanding or inclination regarding environmental conditions (Charef et al., 2021; Compton et al., 2019). Furthermore, the artificial results from the program's focus fail to mirror productivity or output quality measures. Performance indicators often underscore quantitative aspects, overlooking qualitative results—a notable instance is human resource training programs in tourism that prioritize the headcount of participants over the actual training quality.

This problem also permeates human resource development. The training modules that are conceived and executed might not resonate with participant expectations and deliver substandard content quality. Another recurring issue linked with HR capacity-building initiatives is the absence of methods or tools to gauge the success of local-level training. This scenario leads to repetitive, monotonous training on similar topics year after year without any discernible positive impact. It is not rare for trainees to participate in a training topic they have already been through the previous year.

Additionally, many destination development initiatives executed by local governments bear the characteristic of short-term programs (Kamara et al., 2017; Mirchova & Durova, 2021). This approach surfaces due to worries related to staff turnover or policy alterations. Government staff within an agency often relocated to other governmental bodies or institutions unrelated to tourism at any time. With such a policy pattern, long-term planning becomes less critical for the personnel involved. In essence, hurdles to regional destination policy development spring from inadequately designed activity programs that place budget absorption ahead of outcome-oriented approaches that cater to community requirements.

4.3. Regulators and Implementers: The Dual Role of Policy Makers

One of the impediments in regional destination development policies is the overlapping role of local governments as both regulators and implementers of activity programs. This overlapping role often breeds conflicts between the rights and responsibilities of local governments concerning these destinations (Mafruhah et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2017). For instance, numerous local governments orchestrate programs or activities that should fall under the jurisdiction of private entities or non-governmental organizations. In some regions, the government devises a system for promoting tourist attractions to assist tourism stakeholders in selling or marketing their products. However, this unintentionally compels industry players to focus on platforms or applications developed by the government rather than market necessities. Consequently, the program ceases to be centered around the user community's requirements and leans towards accomplishing indicators of executing government-owned programs.

Furthermore, certain governmental institutions possess the authority to administer specific tourist attractions. Regions endowed with such potential tend to concentrate on formulating policies favorable to the tourist attractions they manage, neglecting the needs of other attractions. These policies consequently stir feelings of discrimination among other business operators who do not receive equal treatment from local policymakers. Hence, the dualistic stance of the government serving as both a regulator and an active player in the tourism industry can cause complications and even impede tourism development in the area (Jie & Yanan, 2021; Øgaard et al., 2019). Balance collaboration between local governments, the private sector, and non-government entities in the evolution of tourist destinations is needed to surmount the complication.

4.4. Community's Misaligned Perspective

The final hurdle in the development of regional tourist destinations pertains to the community or the tourism industry's misguided understanding of the government's role in the evolution of such destinations. Residents frequently view the government as a benefactor or an entity capable of providing access to capital. Specific individuals aspire to receive financial and non-financial aid from the government to cultivate tourism products. These community groups sometimes fail to comprehend that the government's objective in organizing programs and activities is not to directly assist tourism actors in the form of economic aid.

Some sections of the tourism community believe that governmental activities aim to dispense direct benefits. For instance, in a tourism capacity-building training initiative, participants enroll in the program enticed by local government incentives through transportation allowances and honorariums. Consequently, the participation of some community groups in the training program does not stem from a desire to acquire knowledge and training on managing tourism destinations. This scenario suggests that the primary motivation of participants leans more toward economic gain than self-enhancement (Endalkachew et al., 2020; Kotut et al., 2021; Mirchova & Durova, 2021).

Another perception some community groups hold is that such programs are mere formalities, yielding no significant contribution to their lives. As a result, adverse reactions often surface toward government-proposed programs despite their potential value and utility (Dugle et al., 2015; Gardner & Marszalek, 2014). Initially, community groups might be motivated to participate in government-run programs. However, when the results do not align with expectations, the viewpoint of some community groups turns apathetic towards the comprehensive suite of programs offered by the government (Družić Ljubotina et al., 2022;

Feruglio & Nisbett, 2018). This view leads to a less-than-favorable or even negative public perception of programs conducted by the government.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the nuanced labyrinth of governmental barriers in shaping and driving regional tourism destination development policies. Throughout this journey, we unmasked and discussed the crucial challenges that hinder regional tourism destination development. These impediments constitute a tapestry of bureaucratic hurdles, contrived activity programs, the multifaceted roles of policymakers, and misaligned societal perspectives.

As our findings suggest, bureaucratic obstacles rest in the disconnect between the various layers of government and the infusion of political elements that sometimes supersede the core objectives. The tendency of local administrations to produce contrived activity programs demonstrates a disconnection from community needs, often reflecting personal agendas over genuine societal interests. Policymakers, both regulators and implementers, face a complex paradox that often leads to conflicts and, in some instances, hinders regional tourism development. The community's perception of the government's role, often skewed towards expectations of direct benefits and financial aid, further adds to these challenges.

Reflecting upon these challenges in light of our findings, it becomes evident that comprehensive reform is required at multiple levels to overcome these barriers. There is a crucial need to synchronize goals across all layers of government and devise pragmatic, adaptable coordination strategies. Policymakers must strive to design activity programs that genuinely address the community's needs, transcending personal agendas and budget constraints. The role of the government needs to be unambiguously defined, ensuring a balanced partition of roles and responsibilities among all stakeholders in the tourism sector, including private and non-governmental entities. Last but not least, efforts must be intensified to realign societal perception, enlightening the community about the fundamental roles of the government in tourism destination development.

This investigation aims to comprehend these problems and lay the groundwork for potential remedies. Therefore, as we draw to a close on our quest for understanding, we hope that the revelations gleaned from this study will catalyze significant change and help shape more effective policies for the growth of competitive, progressive, and sustainable regional tourism destinations.

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7. Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author has declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning this article's research, authorship, and/or publication.

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About the Author

Ahmad Hudaiby Galih Kusumah obtained his Doctoral degree from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, in 2017. The author is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Tourism, Indonesia University of Education, Indonesia.
E-Mail: galih@upi.edu