



Research Paper

The Role of the Government in the Development of Marine Tourism in Pulau Banyak District, Aceh Singkil

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Abstract

This study examines the role of the government in the development of marine tourism in Pulau Banyak District, Aceh Singkil Regency, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The analysis is based on the four government roles in tourism development set out in Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, namely regulation, infrastructure provision, coordination, and promotion. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants, namely the head of Pulau Banyak District, village heads, and community members involved in tourism, and were supported by documents and previous studies. The results show that the government has played a role in the development of marine tourism in Pulau Banyak District. As a regulator, the district and village governments follow the Aceh Singkil Regent Regulation No. 78 of 2019 on the Tourism Development Master Plan and the regent's decree designating tourism villages, although there is no specific written regulation at the district or village level. As an infrastructure provider, the village government, through the village-owned enterprise (BUMDes), has built restaurants, cottages, prayer rooms, bathrooms, and water recreation facilities, but accommodation is still insufficient during holiday seasons. In coordination, there is no capital cooperation with third parties; funding comes from village funds and grants. Promotion is still weak, as it is carried out mainly by tourism operators themselves, apart from the annual Pulau Banyak Festival. The study recommends that the government issue specific written regulations on tourism and strengthen infrastructure and promotion programs.

Keywords: Government Role, Marine Tourism, Tourism Development, Pulau Banyak, Aceh Singkil

1. Introduction

Pulau Banyak consists of a cluster of large and small islands, currently numbering about 63 to 68 islands, each with its own name. Originally, the area had about 99 islands, but some of them



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disappeared or sank as a result of natural phenomena [1], [2]. The cluster now falls within two administrative areas, namely Pulau Banyak District and Pulau Banyak Barat District, the latter formed by the division of Pulau Banyak District. Not all of the islands can be used as tourist attractions. Pulau Panjang, the island closest to the residential island, is the most visited because it has easy access and supporting facilities, such as cottages, canteens, and water sports facilities for snorkeling, diving, and surfing. Other frequently visited islands include Palambak Besar, Palambak Kecil, Asok, Sikandang, and Tailana [2].

Reaching Pulau Banyak takes a long time because the area is remote and borders the Indian Ocean. Domestic tourists travel overland from Medan (about 8–10 hours) or Banda Aceh (about 12–14 hours), while foreign tourists usually fly to Medan or Banda Aceh and continue by the same route. A further 3–4 hours by boat is needed to cross to the tourist sites. Limited accessibility and infrastructure are common obstacles to tourism development in small islands [3], [4]. The involvement of the government in providing infrastructure, such as transportation, accommodation, restaurants, health facilities, road repairs, and safe crossing transportation, is therefore essential to support tourism development in Pulau Banyak [5].

According to data from the Aceh Singkil Communication and Information Office, in 2019 Pulau Banyak received 800 to 1,000 visitors per month, including 100 to 300 foreign tourists per month. Despite the long journey, Pulau Banyak is suitable for family holidays and for visitors seeking tranquility, because its attractions are far from noise and crowds. Previous studies have examined community participation and tourism awareness groups in Pulau Banyak [2] and the Islamic tourism model in Aceh Singkil [1], as well as the role of government in tourism development in other regions [6], [7], [8]. However, studies that examine the role of the government in developing marine tourism in Pulau Banyak based on the government roles set out in the Tourism Law remain limited. This study therefore aims to analyze the role of the government in the development of marine tourism in Pulau Banyak District, Aceh Singkil Regency.

2. Literature Review

The Role of the Government

A role is a set of behavioral patterns that are considered normal and accepted in society, so the role of the government refers to the attitudes or actions that the government must take in accordance with its position in society. In making decisions or policies, the government must consider their impact on the community. Many development programs encounter obstacles because the community feels that the programs do not match its interests and needs, as the government uses a top-down approach that does not involve the community as the subject of development, which leads to indifference or even rejection [9]. The delegation of authority from the regency to the village government also requires adequate understanding of the scope and limits of that authority [9].

The Role of the Government in Tourism Development

In general, the role of the government in tourism development is to provide infrastructure, develop various facilities, and promote tourism, including abroad [6], [10]. Local governments act as facilitators, motivators, and dynamizers of tourism development [6], and weak destination management and coordination among stakeholders often hinder tourism development [7], [8]. The guidelines for the government in developing the tourism sector are set out in Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism [11], which covers four main roles: (1) infrastructure, whereby the government is responsible for providing infrastructure that supports tourism, including roads, airports, ports, and other supporting facilities; (2) regulation, whereby the government makes policies that support tourism development, including operational permits, environmental protection, and cultural

aspects; (3) coordination, whereby the government coordinates the private sector, the public, and other parties involved in tourism development; and (4) promotion, whereby the government introduces the advantages of tourist attractions to the wider public.

Marine Tourism

Marine tourism is tourism whose activities are carried out entirely in maritime areas, including the sea, islands, and coasts. It makes use of the natural landscape of the sea and coastal areas and is intended to enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of coastal attractions by utilizing marine and beach resources, both on land and in the water [4], [12]. Its activities can be direct, such as boating, swimming, snorkeling, diving, and fishing, or indirect, such as enjoying beaches and sea views.

Marine Tourism Development

The development of marine tourism in a region cannot be separated from the contribution of the government in providing supporting facilities that sustain tourist attractions, including training the community in tourism management so that tourism continues to develop sustainably. Successful tourism development depends on three key components, namely the government, the private sector, and the community [13], [14]. Marine tourism development can only be realized with planned support and strategies, including supportive policies, programs, activities, and budget allocations from the government [12], as well as collaboration between the government and the community [15] and the involvement of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) [16], [17].

3. Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to describe, interpret, and explain the information provided by individuals or groups regarding the phenomenon studied [18]. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with predetermined informants and supported by documents, regulations, books, and relevant previous studies. The informants were selected purposively and consisted of the head of Pulau Banyak District, the head of Pulau Baguk Village, and community members directly or indirectly involved in tourism in Pulau Banyak District. The data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing [19], and the themes were organized according to the four government roles in tourism development set out in Law No. 10 of 2009 [11], [20]. To protect their privacy, informants are referred to by their positions.

4. Result and Discussion

The development of marine tourism in Pulau Banyak District depends heavily on the involvement of the government and the community. In line with Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism [11], the role of the government can be grouped into four categories, as described below.

Regulation (Policy-Making)

One of the guidelines for regulating tourism development is the Aceh Singkil Regent Regulation No. 188.45/274/2021, which designates tourism villages in Aceh Singkil Regency, one of which is Pulau Baguk Village in Pulau Banyak District. In planning the development of marine tourism, Pulau Banyak District follows the Aceh Singkil Regent Regulation No. 78 of 2019 on the Tourism Development Master Plan of Aceh Singkil Regency, which sets out the regent's policy on tourism development in the regency. However, there is no specific written regulation on tourism at the district or village level; the district and villages rely only on existing regulations. In practice, village governments understand the character and potential of their villages better and can therefore adjust policies to the characteristics of each village. In managing tourism development, village governments are assisted by village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) and supervised by the district and the relevant regional agencies.

The interviews with the district and village governments show that current tourism policies focus on improving facilities and infrastructure, developing human resources, and providing opportunities for the community and young people to express their ideas and opinions.

Infrastructure Development

Tourism development requires supporting facilities, such as places of worship, health facilities, transportation, and other public facilities. The priority given by the government of Pulau Banyak to tourism can be seen from the construction of supporting facilities at tourist sites, such as restaurants (canteens), cottages, prayer rooms, bathrooms, and water recreation facilities. The head of Pulau Baguk Village stated: "The village government, through BUMDes, continues to try to provide good facilities for visitors on holiday so that they will come back. At the moment, the village government and BUMDes are trying to increase the number of cottages at the tourist sites managed by BUMDes."

The interviews also revealed why the village government currently focuses on adding accommodation. During holiday seasons, the number of visitors surges, and many tourists cannot find a place to stay. As the village head explained: "During holiday seasons, we are usually overwhelmed in providing proper accommodation for tourists, so many tourists do not have a place to stay." Pulau Banyak therefore still needs to increase its accommodation capacity to anticipate a further increase in visitors in the coming years.

Coordination (Cooperation)

At present, neither the village nor the district government has any cooperation with third parties on capital for marine tourism development in Pulau Banyak District. The funding received is in the form of assistance or grants from ministries, the provincial government, and other institutions. The village head stated: "For capital, we do not cooperate with other parties; the capital comes directly from village funds, and if there is assistance (grants), it comes from the ministry, the province, and especially from the village itself." The head of the district added: "There is currently no cooperation on capital, whether with the government, the private sector, or the community; the funds received are grants or donations from certain parties during particular events or activities." Thus, tourism development in Pulau Banyak District does not involve third parties in capital, although almost all promotional activities involve third parties to expand the market, including foreign tourists.

Promotion

Promotion is an effort to introduce or offer products or services that meet consumer needs. In tourism promotion, the government introduces the advantages of tourist attractions to the public through formal and informal events, and the local community also has a role and responsibility in promotion. In Pulau Banyak District, promotion is still carried out independently by business operators or the managers of tourist attractions. The head of the district stated: "Promotion is still carried out independently by the managers of tourist attractions, but the government occasionally holds events to promote tourism in Pulau Banyak District, such as the Pulau Banyak Festival, which is held every year." Tourism promotion in Pulau Banyak District is therefore still carried out individually, and there is no special program that runs intensively, which is one of the factors that the government needs to address.

Discussion

The findings show that the government of Pulau Banyak plays a role in all four areas, but its role is uneven. The government's role as a regulator is limited to implementing regency-level regulations, without specific written regulations at the district or village level. This is consistent with Rijal and Salehuddin [8], who found that the absence of enforced regional regulations and

weak coordination hinder tourism development in Biak Numfor, and with Kristiana and Nathalia [7], who emphasized the need for destination governance and coordination among stakeholders. The role of the village government through BUMDes in providing facilities reflects the facilitator role of local government [6], [15], but the shortage of accommodation during peak seasons shows that infrastructure remains a major constraint, as is common in small-island destinations [3], [5].

The absence of capital cooperation with third parties indicates that tourism development in Pulau Banyak still depends on village funds and grants. Successful tourism development requires synergy among the government, the private sector, and the community [13], [14], and community-based tourism can contribute to sustainable development when residents are actively involved [14]. The weak role of the government in promotion is consistent with Simamora and Sinaga [6] and Rijal and Salehuddin [8], who found that promotion by local governments is often limited. Strengthening the role of tourism awareness groups [2], [16], [17] and using digital media could help expand the reach of promotion, while the government should provide a planned promotion program and budget [10], [12].

This study has several limitations. It relies on a small number of informants from the district and village governments and the community, and it does not include the regency tourism office, private-sector actors, or tourists. Future research should involve a wider range of stakeholders and examine the effects of government programs on tourist visits and community income.

5. Conclusion

The government of Pulau Banyak District has played a role in the development of marine tourism based on the four roles set out in Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, but its role still needs to be strengthened. As a regulator, the district and village governments follow regency-level regulations, but there is no specific written regulation at the district or village level. As an infrastructure provider, the village government, through BUMDes, has built various facilities, but accommodation remains insufficient during holiday seasons. In coordination, there is no capital cooperation with third parties. Promotion is still weak because it is carried out mainly by tourism operators, apart from the annual Pulau Banyak Festival. Infrastructure and promotion are the main constraints on marine tourism development in Pulau Banyak, which is still not widely known to the public.

The government of Pulau Banyak is expected to issue a specific written regulation on tourism that can serve as a clear legal basis for tourism activities. The government should also improve infrastructure, especially accommodation and crossing transportation, and develop a planned and continuous promotion program, so that Pulau Banyak can attract more domestic and foreign tourists.

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Authors' contributions and responsibilities

Meiza Agustin: conceptualization, data collection, analysis, writing – original draft. Akhyar: supervision, methodology, writing – review & editing. Saifuddin: supervision, validation, writing – review & editing.

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Availability of data and materials

All data are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interest.

Ethical approval

This study involved interviews with adult informants. All informants participated voluntarily after being informed of the purpose of the study, and they are referred to by their positions in this article.

Additional information

No additional information from the authors.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, Claude (Anthropic) was used to improve the language and readability of the English text and to format the manuscript and references according to the journal template. The tool was not used to generate research data, perform the analysis, or draw conclusions. The authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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