Implementation of Tourism Development Policy in North Minahasa Regency: A Case Study of Tunan Waterfall

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the implementation of tourism development policies in North Minahasa Regency, focusing on the Tunan Waterfall tourist site. The research is motivated by the suboptimal management of the region's natural tourism potential, particularly at Tunan Waterfall, despite the issuance of Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2023 concerning the Master Plan for Tourism Development (RIPPARKAB) for 2023–2025. This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, using observation, interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The findings indicate that the implementation of tourism development policies still faces various challenges in terms of safety, comfort, attractiveness, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and contribution to local revenue (PAD). Determinant factors influencing implementation include policy communication, resource availability, implementers' disposition, and bureaucratic structure (Edward III), as well as policy objectives, implementing agency characteristics, and socio-political conditions (Van Meter & Van Horn). Furthermore, a gap is identified between policy content and implementation context, as analysed using Grindle's theory. The study recommends cross-sector synergy, institutional capacity building, and community participation to develop tourist destinations that are safe, comfortable, attractive, accessible, and sustainable.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a critical driver of socio-economic development, generating foreign exchange, creating employment, and promoting cultural preservation. In Indonesia, the tourism sector contributed significantly to the national GDP, with an estimated 9.1% share in 2023 according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. The government has prioritized tourism development as a means to diversify regional economies, reduce poverty, and enhance local livelihoods. At the national level, Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism and subsequent regulations outline the roles and responsibilities of central and local governments in fostering sustainable tourism. Regional governments are mandated to formulate medium-term tourism development plans aligned with national strategies, ensuring that destinations meet criteria for safety, comfort, attractiveness, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and economic benefit.

North Minahasa Regency, located in North Sulawesi Province, possesses abundant natural and cultural resources. Bordering the provincial capital of Manado and proximate to Sam Ratulangi International Airport, the region is strategically positioned as a gateway to the larger Minahasa area. Notable attractions include coastal beaches, islands, cultural heritage sites, and inland waterfalls. Among these, Tunan Waterfall in Talawaan Village is recognized for its scenic beauty, 86-meter cascade, and tranquil tropical forest setting. The local government formally adopted RIPPARKAB (Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2023) as the strategic blueprint for tourism development from 2023 to 2025. RIPPARKAB articulates a vision to establish North Minahasa as a competitive, sustainable, and locally grounded tourism destination anchored on five missions: developing safe, comfortable, attractive, and accessible destinations; enhancing human resource capacity; improving infrastructure and connectivity; implementing community- and environment-based tourism; and increasing tourism's contribution to local revenue (PAD) and community welfare.

Despite formal policy adoption, Tunan Waterfall's potential remains underleveraged. Preliminary observations indicate inadequate access roads, limited public facilities, and minimal promotional activities. Moreover, local stakeholders report a disconnect between RIPPARKAB's objectives and on-the-ground realities, such as unavailability of technical guidelines, unclear roles among implementing agencies, and insufficient community engagement. Similar studies in other Indonesian regions—such as Loksado (Amandita, 2022), Goa Akbar (Lestari, 2024), and Pelabuhan Lama Sibolga (Sihombing, 2024)—reveal that obstacles to effective policy implementation often include infrastructure deficits, limited interagency coordination, and resource constraints. This context underscores the necessity for an in-depth examination of Tunan Waterfall to uncover implementation

gaps, identify facilitating and inhibiting factors, and formulate actionable recommendations to optimize the policy's impact.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological design to capture the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in implementing tourism development policy at Tunan Waterfall (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sugiyono, 2020). The phenomenological approach is appropriate for exploring how Dinas Pariwisata staff, local government officials, community leaders, and tourists perceive and engage with policy initiatives. This design facilitates a deep, contextually grounded understanding of complex social phenomena without imposing numerical metrics.

Research Site and Period

Fieldwork was conducted at the Tourism Office of North Minahasa Regency and Tunan Waterfall, Talawaan Village, Dimembe District, from January to March 2025. Talawaan occupies a predominantly rural setting, characterized by agricultural land uses and dispersed settlements. Accessibility is challenged by narrow, unpaved roads linking to provincial highways. The research period spans both dry and transitional rainy seasons, enabling observation of seasonal variations in access and visitor flows.

Data Sources

Primary Data:
- In-depth Interviews: Eight purposively selected informants comprising:
1. Head of Tourism Office (Eselon II)
2. Secretary of Tourism Office (Eselon III)
3. Head of Destination Development Division (Eselon III)
4. Head of Economic Creative Division (Eselon III)
5. Local Government Extension Officer (Eselon IV)
6. Village Head of Talawaan (Hukum Tua)
7. Two local community representatives (UMKM actors leveraging tourism)
8. Three tourists (domestic and international) who visited Tunan Waterfall during fieldwork.

Interview questions addressed: policy knowledge and socialization; operational workflows; infrastructural constraints; resource allocations; community participation; tourism revenue mechanisms; environmental management; and perceptions of safety, comfort, and attractiveness.

- Non-Participant Observation: Forty hours of structured observation at the Tunan Waterfall site and surrounding facilities, documenting visitor behaviors, infrastructure conditions (access roads, parking, sanitation, signage), service processes (ticketing, local guiding), and environmental aspects (waste management, biodiversity presence). Observational protocols recorded variables such as time to reach the site, availability of safety guards, and frequency of garbage removal.

Secondary Data:
- Regulatory Documents: Regional Regulation No. 4 of 2023 (RIPPARKAB), supporting technical guidelines (drafts), and Tourism Office Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Institutional Reports: Tourism Office annual reports (2022–2024) detailing visitor statistics, staff profiles, budget allocations, and implementation progress.
- Promotional Materials: Brochures, websites, and social media posts produced by Dinas Pariwisata and related stakeholders.
- Relevant Academic and Policy Literature: Peer-reviewed articles, policy briefs, and UNWTO guidelines on sustainable tourism and destination management.

Data Collection Techniques

1. In-Depth Interviews: Semi-structured guides were developed and piloted with a local extension officer to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes, conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, with occasional use of the local Minahasa language for community informants. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English for analysis.

2. Non-Participant Observation: Observations were conducted during peak (weekends, holidays) and off-peak periods, covering infrastructure, visitor management, and environmental conditions. Detailed field notes were coded thematically.

3. Documentation Review: Collected and reviewed organizational charts, budget spreadsheets, SOP documents, and promotional media. Performance metrics on visitor numbers, staff training, and revenue generation were extracted.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Transcripts and field notes were coded inductively to generate initial codes (e.g., "safety hazards," "road condition," "parking management," "community income," "policy awareness," "SOP gaps," "environmental monitoring"). These codes were aggregated into categories aligned with theoretical frameworks: (a) Edward's implementation (communication, resources, disposition, structure), (b) Van Meter and Van Horn's factors (policy clarity, resources, organizing agencies, communication, socio-political context), and (c) Grindle's "content vs. context"

dichotomy. A thematic matrix contrasted facilitating and inhibiting factors across six core destination dimensions: safety, comfort, attractiveness, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and economic impact.

Triangulation across data sources (interviews, observations, documents) enhanced credibility. Member checking was conducted with two key informants (the Head and Secretary of the Tourism Office) to validate preliminary interpretations and rectify misunderstandings.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring rigor followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria:
- Credibility: Prolonged engagement (three months in the field), triangulation, and member checking.
- Transferability: Providing thick descriptions of site context, policy environment, and stakeholder roles.
- Dependability: Maintaining an audit trail (coding memos, decision logs) and peer debriefing with academic advisors.
- Confirmability: Reflexive journaling to document researcher biases and decision points.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Institutional Profile of Tourism Office

The Tourism Office of North Minahasa Regency is established under Regional Regulation (Perda) No. 39 of 2022, tasked with formulating and implementing tourism policy, providing licensing and general services, and fostering community-based tourism initiatives. The organizational structure comprises:

1. Head of Tourism Office (Eselon II), responsible for strategic oversight and coordination with the Regional Secretary.

2. Secretary (Eselon III), overseeing administrative support via:
- General Affairs & Human Resources Subdivision: manages personnel, finances, and logistics.
- Planning & Finance Subdivision: handles budgeting, performance monitoring, and development planning.

3. Destination Development Division (Eselon III), divided into:
- Destination Management Section: plans and monitors site improvements for priority destinations.
- Promotion & Marketing Section: designs promotional campaigns, digital media content, and partnership outreach.

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4. Economic Creative Division (Eselon III), comprising:
- Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Development Section: fosters community enterprises linked to tourism.
- Cultural Heritage Section: documents and preserves local cultural assets, supporting cultural tourism.

As of December 2024, the Office employed 42 staff: 34 permanent civil servants (PNS) and 8 contract employees (P3K). Educational attainment included 38% Bachelor's degrees (S1), 29% Master's degrees (S2), and 33% Diploma holders (D3). Rank distribution was 57% middle ranks (III/a–III/c) and 43% senior ranks (IV/a–IV/b). By late 2024, 45% of frontline staff had completed certified training in tourism management, with plans to achieve 100% by 2025 (Tourism Office Training Records, 2024).

Overview of Tunan Waterfall

Tunan Waterfall is situated in a secluded valley 10 km northeast of Airmadidi, the regency seat. Access involves:
- A 7-km paved provincial road from Airmadidi to Talawaan Village, featuring narrow two-lane stretches and occasional potholes.
- A 3-km unpaved village road leading into the forested watershed, accessible only by motorcycles or off-road vehicles.
- A 1-km footpath with uneven terrain and no safety rails, descending 150 meters to the main cascade.

On-site facilities in early 2025 included:
- Unpaved parking for 20 motorcycles and 5 cars.
- Basic public toilets (MCK), with intermittent water supply and no lighting.
- A small wooden ticket booth lacking formal ticketing systems (entrance fees were collected ad hoc).
- One shaded gazebo near the base of the falls, used as a resting area.
- Handwritten signage at the trailhead indicates a "safety path," but no formal guardrails or warning markers.

Local micro-enterprises (warung) sold snacks and local crafts, but without standardized prices or product quality control.

Descriptive Findings
Safety

Observations and interviews reveal multiple safety hazards:
- Trail Condition: The unpaved footpath was slippery due to moss and loose gravel, increasing the risk of slips and falls. The footpath width averaged only 1 meter, with steep drop-offs.

- Lack of Safety Equipment: No guardrails, handrails, or designated rescue points were installed along the descent. Local guides carried basic first-aid kits but lacked formal training in emergency response.
- Security Personnel: No dedicated safety officers or rangers were present. Tourists expressed anxiety when descending, especially older adults and families with children.
- Signage: Warning signs were faded and handwritten, lacking clear instructions on prohibited activities (e.g., not swimming in certain pools), resulting in unauthorized swimming near hydraulic currents.

These conditions contravene RIPPARKAB's safety mandate and require urgent remedial measures.

Comfort

Comfort-related issues include:
- Sanitation: Public toilets (MCK) were insufficient (one unit per gender), poorly maintained, and often lacked soap and clean water. Door locks were broken, compromising privacy.
- Rest Areas: Only one gazebo existed, seating up to ten people. No additional benches or picnic tables were available along the trail or near the falls.
- Waste Management: Three trash bins were placed near the ticket booth, but none were located along the trail or near the falls. Overflowing bins led to litter along the path.
- Shaded Waiting Areas: Tourists waiting for transportation endured direct sun exposure for up to 30 minutes, as no covered waiting shelters were provided at remote trail entrances.

Attractiveness

Tunan Waterfall's natural allure remains strong:
- Scenic Beauty: The 86-meter cascade and accompanying forest canopy were consistently praised by tourists for their pristine appearance and biodiversity (orchids, ferns, and endemic bird species).
- Photography Spots: A simple wooden bridge installed in late 2024 created a photo vantage point, increasing social media visibility.
- Potential for Cultural Integration: Local informants noted that traditional Minahasa music performances and folk storytelling could be introduced to enhance visitor experience, but no structured cultural programs existed as of early 2025.

Accessibility

Accessibility challenges include:

- Road Infrastructure: The final 3-km village road suffered seasonal erosion; during heavy rains, deep ruts impeded motorcycle travel, occasionally necessitating visitors to walk 2 km to reach the trailhead.
- Public Transport: No fixed-route public buses or shared-minivan services traveled to Talawaan. Private motorcycle taxis charged variable rates (IDR 100,000–150,000) for one-way transport, limiting affordability for lower-income visitors.
- Trail Difficulty: Given the steep, rocky descent, families with children or elderly visitors often require local guides for safe passage, incurring additional costs (IDR 50,000 per group).
- Signposting: Official directional markers were absent outside Talawaan. Tourists relied on GPS apps, which sometimes misrouted due to outdated village road data.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental management practices are nascent:
- Waste Segregation: No formal recycling systems; all waste was collected in single-stream bins and trucked to central dumpsites.
- Water Quality Monitoring: No regular testing protocols for water purity; local health records reported two incidents of mild gastrointestinal complaints in January 2025.
- Ecological Conservation: Forest clearing for informal parking expansions occurred without reforestation efforts. No designated conservation zones were demarcated.
- Community-Led Cleanup: Monthly volunteer cleanups organized by local youth groups removed litter, but lacked funding for disposal and limited volunteer participation.

Economic Impact

Tourism's contribution to local economies is modest:
- Visitor Numbers: 25,863 visitors in 2022, 60,989 in 2023, and 71,794 in 2024, indicating sharp year-on-year growth (Tourism Office Report, 2025). Yet, visitor distribution across seasons remained highly skewed toward dry months (June–September).
- Revenue Generation: Entrance fees were set at IDR 10,000 per person in 2024; estimated total revenue collected amounted to IDR 717,940,000 in 2024—under 1.5% of the regency's tourism revenue target. No automated ticketing system existed; revenue was recorded manually.
- Community Income: At least 20 micro-entrepreneurs operated small warungs, generating average monthly incomes of IDR 1.5 million. However, income lacked official channels for tax reporting or formal financial inclusion.

- PAD Integration: Tourism retribution revenue remained off-book in the regional financial management system. Informal cash transactions contributed to underreporting; only 40% of the total collected fees were remitted to the regional treasury.

Synthesis of Findings

Applying Edward's implementation framework revealed:
- Communication: Policy directives were disseminated via circulars and internal memos, but frontline staff reported receiving minimal practical guidance on operationalizing RIPPARKAB. Technical guidelines were delayed, confusing.
- Resources: Limited budgets were allocated primarily for promotional events. Capital expenditure for infrastructure improvements at Tunan amounted to only IDR 250 million in 2024, insufficient for road upgrades or facility construction.
- Disposition: While leadership exhibited commitment to tourism growth, some mid-level officers demonstrated low motivation due to a lack of incentives and recognition; local staff turnover was high.
- Bureaucratic Structure: Overlapping responsibilities between Tourism, Public Works, and Environmental agencies led to implementation delays and coordination conflicts.

Van Meter and Van Horn's model illuminated:
- Policy Standards: RIPPARKAB outlined clear destination criteria, but lacked performance benchmarks, annual action plans, and defined implementation schedules.
- Resources: Human resource capacity was limited; only 40% of staff received specialized training by late 2024.
- Interorganizational Communication: Formal coordination meetings occurred irregularly; joint task forces for Tunan development met only twice in 2024.
- Implementing Agency Characteristics: The Tourism Office had no dedicated unit for Tunan; staff managed multiple destinations concurrently.
- Implementer Disposition: Community informants expressed mild enthusiasm but felt excluded from decision-making.
- External Conditions: Economic pressures compelled local youth to migrate for employment, reducing available labor for tourism-related roles.
- Grindle's framework revealed a disconnect between policy content and context:
- Policy Content: RIPPARKAB's emphasis on destination safety and comfort remained aspirational, with no technical protocols or budget allocations tailored to Tunan.
- Implementation Context: Local power dynamics influenced resource distribution; more accessible coastal destinations received priority over inland waterfalls.

Overall, while policy frameworks are robust on paper, procedural gaps, resource constraints, and contextual misalignments impede RIPPARKAB's full realization at Tunan Waterfall.

CONCLUSION

This Study aims to examine the performance of the Disaster Management Agency, Regional Disaster Management Agency (BPBD) of North Sulawesi Province in Handling disaster floods with a focus on the availability and use means infrastructure. Based on the data analysis carried out, it was found that the BPBD of North Sulawesi Province is facing various challenges that impact the effectiveness of handling floods. 1. Limited Facilities and Infrastructure,
The facilities and infrastructure owned by BPBD are still Far from sufficient to handle the scale disaster floods that occurred in this area. Equipment like boat rubber, water pumps, and vehicle evacuation is not only the amount limited but also in conditions that are partial big need rejuvenation. Inadequacy means this hinders speed and effectiveness response responding to emergencies. 2. Suboptimal Logistics Distribution, System distribution BPBD logistics still shows several weaknesses. Delays in delivery to the location disaster often due to a lack of coordination between agencies and absence inefficient distribution procedure. This is to worsen the impact disaster on the affected society. 3. Capacity-Limited Human Resources, Amount trained staff at BPBD is not adequate to handle a disaster flood with a wide coverage area. In addition, the technical competence of several personnel still needs improvement, especially in using tool weight and relevant modern technology for managing disasters. 4. Low Public Awareness, The level of public awareness of the importance of management environment and preparedness face of disaster is still low. Habit bad like throwing away rubbish haphazardly into water channels becomes one of reason main floods, which worsens the situation during heavy rainfall Rain tall. 5. Inter-Stakeholder Coordination Interest, BPBD's performance is also influenced by the weak coordination between government regions, non-governmental organizations, and sectors private sector. Collaboration across sectors. Not yet running optimally, so that Lots of potential support that has not been utilized to a way maximum. Thus, BPBD has shown significant effort in several aspects, including the implementation of simulation-responsive emergency, preparation plan contingency plans, and development of infrastructure countermeasures against floods. However, to reach the expected effectiveness, required comprehensive improvement is required in aspect technical, operational, and managerial.

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