

Evaluation of Marine Tourism Management Policy in Takabonerate National Park, Selayar Regency

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Abstract

Takabonerate National Park is one of the marine conservation areas that has great potential in the development of marine tourism in South Sulawesi. However, the increase in tourism activities in this region presents challenges in maintaining environmental sustainability and local community involvement. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of marine tourism management policies in Takabonerate National Park, especially in terms of policy implementation, community participation, and its impact on the environment and socio-economy. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that although management policies have been prepared normatively through zoning and visit regulations, in practice there are still obstacles such as limited human resources, weak supervision, lack of community involvement in decision-making, and uneven distribution of economic benefits. In addition, uncontrolled tourism activities have the potential to damage the marine ecosystem which is the main attraction of this region. Based on these findings, it is suggested the need to strengthen institutional capacity, increase coordination between agencies, active community involvement, and develop more inclusive and sustainable management policies. With this approach, it is hoped that marine tourism management in Takabonerate National Park can provide economic benefits while maintaining optimal environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Marine tourism, Management policy, Marine conservation, Community participation, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Marine tourism is one of the strategic sectors in Indonesia's tourism development because it contributes greatly to regional income, job creation, and cultural and environmental preservation. In archipelagic areas such as Selayar Islands Regency, the potential of marine tourism is very prominent and is the mainstay of local economic development. One of the area's top destinations is Takabonerate National Park, a marine conservation area that is famous for being the third largest atoll in the world after Kwajalein atoll in the Marshall Islands and Suvadiva in the Maldives. The region has an incredible marine biodiversity, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows, and various endemic fish species, which makes it very attractive to both domestic and foreign tourists.

The uniqueness and potential possessed by Takabonerate National Park makes it a center for the development of conservation-based marine tourism. However, this potential is also accompanied by various complex challenges. The increase in tourist visits that is not balanced with good management can cause pressure on marine ecosystems, such as damage to coral reefs due to uncontrolled snorkelling and diving activities, as well as environmental pollution from tourism waste. In addition, the involvement of local communities in tourism activities is still relatively low, both in terms of planning, management, and economic benefits obtained. In the context of policy, although there are various



regulations governing the management of this area, the effectiveness of its implementation still needs to be studied comprehensively, especially in the aspects of inter-agency coordination, supervision, and policy sustainability.

Departing from these conditions, this study seeks to answer the main question: How effective is the marine tourism management policy implemented in Takabonerate National Park? And, to what extent is the policy able to maintain a balance between environmental conservation and improving the welfare of local communities?

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the management policy of marine tourism in Takabonerate National Park, by assessing the implementation of the policy and its impact on the marine environment and the socio-economic conditions of the local community. This research is expected to make a scientific contribution to the development of sustainable tourism policy studies, as well as provide practical input for local governments, conservation area managers, and other stakeholders in developing and implementing policies that are more adaptive, sustainable, and inclusive.

Overall, this research has a high urgency and relevance, given the importance of maintaining a balance between the utilization and conservation of natural resources in the marine tourism sector. The results of this research are expected to be the basis for formulating a marine tourism management strategy that not only has a positive impact on improving the regional economy, but also strengthens the protection of the marine environment and encourages the empowerment of local communities as the main actors in tourism development.

2. Literature Review

Marine tourism management is not only related to economic and tourism aspects, but also includes environmental, social, and public policy dimensions. The underlying theory of this research is the theory of sustainable resource management, which emphasizes the importance of a balance between environmental utilization and preservation for the benefit of current and future generations (Miller & Spoolman, 2012). In the context of marine protected area management, the ecotourism and co-management approach between the government, the community, and the private sector is an important basis for realizing participatory and sustainable management (Fennell, 2014). Public policy in tourism also plays an important role, as it can determine the direction, scale, and form of development of tourist destinations, including regulations that regulate environmental governance, supervision of tourist activities, and the involvement of local communities in the tourism economic chain.

A number of previous studies support the importance of evaluating marine tourism management policies, especially in marine conservation areas that are vulnerable to damage due to uncontrolled tourism activities. Research by Qodriyatun (2019) in the Karimunjawa marine tourism area shows that even though regulations have been available, their implementation is not effective due to weak supervision and lack of understanding of tourism actors of zoning rules. This causes significant ecological stress on coral reef ecosystems. Meanwhile, Sinaga et al. (2021) emphasized that the success of marine tourism management is highly dependent on the participation of local communities. Participation is not only in the form of labor, but also in the planning and decision-making process, so that there is a sense of ownership and responsibility for the preservation of natural resources.

On the other hand, Alwidri (2023) In his research in the East Lombok marine conservation area, he found that conflicts of interest between stakeholders, both between governments, investors, and local communities, are often the main obstacles to the implementation of fair and effective policies.

This disharmony in the relationship results in inconsistency in the implementation of policies in the field. Next Nasrun et al. (2025) The study in Wakatobi District highlighted the weak synergy between central and local government policies, resulting in duplication of policies, overlapping authority, and slow response to local dynamics. He suggested the need for the preparation of a structured coordination mechanism and an understanding of vision between levels of government.

Research by Hargen et al. (2024) revealed that the success of marine tourism management is highly determined by the existence of clear zoning rules, a strict licensing system, and integrated supervision. These three aspects are considered important foundations in ensuring that tourism activities do not exceed the carrying capacity of the environment and remain within the established conservation corridors. In practice, the zoning system functions as a spatial control tool, while licensing and supervision ensure the accountability of tourism actors. However, these technical policies are not enough if they are not supported by adequate local community capacity. This is confirmed by Khairusy et al. (2023) which highlights the importance of training and capacity building of human resources, especially for coastal communities in Banten. According to him, tourism management policies will be more effective if the community is not only involved symbolically, but also prepared with skills, understanding of the environment, and managerial abilities.

In a broader context, Akapip (2023) highlighted that a top-down policy approach, as widely applied in marine conservation areas in Ambon City, tends to be unsuccessful if it is not accompanied by a community-based management approach. When local communities do not have the space to participate in decision-making, policies become uncontextual and often generate resistance. This is in line with the findings Rare (2022) in his study in Bunaken National Park, which concluded that the formulation of tourism management policies should be based on accurate field data as well as comprehensive and participatory environmental impact analysis. Without this basis, policies will tend to be normative and do not respond to the needs and socio-ecological realities at the site level.

Further Prakasa and Mu'tashin (2021) In his research on Samalona Island, South Sulawesi, it was emphasized that uncontrolled tourism activities, such as unaccompanied mass snorkelling, litter disposal, and ship landing in coral reef areas, have caused serious damage to marine ecosystems, particularly to coral reefs and endemic biota habitats. This damage occurred due to weak implementation of conservation policies, including lack of enforcement of zoning rules and lack of environmental education for tourists and local operators. This reflects the gap between regulations that have been formally designed and the ability and seriousness to enforce them in the field.

Meanwhile, Dwianto (2019) in his study, which is also located in Takabonerate National Park, it was found that although the area has been equipped with various conservation management and zoning regulations, in practice, coordination between management agencies, such as the National Park Office, regional tourism offices, and village officials, is still not running optimally. This lack of synergy results in overlapping policies, slow responses to tourism problems, and lack of clarity on the role of each party in regional management. On the other hand, the level of participation of local communities in the decision-making process is also low, which ultimately hinders efforts to build a sustainable and equitable marine tourism model. He emphasized that without the involvement of the community as the main stakeholders, conservation programs and management of tourist areas tend to be only administrative and do not touch the real socio-ecological aspects in the field.

Based on these theories and previous research, it can be concluded that marine tourism management requires policies that are not only strong in terms of regulation, but also responsive to social and environmental dynamics. Therefore, the evaluation of tourism management policies in the Takabonerate National Park area is important to identify weaknesses, strengths, and opportunities for improvement in realizing effective, participatory, and sustainable management.

3. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the aim of understanding and evaluating in depth the management policy of marine tourism in Takabonerate National Park, Selayar Islands Regency. The research location is focused on strategic areas within the Takabonerate National Park area which is the center of marine tourism activities and interactions between managers, communities, and tourists. This research was carried out from January to April 2025, involving a number of key informants consisting of national park managers, local government officials, tourism actors, community leaders, and tourists. Data collection techniques are carried out through direct observation of management activities and conditions of tourist areas, in-depth interviews with relevant informants to explore their understanding of policies and their implementation, as well as documentation of regulatory documents, activity reports, and data related to area management.

In analysing the data, the researcher used an interactive analysis model proposed by Miles (1994), which includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. Data reduction is carried out by filtering important information from the results of interviews and observations to focus on aspects relevant to the research objectives. The data presentation was carried out in the form of descriptive narratives and tables to facilitate the understanding of field findings. The final stage is the drawing of conclusions that are carried out continuously during the research process while still considering the validity and consistency of the data. Through this method, it is hoped that the research can provide a complete picture of the effectiveness of marine tourism management policies in Takabonerate National Park.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

Based on the results of observations, in-depth interviews with various key informants, as well as analysis of documentation in the field, it is known that marine tourism management policies in Takabonerate National Park have been designed through various formal regulatory tools, both national and local. This regulation includes the preparation of a five-year National Park Management Plan (RPTN) which contains the direction of strategic policies for area management, the division of the regional zoning system (core zones, protection zones, rehabilitation zones, and utilization zones), as well as operational regulations that regulate tourist visit procedures, limits on the carrying capacity of the area, and ecotourism code of ethics. The management of the area is carried out by the Takabonerate National Park Authority, a technical implementation unit under the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF), which has established partnerships with various parties such as local governments, conservation NGOs, and conservation partner community groups. The technical policies that have been implemented include limiting the number of visits, prohibiting activities that are high risk to marine ecosystems such as sand mining or anchoring on coral reefs, as well as the implementation of environmental education programs and conservation-based tourism counselling.

However, policy implementation at the site level still faces various structural and technical obstacles that have an impact on the low effectiveness of the implementation of the policy. First, the limited number of human resources (HR) for field supervisors and the lack of operational facilities, such as patrol boats and digital monitoring devices, make supervision of tourism activities inconsistent. Surveillance officers often have difficulty reaching remote islands or areas prone to zoning violations, so that enforcement of the rules is only incidental and reactive, not preventive and systematic. Second,

the participation of local communities is still passive and not strategic. Although some residents are involved in tourism economic activities such as providing homestays, becoming local guides, or sea transportation operators, they are not fully involved in the process of formulating policies, spatial planning, and evaluating area management programs. This indicates that the participatory approach to management is still not fully internalized in the decision-making system at the local level.

Third, coordination between management agencies is still weak and has not been built in a strong collaborative framework. For example, between the National Park Office, the Selayar Islands Regency Tourism Office, the marine agency, and village and sub-district governments often experience overlapping authority, disagreements of vision, and lack of formal communication. The absence of an integrated communication forum that routinely brings together all stakeholders leads to slow decision-making and in synchronization of policy implementation in the field. As a result, the great potential of marine tourism risks becoming a source of conflict of interest, environmental degradation, and social disparities if it is not immediately addressed with a more inclusive and integrated institutional approach.

In terms of economic impact, data shows that the number of tourists, both domestic and foreign, has increased from year to year, especially in certain seasons such as the year-end holidays. However, the increase has not fully impacted the welfare of local communities equally. Economic benefits tend to be concentrated in business actors who come from outside the region, such as travel agents or investors providing marine tourism services, while local residents only get the role of informal workers. This gap creates social jealousy and reinforces the perception that tourism does not provide direct benefits to society. In addition, from the results of observations and information from residents, uncontrolled tourism activities, such as diving without official guides, dumping garbage into the sea, and landing ships outside specified points, have the potential to cause damage to ecosystems, especially in coral reef areas and endemic marine biota habitats.

In general, although the policy framework for marine tourism management in Takabonerate National Park is quite comprehensive in writing, its implementation still faces obstacles in the field, both in terms of institutions, human resources, community participation, and the distribution of economic benefits. This indicates a gap between policy formulation and real implementation, which requires a thorough evaluation and the development of new strategies that are more participatory, integrative, and responsive to local dynamics.

In terms of economic impact, data and field findings show that the number of tourist visits to Takabonerate National Park, both domestic and foreign tourists, is on an increasing trend from year to year. Tourist spikes usually occur during certain seasons such as year-end holidays, school holidays, and religious moments or local festivals. However, the increase in the number of tourists has not fully contributed significantly and evenly to the welfare of local communities. The pattern of distribution of tourism benefits still shows a concentrated tendency to business actors from outside the region, such as large travel agents, tour ship owners, and investors providing marine accommodation. In contrast, local communities are only engaged as informal laborers, such as non-certified guides, goods porters, or food vendors, who do not have job protection and access to economic decision-making.

This creates an economic and social gap between external business actors and local residents, which in turn triggers social jealousy and a decline in public trust in the direct benefits of tourism activities. In the long run, these economic injustices have the potential to undermine public support for conservation programs, as they do not feel part of the benefits that result from the use of their own areas. In addition, observations in the field and statements from residents show that uncontrolled tourism activities still occur frequently, such as diving without an official guide, dumping garbage directly into the sea, and tourist boats anchored in sensitive areas of coral reefs. These activities worsen

environmental conditions, especially in areas that are habitat for endemic marine life that should be protected.

Overall, although the marine tourism management policy framework in Takabonerate National Park has been comprehensively compiled on paper, including zoning regulations, tourism governance, and conservation plans, the implementation of these policies on the ground still faces various obstacles. These obstacles include institutional limitations, inadequate number and quality of human resources, low levels of community participation in decision-making, and inequality in the distribution of economic benefits. This fact shows that there is a real gap between policy formulation and the reality of implementation on the ground, which demands a thorough policy evaluation, as well as the formulation of new management strategies that are more participatory, inclusive, adaptive, and based on local potential. Without fundamental changes in policy approaches, the region's great potential in supporting the economy and environmental conservation will face serious threats from increasingly complex internal and external pressures.

4.2. Discussion

The results of the study show that normatively, marine tourism management policies in Takabonerate National Park have referred to the principles of conservation and sustainability-based management. This is reflected in the medium-term planning document (RPTN), the regional zoning system that divides the area into core zones, limited use zones, and general use zones, as well as regulations that regulate tourist behavior such as limits on the number of visits and procedures for tourist activities. However, there is a real gap between policy formulation and its implementation practice on the ground. This shows that the main problem is not only the quality of policy formulation, but rather the institutional capacity to carry out the policy consistently and sustainably. These findings are in line with the study Sinaga et al. (2021) which emphasizes that the effectiveness of marine tourism area management is highly dependent on strong institutions, the availability of competent human resources, and a high level of local community involvement.

One of the crucial problems found in this study is the lack of supervision of tourism activities in the Takabonerate National Park area. Limited number of officers, inadequate operational facilities such as patrol boats or digital monitoring equipment, and the absence of a quick reporting system make violations of zoning rules and environmental pollution actions often go undetected or not followed up. This is exacerbated by the lack of understanding and concern from some tourism actors for the importance of maintaining marine ecosystems. This condition is in line with the results of the research Hargen et al. (2024) which states that weak surveillance and monitoring systems are one of the biggest factors that weaken the effectiveness of marine protected area protection in Indonesia.

In this context, it can be said that policies that have been prepared normatively will not have a significant impact without support for management infrastructure, such as monitoring facilities, officer training, and information technology systems for monitoring tourism activities. In addition, the internal evaluation and control system also needs to be strengthened so that policies are not only administrative, but able to reach and adjust to dynamics in the field. The absence of an adaptive approach in management will lead to stagnant policies and inability to respond to new challenges that arise as tourist pressure increases and environmental changes due to climate and other economic activities.

The involvement of local communities in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating marine tourism management policies is still relatively low. This is a fundamental problem considering that local communities are actually the main stakeholders most affected by tourism activities. Within the framework of the co-management approach, the active participation of the community not only

plays a role in supporting the implementation of policies, but also becomes a key factor in creating a sense of ownership of local resources and strengthening social legitimacy for the policies implemented. The lack of community involvement in decision-making has the potential to give rise to social resistance, such as rejection of zoning restrictions, as well as causing economic inequality where the benefits of tourism are only felt by certain groups. Furthermore, the absence of community voices in regional management can trigger ecological imbalances, when tourism practices take place without paying attention to local values and traditional knowledge that actually play an important role in maintaining environmental sustainability.

Study by Akapip (2023) in the marine conservation area of Ambon City shows that a top-down approach that only relies on policy formulation from the central or regional government level, tends to fail when it is not accompanied by a community-based approach. A technocratic approach alone results in policies that are not contextual, difficult to accept by the public, and ultimately lead to failure of implementation on the ground. Therefore, it is necessary to design policies that are not only administratively strong, but also sociocultural, inclusive, and able to accommodate the aspirations, values, and local wisdom of the community as part of a sustainable conservation strategy.

Furthermore, indecisiveness in the division of roles between agencies, such as between the National Park Office, the Tourism Office, and the village government, is the main obstacle in building solid cross-sector coordination. Overlapping authority and the absence of a standard coordination mechanism cause confusion in policy implementation, as well as weaken accountability between institutions. For example, zoning policies that have been set by national park authorities are sometimes not followed by tourism promotion policies managed by regional tourism offices, causing insynchronization in the direction of tourism development. Rare (2022) In his study in Bunaken National Park, it was found that weak collaboration between institutions not only causes slow decision-making, but also has a direct impact on the poor management of marine tourism areas, including in terms of supervision, tourist data collection, and recovery of environmental damage. For this reason, improving cross-agency coordination through multi-stakeholder forums, collaborative regulations, and strong institutional leadership are absolute requirements to achieve effective, transparent, and sustainable marine tourism management.

In terms of economic benefits, the results of the study show that there is a significant distribution inequality in the marine tourism sector in Takabonerate National Park. Most of the benefits of tourism activities, such as sea transportation services, tour packages, and accommodation, are actually more enjoyed by business actors from outside the region who have access to capital, networks, and information. Meanwhile, local communities only get the role of informal workers, such as tour guides, transport workers, or food providers without fixed facilities. This weak bargaining position of local communities makes them dependent on outsiders, without having control over the processes and outcomes of tourism activities that take place in their own region. This inequality not only creates economic and social gaps, but also erodes people's enthusiasm to participate in the preservation of the area, as they do not feel the direct benefits in a fair and equitable manner. In fact, as emphasized by Wayne and Frechtling (2024), sustainable tourism is supposed to create a balance between ecological interests, local economic growth, and the cultural preservation of local communities.

This condition emphasizes the need for a thorough evaluation of existing management policies, both in terms of regulatory frameworks and implementation mechanisms. The evaluation should include a review of zoning, especially regarding space access and utilization by the community, active community involvement in the decision-making process, as well as the development of a system of economic incentives that are fair and encourage local entrepreneurship. In addition, the coordination mechanism between government agencies, regional managers, and tourism business actors must be

strengthened so that there is no overlap of authority and conflict of interest. A future management strategy should ideally be based on a participatory and adaptive approach, which involves all stakeholders equally and adapted to local socio-ecological dynamics. Strengthening the capacity of management institutions, drafting clear and firm regulations, and intensive public education on the importance of conservation and fair tourism governance are integral parts of this strategy.

With this approach, the management of the Takabonerate National Park area can not only maintain environmental sustainability, but also ensure that local communities as owners of customary territories and resources also receive real benefits, both economically and socially. Only in this way can marine tourism develop sustainably and be widely accepted by all stakeholders.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been carried out, it can be concluded that the marine tourism management policy in Takabonerate National Park has normatively reflected the principles of conservation and sustainability, but in its implementation, it still faces various obstacles, both from institutional, technical, and social aspects. Policy implementation has not been optimally carried out due to limited human resources and monitoring facilities, low participation of local communities in decision-making, and weak coordination between related agencies. The economic impact of tourism has also not been felt equally by the local community, while uncontrolled tourism activities are beginning to threaten the sustainability of marine ecosystems. Based on these findings, it is suggested that the management of this area be directed towards a more participatory, collaborative, and adaptive approach. The government needs to strengthen institutional capacity, provide adequate monitoring facilities, and encourage active community involvement in the entire management process. In addition, it is important to develop policies that ensure a fair distribution of economic benefits and ensure that tourism activities do not threaten long-term environmental sustainability.

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