

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT: The development of cultural tourism villages has become an important strategy for promoting regional economic growth, preserving cultural heritage, and empowering local communities. Muntei Village, located in South Siberut District, Mentawai Islands Regency, is a prioritized cultural tourism destination due to its indigenous culture, local wisdom, and unique cultural attractions of the Mentawai community. However, the implementation of cultural tourism policies faces several challenges, including limited infrastructure, human resource capacity, tourism management, weak institutional coordination, community participation, and cultural sustainability issues. This study aims to describe the strategies of local government policy implementation in developing Muntei Village as a sustainable cultural tourism destination. This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis involving local government officials, village authorities, indigenous leaders, Tourism Awareness Groups (*Pokdarwis*), tourism operators, communities, and academics. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model. The findings show that local government strategies include institutional strengthening, community empowerment, cultural preservation, infrastructure development, tourism promotion and digitalization, stakeholder coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. These strategies emphasize not only increasing tourist visits but also preserving Mentawai cultural identity. The study concludes that collaborative efforts among stakeholders are essential to strengthen policy implementation and ensure the sustainability of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination.

KEYWORDS: Cultural tourism village; policy implementation; local government strategy

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism villages is one of the development instruments capable of integrating economic growth, cultural preservation, and community empowerment in a sustainable manner. From the perspective of tourism development, a tourism village is not only viewed as a destination offering unique attractions but also as a social space that can enhance community income through the optimal utilization of local resources (Sharpley, 2002). Therefore, the success of tourism village development largely depends on the ability of local governments to formulate adaptive policies, provide institutional support, and foster a collaborative environment that enables all stakeholders to participate in the management of tourism destinations (Hall, 2008). In this regard, the development of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination constitutes an important component of the regional development strategy aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the tourism sector in the Mentawai Islands Regency.

In addition to government policy support, the success of tourism village development is also determined by the region's capacity to manage its tourism potential in a sustainable manner. According to Weaver (2006), sustainable tourism development should create a balance among economic, social, cultural, and environmental interests so that its benefits can be enjoyed by both present and future generations. Furthermore, Lane (1994) argues that the development of rural tourism destinations should take into account local characteristics, community participation, and the quality of visitors' experiences as key factors in enhancing destination attractiveness. Therefore, the development of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination is expected to improve the quality of tourism services, strengthen the cultural identity of the Mentawai people, and contribute to local economic growth. This condition can be further illustrated by the increasing number of tourist arrivals, which serves as one of the indicators of the success of tourism sector development in Muntei Village. According to data from the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) of the Mentawai Islands Regency, the number of both international and domestic tourist arrivals in Muntei Village, South Siberut District, showed a steady increase between 2017 and 2024. In addition, the number of domestic tourist trips continued to rise, reaching approximately 11,000 to 15,000 visits, including both international and domestic tourists. This trend is presented in the following table.

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

Table 1. International and Domestic Tourist Visits

Year	International Tourists	Domestic Tourist Trips
2024	10,000	15,000
2025	10,000	15,000

Source: Statistics Indonesia (BPS) and the Ministry of Tourism (2025).

Although detailed annual statistical data on international and domestic tourist arrivals at the village level remain limited, various indicators suggest a significant increase in tourism activities, particularly community-based cultural tourism centered on the indigenous Mentawai people. The increasing number of tourist visits has been supported by improvements in transportation accessibility, tourism promotion, and the development of tourism villages across Indonesia. One of the regions that has actively developed cultural tourism is West Sumatra Province, particularly the Mentawai Islands Regency. Muntei Village gained national recognition after being selected among the Top 75 Tourism Villages in the 2023 Indonesian Tourism Village Award (Anugerah Desa Wisata Indonesia/ADWI), highlighting its growing reputation as a promising cultural tourism destination.

The Mentawai Islands Regency is widely recognized for its rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge, which constitute valuable assets for sustainable tourism development. The regency comprises a group of islands whose communities have successfully maintained distinctive socio-cultural traditions despite ongoing modernization. These traditions include the Sikerei indigenous healing practices, the Turuk Laggai traditional dance, traditional Mentawai tattooing, sago processing, and visits to the traditional Uma communal houses. These unique cultural practices have become major attractions for both domestic and international visitors while simultaneously serving as important forms of social capital for tourism development. Recognizing this potential, the Mentawai Islands Regency Government has prioritized cultural tourism as a key component of its regional development strategy, aiming to promote economic growth while safeguarding the cultural identity and traditions of the indigenous Mentawai community.

According to the 2017–2022 Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of the Mentawai Islands Regency, during the second term of Regent Yudas Sabaggalet's administration, the Mentawai Islands Regency Government planned to develop tourism based on cultural tourism. This policy encouraged each village to develop tourism initiatives that could improve the welfare of local communities. It was also in line with the Regent's vision and mission, as stipulated in Regent Regulation No. 12 of 2017 concerning the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of the Mentawai Islands Regency. Based on this policy, five villages were designated as cultural tourism villages in the Mentawai Islands Regency. These designated villages are presented in the following table:

Table 2 Tourism Villages Based on Location and Main Attractions in the Mentawai Islands Regency

No.	Village	Location	Main Attraction
1	Muntei	South Siberut	Cultural Tourism
2	Madobag	South Siberut	Cultural Tourism
3	Matotonan	South Siberut	Cultural Tourism
4	Tuapeijat–Mapaddegat	North Sipora	Beach and Marine Tourism
5	Katiet	South Sipora	Surfing Waves

Source: Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of the Mentawai Islands Regency, 2017–2022.

Based on Table 2, the Mentawai Islands Regency Government has promoted the development of tourism villages through institutional strengthening, human resource development, the digitalization of tourism promotion, and the establishment of collaborations with both the private sector and academic institutions. These villages are not only designated as tourism destinations but also serve to preserve and promote local wisdom and cultural values that have been passed down from generation to generation. However, among the tourism villages in the Mentawai Islands Regency, Muntei Village in South Siberut District has become the most popular destination for visitors.

Muntei Village has become one of the priorities in the development of culture-based tourism in the Mentawai Islands Regency, without neglecting other villages that are also included in the broader cultural tourism development program, such as Madobag, Matotonan, Mapaddegat, and Katiet Villages. The designation of Muntei Village as a priority is based on its various potentials, including the strength of local cultural values, the existence of Mentawai community traditions, the availability of supporting facilities, and better accessibility compared to several other tourism villages. The development of culture-based tourism villages essentially aims to utilize local potential as a tourism attraction while maintaining the sustainability of local cultural values (Richards, 2018).

Various development programs have been implemented by the Regional Government of the Mentawai Islands Regency as part of the policy implementation to develop Muntei Village into a cultural tourism village. However, its implementation still

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

faces several challenges and obstacles, particularly related to road infrastructure development, human resource capacity improvement, tourism destination management, weak inter-institutional coordination, limited supporting facilities and infrastructure, low community participation, and the influence of modernization on the sustainability of local cultural values. These conditions indicate that the success of tourism village development does not solely depend on the attractiveness of tourism resources but is also influenced by institutional capacity, community readiness, and the government's ability to manage various supporting factors for tourism development (Tosun, 2000).

In addition to physical development factors, the implementation of cultural tourism development policies in Muntei Village is also influenced by the social and cultural aspects of the community. The strong customary structure, the relationship between the community and the government, and the community's readiness to accept change are important factors determining the success of policy implementation. In the context of local communities, tourism development needs to consider existing socio-cultural values so that the changes that occur remain aligned with the identity of the local community (Scheyvens, 1999). Therefore, a development approach that involves the community as the main actor is essential so that cultural tourism development not only increases tourist arrivals but also provides economic, social, and cultural benefits for the local community.

On the other hand, challenges remain in the implementation of policies and regulations concerning the development of cultural tourism in Muntei Village. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study on the strategies of regional regulations in implementing cultural tourism village policies in Muntei Village. Based on the background described above, this study aims to describe the strategies of local government policies in developing Muntei Village as a sustainable cultural tourism destination.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. According to Moleong (2021), qualitative research aims to holistically understand phenomena experienced by research subjects—such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others—through descriptions in the form of words and language within a natural context. Qualitative research was chosen because it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena, particularly regarding local government policy strategies for developing Muntei Village as a sustainable cultural tourism destination. Informants in this study are individuals who possess the necessary knowledge, are directly involved in the activities under investigation, and are willing to provide complete and honest data (Moleong, 2014). Informants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, based on the consideration that they possess the knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the implementation of cultural tourism policies in Muntei Village. The informants in this study were policymakers, including the Tourism Office, subdistrict heads, and village heads; direct implementers, including the Community-Based Tourism Group (Pokdarwis), traditional leaders, tourism operators, and the local community; and supplementary data sources, including the Village Empowerment Agency (PMD), NGOs, academics, and tourists. The data collection methods used were observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, with data analysis based on the framework developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consists of three main components: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification.

This study was conducted in Muntei Village, South Siberut Subdistrict, Mentawai Islands Regency, West Sumatra Province. The selection of this research location was based on several considerations. First, Muntei Village is one of the villages designated by the Mentawai Islands Regency Government as a Cultural Tourism Village. Second, this village is strategically located near the center of South Siberut Subdistrict and major transportation routes, making it more accessible to both residents and tourists. Third, it has a higher level of tourist visits compared to several other villages in the South Siberut region. The high number of tourist visits indicates that Muntei Village possesses cultural appeal and growing tourism potential, making it a relevant location for research on the management, development, and sustainability of cultural tourism villages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The development of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination represents one of the efforts undertaken by the Government of the Mentawai Islands Regency to promote tourism sector development that is oriented toward the preservation of local culture and the improvement of community welfare (Inskeep, 1991). This policy is not only intended to increase the number of tourist arrivals but also aims to preserve the cultural identity of the Mentawai people, which constitutes the area's primary tourist attraction (Murphy, 1985; Suansri, 2003). Therefore, the implementation of this policy is carried out through various interconnected strategies involving the regional government, village government, indigenous communities, Tourism Awareness Groups (*Kelompok Sadar Wisata* or *Pokdarwis*), business actors, academics, and other relevant stakeholders. The involvement of these actors is consistent with the concept of *collaborative governance*, which emphasizes the importance of collaboration between government and non-government actors in the formulation and implementation of public policies (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Based on the research findings, the local government's strategy for implementing the policy to develop Muntei Village as a cultural tourism village involves institutional strengthening, community empowerment, preservation of local culture, infrastructure development, tourism promotion, collaboration among stakeholders, and monitoring and evaluation of program

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

implementation. These strategies form the foundation for sustainable tourism development while maintaining a balance among economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects;

1. Strategies for Strengthening Policies and Institutions

Research findings indicate that the first strategy implemented by local governments is to strengthen policies and institutions as the primary foundation for implementing cultural tourism village programs. Policy strengthening is carried out through the formulation of regulations governing the development of tourism villages, the integration of programs into regional development planning documents, and the establishment of institutions responsible for managing cultural tourism areas. On the other hand, local governments also strengthened coordination among local government agencies related to the tourism, culture, community empowerment, and village development sectors. Additionally, village governments were given a greater role in planning and managing cultural tourism village programs in accordance with the sociocultural conditions of the local community. These local government strategies demonstrate a systematic decision-making process oriented toward achieving policy objectives

Furthermore, the establishment of institutions such as Pokdarwis and the strengthening of the village government's role reflect a rational division of functions and responsibilities. In this context, the existence of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) plays a vital role within the institutional framework of a tourism village. Pokdarwis serves as a liaison between the government and the community in managing various tourism activities, ranging from providing information to tourists and managing cultural attractions to maintaining the cleanliness and sustainability of the tourism environment. Thus, this institutional strengthening strategy demonstrates that the successful implementation of policies is greatly influenced by a clear organizational structure, a coordinated division of tasks, and regulatory support that provides certainty in program implementation.

2. Local Community Empowerment Strategy

Research findings indicate that the implementation of the cultural tourism village policy positions the community as the primary actor in the development of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination. This is because the success of a tourism village cannot be separated from the community's involvement or level of participation in its development. Community empowerment strategies are carried out through various capacity-building activities, such as training in tourism village management, training for local tour guides, the development of creative economy enterprises, training in homestay management, and mentoring for community business groups. The government also encourages the development of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) that leverage local cultural potential, such as traditional crafts, Mentawai specialties, and products based on local wisdom.

Based on the results of the above study, it can be seen that local community empowerment strategies involve planning and decision-making processes aimed at effectively achieving policy objectives. Simon (1947) explains that a rational approach to decision making involves several stages: understanding the objectives to be achieved, identifying problems, considering various alternative courses of action, selecting the most appropriate strategy, and allocating resources to achieve the expected results. In other words, this strategy ensures that local communities are not merely objects of tourism but become key actors who reap the economic and social benefits of the development of these cultural tourism villages.

3 Strategies for Preserving Local Culture

Mentawai culture is the main attraction of Muntei Village, so policy implementation is focused on efforts to ensure the sustainability of local culture. The government, together with the indigenous community, implements cultural preservation strategies to ensure that traditional values are maintained amid the growth of tourism. These strategies include: protecting the traditional "uma" houses as symbols of Mentawai identity; preserving traditional dances, indigenous rituals, and local arts; and organizing cultural activities that involve the local community.

The development of tourism based on the indigenous culture of the Mentawai, the documentation of local culture, the transmission of cultural values to younger generations, and the restriction of tourism activities that conflict with local customs. The objective of this strategy is to maintain a balance between tourism development and the protection of the Mentawai people's cultural identity. In other words, this strategy demonstrates that the development of cultural tourism is not only focused on increasing tourist visits but also on protecting the cultural identity of the Mentawai people.

From a rational strategy perspective, the government's decision to preserve the traditional Uma houses, customary traditions, and various expressions of local culture represents a choice among policy alternatives that takes into account the strategic value of culture for the sustainability of tourist destinations. The Uma traditional houses are viewed not only as tourist attractions but also as symbols of identity, social systems, and living spaces for the Mentawai people. Thus, cultural preservation serves as a strategic tool for maintaining the uniqueness of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination.

4.Strategies for Developing Tourism Infrastructure and Facilities

Research findings indicate that infrastructure development is one of the key strategies for supporting the development of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination. The local government is striving to improve access to the tourism area through road construction and repairs, the provision of transportation, and the enhancement of other supporting facilities. In addition to

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

accessibility, the government is also developing various tourism facilities such as homestays, tourist information centers, sanitation facilities, communication networks, electricity supply, and the development of the cultural tourism area. The provision of these facilities aims to provide comfort for tourists while improving the quality of tourism services.

Nevertheless, research findings indicate that infrastructure development still faces various challenges, particularly due to the geographical conditions of Mentawai Islands Regency, which consists of an archipelago and thus requires relatively high construction and maintenance costs. These conditions have prevented some tourism support facilities from being developed to their full potential.

5. Tourism Promotion and Digitalization Strategies

The research findings indicate that tourism promotion and digitalization strategies are among the key measures implemented by the Mentawai Islands Regency Government in collaboration with tourism operators to promote Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination. These strategies aim to enhance the village's appeal to tourists, expand the reach of information regarding the cultural potential of the Mentawai Islands, and boost Muntei Village's competitiveness in an increasingly competitive tourism industry.

Tourism promotion is not only carried out through conventional methods but also leverages advancements in information technology through the digitalization of promotional efforts. The government and tourism operators carry out various promotional activities, such as using social media, publishing digital content about Mentawai culture, developing the brand image of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism village, collaborating with travel agencies, and participating in various cultural festivals. Through these strategies, Muntei Village is expected to attract both domestic and international tourists interested in tourism experiences rooted in local culture.

This means that the use of social media as a promotional tool is a rational strategic decision because it takes into account changes in tourists' behavior when seeking travel information. In the digital age, tourists tend to use various digital platforms to decide which destinations to visit. Therefore, the use of social media is an effective option because it can reach a wider audience at a relatively lower promotional cost compared to conventional promotion. This strategy aims not only to increase the number of tourists but also to strengthen Muntei Villages identity as a cultural tourism destination that possesses sustainable economic, social, and cultural value.

6. Coordination Strategy Among Actors

The coordination strategy among actors in the implementation of the Cultural Tourism Village policy in Muntei Village demonstrates a rational decision-making process. In implementing the Cultural Tourism Village policy, the government does not carry out the program independently but chooses to establish coordination with the village government, indigenous communities, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), business operators, academics, cultural communities, the media, and the private sector. This decision reflects a rational approach, as the government recognizes the limitations in institutional capacity, human resources, budget, and the scope of program implementation if it were to rely solely on a single agency.

Through coordination, each actor is assigned a role commensurate with their capacity and expertise. The local government plays a role in policy formulation, budgeting, and program coordination. The village government is responsible for implementing the policy at the local level. Indigenous communities preserve the cultural values that serve as the main attraction of tourism villages. Pokdarwis manages tourism activities and services for tourists, while business operators support the provision of tourism services and facilities. Academics provide research-based guidance and recommendations; cultural communities ensure the continuity of traditions; and the media and the private sector play a role in promotion and the development of partnerships.

Based on Herbert A. Simon theory, this coordination strategy is a rational decision because it was chosen after considering the various constraints faced in policy implementation. The government does not seek the most perfect strategy but rather selects the alternative deemed most effective and realistic for achieving the objectives of developing Cultural Tourism Villages. Collaboration among stakeholders allows the government to leverage the resources, knowledge, networks, and authority possessed by each party, thereby making policy implementation more efficient and focused.

Thus, the strategy of coordination among stakeholders in the implementation of the Cultural Tourism Village policy in Muntei Village is an application of bounded rationality. The decision to build collaboration with various stakeholders is a rational choice because it takes into account the government's limitations while leveraging the potential of each actor. This strategy serves as the most viable (satisficing) alternative for achieving the policy objective: the effective, participatory, and sustainable development of a Cultural Tourism Village.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy

The government implements a monitoring and evaluation strategy in the implementation of the Cultural Tourism Village policy in Muntei Village to ensure that all programs are carried out in accordance with the established policy objectives, namely promoting cultural tourism while preserving local cultural values and the natural environment. This strategy is operationalized through tourism program monitoring, evaluation of tourism village development initiatives, supervision of tourist activities,

Local Government Policy Strategies in Developing Muntei Village as a Sustainable Cultural Tourism Destination

assessment of socio-cultural impacts, and control of cultural exploitation. Monitoring and evaluation serve not only as mechanisms of policy oversight but also as instruments for generating evidence on policy effectiveness, thereby providing a foundation for improving future policy implementation.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation strategy continues to face several challenges, including budget constraints, limited human resource capacity, inadequate transportation access, insufficient tourism promotion, deficiencies in basic infrastructure, and the need to maintain a balance between tourism development and the preservation of indigenous cultural traditions. From Simons perspective, these challenges illustrate the reality of bounded rationality, where decision-makers operate under significant constraints that influence policy choices. Rather than pursuing an ideal or optimal solution, the government adopts satisficing strategies by selecting policy alternatives that are considered feasible within the available resources and institutional capacity. Through continuous monitoring and evaluation, the government is able to identify implementation weaknesses, establish priorities for improvement, and formulate more adaptive and effective strategies to support the sustainable development of Muntei Village as a Cultural Tourism Village.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the implementation of the Cultural Tourism Village policy in Muntei Village is based on an integrated strategy encompassing institutional strengthening, community empowerment, cultural preservation, tourism infrastructure development, tourism promotion and digitalization, stakeholder coordination, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. These strategies collectively support sustainable tourism development while balancing economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. The findings highlight that the successful implementation of the policy depends not only on government commitment but also on active collaboration among the village government, indigenous communities, Tourism Awareness Groups (Pokdarwis), business operators, academics, cultural organizations, the media, and the private sector. Such collaboration has strengthened local participation, enhanced institutional capacity, and contributed to preserving the unique cultural identity of the Mentawai people as the primary asset of Muntei Village. From the perspective of Herbert A. Simon Rational Decision-Making Theory, the implementation strategies reflect the principles of bounded rationality, whereby policymakers formulate decisions under constraints such as limited financial resources, human resource capacity, infrastructure, and geographical conditions. Rather than pursuing optimal solutions, the government adopts satisficing strategies by selecting feasible and adaptive policy alternatives that maximize available resources and respond to implementation challenges. Although the policy has generated positive outcomes, challenges related to budget limitations, infrastructure, transportation access, tourism promotion, and the protection of indigenous cultural values remain significant. Therefore, strengthening institutional capacity, improving infrastructure, expanding digital tourism promotion, and reinforcing multi-stakeholder collaboration are essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Muntei Village as a cultural tourism destination. These findings also demonstrate that Herbert A. Simon rational decision-making framework provides a valuable perspective for understanding tourism policy implementation in resource constrained indigenous communities.

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