



DECENTRALIZATION AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: COMPARING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STRATEGIES FOR TOURISM IN PADANG CITY AND BUKITTINGGI CITY

DESENTRALISASI DAN PENGEMBANGAN PARIWISATA: MEMBANDINGKAN STRATEGI ADMINISTRASI PUBLIK UNTUK PARIWISATA DI KOTA PADANG DAN KOTA BUKITTINGGI

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Abstract

This research examines how decentralization policy in Indonesia shapes public administration strategies in tourism destination development across two major cities in West Sumatera: Padang City and Bukittinggi City, which possess distinct geographical characteristics, governmental structures, and fiscal capacities. Through a comparative literature study finds that Padang City adopts a coastal modernization strategy oriented toward infrastructure and MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions), whereas Bukittinggi City develops a heritage conservation and community based governance approach. Decentralizations demonstrates a characteristics of asymmetrical governance, where fiscal capacity and geographical context significantly determine the local government's ability to formulate tourism strategies. This study contributes to the theory of destination governance and decentralizations by offering the perspective that regional autonomy does not automatically enhance policy effectiveness: rather, it must be supported by institutional capacity, collaboration, and policy fit with the unique characteristics of the tourist destination.

Keywords : governance, tourism, policy, decentralizations.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kebijakan desentralisasi di Indonesia membentuk strategi administrasi publik dalam pengembangan destinasi wisata di dua kota besar di Sumatera Barat: Kota Padang dan Kota Bukittinggi, yang memiliki karakteristik geografis, struktur pemerintahan, dan kapasitas fiskal yang berbeda. Melalui studi sastra komparatif, ditemukan bahwa Kota Padang mengadopsi strategi modernisasi pesisir yang berorientasi pada infrastruktur dan MICE (Pertemuan, Insentif, Konvensi, dan Pameran), sedangkan Kota Bukittinggi mengembangkan pendekatan konservasi warisan dan tata kelola berbasis masyarakat. Desentralisasi menunjukkan karakteristik tata kelola asimetris, di mana kapasitas fiskal dan konteks geografis secara signifikan menentukan kemampuan pemerintah daerah dalam merumuskan strategi pariwisata. Studi ini berkontribusi pada teori tata kelola destinasi dan desentralisasi dengan menawarkan perspektif bahwa otonomi daerah tidak secara otomatis meningkatkan efektivitas kebijakan: melainkan, harus didukung oleh kapasitas kelembagaan, kolaborasi, dan kesesuaian kebijakan dengan karakteristik unik destinasi wisata.



Kata Kunci : tata kelola, pariwisata, kebijakan, desentralisasi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the development sectors that has undergone the most significant transformation since Indonesia's decentralization policy was implemented in 1999. Within the context of regional autonomy, district and city governments were granted the authority to formulate, manage, and evaluate tourism policies according to the specific needs of their respective regions. This structural shift transferred much of the responsibility for destination development from the central government to local authorities, creating opportunities for policy innovation while simultaneously posing new challenges, such as uneven capacity, fragmented authority, and variations in fiscal capabilities across regions (Rondinelli, 2020).

Amid this policy complexity, West Sumatera represents a particularly interesting case for study, notably because it encompasses two cities with starkly contrasting destination characteristics: Padang (a coastal city focused on marine and urban tourism) and Bukittinggi (a highland city centered on heritage and cultural tourism). Both operate under the same decentralization framework, yet the tourism development strategies that have emerged are highly divergent.

Padang, as the provincial capital and the largest coastal city in Sumatera West coast, prioritizes coastal tourism as a key development focus. Policy orientations include the revitalization of Padang Beach, the construction of promenades, the expansion of public spaces, and the promotion of the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector (Siskawati, 2021). This development approach reflects the city government's effort to enhance the attractiveness of modern urban tourism while positioning the coastline as an economic showcase.

However, the coastal characteristics, which are prone to erosion, high waves, and tsunami risks, place Padang in a policy dilemma. Rather than serving as an ideal tourist space, the coastal area has become a contested arena for the interest of fishermen, traders, investors, and the government. In the context of decentralization, overlapping authorities concerning coastal zones and marine space further complicate tourism management (Herawati, 2024).

In contrast to Padang, Bukittinggi a highland destination with a rich historical heritage has developed tourism based on conservation and the strengthening of cultural identity. Iconic attractions such as Jam Gadang, Ngarai Sianok, Fort de Kock, and Pasar Atas have long been embedded in the imagination of domestic tourists. The local government does not rely on massive infrastructure development; rather, it emphasizes the enhancement of service quality, destination management, and the appeal of local cultural assets (Anggraini, 2022).

However, this success brings challenges, including overtourism, limited urban space, pressure on cultural heritage sites, and high conservation financing needs. These conditions have led Bukittinggi to adopt community based governance and foster collaboration among the government, business, and indigenous communities to ensure the sustainability of its



destinations. From a public administration theoretical perspective, these two case studies raise fundamental questions: Can decentralization generate tourism strategies that are adaptive to the specific characteristics of destinations? Or does decentralization instead exacerbate disparities in capacity across regions?

Several theoretical studies indicate that the success of decentralization heavily depends on regional fiscal capacity, the quality of bureaucratic institutions, and the ability of local governments to coordinate across sectors (Smoke, 2015). In the tourism context, destination governance theory (Errchiello and Micera, 2021) highlight the importance of integrating government, the private sector, local communities, and digital innovation.

This study argues that geographical characteristics coastal versus highland, substantially shape the logic of public administration at the regional level. Padang's approach of coastal modernization fundamentally differs from Bukittinggi's heritage conservation strategy. These differences are not merely technical but structural, reflecting how decentralization produces variation in governance models, policy strategies, and development priorities.

Accordingly, the research questions of this study are as follows:

- a. How does decentralization influence public administration strategies in the development of coastal destinations (Padang) and heritage destinations (Bukittinggi)?
- b. What are the fundamental differences between the tourism strategies of the two cities, and how do geographical context and fiscal capacity shape local policies?
- c. How do different governance models impact the effectiveness of destination development?

This study aims to provide an in depth comparative analysis of the differences in public administration strategies between Padang and Bukittinggi and to identify the structural factors underlying these differences. Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of an asymmetric decentralized tourism governance model, while practically, it offers policy recommendations for local governments to align destination development strategies with local contexts.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a literature based qualitative comparative case study to examine public administration strategies in tourism development in Padang and Bukittinggi. Secondary, data include peer reviewed literature (Scopus and SINTA), books, government reports, regional regulations, and official statistics, while primary data were collected through informal interviewes with tourism officials, creative communities, vendors, and MSMEs during 2023-2024. The unit of analysis is public administration strategies, focusing on policy formulation, implementation, governance, and the influence of local capacity and community participation. Data were analyzed through reduction, categorization (input process output), comparative assessment, and theoretical synthesis, enabling a concise, critical, and comparative understanding of tourism governance under decentralization.



3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

a. Public Administration Strategies in Tourism: Comparative Analysis of Padang and Bukittinggi

1) Tourism Strategy in Padang

Padang's tourism policy emphasizes coastal development with a focus on public space revitalization, infrastructure enhancement, and the creation of new tourist icons. Guided by RIPPDA 2014-2025, tourism is positioned as a strategic sector supporting the creative economy and modern services. Initiatives include Pantai Padang revitalization, pedestrian promenades, MICE area development, estuary restoration, and branding as "Padang Kota Tercinta". This urban oriented strategy aligns with Kim & Lee (2020), which notes modern coastal cities prioritize urban attractiveness over traditional ecological features. Challenges include fragmented governance across city, provincial, and national authorities, leading to slow zoning implementation and land use conflict (Herawati, 2024), while coastal infrastructure development raises environmental risks such as erosion (Andhika, 2022). Based on IPO perspective, Padang has strong inputs, process challenges in coordination, and outputs in the form of large scale projects, whose sustainability depends on environmental mitigation capacity.

2) Tourism Strategy in Bukittinggi

Bukittinggi focuses on cultural heritage and natural assets. Core attractions include Jam gadang, Fort de Kock, and Ngarai Sianok. Policies emphasize heritage preservation, cultural events, Pasar atas revitalization, natural tourism, and community based governance. Despite limited fiscal capacity, Bukittinggi leverages strong cultural identity and participatory processes to deliver sustainable heritage destinations. Challenges include overtourism during peak periods and high costs for heritage preservation (Anggraini, 2022). In IPO terms, inputs are culturally strong but financially limited, processes rely on collaboration, and outputs are heritage focused attractions, through vulnerable to tourism pressure.

3) b

Structurally, Padang benefits from higher fiscal resources, extensive territory, and infrastructure, yet faces coordination and environmental challenges. Bukittinggi, with limited resources, relies on participatory governance and heritage preservation to maintain tourism quality. Output differences show Padang emphasizing urban-modern projects and MICE, while Bukittinggi focuses on cultural and heritage sustainability. The analysis demonstrates how decentralization, local context, and governance models shape differentiated tourism administration strategies in Indonesian cities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that decentralization produces distinct public administration strategies for tourism in Padang and Bukittinggi. Differences in geography, fiscal capacity, destination identity, and cross sectoral coordination shape these variations. Decentralization itself does not guarantee innovation; rather, innovation emerges when local governments accurately



interpret and respond to the specific needs of their destinations. The effectiveness of decentralized tourism governance therefore depends on the adaptive capacity and strategic insight of local governments.

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