

Collaborative Strategy For Marine Tourism Development Through Empowerment Of Creative Economy Based Msmes In Enhancing The Economy In Bone Bolango Regency

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi kolaborasi dalam pengembangan pariwisata bahari melalui pemberdayaan Usaha Mikro, Kecil, dan Menengah (UMKM) berbasis ekonomi kreatif di Kabupaten Bone Bolango. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada tiga isu utama, yaitu strategi kolaboratif antar pemangku kepentingan, peran UMKM berbasis ekonomi kreatif dalam memperkuat daya saing destinasi, serta tantangan pengelolaan dan pemasaran pariwisata bahari. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), dan dokumentasi. Analisis data dilakukan secara tematik dengan dilengkapi analisis SWOT, analisis stakeholder, serta Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) untuk menentukan prioritas strategi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengembangan pariwisata bahari di Bone Bolango telah menerapkan strategi kolaborasi berbasis pentahelix, di mana pemerintah berperan sebagai regulator dan fasilitator, pelaku usaha sebagai penyedia layanan, akademisi sebagai penghasil pengetahuan, komunitas lokal sebagai pengelola destinasi, dan media sebagai agen promosi. UMKM berperan penting sebagai motor penggerak ekonomi kreatif melalui produk kerajinan, kuliner khas, dan jasa wisata berbasis kearifan lokal. Namun, tantangan masih dihadapi berupa keterbatasan literasi digital, akses permodalan, serta ancaman lingkungan dan persaingan antar destinasi. Penelitian ini menawarkan rancangan strategi kolaboratif adaptif yang mengintegrasikan UMKM ke dalam tata kelola pariwisata bahari secara inklusif dan berkelanjutan.

Keywords: Kolaborasi Pengembangan; Pariwisata Bahari; Pemberdayaan UMKM; Ekonomi Kreatif; Sustainable Development Goals

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze collaborative strategies in developing marine tourism through the empowerment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) based on the creative economy in Bone Bolango Regency. The research focuses on three main issues: collaborative strategies among stakeholders, the role of creative economy-based MSMEs in strengthening destination competitiveness, and the challenges of managing and marketing marine tourism. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and documentation. The data were analyzed thematically, complemented by SWOT analysis, stakeholder analysis, and the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine strategic priorities. The findings reveal that marine tourism development in Bone Bolango has adopted a pentahelix collaboration model, where the government acts as regulator and facilitator, businesses provide services, academia generates knowledge and training, local communities manage destinations, and media serve as promotion and education agents. MSMEs play a vital role as drivers of the creative economy through handicrafts, culinary products, and tourism services based on local wisdom. However, challenges persist, including limited digital literacy, restricted access to financing, environmental threats, and competition with other marine destinations. This study proposes an adaptive collaborative strategy that integrates MSMEs into marine tourism governance, emphasizing creative economy practices to promote inclusive and sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the strategic sectors that plays a significant role in supporting regional and national economic development. Its contribution not only includes increasing Regional Original Revenue (PAD), but also job creation, poverty alleviation, and improving the welfare of local communities (Niode & Rahman, 2022). In Indonesia, marine tourism has become one of the fastest growing subsectors due to the country's geographical potential, which is dominated by coastal and marine areas. This potential is increasingly relevant in the context of sustainable development, as marine tourism is directly linked to marine ecosystem conservation while also empowering coastal community economies (Winchenbach et al., 2022).

Bone Bolango Regency in Gorontalo Province is one of the regions with prominent marine tourism potential. Leading destinations such as Botubarani Whale Shark Tourism, Olele

Marine Park, Kurenai Beach, Botutunuo Beach, and Molotabu Beach have gained recognition at both national and international levels (Tui et al., 2023). Data from the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports of Bone Bolango Regency show an increase in tourist visits each year, for instance, Kurenai Beach received 239,296 visits in 2023, while Whale Shark Tourism increased from 21,466 visits in 2022 to 28,464 visits by August 2023 (Disarpora, 2025). Nevertheless, the contribution of marine tourism to improving local community welfare remains limited. The lack of community involvement in destination management, weak access of MSMEs to capital, and limited innovation are the main challenges (Binolombangan, 2024).

In the literature, multi stakeholder collaboration is considered an effective approach to addressing the complexity of sustainable tourism management. The pentahelix and heptahelix models emphasize the importance of involving five to seven key elements, namely government, academia, the private sector, communities, media, and even tourists (Sari et al., 2024; Taghulih & Ayuningsih, 2024). The application of these models has proven to strengthen community based tourism governance, enhance environmental conservation, and encourage service innovation (Karo & Aziz, 2024). In the context of Bone Bolango, such collaborative strategies are essential to align the interests of various actors in managing marine tourism potential.

In addition to collaboration, the empowerment of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is a crucial element in supporting the competitiveness of marine tourism. MSMEs function not only as providers of goods and services but also as cultural agents that introduce local wisdom through culinary products, handicrafts, and distinctive regional tourism services (Sakinah et al., 2022). Previous studies indicate that MSME involvement in tourism can increase regional income by up to 30% within five years (Sulistiyadi et al., 2024). However, MSMEs in Bone Bolango still face significant challenges, including limited access to capital, lack of training, and low adoption of digitalization (Mopangga et al., 2022).

Policies for tourism development based on the creative economy are also receiving increasing attention. The creative economy is seen as a driving force for destination competitiveness, as it is based on creativity, ideas, and innovation (M. Hasan, 2018; Pancawati & Widaswara, 2023). In marine tourism, the creative economy is manifested through the creation of unique local products, cultural festivals, and thematic tour packages that provide authentic experiences for tourists (Muhtasom et al., 2024). Therefore, the integration of the creative economy with MSME development in the marine tourism sector can create synergies oriented toward sustainable development (Han et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2023).

Based on the above description, this study is designed to address three main research questions: (1) how effective collaborative strategies can be developed among government, business actors, academics, local communities, and media in the development of marine tourism in Bone Bolango Regency; (2) how the empowerment of creative economy based MSMEs contributes to enhancing the competitiveness of marine tourism and the local economy; and (3) what are the main challenges faced in the management and marketing of creative economy based marine tourism destinations. The novelty of this research lies in the design of an adaptive collaborative strategy that integrates creative economy based MSMEs into the governance of marine tourism in Bone Bolango, with an emphasis on MSME empowerment relevant to the local context, as well as the development of inclusive and sustainable strategies aimed at improving community welfare while preserving local culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze collaborative strategies in the development of marine tourism through the empowerment of creative economy based MSMEs in Bone Bolango Regency. A qualitative approach is chosen as it enables an in depth understanding of stakeholder collaboration, community participation, and the role of MSMEs in strengthening tourism competitiveness (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

1. Research Stages

Data Identification and Collection: conducted through observation, in depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with local government, MSME actors, academics, local communities, and media.

Data Processing and Analysis: focused on the contribution of MSMEs within the marine tourism ecosystem, product innovation factors, access to capital, digital marketing strategies, and forms of multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Report Preparation and Publication: research findings are compiled into a scientific report and articles for publication in accredited national journals.

2. Data Analysis Techniques

To strengthen the findings, this study applies four analytical techniques (Bryson, 2018):

- a. Thematic qualitative analysis to identify patterns and themes from interviews and observations.
- b. SWOT analysis to assess strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in marine tourism development.
- c. Stakeholder analysis to map the interests and influence of key stakeholders.
- d. Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) to determine the most effective strategic priorities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Effective Collaborative Strategies Among Government, Business Actors, Academics, Local Communities, and Media in Marine Tourism Development

The research findings indicate that the development of marine tourism in Bone Bolango Regency cannot be separated from the implementation of a pentahelix based collaborative strategy. This model emphasizes the roles of five key actors government, business actors, academics, local communities, and media who must work synergistically to achieve sustainable development goals (Taghulihi & Ayuningsih, 2024). The study reveals that the local government functions as a regulator, facilitator, and infrastructure provider, while business actors serve as service providers. Academics contribute through research, training, and capacity building; local communities act as direct managers of tourism destinations; and the media serves as a channel for promotion and public education.

In the context of the government's role, concrete actions include the development of basic infrastructure such as road access to Kurenai Beach and Botubarani, the provision of destination management training, and the formulation of regional regulations governing tourism zoning. This role aligns with the concept of smart governance, which emphasizes intelligent,

innovative, and sustainable governance (Bryson, 2018). However, inter agency coordination remains a weakness. Overlapping authority among the Department of Tourism, the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, and the Department of Environment often leads to unsynchronized policies, highlighting the need for more structured multi stakeholder coordination forums.

Business actors also hold a crucial position within the tourism value chain. In Bone Bolango, local entrepreneurs manage marine transportation, snorkeling and diving equipment rentals, and family based homestays. The public private partnership (PPP) model implemented in several locations has demonstrated positive outcomes, such as the involvement of Botubarani fishermen in managing tourist boats alongside whale shark conservation programs. This practice illustrates the potential for inclusive partnerships that not only benefit investors but also distribute economic gains to local communities (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015).

Academics and higher education institutions contribute through research on marine tourism potential mapping, feasibility studies, and community service programs. This collaboration aligns with (Otundo Richard, 2024), who argues that creative tourism requires a strong knowledge base to generate sustainable product and service innovations. Research activities and thematic community service programs (KKN) conducted by universities in Gorontalo have helped strengthen the capacity of tourism village communities, particularly in ecotourism management and digital literacy.

Local communities play a direct role as destination managers, particularly through tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). They provide tour guide services, local culinary products, homestays, and are responsible for maintaining beach cleanliness and preserving marine ecosystems. The findings show that community involvement from the planning stage to management enhances a sense of ownership and commitment to sustainability, in line with the concept of Community Based Tourism (CBT) (Han et al., 2021).

The media acts as an agent of promotion and education. The use of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok by local content creators has increased the visibility of Bone Bolango as a marine tourism destination. However, promotional strategies remain fragmented and often depend on major events. In fact, consistent digital promotion can build stronger and more competitive destination branding (Schönherr et al., 2023).

A SWOT analysis of the collaborative strategy highlights several key points. In terms of strengths, the region possesses unique tourism attractions such as whale sharks in Botubarani and the underwater beauty of Olele. Weaknesses include limited human resource capacity and suboptimal inter agency coordination. Opportunities arise from the global trend toward conservation based tourism, while threats include environmental degradation and competition from other marine tourism destinations such as Wakatobi and Raja Ampat. Therefore, collaborative strategies should be directed toward strengthening multi-stakeholder institutions, enhancing human resource capacity, and integrating digital-based promotion.

2. The Role of Creative Economy-Based MSME Empowerment in Enhancing the Competitiveness of Marine Tourism and the Local Economy

MSMEs have proven to be a key driving force in creating added value for marine tourism in Bone Bolango. Handicraft products made from local materials, coastal culinary specialties, and educational tours based on cultural narratives demonstrate how community

creativity can enhance the attractiveness of tourism destinations (Pancawati & Widaswara, 2023). MSMEs not only meet the needs of tourists but also serve as a medium for preserving local culture and identity.

This study finds that fishermen in Botubarani not only provide boat services for whale shark tourism but also produce handicrafts from local materials and offer educational tours on marine conservation. This aligns with the concept proposed by (Siregar et al., 2025), which views the creative economy as being driven by ideas, creativity, and imagination as primary sources of economic value. Thus, MSMEs in Bone Bolango play a dual role: as tourism service providers and as cultural agents that enrich the tourist experience.

From an economic perspective, MSME involvement contributes to increasing local community income. A study by (Sakinah et al., 2022) shows that MSMEs can improve household welfare by up to 30% when integrated into the tourism ecosystem. In Bone Bolango, culinary and coastal handicraft MSMEs have proven capable of absorbing labor, particularly women and rural youth. This supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth.

However, structural challenges remain significant. Access to capital is limited, as most MSMEs lack collateral or creditworthiness in formal financial institutions. In addition, the digital literacy of MSME actors remains low, resulting in suboptimal use of e-commerce platforms and social media (Mopangga et al., 2022). MSME products also face issues related to packaging design, branding, and quality certification standards. These constraints reduce the competitiveness of Bone Bolango's MSMEs compared to other marine tourism destinations that are more advanced in digitalization.

Nevertheless, the potential for MSME innovation is substantial. Coastal cultural and culinary festivals initiated by the local government can serve as strategic platforms to introduce MSME products to wider markets. With support from academics in digital marketing training and product design, as well as promotion through local and national media, MSMEs are expected to scale up and become a central pillar of creative tourism in Bone Bolango.

3. Key Challenges in the Management and Marketing of Creative Economy-Based Marine Tourism Destinations

The management and marketing of creative economy based marine tourism in Bone Bolango still face fundamental challenges. First, governance fragmentation. The involvement of multiple agencies ranging from the Department of Tourism, the Department of Marine Affairs, to the Department of Environment often leads to overlapping authorities. This condition results in slow and unsynchronized decision making. In fact, effective governance should be integrated, responsive, and data driven (Bryson, 2018).

Second, issues related to digital literacy and destination branding. Most MSMEs still struggle to utilize digital platforms for promotion and sales. Tourism promotion is largely carried out through traditional methods or relies on individual social media accounts, making it inconsistent. This hinders the development of a strong brand identity for Bone Bolango as a leading marine tourism destination. According to (Schönherr et al., 2023), digital transformation in tourism must be accompanied by community literacy to avoid widening gaps.

Third, environmental threats and over-tourism. Uncontrolled tourism activities have the potential to damage marine ecosystems, particularly coral reefs in Olele and the whale shark

habitat in Botubarani. Plastic waste pollution, the use of environmentally unfriendly motorized boats, and destructive fishing practices pose serious threats (Niode & Rahman, 2022; Winchenbach et al., 2022). If not properly managed, the primary advantage of Bone Bolango as an ecotourism destination may be degraded.

Fourth, competition among destinations. Bone Bolango must compete with other well-established marine tourism destinations in Eastern Indonesia, such as Wakatobi, Raja Ampat, and Bunaken. Without strong differentiation and branding, Bone Bolango risks being left behind in the global tourism market.

To address these challenges, long term strategies should focus on three key aspects. First, strengthening multi stakeholder governance through regular pentahelix based coordination forums. Second, enhancing the capacity of local human resources in digital literacy, destination management, and service standards aligned with international benchmarks. Third, integrating conservation strategies with destination management to ensure a balance between economic growth and ecological sustainability. The success of tourism development will largely depend on collaboration among stakeholders in ensuring that the sector is developed based on sustainable, inclusive, and locally grounded principles (K. K. Hasan et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study confirms that marine tourism in Bone Bolango Regency holds significant potential to strengthen the local economy through collaborative governance and the empowerment of creative economy based MSMEs. The findings reveal that effective collaboration based on the pentahelix model encompassing government, business actors, academics, local communities, and media serves as the main driver of sustainable tourism development. The government acts as a regulator and facilitator, business actors provide services and investment, academics contribute through research and training, local communities preserve authenticity and cultural wisdom, while the media plays a role in promotion and public education.

MSMEs are proven to play a crucial role, not only as providers of goods and services but also as cultural ambassadors capable of transforming local wisdom into authentic tourism products. Their involvement enhances destination competitiveness by offering unique and personalized experiences to tourists. However, several challenges remain, including low levels of digital literacy, limited access to financing, and weak inter agency coordination. Environmental threats such as marine pollution and the risk of over-tourism further highlight the importance of a conservation-based approach.

The novelty of this research lies in the design of an adaptive collaborative strategy that integrates MSMEs into the governance of marine tourism, emphasizes creative economy practices, and promotes inclusive and sustainable development. This approach contributes theoretically to the discourse on sustainable tourism governance while also providing practical guidance for stakeholders in Bone Bolango and other regions.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, several recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the development of marine tourism in Bone Bolango Regency:

- a. For Local Government: Strengthen regulations and inter-agency coordination to avoid fragmented governance, while increasing resource allocation for infrastructure development and digital literacy programs for communities and MSME actors.
- b. For Business Actors: Expand inclusive partnerships with local communities and MSMEs, particularly through corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs focused on environmental conservation and community skill development.
- c. For Academics: Enhance applied research and community service programs that directly support tourism innovation, MSME empowerment, and environmental sustainability.
- d. For Local Communities: Strengthen active participation not only as tourism service providers but also as owners and innovators of cultural and creative products that add value to marine tourism.
- e. For Media: Develop consistent and professional digital campaigns by utilizing storytelling and branding strategies to expand the tourism market of Bone Bolango.

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