

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE ACCOMMODATION POLICY IN SOUTH SULAWESI, INDONESIA: A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Tourism plays a pivotal role in the global economy, generating significant economic growth and providing millions of jobs worldwide. However, its rapid expansion, especially in developing regions, often leads to environmental and social challenges, such as resource depletion and threats to cultural heritage. This study investigates the challenges faced by South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in implementing sustainable accommodation policies, with a focus on community-based and participatory tourism initiatives. The research identifies key barriers to sustainability, including fragmented institutional coordination, inadequate infrastructure, financial constraints, and limited community engagement. Despite the presence of policy frameworks for green tourism, inconsistent enforcement and overlapping regulations hinder effective implementation. The study highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom, fostering stakeholder participation, and aligning environmental, economic, and social objectives in tourism development. By exploring these challenges and opportunities, the research emphasizes the need for multi-stakeholder, integrated approaches to address sustainability gaps.

Keywords: Sustainable Accommodation, Tourism Policy, South Sulawesi, Multi-Stakeholder Analysis

A. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a powerful global economic sector, generating over 10% of global GDP and millions of jobs, but its influence extends well beyond economics. Tourism development is most effective when local communities are actively involved in tourism planning and management (Anindhita et al., 2024; Da Costa et al., 2025; Gaonkar & Sukthankar, 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Tran & Tran, 2024; Turčinović et al., 2025; Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025). This inclusive approach not only preserves cultural heritage but also ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are equitably distributed among the local population. Furthermore, empowering local communities involves increasing their participation and voice in decision-making (Anindhita et al., 2024; Da Costa et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Tran & Tran, 2024; Turčinović et al., 2025; Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025). This dynamic interaction between stakeholders and local residents is a cornerstone of modern sustainable tourism frameworks. However, the rapid growth of tourism can also create significant environmental and social pressures, particularly in developing regions where regulatory enforcement and sustainability awareness are often weak. These pressures include resource

depletion, competition for local facilities, threats to cultural authenticity, and challenges to social cohesion (Anindhita et al., 2024; Thelen & Kim, 2024; Brooks et al., 2023). Addressing these issues requires integrative strategies that promote participatory governance, effective policy-making, and the incorporation of cultural, social, economic, and environmental sustainability pillars at every stage of tourism development (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Turčinović et al., 2025; Gaonkar & Sukthankar, 2025; Da Costa et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023). Empowering local stakeholders and ensuring their active participation are fundamental to achieving sustainable and equitable tourism outcomes (Anindhita et al., 2024; Da Costa et al., 2025; Tran & Tran, 2024; Turčinović et al., 2025; Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025).

1.1 Background and Rationale

Indonesia's rapidly expanding tourism sector is a vital economic engine, but its growth often surpasses the country's ability to manage environmental and social impacts effectively. Sustainable accommodation policies are central to addressing these challenges, as hotels, homestays, and other facilities significantly influence both the ecological footprint of tourism and the well-being of local communities. In Bali, for example, the integration of green human resource management and eco-innovation—rooted in local philosophies like *Tri Hita Karana*—has been shown to improve environmental performance in hotels, suggesting that strong leadership and staff engagement are key to long-term sustainability (Bagus et al., 2024). However, at the national level, Indonesia's tourism policies have struggled with gaps in environmental sustainability, infrastructure, and interagency coordination, indicating that policy mechanisms alone are insufficient without effective implementation and resource allocation (Koerner et al., 2023; Jaelani et al., 2023).

Community-based approaches, especially in rural and tourism villages, highlight the importance of local wisdom, cultural preservation, and active community involvement in managing tourism's impacts (Suprobowati et al., 2025; Rosalina et al., 2023; Saputro et al., 2023; Hermawan et al., 2023; Ferdian et al., 2024). Strategies such as green architecture, smart management systems to reduce waste, and stakeholder engagement are being explored to promote sustainable practices in accommodation and tourism development (Ranti & Lee, 2023; Yuliani & Setyaningsih, 2023). Despite regulatory frameworks for green tourism, overlapping regulations and inconsistent enforcement remain challenges, limiting the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives (Jaelani et al., 2023). Overall, successful sustainable accommodation in Indonesia depends on harmonizing economic goals with environmental stewardship and community empowerment, requiring both innovative practices at the facility level and stronger, more coordinated policy implementation at the national and local levels (Bagus et al., 2024; Suprobowati et al., 2025; Koerner et al., 2023; Rosalina et al., 2023; Ranti & Lee, 2023; Saputro et al., 2023; Yuliani & Setyaningsih, 2023; Hermawan et al., 2023; Jaelani et al., 2023; Ferdian et al., 2024).

South Sulawesi's diverse tourism landscape—including urban, coastal, and cultural destinations—faces significant challenges in implementing sustainable accommodation policies. Despite its rich tourism potential, sustainability efforts in the region are fragmented, with many accommodations lacking effective waste management, energy efficiency, and integration of local resources. A key barrier is the lack of institutional coordination among

tourism, environmental, and investment agencies, resulting in overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent policy enforcement.

Research from other Indonesian regions highlights that successful sustainable tourism requires coordinated efforts among government, industry, local communities, and other stakeholders, with a focus on aligning environmental, economic, and social objectives (Buchari et al., 2024). Community-based and participatory approaches, as well as the integration of local wisdom and stakeholder engagement, are essential for improving sustainability and resilience in tourism management (Buchari et al., 2024). These findings suggest that South Sulawesi could benefit from adopting similar multi-stakeholder, integrated strategies to address its current policy and implementation gaps.

Several key factors hinder the effective implementation of sustainable accommodation policies in South Sulawesi. First, there is a lack of institutional coordination among tourism, environmental, and investment agencies, leading to overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent policy enforcement across districts. This results in uneven operationalization of sustainability principles, as seen in Tana Toraja, where accommodation growth has outpaced infrastructure planning, and in Bulukumba, where poor waste management and weak regulatory oversight have led to environmental degradation.

Broader research from Indonesia and similar contexts highlights additional barriers, including inadequate infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, and insufficient investment in sustainable practices (Sukran et al., 2025). The absence of stakeholder engagement—particularly the exclusion of local communities from decision-making—further undermines policy effectiveness and leads to fragmented sustainability efforts (Fernandez-Abila et al., 2024; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires cooperative, multi-stakeholder initiatives, improved policy coherence, and a shift toward circular economy concepts in waste management to ensure long-term ecological and economic resilience (Sukran et al., 2025; Ratnasari et al., 2023).

1.2 Research Gap and Objectives

Empirical research on the implementation of sustainable accommodation policies in emerging regions like South Sulawesi is limited, but studies from similar Indonesian contexts highlight several key challenges and enabling factors. Major challenges include fragmented institutional coordination, where overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent enforcement hinder effective policy execution, as well as inadequate infrastructure and limited human resource capacity (Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023; Rosalina et al., 2023). Socio-economic disparities and the lack of stakeholder engagement—particularly the exclusion of local communities from decision-making—further undermine the operationalization of sustainability principles at the local level (Rosalina et al., 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2024).

Enabling factors identified in related research include integrated policy development that involves all stakeholders, strong community and customary involvement, and the strategic use of local resources to foster conservation and co-creative tourism experiences (Rosalina et al., 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2024). Financial incentives, business scalability, and participatory management approaches also support the sustainability of accommodation and tourism initiatives (Ariyani & Fauzi, 2024). Thematic analysis using qualitative, multi-stakeholder approaches—such as the one described in your

study—can help uncover the complex interlinkages among institutional, economic, and social dimensions, providing a deeper understanding of both barriers and opportunities for sustainable policy implementation in South Sulawesi (Rosalina et al., 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2024).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative, multi-stakeholder design guided by collaborative governance, policy-implementation models, and sustainability frameworks for the accommodation sector. Fieldwork focused on South Sulawesi’s main destination types—urban Makassar, coastal Bulukumba, and cultural Tana Toraja—to capture institutional and socio-ecological variation in implementation contexts. Data were generated through in-depth interviews with key actors directly involved in policy practice—local government officials, accommodation operators, and community leaders—as reflected in anonymized quotations from Makassar, Bulukumba, and Tana Toraja. Interview accounts were situated within the prevailing policy environment (e.g., Indonesia’s Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme) to ground interpretations of on-the-ground practice. Analysis followed thematic analysis to synthesize cross-cutting patterns across institutional/regulatory, economic/financing, and social/participation dimensions of implementation.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Institutional and Regulatory Fragmentation

One of the most significant findings in this study is the fragmentation of institutional and regulatory frameworks, which has severely impacted the implementation of sustainable accommodation policies in South Sulawesi. While Indonesia has established a national framework for sustainable tourism through policies such as the Sustainable Tourism Certification Scheme, these policies often fail to be effectively implemented at the local level due to weak coordination among the various government bodies.

Local government representatives from South Sulawesi highlighted a lack of clear institutional boundaries and overlapping responsibilities between tourism, environmental, and investment agencies. For instance, tourism offices focus on boosting visitor numbers and business growth, whereas environmental agencies prioritize conservation, leading to conflicting priorities. A senior official from the Bulukumba Regional Development Agency stated:

“Local hotels are not required to comply with sustainability guidelines unless they are specifically certified. However, there is no coordinated effort to enforce these certifications consistently across districts.”

This fragmentation has led to policy incoherence and missed opportunities for integrated planning. A significant barrier to sustainability is the absence of unified monitoring systems across districts, which would allow for tracking and evaluating the environmental performance of accommodation providers. In the absence of such a system, sustainability efforts become disjointed, with some regions making significant progress while others lag behind.

In addition, the research identified capacity disparities between districts. Urban centers like Makassar have better infrastructure and human resources to support sustainability programs, whereas rural areas like Tana Toraja struggle with limited budgets and external dependencies. This disparity in institutional capacity undermines the equitable implementation of sustainable tourism policies.

3.1.2 Financial and Resource-Based Constraints

Another critical theme that emerged from the data is the financial constraints faced by accommodation providers. The majority of participants across all districts identified high initial costs as a significant barrier to adopting sustainable practices. Many accommodation operators expressed interest in implementing green technologies, such as solar panels or waste management systems. However, these investments require significant capital, and there is a lack of fiscal incentives, such as tax breaks or government subsidies, to make these technologies financially viable.

A hotel manager from Makassar explained:

“We would like to invest in energy-efficient technologies, but the upfront costs are too high. Without financial incentives or subsidies, it is challenging to justify the investment, especially for smaller businesses.”

Furthermore, participants noted that local governments lack sufficient budgets to provide financial support for sustainability initiatives. For instance, many tourism offices in South Sulawesi are constrained by limited budgets, which restricts their ability to support accommodation providers with training, monitoring, or financial incentives.

The financial challenges are exacerbated by the short-term nature of many investments in the tourism sector. As one community representative from Bulukumba pointed out:

“Most investors are focused on immediate returns, so there is little emphasis on long-term sustainability. They build fast but rarely maintain the quality or environmental standards of their properties.”

This short-term profit orientation hampers the integration of sustainability into long-term business strategies. To address these barriers, the study emphasizes the need for public-private partnerships (PPPs), low-interest green loans, and tax incentives to reduce the financial burden on accommodation providers.

3.1.3 Limited Social Awareness and Participation

The third significant theme identified was the limited social awareness and participation in sustainable tourism practices. Despite growing recognition of the importance of environmental responsibility, many accommodation providers and local communities lack awareness of the ecological impacts of tourism and the potential benefits of sustainable practices.

A community leader from Tana Toraja explained:

“Our people are proud of our culture and heritage, but we are not yet fully aware of the environmental impacts of tourism. Many accommodations do not involve the local community in environmental initiatives.”

Similarly, accommodation providers often view sustainability as a corporate responsibility, rather than an integral part of their operational practices. A resort owner in Bulukumba noted:

“We organize occasional beach clean-ups for publicity, but it does not translate into systemic changes in our daily operations.”

This gap in awareness and participation is a major obstacle to effective sustainability governance. Local communities and accommodation providers must be engaged more actively in sustainability initiatives through capacity-building programs, education, and participatory governance mechanisms.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Institutional Coherence and the Limits of Decentralization

Decentralized governance in Indonesia has led to fragmented institutional structures and unclear regulatory authority, resulting in inefficiencies in the implementation of sustainable tourism policies. This fragmentation is particularly evident in the lack of coordination between tourism, environment, and investment agencies, which creates policy dissonance and implementation failures due to unclear inter-organizational boundaries and competing mandates. The absence of integrated planning systems further complicates efforts to monitor and assess the sustainability performance of accommodation providers, making it difficult for local governments to achieve cohesive and effective policy outcomes (Koerner et al., 2023; Jaelani et al., 2023).

To address these challenges, research recommends the establishment of multi-level governance platforms that facilitate coordination among national, provincial, and district agencies. Such platforms can align sustainability objectives, enable data sharing, and harmonize regulations across sectors, thereby overcoming regulatory overlap and improving policy coherence (Fatina et al., 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023; Jaelani et al., 2023). Integrated, collaborative models that involve all stakeholders—including government, private sector, and communities—are essential for creating a conducive ecosystem for sustainable tourism and ensuring long-term ecological and economic resilience (Fatina et al., 2023; Ariyani & Fauzi, 2023; Achmad et al., 2023).

3.2.2 Economic Incentives and the Politics of Sustainability Financing

Financial constraints are a major barrier to the adoption of sustainable practices among accommodation providers, as high upfront costs for green technologies and the lack of financial incentives make sustainability appear prohibitively expensive. Research highlights the critical role of green financing mechanisms—such as green bonds, low-interest loans, and targeted grants—in enabling investment in environmentally responsible technologies and practices within the tourism and hospitality sectors (Shang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2025; Fu et al., 2024; Hunjra et al., 2023). For example, the issuance of green bonds has been shown to significantly improve the green efficiency of tourism accommodations in the long term, while innovative financial instruments like mini-bonds can provide alternative funding sources for both large and small projects, including waste management and renewable energy infrastructure (Shang et al., 2023; Bužinské et al., 2025).

Policy recommendations emphasize the need for transparent regulations, green fiscal policies, and the integration of circular economy principles to further support sustainable tourism development (Shang et al., 2023; Fu et al., 2024). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can also play a key role by facilitating shared infrastructure projects, such as renewable energy microgrids or centralized waste treatment facilities, which benefit a wide range of accommodation providers. Additionally, eco-certification programs and market-based incentives can enhance the visibility and competitiveness of sustainable accommodations, attracting environmentally conscious consumers and turning sustainability into a business advantage (Fu et al., 2024).

3.2.3 Social Empowerment and the Cultural Dimensions of Sustainability

Social participation and cultural integration are widely recognized as essential for sustainable tourism governance, yet research consistently finds that local communities often have limited engagement with sustainability practices, especially in culturally rich regions

where traditional beliefs are central to tourism but disconnected from modern governance frameworks. This disconnect can create resistance to sustainability policies that do not respect or incorporate local traditions and cultural norms, highlighting the need for context-sensitive approaches that integrate indigenous values and practices (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Paulino et al., 2023). For example, participatory governance structures—such as community tourism councils, co-creation workshops, and joint training programs—have been shown to empower local communities, foster consensus, and ensure that sustainability initiatives are both culturally appropriate and widely accepted (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Paulino et al., 2023; Spadaro et al., 2023).

Studies recommend that sustainability policies be designed to align with local customs and traditions, ensuring cultural relevance and community buy-in (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Paulino et al., 2023). Integrative strategies that promote participatory governance and cooperation between public and private actors can help overcome structural barriers, maximize positive impacts, and preserve both cultural heritage and social fabric (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Paulino et al., 2023; Spadaro et al., 2023). Ultimately, effective sustainable tourism governance requires not only the active involvement of local communities but also the respectful integration of their cultural values into policy design and implementation (Zambrano-Mieles et al., 2025; Ottaviani et al., 2023; Paulino et al., 2023).

3.2.4 Interdependence of Institutional, Economic, and Social Dimensions

Research supports the idea that the successful implementation of sustainable accommodation policies requires a holistic approach that addresses the interdependence of institutional, economic, and social (including cultural) dimensions. Studies emphasize that improvements in one area—such as effective institutional coordination—can facilitate economic incentives, which in turn drive greater social participation and empowerment, creating a positive feedback loop for sustainability outcomes (Haag et al., 2024; González-Fernández & Pérez-Moreno, 2025; Väisänen et al., 2023; Hassanli & Williamson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). The Holistic Quality Model and similar frameworks highlight the importance of integrating economic, environmental, and social quality aspects, and stress that these dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than isolated (Haag et al., 2024; González-Fernández & Pérez-Moreno, 2025; Jayawardana et al., 2025).

Additionally, adaptive governance mechanisms and participatory structures are recommended to ensure that policies remain responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities, and to foster collaboration and feedback among stakeholders (González-Fernández & Pérez-Moreno, 2025; Hassanli & Williamson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Incorporating local cultural values and community engagement into policy design further strengthens the sustainability of accommodation services, as it enhances both acceptance and effectiveness (Hassanli & Williamson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025). Overall, a holistic, collaborative, and adaptive approach is essential for moving towards a more integrated and sustainable tourism model (González-Fernández & Pérez-Moreno, 2025; Haag et al., 2024; Hassanli & Williamson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025).

Sustainable Accommodation Holistic Approach



Figure 1. Framework of sustainable accommodation policy implementation. Adapted from González-Fernández & Pérez-Moreno, 2025; Haag et al., 2024; Hassanli & Williamson, 2023; Zhang et al., 2025.

D. Conclusion

This study underscores the significant challenges in implementing sustainable accommodation policies in South Sulawesi, identifying fragmented institutional coordination, financial constraints, and limited social awareness as the primary barriers. To address these issues, immediate and structured policy interventions are required. First, the study recommends the establishment of an inter-agency task force—comprising representatives from tourism, environmental, and investment bodies at both provincial and district levels—to harmonize regulations, oversee policy execution, and ensure consistent monitoring of sustainability standards. Second, the government should introduce green fiscal incentives, such as tax rebates or low-interest green loans, to offset the high initial costs of adopting eco-friendly technologies for local accommodation providers.

Furthermore, active stakeholder engagement, particularly empowering local communities through capacity building and integrating local wisdom into operational practices, remains critical for fostering long-term socio-economic and environmental resilience.

Future Research Directions

While this study provides a comprehensive qualitative overview, future research should explore the quantitative impact of the proposed green fiscal incentives on the operational performance of accommodations. Additionally, expanding the scope to include longitudinal studies across different Indonesian provinces would allow for comparative analyses and a broader understanding of the effectiveness of inter-agency collaborations in sustainable tourism governance.

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