

Understanding Actor Dynamic in Local Tourism Policy Implementation: Lessons from Bantaeng City

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Received: 11th Dec, 2025; Revised: 6th Feb 2026; Accepted: 12th Feb, 2026; Available Online: 28th Feb, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the success of the structure and dynamics of policy network actors in implementing tourism policy in Bantaeng Regency. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with analysis based on five theoretical indicators according to Klijn and Koppenjan (2016): focusing on Recognizing the Complexity of Policy Implementation, mapping actor structures and framing problems and solutions. The results of the study indicate that the indicator Recognizing Complexity of Policy Implementation in Destination Development cannot be handled by a single actor, but requires collaboration across sectors, business actors, local communities, and public facilities. This shared understanding of interdependence indicates that actors have recognized the complexity of the policy network. The indicator Mapping the structure of actors in the policy network has not been running optimally, because tourism management involves many actors with different roles, interests, capacities, and levels of influence, thus requiring a systematic mapping process before policy interventions are carried out. Actor mapping is also important to ensure transparency and prevent illegal levies. The indicator Framing problems and solutions in the policy network, because each actor brings different perspectives, interests, and framings related to destination issues ranging from irregular business actor activities, non-uniformity of service standards, to limited supporting facilities so that the resulting solutions are not fully consistent, comprehensive, and responsive. The indicator While striving to direct cross-actor collaboration, coordination capacity and regulatory consistency still need to be strengthened so that destination governance can be more focused, adaptive, and sustainable.

Keywords: *Policy Network, Actors, Tourism*

How to cite this article: Sulfira, Alwi and Nara N, Understanding Actor Dynamic in Local Tourism Policy Implementation: Lessons from Bantaeng City. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(5s): 456-461. DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.5s.61

Source of support: Nil.

Conflict of interest: None

INTRODUCTION

From a public administration perspective, public policy is a tool used by the state or government to regulate and distribute important values within society through legitimate and enforceable decisions. Public policy involves not only administrative processes but also political and social dimensions, involving struggles between various community groups to determine what constitutes shared values and priorities (Easton, 1953). These problems arise from public demands for increasingly high-quality public services and the limited resources required for such provision (Alwi, 2022).

In this context, the formulation and implementation of public policy can no longer be viewed as simple. This occurs because they involve numerous stakeholders, some of whom have conflicting interests (Alwi, 2022). Solving public problems and needs is complex because the implementation of public services and policies is no longer the sole domain of the government; it requires the involvement and collaboration of other stakeholders, such as the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

The success of a policy will depend heavily on the involvement of various actors (Rukmana et al., 2020).

The success of tourism development cannot be measured solely by physical development. Increasing the effectiveness of tourism development requires comprehensive action. Development must encompass all aspects related to and influencing tourism. Some measures in tourism development include physical revitalization, market management development, creative economy empowerment, and protection of rare natural resources. Successful tourism development cannot be achieved by maximizing a single measure; it must be implemented in a balanced manner.

Tourism development policies aim not only to increase tourist visits, encourage local economic growth, create jobs, and preserve cultural heritage. However, the implementation of tourism policies does not solely rely on government actors but involves a complex network of actors, including technical agencies, the private sector, local communities, and non-governmental organizations.

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The process of implementing public policy in the current context of decentralization tends to take place through a collaborative and network-based governance approach. In this context, the success of implementation is largely determined by the structure and dynamics of relationships between actors. Relationships between actors are not hierarchical, but horizontal and interdependent, making the exchange of resources and trust the main foundations of networked work. Public policy implementation is the action taken in a previous decision. This action transforms the decision into operational actions carried out by public organizations to achieve predetermined goals (Van Meter and Van Horn, 2008).

In Bantaeng Regency, various tourism development efforts have been undertaken, ranging from destination infrastructure development to digital tourism promotion. However, challenges such as weak cross-sectoral coordination, the dominance of certain actors, conflicts of interest, and low local community participation remain obstacles to achieving policy objectives. Due to these problems, the involvement of many actors in the formulation and implementation of tourism policies is increasingly complex. In this regard, the Bantaeng Regency Tourism Office holds authority in this regard. Therefore, the above phenomena indicate the importance of examining how the structure and dynamics of policy actor networks are formed, operate, and influence the effectiveness of tourism policy implementation.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach, focusing on analyzing the policy network in tourism policy in Bantaeng Regency, South Sulawesi Province. The research design used is a case study. In the analysis process, the researcher utilized the policy network theory proposed by Klijn & Koppenjan (2016) focuses on the complexity of tourism problems in Bantaeng Regency faced by actors as well as the efforts and solution frameworks undertaken to resolve tourism problems through the public policy process.

Data collection was conducted through observations and interviews with several informants, including the Head of Tourism Destination Attractions, Tourism Managers and Visitors. In addition, the researcher also collected various documents, including research results and other relevant documents, to enrich the analysis. The collected data were then analyzed using data analysis techniques proposed by Creswell (2018): Organizing and Preparing Data, Reading Through All Data, Coding the Data, and Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the Bantaeng Regency Tourism Office, tourism policy implementation involves interactions between local governments, business actors, community groups, and non-governmental organizations with interests in tourism destination development. Therefore, understanding the structure and dynamics of policy networks is crucial for assessing how policy processes are implemented, how

coordination and negotiation between actors are formed, and the extent to which these relationships influence the effectiveness of policy implementation.

Based on the Policy Network theory perspective proposed by Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), public policy is the result of interactions between interdependent actors within a network. In this context, the local government is no longer viewed as the sole primary actor, but rather as a network manager, whose role is to manage relationships and communication among the actors involved. In the context of Bantaeng Regency, the dynamics of the tourism policy network reflect how actors collaborate, share information, and negotiate their respective interests to achieve policy objectives. The following are visitor numbers from 2020-2024:

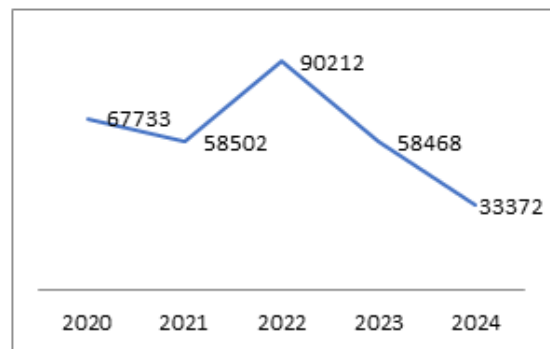


Figure 1. Domestic Tourists in Bantaeng Regency

Source: Bantaeng Regency Tourism Office (2025)

Data on domestic tourist visits to various tourist destinations managed by the Bantaeng Regency government shows fluctuating dynamics over the past five years. Four government-managed tourist destinations—Marina Beach, Eremerasa, Bissappu Waterfall, and Datuk Pakkalimbungan—have uneven visitation patterns. Eremerasa Baths was the destination with the highest number of visitors from 2020 to 2024, with a total of 139,294 visitors, followed by Datuk Pakkalimbungan with 87,746 visitors. Meanwhile, Bissappu Waterfall received 68,685 visitors, and Marina Beach had a very low number of visitors, with 38,147 visitors. These visitor numbers indicate variations in the level of attractiveness, accessibility, and promotional effectiveness of each tourist destination in Bantaeng Regency. 2022 marked the peak year for all destinations, particularly Bissappu Waterfall with 26,837 visitors and Marina Beach with 10,892 visitors. This increase was related to community activity following COVID-19 restrictions, which increased domestic tourist mobility. Then, visitor numbers began to decline significantly in 2023, particularly at Marina Beach and Bissappu Waterfall. This reflected challenges in management and promotion, as well as a decline in the intensity of regional tourism. However, 2024 showed stability, with a rebound in visits to certain destinations, such as the Eremerasa Baths and Datuk Pakkalimbungan. This indicates adaptations to tourism policies and improvements in destination management.

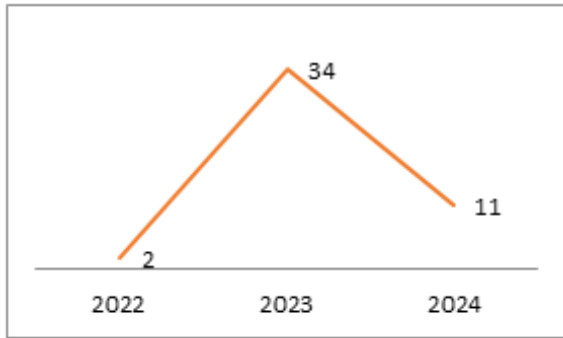


Figure 2. Foreign Tourists in Bantaeng Regency

Source: Bantaeng Regency Tourism Office (2025)

Table 3.2 shows that foreign tourist visits to Bantaeng Regency's tourist destinations over the past five years have remained very low and uneven. Foreign tourist visits were only recorded in 2022, with two visitors to the Eremerasa Baths, before increasing in 2023 with 34 visitors to Bissappu Waterfall. In 2024, 11 foreign visitors returned. Meanwhile, Marina Beach and Datuk Pakkalimbungan have yet to receive any foreign tourists.

These tourist destination visit figures demonstrate the effectiveness of the Bantaeng Regency Tourism Office's policy implementation in developing and strengthening tourist attractions. Destinations experiencing consistent visitor increases, such as the Eremerasa Baths and Datuk Pakkalimbungan, can be used as indicators of the success of policies based on infrastructure development, event hosting, and increased accessibility. Conversely, destinations that tend to fluctuate or decline indicate the need for further intervention through promotional strategies, improving the quality of service facilities, and optimizing stakeholder networks in regional tourism development.

According to Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), important indicators that can improve policy networks are: Recognizing the Complexity of Policy Implementation, Mapping Actor Structure, Interaction and Negotiation, Framing Problems and Solutions, and the Role of Government as a Network Manager.

Complexity of Policy Implementation

This strategy emphasizes the complexity of tourism policy in Bantaeng Regency arising from the involvement of various interests, resources, and socio-economic dynamics. The development of tourist destinations such as Marina Beach, Bissappu Waterfall, Eremerasa Baths, and Datuk Pa'kkalimbungan requires a combination of infrastructure policies, community empowerment, promotion, and investment, which cannot be addressed by a single actor.

By recognizing this complexity, local governments and network actors can avoid overly technocratic and rigid policy approaches. This recognition encourages the use of collaborative, adaptive, and process-oriented approaches. Awareness of complexity also helps actors understand that successful implementation is determined not only by

planning but also by the ability to manage change, conflict, and social dynamics that arise during the policy process. This reflects the theory of Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), which states that by recognizing the complexity of tourism policy implementation, which involves cross-sectors (government, businesses, communities, and local organizations) that do not exist within a single hierarchical structure, the implementation of tourism policy can be more effective. The Head of the Tourism Destination Division stated that:

“Tourism sector development cannot be carried out by a single actor; it requires collaboration across stakeholders. This is crucial, especially as tourism is a leading sector in the economy, particularly through several popular tourist destinations. (October 23, 2025)

Based on an interview with the Head of the Destinations Division, the success of a tourism policy requires acknowledging the complexity and importance of destination development. Tourism development cannot be achieved by a single actor; for example, cross-sector collaboration, collaboration with destination managers, and the development of joint promotional strategies are needed. This collaboration not only increases visitor numbers but also demonstrates the social dynamics that emerge during the policy process.

The tourism sector is a cross-sectoral sector involving various interests, from the government, business actors, local communities, to communities and non-governmental organizations. Without collaboration between stakeholders, tourism development has the potential to be partial, overlapping, and unsustainable. The government plays a role in formulating regulations, spatial planning, and providing infrastructure; the private sector contributes to investment, innovation, and destination management; while local communities are key actors in preserving culture, the environment, and the quality of the tourism experience. Collaboration enables alignment of visions, a clear division of roles, and more efficient use of resources, so that tourism policies and programs are oriented not only toward economic growth but also toward social and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, collaboration between stakeholders is crucial for increasing the competitiveness and resilience of the tourism sector in the face of external dynamics, such as changing tourist preferences, economic crises, disasters, and pandemics. Through collaboration, decision-making processes become more inclusive and responsive to local needs, thereby minimizing conflicts of interest and increasing policy legitimacy. This synergy also encourages locally driven innovation, strengthened community capacity, and a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Thus, collaboration is not just a strategic choice, but a primary prerequisite for sustainable and equitable tourism development. This is also in line with the statement of the Tourism Manager:

"Tourism management will be successful if there is synergy between parties, including the community and other non-governmental organizations." (October 24, 2025)

Interview results indicate that destination managers recognize the complexity of tourism policy implementation, noting that each destination's problems cannot be resolved by a single actor. This recognition of complexity aligns with the view of Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), who emphasized that policy in a network context always involves interdependence between actors. Therefore, the involvement of business actors, local communities, and community organizations is crucial to creating collaborations that can drive more effective tourism destination development in Bantaeng Regency.

From the perspective of the policy network theory proposed by Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), managing the tourism sector requires collaboration between actors because the problems are complex, interdependent, and cannot be resolved by a single actor. Tourism involves a network of actors consisting of government, business actors, local communities, communities, and non-governmental organizations, each with different interests, resources, and perceptions. According to Klijn and Koppenjan, this interdependence requires these actors to interact within a policy network, where hierarchical coordination is no longer effective. Collaboration becomes the primary mechanism for pooling dispersed resources, knowledge, and authority, enabling tourism management to be more adaptive and contextual.

Furthermore, Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) emphasize the importance of interaction, trust, and network management in ensuring effective collaboration between actors. In the tourism context, the success of destination management is greatly influenced by the ability of key actors to build shared understanding, manage conflicts of interest, and create collectively agreed-upon rules of the game. Well-managed collaboration enables joint learning and policy innovation, resulting in more legitimate and sustainable decisions. Thus, according to Klijn and Koppenjan's framework, collaboration between actors is not merely a means of coordination but is at the heart of network-based tourism governance. This condition is also clarified by visitors, as part of the community who also have a role and responsibility in managing tourism.

"The success of tourist destination management is influenced by various interrelated aspects, including environmental cleanliness, accessibility, service quality of business operators, comfort of public facilities, and local community involvement. Visitors emphasize that if any of these aspects fail, the entire destination suffers. (October 25, 2025)

Interviews with visitors to tourist destinations in Bantaeng Regency indicate that they recognize that tourism management cannot be handled by a single entity. Visitors believe that destination quality is influenced by various interrelated elements, such as environmental cleanliness, accessibility, service quality from business operators, the

comfort of public facilities, and the active participation of local communities. Visitors emphasized that if any of these elements fail to function properly, the overall quality of the destination can decline. This finding aligns with the perspective of Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), who emphasize that policy implementation occurs within a complex network context, where various actors have interrelated roles and interests. Therefore, visitors' recognition of the interconnectedness of various aspects of a destination reflects that improving tourism quality in Bantaeng Regency requires cross-actor coordination and management that is responsive to this complexity.

The involvement and perceptions of local communities and visitors play a crucial role in advancing the tourism sector while reducing the complexity of its associated problems. Tourism is not only about providing destinations and infrastructure, but also about social acceptance, cultural values, and environmental sustainability. When local communities are actively involved in tourism planning and management, they are no longer positioned as objects but rather as subjects of development. This involvement fosters a sense of ownership, increases compliance with regulations, and strengthens the community's commitment to preserving the local environment and culture. Positive community perceptions of tourism also contribute to reducing the potential for social conflict, resistance, and exploitative practices that often contribute to the complexity of destination management.

Furthermore, the perceptions and experiences of visitors also influence the direction and quality of tourism development. Tourists are not only consumers but also actors who interact directly with the spaces, communities, and ecosystems of destinations. Visitor input, behavior, and satisfaction levels can be important sources of information for policy improvement and more responsive destination management. When tourist perceptions align with sustainability values—for example, through environmental awareness and respect for local culture—pressure on resources can be controlled and tourism issues become more manageable. Thus, engaging communities and visitors in building shared perceptions serves as a social mechanism to simplify complexity, strengthen policy legitimacy, and encourage sustainable tourism.

Actor Structure

In policy networks, this structural mapping provides a framework for analyzing key actors within the policy network, how they are connected, and how the distribution of resources and access to information influences their position. Using this approach, dominant actors (central actors), brokers, and peripheral actors within the tourism network can be identified. Mapping the actor structure within the policy network is crucial for understanding the duties and functions of each. Key actors include the Tourism Office as the leading sector, village governments as direct managers, business actors, and tourists as service users.

Actor mapping also serves as a tool for identifying potential collaborations and conflicts. For example, community-based destination management requires synergy between village governments, while tourist destinations require strong relationships with local governments. By understanding this structure, the government can design more targeted collaboration mechanisms, such as dividing roles in destination management, integrating promotions between the government and business actors, and structuring authority between agencies to avoid overlapping roles. The importance of actor mapping in viewing and determining the structure of the actor network was also explained by the Head of the Tourism Destination Sector:

“It's important to map and identify actors with their respective roles and interests, including tourism businesses, local communities, and visitors themselves. This mapping aims to understand the position, capacity, and contribution of each actor, serving as a crucial initial step before determining the form of collaboration or policy intervention strategy. (October 23, 2025)

The interview results indicate that mapping tourism actors—business actors, local communities, and visitors—is a crucial prerequisite for understanding the structure and dynamics of tourism policy networks. According to Klijn and Koppenjan (2016), public policy, including tourism, is implemented within the context of policy networks characterized by interconnected actors with varying interests, resources, and levels of influence. Tourism business actors generally possess capital capacity, market access, and managerial skills; local communities possess contextual knowledge, social legitimacy, and control over local space and culture; while visitors act as end-users shaping destination demand and image. Without clear mapping, interactions between actors have the potential to be unequal, uncoordinated, and give rise to conflicts of interest, which in turn increase the complexity of tourism issues.

Furthermore, Klijn and Koppenjan (2016) emphasize that understanding the positions and perceptions of actors within policy networks is fundamental to effective network management. The actor mapping generated from these interviews can be understood as an initial effort to identify points of interdependence, potential coalitions, and strategic resources that can be integrated into the collaborative process. By understanding the capacity and contribution of each actor, governments or destination managers can design more adaptive and inclusive policy intervention strategies, for example through participation mechanisms, economic incentives, or regulating tourist behavior. Within a policy network framework, this step serves not only as an analytical tool but also as a foundation for building trust, managing conflict, and simplifying the complexities of tourism governance toward more sustainable outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The complexity of policy implementation within the structure and dynamics of the tourism policy network in Bantaeng Regency has been well-executed. Destination development cannot be handled by a single actor but requires collaboration across sectors, including businesses, local communities, and public facilities. This shared understanding of interdependence demonstrates that actors recognize the complexity of the policy network. Effective management of this complexity still requires strengthened coordination and synergy between actors to optimize and sustainably improve tourism quality. The structure of actors within the policy network has not yet been optimally implemented. This is due to the lack of systematic actor mapping, despite the fact that tourism management involves numerous actors with varying roles, interests, capacities, and levels of influence. While actors are aware of the complexity of the policy network, its effectiveness still requires strengthened coordination and improved cross-actor management mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of tourism policies in Bantaeng Regency. Furthermore, the framing of problems and solutions within the tourism office's policy network in Bantaeng Regency has not been fully implemented in the management of tourist destinations in Bantaeng Regency, as each actor brings a different perspective, interest, and framing to bear on destination issues, ranging from irregularities in business activities, inconsistent service standards, to limited supporting facilities.

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