

Integrated tourism governance and policy fragmentation in Labuan Bajo: a multi-level governance perspective

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Abstract

The Labuan Bajo tourism area, designated as a top national super-priority destination, is currently experiencing complex dynamics in tourism development, characterized by accelerated investment, an increase in tourist arrivals, and growing environmental and socio-cultural pressures. This study aims to analyze integrated tourism policy governance practices in Labuan Bajo and to examine structural opportunities and institutional constraints in achieving sustainable and inclusive tourism development. A qualitative case study approach was employed, relying on in-depth interviews, policy document analysis, and field observations. Findings showed that national policy alignment and infrastructure-driven development have enhanced the destination's competitiveness and global branding. However, governance fragmentation persists due to imbalanced intergovernmental relations, sectoral centric, and weak institutional synchronization. This study identifies three key governance gaps: (1) vertical dissonance between central and local policy implementation, (2) horizontal fragmentation among sectoral agencies, and (3) limited participatory governance, which marginalizes local community involvement. These findings suggest that policy integration remains procedural rather than substantive. This study contributes by proposing an integrated tourism governance model that bridges multi-level governance perspectives and policy integration, emphasizing adaptive and collaborative mechanisms in managing priority destinations.

Keywords: *tourism governance, super-priority destination, policy integration, collaborative governance, sustainable tourism development*

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Introduction

The tourism sector in Indonesia has experienced significant growth in recent decades and is increasingly positioned as an instrument for sustainable economic development strategies. However, this growth has also been driven by increasing governance complexity, particularly in rapidly developing destinations. This policy aligns with the tourism sector's contribution to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which pre-pandemic reached approximately 4.1% and employed more than 13 million workers. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, tourism has been repositioned as a strategic sector in national economic recovery. Recent literature shows that the success of tourism development is determined not only by investment and infrastructure, but also by the governance capacity to integrate policies across sectors and levels of government. In this context, a multi-level governance and policy integration approach is a crucial framework for understanding how tourism policies are effectively implemented in a system involving multiple actors and stakeholders.

The Labuan Bajo region, as a national super-priority destination, embodies this dynamic. Accelerated development, marked by increased investment, infrastructure development, and global promotion, has significantly boosted the region's economic growth (Ratman, 2016). However, behind these achievements, fundamental governance issues have emerged, particularly related to institutional fragmentation and failed coordination between actors. Labuan Bajo tourism management involves various actors across sectors and levels of government, including ministries, local governments, authorities, the private sector, and local communities, often resulting in overlapping policies, regulatory disharmony, and asynchronous development planning. This condition reflects the fragmentation of governance characterized by weak policy integration and limited horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms. This failure of coordination not only results in policy inefficiency but also has the potential to exacerbate environmental pressures and widen socio-economic inequalities at the local level. Previous studies have shown that rapidly developing tourism destinations without integrated governance are prone to conflicts of interest, environmental degradation, and exclusion of local communities (Farsari, 2023). However, most of this research has focused on developed country contexts or on normative approaches regarding the importance of collaboration, without deeply examining the failure of policy integration within a multi-level governance framework.

On the other hand, the development of airports, ports, premium areas, and supporting tourism facilities in Labuan Bajo has experienced unprecedented acceleration, demonstrating the region's significant economic opportunities for driving regional and national growth. However, this accelerated development has also given rise to various structural issues in tourism governance. One key issue is the suboptimal integration of policies across sectors and levels of government. Labuan Bajo tourism management involves numerous actors, from ministries/agencies at the central level, provincial and district governments, the Tourism Authority, the private sector, and even local communities. This complexity of actors often leads to policy fragmentation, overlapping authority, and a lack of synchronization in development planning. Rapidly developing tourism destinations without integrated governance are at risk of policy inefficiencies and conflicts of interest between stakeholders.

Labuan Bajo has a highly sensitive ecosystem, particularly the coastal and marine areas that make up the Komodo National Park ecosystem. This puts pressure on environmental and socio-cultural carrying capacity. This is due to the increasing number of tourists and tourism activities, which have resulted in environmental degradation, such as increased waste, pressure on water resources, and the risk of damage to marine ecosystems. From a social perspective, tourism development in Labuan Bajo also poses challenges to inclusivity (Edgell, L, 2019; Fathani et al., 2023; Saputra & Ali, 2020). This indicates that the economic benefits of tourism have not been fully and equally felt by local communities. Limited community participation in planning and decision-making processes, weak local human resource capacity, and the dominance of external actors in the tourism value chain have the potential to create social and economic inequality. Non-participatory tourism governance risks ignoring the interests of local communities and weakening the legitimacy of public policy (Fathani et al., 2023; Hajar et al., 2022; Sadat et al., 2025).

The urgency of implementing an integrated tourism governance policy in Labuan Bajo is further strengthened when linked to the demands of sustainable development. The global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda explicitly positions tourism as a development instrument that must support inclusive economic

growth, environmental preservation, and the strengthening of local culture (Epifani & Valente, 2023; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). In this context, integrated tourism is not only interpreted as physical integration between destinations, but also as the integration of policies, institutions and cross-sectoral interests. Collaborative and integrated governance approach is a primary prerequisite for the successful management of complex tourism destinations (Downs et al., 2022; Sadat et al., 2025).

Although various national policies have been issued to support the development of Labuan Bajo, implementation at the local level remains challenging. Regulatory disharmony, weak coordination mechanisms, and conflicting interests among stakeholders often hinder the achievement of integrated tourism goals. Furthermore, the institutional capacity of local governments to manage the dynamics of international tourism remains a serious challenge. Many leading destinations in developing countries face governance capacity gaps that impact the effectiveness of policy implementation (Fan et al., 2024; Hajar et al., 2022). Therefore, the implementation of integrated tourism governance policies in the Labuan Bajo Tourism Area is highly relevant and urgent. This research is crucial for identifying the extent to which formulated policies address the complexities of destination management, while also uncovering the opportunities and challenges faced in their practical implementation.

Integrated tourism is an approach to tourism development that integrates various aspects, such as economic, social, cultural and environmental, within a holistic policy framework (Hossain et al., 2025; Moerwanto & Junoasmono, 2017). This approach aims to create synergy between various tourism components so that it can provide greater and sustainable benefits for all stakeholders (Brendehaug et al., 2017; Hajar, Ramlan, et al., 2024). This approach also emphasizes the importance of comprehensive and coordinated planning between various sectors and levels of government. Integrated tourism requires a framework that enables the active involvement of all stakeholders, including local communities, the private sector, and the government (Almeida et al., 2017; Hendrayani & Zen, 2025; Ramlan et al., 2023). This includes the development of adequate infrastructure, environmental conservation, protection of cultural heritage, and strengthening human resource capacity in the tourism sector. In the Labuan Bajo area, the implementation of the integrated tourism concept is highly relevant given the complex challenges faced, such as threats to the Komodo National Park ecosystem, limited infrastructure, and the economic disparity between local communities and tourism businesses.

Tourism governance refers to a set of processes and mechanisms that direct, control and manage the tourism sector with the aim of achieving sustainable development (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Ocay & Hinlayagan, 2022). Tourism governance is a concept that includes the regulation, control and management of the tourism sector by various actors, both from the government, private sector and local communities. Tourism governance involves actors from various sectors, including government, the private sector, local communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Mergel et al., 2021; Volgger & Pechlaner, 2015; Zhuang et al., 2024). The principles of good tourism governance include transparency, participation, accountability, and effectiveness and efficiency in decision-making and policy implementation (Hajar et al., 2021). In tourism governance, the role of government is crucial, particularly in creating a regulatory framework that supports sustainable tourism development.

Furthermore, local community involvement in tourism decision-making and management is crucial to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism reach local communities and that cultural and environmental values are protected.

In line with this explanation, tourism governance is no longer the sole domain of the government, but rather a collaborative process involving the government, the private sector, local communities, and other non-state actors within a multi-level and multi-actor governance framework. Some research results, focused on state-led tourism planning (Arma et al., 2024; Moekahar et al., 2022; Tuthaes, Carolina Lidya; Toda, Hendrik; Lake, 2024). However, this approach is considered inadequate in addressing the dynamics of modern destinations, due to the paradigm shift from government to governance, where the effectiveness of tourism policy is largely determined by the quality of coordination, institutional networks, and collaboration mechanisms between stakeholders (Ng et al., 2022). Then, emphasizing on policy fragmentation and weak coordination are the main obstacles in managing rapidly developing tourism destinations. However, most previous research has focused on tourism governance models in developed countries or on tourism destinations with established institutional systems. Studies specifically examining the dynamics of integrated tourism governance in super-priority destinations in developing countries, particularly those characterized by strong conservation ecosystems and local communities, are still relatively limited. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its analysis of how integrated tourism governance policies in Labuan Bajo can be developed through a collaborative approach that integrates infrastructure development, conservation area environmental preservation, and local community empowerment as key actors in the tourism ecosystem. This approach is expected to provide conceptual and empirical contributions to the development of sustainable tourism governance models relevant to strategic tourism destinations in Indonesia and other developing regions.

An integrated tourism governance policy is a crucial approach to optimizing Labuan Bajo's tourism potential while simultaneously safeguarding environmental sustainability and the well-being of local communities. This integrated approach requires strong coordination between the central government, local governments, the private sector, the community, and other stakeholders (Brunetta et al., 2018; Hajar, Ramlan, et al., 2024). All parties must play an active role in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of tourism policies in Labuan Bajo. Within the context of sustainable tourism, Outeda (2024); Tortia (2016) emphasizes the importance of network governance to increase destination resilience and ensure a more equitable distribution of tourism benefits. However, in its sustainability, governance failures often have a direct impact on environmental degradation and social exclusion. As explained by Dangi & Petrick (2021); Yan et al., (2024) An integrated governance approach that combines the principles of sustainability, community participation, and institutional capacity building can increase destination competitiveness while maintaining environmental carrying capacity. Thus, policy implementation faces challenges due to power imbalances between actors, the dominance of investment interests, and weak local government capacity, despite the theoretical strengths of integrated tourism governance. Effective tourism governance policies require strong integration across sectors. Sectors such as transportation, energy, the environment, and culture must collaborate in formulating policies that support integrated tourism in Labuan Bajo.

Thus, a significant research gap remains. While existing studies have examined tourism development and sustainability, limited attention has been paid to the failure of policy integration within multi-level governance arrangements, particularly in

emerging tourism destinations like Labuan Bajo. This gap highlights the need for a more critical analysis of how tourism policies are implemented, as well as why fragmentation and dysfunctional coordination persist despite the existence of a policy framework. Based on these problems, this research is formulated through the following key questions; 1) How is tourism policy integration implemented in Labuan Bajo?; 2) Why do policy fragmentation and coordination failures persist in tourism governance?. This research aims to analyze the implementation of integrated tourism governance policies and identify the factors causing fragmentation and coordination failures in the context of multi-level governance. Empirically, this research contributes through an in-depth case study of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority destination in a developing country. Meanwhile, theoretically, this study contributes to enriching the literature on tourism governance by offering new insights into the dynamics of governance fragmentation and the limitations of policy integration, as well as their implications for the effectiveness of sustainable tourism destination management. Thus, this study not only fills a gap in the literature but also provides an analytical basis for strengthening a more integrated, adaptive, and collaborative tourism governance model to address the complexities of strategic tourism destinations.

Research Methods

This qualitative research is designed to deeply examine the integration of integrated tourism governance policies in the Labuan Bajo Tourism Area, including both opportunities and challenges. The research focuses on the policy implementation process, the dynamics of actors, and the surrounding institutional and social contexts, where integrated tourism policies complexly involve multiple stakeholders and cross-sectoral issues (Bunkar et al., 2024; Lim, 2025). This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the meanings, perceptions, and interactions between actors in the process of integrating tourism governance policies. Qualitative research emphasizes exploring the context, processes, and dynamics of policies that cannot be reduced to purely quantitative variables. In the context of integrated tourism, this approach is relevant for uncovering the realities of policy implementation, which are often complex, contextual, and influenced by diverse power relations and interests (Bunkar et al., 2024; Makateng & Mokala, 2025). Therefore, the informants in this study were 10 people, consisting of the Labuan Bajo-Flores Authority Agency, community leaders, tourism actors (travelers, souvenir traders, tourism MSMEs), and the West Manggarai Regency Tourism Office.

The research design used was a case study. This case study was chosen because Labuan Bajo is a tourism area with unique characteristics as a national super-priority destination managed through various cross-sectoral and cross-level government policy schemes. Case studies allow for in-depth analysis of a specific location with the goal of gaining a comprehensive understanding of how integrated tourism governance policies are implemented, as well as the factors influencing its success and challenges (Bunkar et al., 2024; Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2011). The research focuses on the integration of tourism policies across sectors (tourism, environment, spatial planning, transportation, and the local economy), coordination mechanisms between actors, and policy implications for destination management and local communities. This focus was chosen to comprehensively capture the opportunities and challenges of integrated tourism governance in the Labuan Bajo Tourism Area, West Manggarai Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. The research stages are as follows:

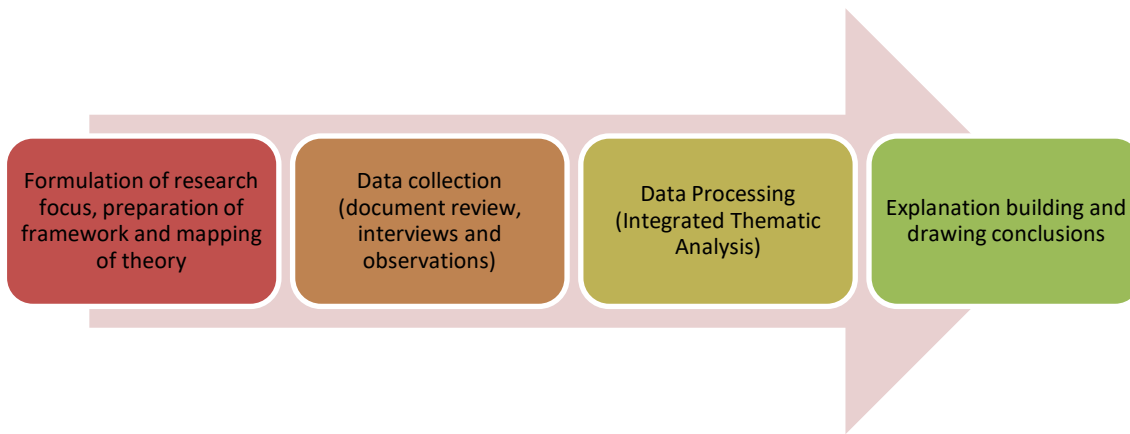


Figure 1. Research Stages

Source: processed by author

The research process begins with formulating the research focus, developing the analytical framework, and mapping relevant theories through a literature review on tourism governance, policy integration, and sustainable tourism, which also serves to identify key informants. Data collection is then conducted simultaneously and flexibly, allowing the researcher to adjust questions and refine the focus based on initial field findings. The collected data from various sources are compiled, transcribed, and classified according to the research focus, followed by integrated thematic and SWOT analyses. Finally, the results are synthesized by developing explanations, drawing conclusions, and formulating policy implications and strategic recommendations to strengthen integrated tourism governance in Labuan Bajo.

Data analysis in this study uses thematic analysis is used to identify, analyze, and interpret thematic patterns that emerge from qualitative data (Brandler & Roman, 2007; Saldana, 2014; Sidney, 2020). The thematic analysis process was carried out through the stages of open coding, code grouping, and the formation of main themes related to policy integration, institutional coordination, stakeholder participation, and policy impact.

Results and Discussion

The rapid development of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority tourism destination reflects the strategic positioning of tourism as a driver of economic growth and regional development. Empirically, this transformation is marked by accelerated infrastructure expansion, increased tourist arrivals, and strong national policy support through programs such as the “10 New Balis” initiative. However, beyond these achievements, the findings reveal that tourism governance in Labuan Bajo is characterized by significant structural challenges, particularly in terms of policy integration, institutional fragmentation, and coordination failure (Syariah, 2020). From an empirical standpoint, integrated tourism governance has been formally designed through cross-sectoral and multi-level policy frameworks that combine tourism, infrastructure, environmental management, spatial planning, and the creative economy. Nevertheless, implementation remains largely administrative, with sectoral actors operating within their respective institutional mandates. This indicates that policy integration has not been fully internalized in governance practices.

Some of the main challenges include: 1) environmental pressures arising from the increasing number of tourists and tourism activities that have the potential to degrade ecosystem quality. These pressures are primarily related to the risk of damage to the Komodo dragon's habitat, coral reef degradation, and increased environmental

pollution if management is not based on environmental carrying capacity; 2) limited infrastructure, which is an inhibiting factor in supporting tourism growth. Basic infrastructure such as roads, clean water, energy, and sea and land transportation are not yet fully capable of accommodating the increasing number of tourists and the needs for developing tourist destinations on surrounding islands; 3) social and economic inequality, which reflects the gap between the growth of the tourism industry and the level of welfare of local communities. The dominance of external investment in the accommodation and tourism services sectors has the potential to result in local communities receiving only limited economic benefits; 4) limited human resources, related to the low capacity of the local workforce to meet international tourism industry competency standards. This condition affects the quality of tourism services and the opportunities for local communities to play a greater role in the tourism economic value chain; and 5) potential land conflicts, arising from the increasing need for space for the development of tourism facilities such as hotels, resorts, and other supporting infrastructure. Land acquisition by investors can create tensions with local communities who have been using the land for economic and social activities.

This condition reflects a gap between policy formulation and implementation, where integration is procedural rather than substantive. The persistence of sectoral silos suggests that coordination mechanisms are weak and not institutionalized, leading to fragmented governance. This finding confirms theoretical arguments within multi-level governance, where vertical alignment between central and local government does not automatically ensure horizontal coordination across sectors. It also illustrates a broader phenomenon of policy integration failure, in which formal frameworks exist but lack operational coherence. Therefore, an integrated tourism governance approach is needed that integrates environmental policies, infrastructure development, local community empowerment, human resource capacity building, and equitable and sustainable spatial management. Integrated tourism is a concept in which the development and management of tourist destinations involves various aspects, including systematic planning, active participation of local communities, environmental protection, and coordination between stakeholders (Hossain et al., 2025; Sutono et al., 2021). Integrated tourism also includes infrastructure management, tourism promotion, and tourism attractions in a holistic manner so that destinations can develop harmoniously. Furthermore, Effective tourism governance must involve multi-stakeholder collaboration, where the public sector, the private sector, and local communities work together to create conditions that support sustainable tourism growth (Challies et al., 2017; Dredge & Jamal, 2015). This collaboration is necessary to avoid conflicts of interest between tourism actors and local communities and to ensure that the positive impacts of tourism are felt by all parties (Gash, 2022; Keast, 2022).

Furthermore, the multiplicity of actors involved in Labuan Bajo's tourism governance ranging from central and local governments to private investors and local communities has empirically resulted in overlapping authority, regulatory inconsistencies, and weak coordination. In addition, power asymmetry is evident, with dominant actors exerting greater influence over decision-making processes. In addition to the government, the private sector, as investors and developers, also plays a key role in ensuring that investments align with the principles of sustainable tourism (Chand et al., 2025; Hendrayani & Zen, 2025; Qiu et al., 2025). Synergy between the private sector and the government, through public-private partnership (PPP) schemes, can be an effective model for developing environmentally friendly tourism infrastructure and facilities. Meanwhile, local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

must also be actively involved in tourism planning and management. This is crucial to ensure that implemented policies not only benefit certain parties but also provide equitable and equitable benefits to the entire community (Hermawan & Rofiq, 2020; Najiyati et al., 2024).

This condition can be interpreted as a manifestation of institutional fragmentation, where governance is dispersed and lacks a unified direction. The imbalance of power exacerbates coordination failure and limits the effectiveness of collaborative processes. As a result, governance tends to be top-down, marginalizing local participation. From a theoretical perspective, this finding highlights the limitations of collaborative governance, particularly when key enabling conditions such as trust, shared authority, and balanced power relations are not present. It reinforces the argument that collaboration cannot function effectively in structurally unequal governance systems. These policies must integrate various aspects, such as infrastructure development, environmental conservation, community empowerment, and cross-sector integration (Epifani & Valente, 2023; Mutiarawati & Sudarmo, 2021). Furthermore, implementing these policies also requires strong coordination between various stakeholders and adequate resource support. With appropriate governance policies, Labuan Bajo will not only become a world-class tourist destination but also a successful example of how integrated tourism can provide sustainable benefits to the environment and surrounding communities. Labuan Bajo, currently experiencing rapid growth, risks facing these challenges if governance policies are not geared toward sustainability. Junaedi et al., (2023) proposes that sustainable tourism development must take into account: 1) Environmental capacity, that is, the natural carrying capacity must be calculated carefully to avoid permanent damage; 2) Local participation, that is, the community must be part of the planning and development process so that they can feel the direct benefits of the tourism industry; 3) Equitable economic benefits, that tourism must provide fair benefits to local communities, and not only to large business actors or investors from outside the region.

In addition to institutional issues, the empirical findings also show that rapid tourism development has generated environmental and socio-economic pressures. Increasing tourist activities have contributed to ecosystem degradation, including risks to marine environments and biodiversity, while economic benefits remain unevenly distributed among stakeholders. Local communities often experience limited participation in decision-making processes and restricted access to tourism value chains. These findings indicate that sustainability principles have not been effectively embedded in governance practices. Environmental management remains reactive rather than preventive, and social inclusion is not fully realized. This reflects a disconnect between sustainability as a policy objective and its practical implementation. Theoretically, this supports critiques in sustainable tourism governance, which emphasize that sustainability often remains normative unless supported by strong institutional integration and inclusive governance mechanisms. Integrated tourism policies in support of tourism governance include regulations on conservation zoning, natural resource management, and rules for tourism operators and tourists, as well as strict law enforcement to ensure the sustainability of the destination (Hajar & Saputra, 2024; Ogwu et al., 2022).

Thus, all tourism policies in Labuan Bajo are oriented towards environmental preservation, cultural sustainability, and long-term benefits for the local economy, for example the development of environmentally friendly accommodation and educational tourism programs about conservation (Hajar, Siti; Ramlan; Kholik, 2025; Sibarani et al.,

2025). The government's efforts through this policy are to reduce pressure on Komodo National Park, promote alternative destinations around Labuan Bajo, such as Padar Island and Rinca Island, and explore land-based tourism that highlights the natural beauty and biodiversity of Flores. The government and the Tourism Authority implement regular monitoring mechanisms to measure the social, economic, and environmental impacts of tourism activities, and use the evaluation results to adjust policies to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

The implementation of integrated tourism governance policies in Labuan Bajo has been designed through a cross-sectoral and cross-level government approach. The national policy emphasizes the integration of tourism, infrastructure, spatial planning, the environment, and the creative economy within a single regional development framework (Hajar, ., et al., 2024; Hossain et al., 2025). This approach is in line with the principle of integrated tourism governance which positions destinations as complex systems that require simultaneous policy and institutional coordination (Dredge & Jamal, 2015). This policy is realized through the acceleration of strategic infrastructure development, the arrangement of tourist areas, and the strengthening of destination branding. The central government plays a dominant role in policy orchestration, while regional governments act as implementers at the local level. This model demonstrates vertical policy integration, where development direction is determined nationally and implemented locally.

However, research results indicate that policy integration in implementation still tends to be administrative in nature. Each sector carries out policy mandates based on its own institutional logic, so cross-sectoral coordination has not been fully internalized in destination management practices. (Sururi, 2018; Toledo Gómez et al., 2024) emphasized that this kind of condition is common in leading destinations that are experiencing accelerated development, where policy integration is often stronger at the planning level than at the implementation level.

Despite these challenges, the analysis also identifies significant opportunities for strengthening integrated tourism governance. Empirically, strong national policy support, increasing global attention to sustainable tourism, and the emergence of community-based tourism initiatives provide a strategic foundation for governance reform. these conditions can be understood as enabling factors for the development of adaptive governance, which emphasizes flexibility, learning, and stakeholder collaboration in managing complex systems. The diversity of actors, while contributing to fragmentation, also represents potential social capital that can be leveraged through inclusive and deliberative governance mechanisms. The numerous actors involved, ranging from ministries/agencies, local governments, authorities, businesses, and local communities, create high governance complexity. Without a strong and clear coordination mechanism, policy integration risks being reduced to a mere division of administrative tasks (Luz et al., 2020).

Furthermore, research shows a power imbalance between actors in the policy implementation process. Actors with greater resources and authority tend to dominate decision-making, while the role of local governments and communities is relatively limited. This situation reinforces the tendency towards top-down governance and undermines the principle of collaborative governance, a prerequisite for the success of integrated tourism (Gash, 2022; Hartman, 2021). Then, (Choi et al., 2021; Sadat et al., 2025) emphasized that failure to mainstream sustainability into tourism governance will threaten the long-term competitiveness of destinations. Another equally important challenge is the pressure on environmental sustainability. Although environmental

aspects have been included in policy frameworks, their implementation is often reactive and not fully integrated throughout the policy cycle. One cause is the rapid growth of tourism that increases the risk of environmental degradation, particularly in coastal and marine areas.

Amid these challenges, Labuan Bajo offers significant strategic opportunities to strengthen integrated tourism governance. Strong national policy support provides political legitimacy and significant resources for destination development. Furthermore, increasing international attention to sustainable tourism issues opens up opportunities to adopt more adaptive and sustainability-oriented governance practices. Another opportunity lies in the potential for strengthening collaborative governance. The involvement of various actors can provide significant social capital when managed through inclusive and deliberative collaborative mechanisms. (Harris, 2022; Steelman, 2022) emphasizes that effective collaborative governance can improve policy quality, strengthen public legitimacy, and reduce conflicts of interest. Therefore, this study argues that the core challenge in Labuan Bajo is not merely the absence of policy frameworks, but the failure to operationalize integration within governance practices. Strengthening integrated tourism governance requires the institutionalization of coordination mechanisms, reduction of power asymmetries, and meaningful inclusion of local communities. These findings contribute theoretically by demonstrating how fragmentation and coordination failure persist within multi-level governance systems, and empirically by providing evidence from a rapidly developing tourism destination in a developing country context.

The development of Labuan Bajo as a super-priority tourism destination demonstrates significant structural capacity to support sustainable and globally competitive tourism. Empirically, this capacity is reflected in its unique biodiversity, strong national policy commitment, expanding infrastructure, and increasing investment flows, alongside emerging local community involvement. These conditions position Labuan Bajo as a strategic node within Indonesia's tourism development agenda. However, the findings indicate that this structural capacity is not matched by equivalent governance capacity. Despite strong policy frameworks, implementation remains fragmented, with limited coordination across sectors and governance levels. Challenges such as uneven infrastructure development, environmental pressures, and weak stakeholder coordination suggest that governance arrangements are not yet fully integrated.

The persistence of fragmented implementation indicates that policy integration remains procedural rather than substantive. In this context, policies are aligned at the formal level but not operationalized through effective inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms. This condition illustrates a key limitation of multi-level governance, where vertical alignment between central and local actors does not guarantee horizontal coherence across sectors. It also reflects a broader phenomenon of policy integration failure, in which sectoral policies coexist without meaningful coordination, thereby reducing overall policy effectiveness. This multiplicity has resulted in overlapping authority, regulatory inconsistencies, and unequal distribution of influence in decision-making processes. This situation can be interpreted as a manifestation of institutional fragmentation, where governance lacks coherence and unified direction. Power asymmetry further reinforces coordination failure, as dominant actors shape policy outcomes while local actors remain marginal. Consequently, governance tends to operate in a top-down manner, limiting inclusivity and reducing policy responsiveness to local needs.

These findings expose the limitations of collaborative governance, particularly when enabling conditions such as trust, shared authority, and balanced power relations are absent. Rather than functioning as a mechanism for integration, collaboration becomes symbolic and fails to produce substantive policy coordination and local communities often remain peripheral in decision-making processes and have limited access to tourism value chains. Thus, these conditions highlight the potential for developing adaptive governance, which emphasizes flexibility, learning, and the capacity to respond to dynamic environmental and socio-economic conditions. The diversity of actors, while contributing to complexity, can be transformed into a source of institutional strength if supported by effective coordination mechanisms. Therefore, this study argues that the primary challenge in Labuan Bajo lies not in the absence of policy frameworks, but in the limited capacity to operationalize integration within governance practices. Strengthening tourism governance requires institutionalizing coordination across sectors and levels, addressing power imbalances, and ensuring meaningful participation of local communities.

Conclusion

An integrated tourism area refers to a system in which all tourism components attractions, accommodation, transportation, supporting facilities, and services are managed in a coordinated and synergistic manner across sectors. In the context of Labuan Bajo, this study finds that although integrated tourism governance policies have been formally established, their implementation remains largely fragmented and insufficiently coordinated. Addressing the first research question, the study shows that policy integration has been implemented at the level of planning through cross-sectoral and multi-level frameworks. However, in practice, governance remains unintegrated, characterized by overlapping policies, ineffective program implementation, and weak synergy among government, private sector actors, and local communities. Regarding the second question, governance fragmentation persists due to structural constraints, including weak coordination mechanisms, uneven infrastructure development, limited community participation, and power asymmetries among stakeholders. These conditions are further exacerbated by environmental pressures, particularly the threat to ecosystem sustainability in the Komodo National Park area.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes by demonstrating that policy integration failure within multi-level governance systems is rooted in institutional fragmentation and limited collaborative capacity. It also extends collaborative governance theory by highlighting that effective integration requires not only multi-actor involvement but also balanced power relations and institutionalized coordination mechanisms. In terms of policy implications, achieving integrated and sustainable tourism in Labuan Bajo requires a reorientation of governance toward holistic and adaptive approaches. This includes strengthening cross-sectoral coordination, developing integrated infrastructure, enhancing community empowerment, embedding environmental sustainability into policy implementation, diversifying tourism products, improving data systems, and fostering international collaboration. Importantly, tourism development must align with sustainable development principles, ensuring a balance between economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection. Finally, future research should focus on developing measurable indicators of governance

integration, conducting comparative studies across similar destinations, and examining the role of digital governance in improving coordination and policy effectiveness.

To strengthen integrated tourism governance in Labuan Bajo, a shift from fragmented to coordinated and adaptive governance is essential. Policy integration must move beyond formal alignment toward operational coherence through strengthened cross-sectoral coordination and harmonized multi-level governance. Institutional mechanisms for collaboration should be reinforced to ensure meaningful participation of government, private sector, and local communities, thereby reducing power asymmetries and improving policy effectiveness. Infrastructure development needs to be more equitable and integrated across regions, while sustainability principles must be embedded throughout the policy cycle, including stricter environmental regulation and carrying capacity management. In addition, empowering local communities through capacity building and inclusion in the tourism value chain is crucial to ensure equitable economic benefits. Furthermore, governance transformation should be supported by adaptive approaches, including the use of digital systems, integrated data management, and continuous policy learning. Diversification of tourism products and strengthened international collaboration are also important to enhance destination resilience and competitiveness. For future research, it is recommended to develop measurable indicators of governance integration, conduct comparative and longitudinal studies, and explore the role of digital governance in improving coordination and sustainability outcomes.

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