

Tourism Development Strategy of Maros Regency Highlighting Local Uniqueness and Potential

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ABSTRACT: A study on tourism development strategies in a region is an essential aspect that cannot be separated from tourism development policies, and this is also the case for the tourism development strategy of Maros Regency. This study aims to identify the strategies planned by the Maros Regency Government in developing tourism in the area. The method used is descriptive-exploratory, relying on the 3A theory (Attraction, Accessibility, and Amenity) and the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) theory. The findings of this study indicate that in its tourism development plan, the Maros Regency Government has established several programs through the RIPPAN (Tourism Development Master Plan) of Maros Regency, along with the strategies for their implementation. The extent to which these strategies are carried out to realize Maros Regency as one of the tourism destinations is the main focus of this research. The implications of this discussion highlight several strategic steps for each planned program and, ultimately, aim to foster a sense of ownership of these programs among the local community.

KEY WORDS: Development Strategy, Local Uniqueness, Tourism Potential.

INTRODUCTION

Maros Regency (dpmpstps.sulselprov.go.id, 2025) is one of the regencies in South Sulawesi Province. Maros is located in the western part of South Sulawesi, between 4°45'–5°07' South Latitude and 109°205'–129°12' East Longitude. It borders Pangkep Regency to the north, Makassar City and Gowa Regency to the south, Bone Regency to the east, and the Makassar Strait to the west. The total area of Maros Regency is 1,619.12 km², administratively divided into 14 districts and 103 villages/sub-districts. Maros Regency is located approximately 30 kilometers north of Makassar City, the capital of South Sulawesi Province (Sobirin et al., 2023; Jaya et al., 2022). The Sultan Hasanuddin International Airport is also located within this regency.

According to records from the Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysics Agency (BMKG), the average monthly air temperature in Maros Regency ranges between 26°C and 27.6°C. The lowest monthly temperature is 19.9°C, while the highest reaches 34.6°C. The climate in Maros Regency is classified as a humid tropical climate, with an average monthly rainfall of around 396 mm and about 148 rainy days in 2016. The average minimum air temperature is 23.9°C, and the maximum is around 32°C, with an average sunshine rate of about 73%. Geographically, 10% (10 villages) of the area is coastal, 5% (5 villages) is valley area, 27% (28 villages) is hillside, and 58% (60 villages) consists of plains.

In terms of governance, since the implementation of regional autonomy in 2001, the number of districts in Maros Regency has remained the same, totaling 14 districts consisting of 80 villages and 23 sub-districts (103 in total). These include 89 neighborhoods and 320 hamlets. According to the classification of villages/sub-districts, there are still 22 developing areas (swakarya), while the remaining 59 have reached self-sufficiency (swasembada).

Regarding population issues, the number of inhabitants has increased year by year. The projected population of Maros Regency in 2025 is approximately 368,400 people. This projection is based on the 2017 population census data, which recorded 346,383 inhabitants. Assuming stable population growth, this number is expected to reach the projection by 2025 (google.com/jumlah penduduk maros, 2025). The population is spread across 14 districts, with the largest population—44,621 people—residing in Turikale District.

Overall, the number of female residents exceeds that of male residents, with approximately 176,950 [186,396] females and 169,433 [182,004] males. The average annual population growth rate is 1.06%, with the lowest growth found in Cenrana District at 1.05%. The highest population density is recorded in Turikale District with 1,490.85 people per km², while the lowest density is found in Mallawa District, with 49 people per km² (dpmpstps.sulselprov.go.id, 2025). See the following map of Maros Regency for reference.



(Source: Wikipedia 2025)

Figure 1. Map of Maros Regency, South Sulawesi

With its territorial features, topography, and population potential, Maros Regency is an area that holds significant tourism potential worthy of proper development, and tourism has indeed become one of the government’s leading sectors. The Government of Maros Regency has a comprehensive strategy for developing tourism, which includes the enhancement of tourism potential, improvement of human resources quality, and community participation. This strategy also involves efforts to preserve natural resources and local culture, as well as strengthening cooperation with various stakeholders. It is an effort aimed at the overall development of tourist destinations, including planning, construction, and management. The following is a list of tourist attractions found in Maros Regency (both flagship destinations and newly developed ones):

Table 1. Tourist Attractions in Maros Regency

No	Name of Attraction	Description	Remarks
1	Bantimurung Nature Park	The main icon of Maros Regency, continuously developed with additional facilities and improved comfort.	Flagship
2	Leang-Leang Archaeological Park	A complex of prehistoric sites that is fascinating and world-renowned.	Flagship
3	Rammang-Rammang Natural Scenery Destination	A relatively new tourist attraction with great potential that continues to be developed.	Flagship
4	Beach Tourism at Kuri Beach	A new and potential destination for development, located in Marusu District.	New Destination
5	Garden Tourism	A new destination located in Tompobulu District.	New Destination
6	River Tourism at Pute River	A new destination located in Bontoa District.	New Destination
7	Waterfall Tourism at Lacolla	A new destination located in Cenrana District.	New Destination

Tourism development in Maros should focus on improving existing destinations, expanding the scope of promotion, developing new destinations, enhancing the quality of human resources—including foreign language proficiency—and strengthening cooperation with stakeholders (local, national, and international), while maintaining amenities for visitors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

a. Previous Studies

Tourism development has been widely recognized as a catalyst for regional economic growth, particularly in areas with rich natural and cultural resources. According to Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model, destinations typically progress through stages of exploration, development, and consolidation, requiring careful management to ensure sustainability (Butler, 1980). In the context of regional tourism, this means that destinations like Maros must balance between developing new attractions and maintaining the quality of existing sites to avoid overexploitation and visitor saturation.

Tourism can take many forms, such as nature-based tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, and eco-tourism, each offering unique experiences to visitors (Wance & Syahidah, 2025; Rahman et al., 2019; Farkić & Taylor, 2025). Beyond economic benefits, tourism also plays an important role in fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting the preservation of heritage and the environment (Pai et al., 2025; Rahman, 2018; Sihombing et al., 2024). However, if not managed properly, tourism can lead to negative impacts such as environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and overcrowding. Therefore, sustainable tourism development—balancing economic growth with environmental protection and community welfare—is crucial to ensure that tourism continues to bring long-term benefits both locally and globally.

Human resources also play a crucial role in the success of tourism destinations. Previous studies highlight that the availability of skilled personnel, particularly in areas such as hospitality, communication, and foreign language proficiency, is essential for improving tourist experiences and competitiveness (Sharpley, 2018). Moreover, effective community involvement in tourism ensures that local residents not only benefit economically but also become active participants in preserving cultural and environmental assets (Okazaki, 2008). This aligns with the idea that sustainable tourism must be built on inclusive development and capacity building at the local level.

Another key factor in tourism development is the role of multi-level stakeholder collaboration. Research has shown that partnerships between local governments, private sectors, and international organizations strengthen destination management and promote innovation (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). For Maros, such collaboration can enhance marketing strategies, attract investment, and foster cross-cultural exchange. Furthermore, integrating sustainable practices in tourism planning—such as conserving biodiversity, managing visitor flows, and promoting eco-friendly infrastructure—ensures that the region's natural and cultural assets remain preserved for future generations.

b. Sustainable Tourism Development and Community Participation

Tourism development has long been recognized as a catalyst for regional economic growth, especially in areas with abundant natural and cultural resources. Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) model explains that destinations typically go through phases of exploration, development, and consolidation, which require proper management to ensure sustainability (Butler, 1980). If managed poorly, destinations risk experiencing stagnation or decline due to overexploitation and visitor saturation. For regions like Maros, this means balancing the development of new attractions with the preservation of existing resources to maintain long-term tourism growth.

Human resources are another critical component of sustainable tourism. Sharpley (2018) emphasizes that the quality of personnel—particularly in areas such as hospitality, communication, and foreign language proficiency—determines how well a destination can meet the needs of international and domestic visitors. Improving the capacity of local workers not only enhances the quality of service but also increases the competitiveness of the destination. In the context of Maros, investment in education, training, and tourism seminars is vital for ensuring that human resources can support the growing demands of the industry.

Equally important is the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and development. Okazaki (2008) argues that community-based tourism empowers residents by giving them economic benefits while fostering a sense of ownership over cultural and environmental preservation. Similarly, Sihombing, Suastini, and Puja (2024) highlight that sustainable cultural tourism can protect local traditions and heritage while offering authentic experiences to visitors. For Maros, encouraging community participation through tourism villages, creative economy initiatives, and cultural preservation programs ensures that development does not only benefit external stakeholders but also uplifts local society in meaningful ways.

c. Stakeholder Collaboration in Tourism Development

Tourism development cannot rely solely on government initiatives; it requires strong collaboration between multiple stakeholders,



including local governments, private investors, community groups, and international organizations. Bramwell and Lane (2011) argue that governance and stakeholder partnerships are central to sustainable tourism management, as they help balance economic goals with environmental and cultural preservation. By building cooperative networks, destinations can attract greater investment, diversify tourism products, and ensure that development aligns with long-term sustainability objectives.

In the case of regions like Maros, stakeholder collaboration is particularly important because the area holds both ecological and cultural assets that require careful protection. Partnerships between the government, local communities, universities, and tourism businesses can foster innovation in marketing strategies, improve destination branding, and enhance infrastructure development. Moreover, collaboration with international organizations, such as UNESCO in the recognition of the Maros-Pangkep Geopark, provides not only global visibility but also technical assistance for conservation and sustainable tourism planning.

METHOD

One of the key aspects in monitoring tourism development policies and strategies is observing the development of facilities and infrastructure at each site, as improvements that meet tourism standards will in turn encourage an increase in visitor numbers over time. The implication is that government revenue will rise, and the tax sector will also be boosted. The most appropriate strategy is to carry out improvements in every sector that meets the needs of tourists.

The method used is exploratory-explanatory, relying on Strategic Planning Theory with an Incremental and Flexible Approach. The results of this study show that tourism development policies in Maros Regency demonstrate a positive trend. This is in line with the issuance of several local regulations and government policies supporting tourism development, as well as budget allocations to strengthen the tourism sector. Tourism development strategies can be based on various theories, including the 3A Theory (Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities) and Community-Based Tourism (CBT). These theories assist in planning and managing tourism development by considering social, economic, and environmental impacts, and are aligned with the Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPAR) of Maros Regency.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Maros Regency, one of the regencies in South Sulawesi, is known as a supporting region for the provincial capital. Its prominence does not stem from natural resources or agriculture, but rather from its tourist attractions, such as Bantimurung Nature Park (famously called the “kingdom of butterflies,” home to hundreds of butterfly species, including endemic ones found only in this area), Leang-Leang, Rammang-Rammang, and its Geopark.

With the designation of the Geopark by UNESCO (this decision was made at the 216th Executive Board Session in Paris, France, on May 24, 2023), Maros Regency has successfully secured a place on the world tourism map. This achievement cannot be separated from the hard work of the Maros government and the support of various parties, including the South Sulawesi provincial government and the central government. Through strategic planning, a long-held aspiration has finally been realized. The following are several key points in the Maros government’s strategy for developing tourism:

Table 2. Strategies of Maros Regency Toward Achieving Status as a Tourism Destination

No	Strategy of Maros Regency Toward Becoming a Tourism Destination	Remarks
1	Developing Every Tourism Potential	On progress
2	Improving the Quality of Tourism Human Resources	On progress
3	Encouraging Community Involvement	On progress
4	Preserving Natural Resources (NR) and Local Cultural Heritage	On progress
5	Expanding Opportunities for Strengthening Cooperation	On progress

The description of each point mentioned above, with data collected from various sources and preliminary studies conducted by the researcher, is as follows:

- 1. Developing Every Tourism Potential:** Maros Regency is one of the regions with unique tourism potential, such as the Maros Geopark, Bantimurung Nature Park, and other attractions like Leang-Leang and Rammang-Rammang. The government seeks to develop this potential through various means, including community empowerment programs, development of facilities and infrastructure, and continuous improvement of service quality.

- Improving the Quality of Tourism Human Resources:** It has become a commitment that tourism development requires competent and professional human resources. The Maros government strives to enhance the quality of human resources in the tourism sector through training, education, and various tourism seminars to develop employee competencies.
- Encouraging Community Involvement:** Sustainable tourism requires the active participation of local communities. The Maros government has involved communities in the development, maintenance, and preservation of tourism potential, including through the empowerment of creative economies, the development of tourism villages, and assistance in the preservation of nature and wildlife.
- Preserving Natural Resources and Local Cultural Heritage:** The fundamental principle of sustainable tourism must also pay attention to the preservation of natural resources and the protection of local cultural heritage. The Maros government seeks to preserve biodiversity, geological diversity, and cultural diversity through various programs and activities, such as the development of the Maros Geopark.
- Expanding Opportunities for Strengthening Cooperation:** Tourism development requires strong cooperation among various parties. The Maros government has established partnerships with different stakeholders, such as related agencies, educational institutions, tourism actors, and other business sectors, to support tourism development.

Through well-planned and comprehensive strategies that involve multiple parties, the Maros government demonstrates a strong commitment to making tourism a key driver of economic growth and community welfare in the region.

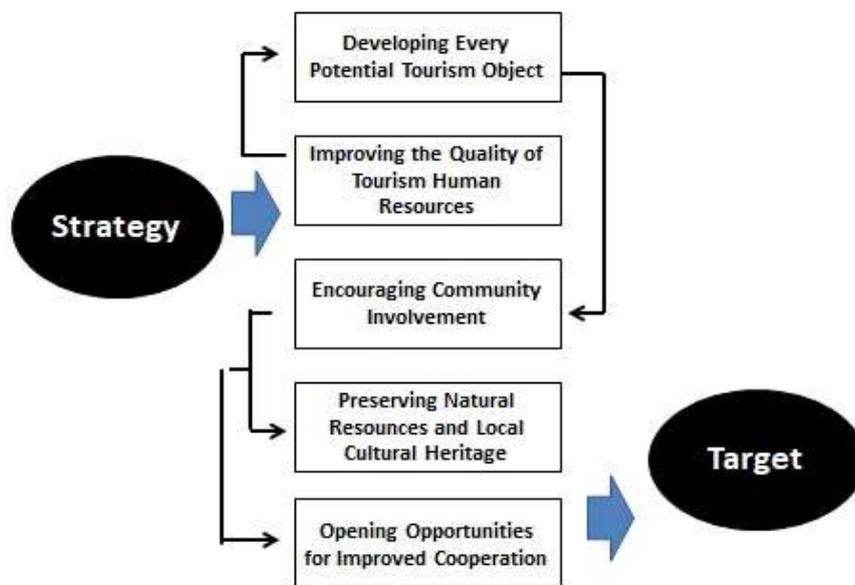


Diagram 1. Formulating Strategies Toward Achieving the Goal

Wisely, this strategy can be successfully achieved if it begins with improving the quality of human resources. Even if a region possesses several potentials for tourism development, without adequate human resources, tourism will remain stagnant. With the availability of competent human resources, it is they who will be ready to develop each tourism potential. The next step is to encourage community involvement. Community participation serves as the basic capital for preserving natural resources (NR) and local cultural heritage. From this point, the government will then open opportunities for enhancing cooperation. Tourism development in Maros focuses on improving existing destinations, developing new destinations, enhancing the quality of human resources, and strengthening cooperation with stakeholders, both private and governmental institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the previous explanation, Maros Regency is one of the regions with tourism potential that requires improvement in several areas. Such improvements must be grounded in government policies, proper planning, community empowerment, and the design of strategies aimed at achievement.



The key conclusions from this discussion are as follows: a) The geographical position of Maros Regency as a strategic buffer for the provincial capital, rich in natural beauty, with mountains, waterways, plains, and seas, is a natural blessing that must be utilized. The presence of an international airport makes this regency more advantageous compared to other regions in South Sulawesi. It also serves as a gateway to two regions—Toraja and Bone—making its tourist attractions a chosen stopover for both domestic and international tourists.

b) The most appropriate tourism development strategy is the application of the 3A concept (Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities) combined with the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) approach. This combination can foster tourism development that simultaneously produces social, economic, and environmental impacts, as outlined in the Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPAR) of Maros Regency. c) The designation of the Geopark by UNESCO (based on the decision made at the 216th Executive Board Session in Paris, France, on May 24, 2023) represents a major milestone for Maros Regency, marking its place on the world tourism map. This opportunity must be leveraged to generate multiple effects for other tourist attractions. d) The focus of tourism development in Maros Regency is on enhancing the quality of existing destinations, developing new destinations, improving human resources, and strengthening cooperation to promote more advanced and modern tourism development.

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