

ARTICLE

Larea-rea Island

Between Hope and Reality

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Abstract: Tourism development in small island regions such as Larea-rea Island holds great potential to contribute to local economic growth. However, limited infrastructure, inconsistent governance, and low community participation have hampered realizing this potential. This study aims to analyze the role of local government in developing tourism on Larea-rea Island, Sinjai Regency. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach and was conducted from January to March 2024 on Larea-rea Island, located in the Sembilan Island sub-district. Data was collected through field observations, in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including the Tourism and Culture Office of Sinjai Regency, village government officials, and local visitors and supplemented by document analysis. The findings indicate that tourism development on Larea-rea Island remains constrained by inadequate supporting facilities, fluctuating visitor numbers, limited environmental management, and low levels of promotion continuity. The local government has attempted to address these issues through infrastructure development, tourism promotion via social media, environmental conservation efforts, and community empowerment through tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). The analysis shows that while these initiatives have had a positive impact, they require stronger coordination, integrated planning, and sustainable policy support. This study concludes that the role of local government must evolve beyond infrastructure provision toward strategic governance that fosters inclusive community participation and long-term destination sustainability.

Keywords: Local Government; Tourism Policy; Community Participation; Sustainable Tourism; Larea-rea Island.

1. Introduction

Indonesia, with its diversity of flora and fauna, natural forests and maritime areas, has the potential as a tourist destination both nationally and as an international tourism network. Tourism development in an area will impact tourists and local communities if managed properly (Muliani et al., 2021). Indonesia, with its vast marine areas, rich biodiversity, and diverse cultural heritage, holds significant potential for national and international tourism development. However, realizing this potential is highly dependent on governance quality—especially at the local level. Tourism, when effectively managed, not only generates economic growth but also contributes to community empowerment and environmental preservation (Muliani et al., 2021).

Government policies in tourism play an important role in the development and sustainability of this sector. Various studies show that good policies can encourage sustainable tourism growth and reduce negative impacts on the environment and local communities. In Karangasem, Bali, for example, research by Santhyasa et al. (2020) developed a policy framework for tourism destination development that demonstrated the importance of a criteria-based approach in policy formulation. This is in line with the findings of Karmoker and Ahmed (2022), who emphasized that government interventions, such as incentives and awareness programs, are crucial to encourage eco-friendly tourist behavior in Bangladesh. Furthermore, research by Hakim et al. (2024) suggests that the government should function as a facilitator by providing facilities and infrastructure that support tourism, as well as a regulator that sets relevant regulations and policies for tourism management. This is in line with Sefriameli and Khairul's finding (2023) that emphasize the importance of local government consistency in tourism development. Government policy is a pivotal determinant in the development and sustainability of tourism. Numerous studies emphasize that effective policy interventions—ranging from infrastructure provision to community engagement programs—can reduce environmental degradation and foster long-term socio-economic benefits. Santhyasa et al. (2020), for instance, stressed the importance of criteria-based policy formulation in Bali's tourism development, while Karmoker and Ahmed (2022) demonstrated how eco-friendly behavior among tourists in Bangladesh is linked to government-driven incentives and awareness programs. These findings reinforce the notion that government is not only a provider of infrastructure but also a regulator, facilitator, and enabler in sustainable tourism governance (Hakim et al., 2024; Sefriameli & Khairul, 2023).

Government policies should also address institutional barriers that may hinder tourism development. Degarege and Lovelock (2021) identified that instability in tourism governance systems, such as incomplete decentralization, can hinder the development of tourism products. Therefore, appropriate government intervention is required to create an enabling environment for sustainable tourism development.

In the context of sustainability, Baloch et al. (2023) pointed out that the Pakistani government has implemented certain interventions, such as afforestation programs and infrastructure development, to reduce the negative impact of tourism on the environment. In addition, Wu and Liang (2023) emphasized the importance of environmental regulation in improving the ecological efficiency of tourism, suggesting that appropriate government policies can promote more sustainable tourism development in China. In this regard, one critical concept emerging in literature is capacity governance—the institutional and administrative capability of local governments to mobilize resources, coordinate stakeholders, and implement coherent policies. Degarege and Lovelock (2021) argued that weak governance

structures, such as incomplete decentralization, can create institutional barriers to tourism innovation and product development. In parallel, scholars like [Wu and Liang \(2023\)](#) and [Baloch et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrated that government regulations and environmental interventions significantly influence ecological efficiency and resilience in tourism destinations.

Local government policies should also be responsive to emerging challenges, as seen in tourism development in remote areas. [Surur et al. \(2019\)](#) identified that local governments must encourage local tourism potential with an integrated approach, including developing integrated tourism areas. In this context, inclusive and community-based development strategies are essential to ensure that all parties, including local communities, can feel the benefits of tourism.

The importance of collaboration between local governments and local communities is also expressed in several studies. [Sentanu and Mahadiansar \(2020\)](#) emphasized that local governments have an advantage in managing sustainable local tourism through competencies in related policy areas such as infrastructure and spatial planning. Community participation in tourism development is key to achieving sustainability. For example, research by [Widagdo \(2023\)](#) shows that community-based homestay management can improve tourism sustainability by actively involving local communities. In addition, [Rizal et al. \(2023\)](#) highlighted the importance of community participation in the development of tourism villages that can increase the economic and social potential of the area. In tourism management, coordination and collaboration between the parties involved are needed ([Soesanta et al., 2023](#)).

Tourism policies must also be responsive to emerging challenges, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Seyfi et al. \(2023\)](#) noted that many countries implemented strict measures to restrict international travel, which had a significant impact on the tourism sector. In this context, governments need to develop inclusive and adaptive recovery strategies, as proposed by [Vermeulen-Miltz et al. \(2023\)](#), who emphasizes the importance of cross-sector collaboration in decision-making for sustainable tourism recovery. Overall, government policies in tourism should include a holistic and sustainable approach, taking into account environmental, social, and economic aspects. This will ensure that tourism is not only a source of income but also provides long-term benefits to local communities and the environment, as well as social and economic benefits. This will ensure that tourism is not only a source of income but also provides long-term benefits for local communities and the environment. One of them is tourism development in the Sumenep district, which shows that tourism development can boost regional development ([Basri, 2019](#)). And an important thing is that Tourism activists need to gain more awareness about the importance of promoting tourism through digital means ([Nugraha, 2024](#)).

Sinjai Regency has many potential tourist attractions promising enough to be developed and become a significant capital in tourism development. Sinjai Regency has not been proclaimed as a tourism district, even though the potential is quite large because almost all sub-districts in Sinjai Regency have various tourism locations. However, the problem is that the management of tourism objects has not been implemented effectively ([Sani & Mursak, 2018](#)). But then, the Regional Regulation of Sinjai Regency Number 6 of 2013 regulating the Implementation of Tourism in Sinjai Regency was issued. Regional regulation authorizes regions to manage and develop tourism in their respective regions according to the potential of each region. But so far, the potential has not run optimally and has not been separated in an integrated manner in the concept of tourism. If the tourism potential goes well, it will provide a

new force in tourism development in Sinjai Regency, especially for the tourist attraction of Larea-rea Island.

Larea-rea Island is one of the islands in the cluster of nine islands in Sinjai Regency. It is called Nine Islands because nine islands make up the cluster. The island included in the Nine Islands group is a mainstay marine tourism destination in Sinjai Regency. Larea-rea Island is a marine tourism destination combining sailing and boating and vacation activities. Larea-rea Island Tourism is also one of the favorite tourist locations in Sinjai Regency ([Statistics of Sinjai Regency, 2024](#)). It takes approximately 1 hour to arrive at Larea-rea Island from Cappa' Ujung Harbor, North Sinjai District. In between trips, visitors can also take advantage of the time to take pictures on the boat and enjoy the beauty of Larea-rea Island.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the role of the local government, particularly the Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office, in managing and developing tourism on Larea-rea Island. By focusing on infrastructure facilitation, promotion strategies, environmental preservation, and community-based governance (e.g., Pokdarwis), this research seeks to address the following problem: To what extent does the local government function as a strategic agent in ensuring inclusive and sustainable tourism development on Larea-rea Island?

By filling this gap, the study contributes to the growing discourse on tourism governance in peripheral regions and offers practical insights for enhancing public sector capacity in managing ecotourism assets.

2. Methods

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to exploring the role of local government in the development of tourism on Larea-rea Island, Sinjai Regency. The study aims to understand social phenomena in depth by collecting and interpreting data through naturalistic inquiry.

The type of research is case study research, which allows the researcher to investigate a bounded system (Larea-rea Island) within its real-life context, especially where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. The research strategy is explanatory-descriptive, aiming to uncover the dynamics of local governance, stakeholder involvement, and tourism infrastructure management in a remote island setting.

The study was conducted over three months, from January to March 2024, on Larea-rea Island, which is located in the Sembilan Island Sub-district, Sinjai Regency.

The data consists of both primary and secondary sources:

A. Primary data were collected through:

- a. Non-participant observation at the research site;
- b. In-depth semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including:
 - Officials from the Tourism and Culture Office of Sinjai Regency;
 - Village government officials of Pulau Persatuan;
 - Tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) leaders;
 - Local tourism entrepreneurs and visiting tourists.

B. Secondary data included:

- a. Official documents (regional regulations, statistical tourism reports);
- b. Previous research, policy briefs, and relevant literature.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria:

- A. Stakeholders directly involved in tourism governance and management;
- B. Local community members who have resided on or interacted with Larea-rea Island tourism activities for at least one year;
- C. Tourists who had visited the island within the past six months.

This selection ensures the richness and relevance of the data. Twelve key informants were interviewed, and triangulation was used to validate findings across sources and perspectives.

Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes the following steps:

- A. Data reduction, through coding and categorizing key themes;
- B. Data display, in the form of matrices and narrative summaries;
- C. Conclusion drawing and verification, by identifying patterns, stakeholder roles, and governance dynamics.

Credibility was maintained through source triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing during the analysis process.

3. Results and Discussion

Sustainable tourism development, as outlined in the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) framework, refers to tourism that meets the needs of present stakeholders while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It emphasizes balancing economic growth, environmental preservation, and socio-cultural integrity. In Indonesia, this concept is also reinforced through national-level regulations such as Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism, which mandates local governments to develop environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive, and economically viable tourism. Sustainable tourism development is the concept of tourism development to resolve the emergence of negative impacts of tourism development, with the principle of tourism development to meet the needs of tourism stakeholders while ensuring environmental, economic and socio-cultural sustainability. Sustainable tourism development can be developed by implementing ecological tourism development, then a sustainable cycle, both economically and environmentally (Yuninata, 2023). Despite the various challenges, tourism growth and economic development, if supported by coordinated public policies, can both make a significant contribution to increasing economic development in countries designated as tourist destinations (Pulido-Fernández & Cárdenas-García, 2021; Tooman, 1997).

At the local level, the implementation of sustainable tourism must be grounded in clear regulatory frameworks, strategic planning, and collaborative institutional arrangements. The Sinjai Regency Government refers to Regional Regulation No. 6 of 2013 concerning the Implementation of Tourism, which mandates the regional government to not only manage tourism potential but also ensure sustainability principles are applied in every stage of tourism development. Local governments have an important role in providing support for sustainable tourism development. This support can take the form of the availability of policies or regulations, the

existence of synergy and coordination between stakeholders, communities and businesses, so that good cooperation emerges (Sri Widari, 2020); conducting tourism promotions (Mariane et al., 2022); providing funding allocations for tourism development, both for facility development and resource development (Arisa & Ahmady, 2019); and encouraging participation from local communities.

Based on this regulation and aligned with national policy directions, the Tourism and Culture Office of Sinjai Regency functions as the executor of regional government affairs in the field of tourism. Their role includes the formulation and execution of tourism development programs, promotion strategies, and facilitation of community-based initiatives. The case of Larea-rea Island, a leading marine tourism destination within the Nine Islands cluster, illustrates how the regional apparatus attempts to align policy with practice. The island combines nautical tourism with coastal recreational activities and has been prioritized as a strategic location for boosting local economic revenue through tourism.

To achieve these goals, the local government adopts a formulative-implementation approach—designing tourism plans and regulations, then translating them into concrete actions such as infrastructure development, stakeholder engagement, and tourism promotion. However, challenges remain in ensuring these efforts are sustainable, participatory, and capable of generating consistent tourist interest. As shown in Figure 1, fluctuations in visitor numbers reflect the need for more integrated planning and adaptive governance strategies.

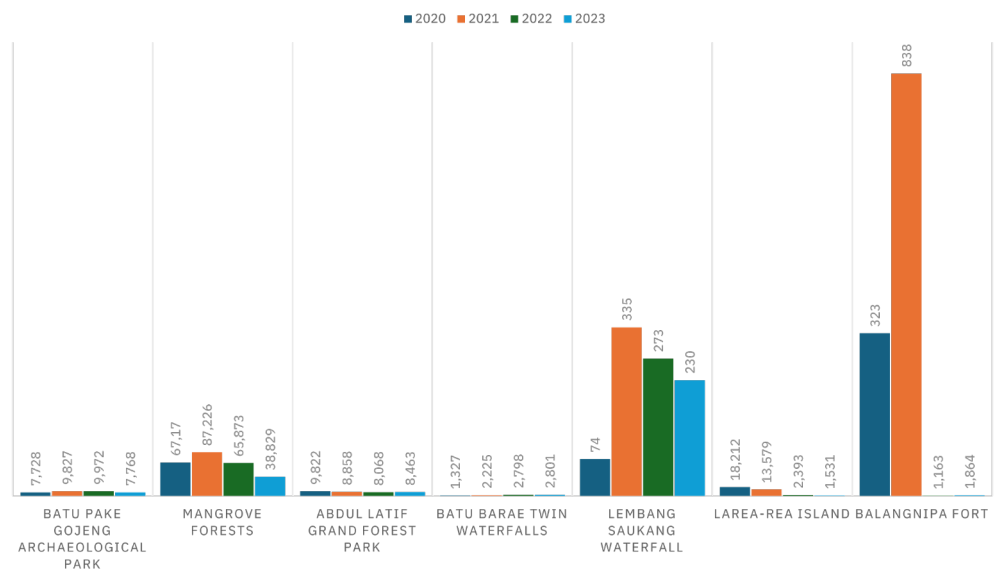


Figure 1. Number of Visitors to Tourist Attractions in Sinjai Regency (2020–2023)

Source: Statistics of Sinjai Regency (2024)

From 2020 to 2023, Larea-rea Island experienced a significant decline in visitor numbers, from 18,212 in 2020 to only 1,531 in 2023, representing a 91.6% decrease. In contrast, destinations such as Benteng Balangnipa showed growth of over 470%, indicating a shift in tourist preferences, possibly due to accessibility, novelty, and promotional focus.

Interestingly, the Hutan Mangrove attraction, while still receiving the highest overall number of visits, dropped 42.2% between 2020 and 2023, suggesting broader regional trends influenced by post-pandemic travel behavior and reduced tourism activities.

These figures highlight the urgency for local government—particularly for Larea-rea Island—to revitalize tourism offerings, improve access, and innovate promotional strategies to recapture interest and diversify its visitor base.

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, several important findings need to be considered, among others:

3.1. Establishing Tourism Destinations

In 2018, the local government, the Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office, became more focused on developing the Larea-rea Island tourist attraction. From 2018 to 2019, the Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office began building several focal points of tourist attraction, such as prayer rooms, meeting places/meeting places, changing rooms, docks, gazebos, toilets, culinary places/restaurants and also the signboard “LAREA-REA ISLAND”. In 2022, the Tourism and Culture Office of Sinjai Regency again built a villa that can be used by visitors who want to spend the night on Larea-rea Island.

The local government’s strategy in developing tourist destinations is also inseparable from the cooperation between the local government and the community. Therefore, in a tourism place, Sinjai Regency has a distribution to support tourism destinations so that they can be better. Tourism distribution is a system of intermediaries, or liaisons, facilitating the sale and delivery of tourism services from suppliers to consumers. It can also be a form of sustainable development. In terms of determining services through distribution on Larea-rea Island tourism, in 2019, the Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office determined the amount of distribution through the Larea-rea Island tourism manager, collecting fees or tickets for each tourist visiting at a rate of IDR10,000 for adults and IDR5,000 for children. For now, there are no tickets or levies for outside tourists in the form of sheets held by the Larea-rea Island manager.

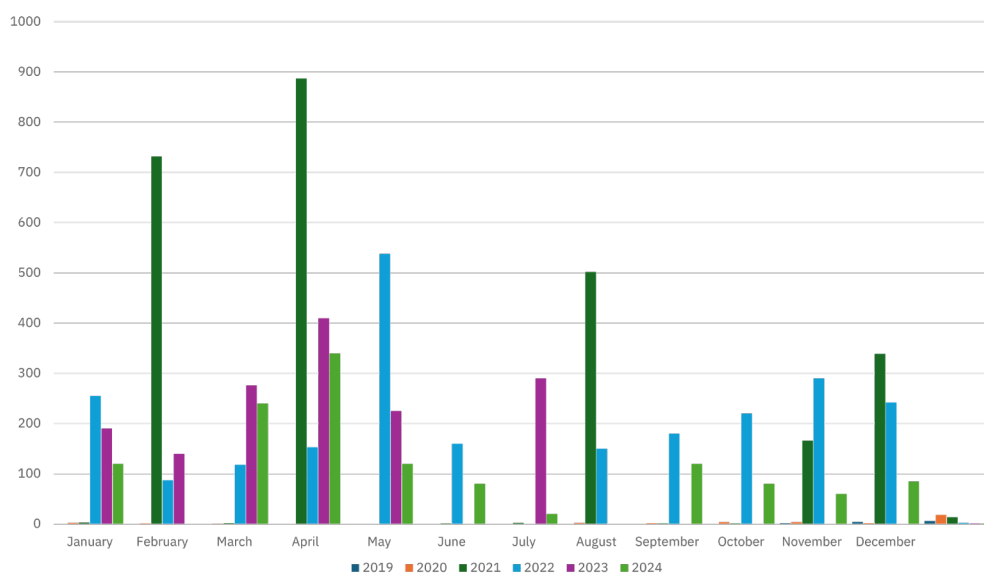


Figure 2. Monthly Visitors to Larea-Rea Island (2019–2024)

Source: Statistics of Sinjai Regency (2024)

In Figure 2, it can be seen that the number of visitors to tourist attractions in 2019-2024 on Larea-rea Island (Disparbud Kabupaten Sinjai, 2025). From the data, it can be seen that visits to Larea-rea Island Tourism objects have decreased. The things complained about by tourists include the lack of clean water availability. In

2020–2021, there was a high number of visits compared to the previous year. This year, the government is building facilities and infrastructure, so public interest is also increasing because they are curious about the new look of Larea-rea Island. In addition, in that year, restrictions imposed on various areas due to COVID-19 had not been implemented in the area on Larea-rea Island, so many people chose to visit the tourist site. In subsequent years, visitors began to decline because they felt bored. After all, the facilities offered were not updated. In addition, the weather on Larea-Rea Island is erratic, and the presence of COVID-19 is one of the factors leading to the decline in visitors to Larea-Rea Island.

By establishing Larea-rea Island as one of the mainstay tourist icons in Sinjai Regency, of course, this needs serious attention from the local government, in this case, the Sinjai Tourism and Culture Office, so that it can carry out strategies to attract tourists to return to visit Larea-Rea Island.

3.2. Facilitate the Development of New Tourism Attractions

Based on the findings of researchers, tourism in Sinjai Regency, precisely the tourism on the island of the nine Larea-rea islands, has provided access, in this case, in collaboration with local communities, for crossing tourists. For this reason, the Sinjai district government has also provided facilities and infrastructure that can support the development of the tourist attraction of Larea-rea island, as follows: a changing room, a prayer room, a gazebo, a photo spot, and a toilet.

Unfortunately, access to the island requires quite expensive costs compared to visiting other tours in Sinjai Regency. The cost of boat crossings and visitor levies that are calculated per person causes less public interest in visiting. Especially when the sea weather is less friendly during the holidays. Tourists prefer to visit other tours that are relatively safe and cost less because they only pay for entrance tickets and parking. It's different if you have to cross to Larea-rea Island.

In addition, the presence of other new beach tourism at several locations along the coast of East Sinjai Subdistrict is the main choice for tourists to visit. In terms of distance, access and cost, people will certainly think again if they have to visit Larea-rea Island while there are no new attractions offered by the manager.

Realizing this, there is a local government strategy in managing the income of new tourist attractions through cooperation with Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes). The village government provides capital assistance to village-owned enterprises to buy banana boats as a tourist attraction for Larea-rea Island, so that the results of revenue management can be managed again.

The local government needs to regulate, manage, and give authority to the village government and provide opportunities for the community to manage tourist attractions. The importance of collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector is also expressed in research by Rusyidi and Fedryansah (2018), which shows that community-based tourism development can contribute significantly to local revenue and job creation. By involving the community in tourism development, it is expected that they can feel the direct benefits of tourism activities that take place in their area. This requires more effort from the government in order to realize cooperation that has an impact on tourism development on Larea-rea Island.

3.3. Promoting Tourism Destinations

The tourism promotion method of the Sinjai Regency government is through social media. In addition to social media, tourism promotion can also be found in print media such as newspapers, brochures, and banners. And tourism promotions can also be found or seen on local TV/Sinjai TV, and also on local radio.

Promotion of Larea-rea Sinjai Island tourism can be seen in Instagram posts through the @ayokesinjai1 (Figure 3) and YouTube account (Figure 4).

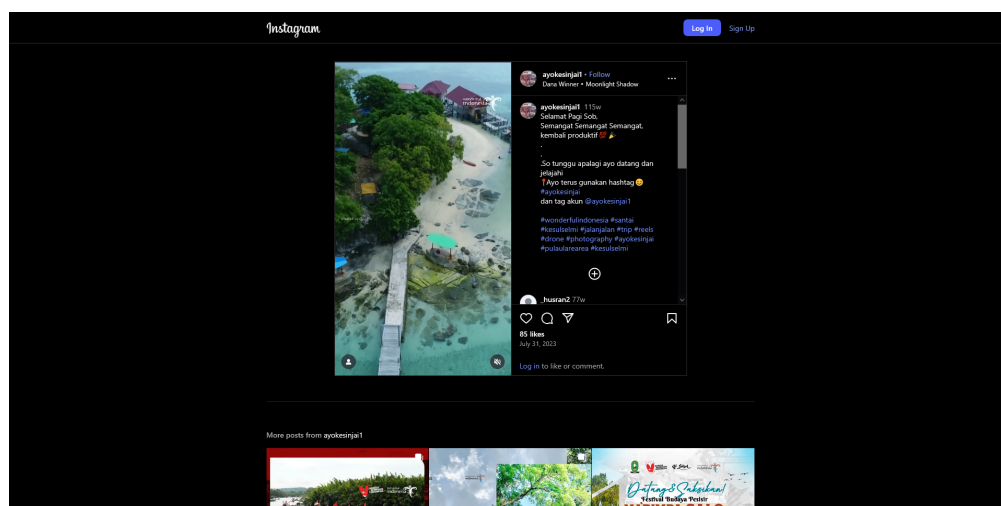


Figure 3. AyoKeSinjai Instagram Account

Source: Instagram @ayokesinjai1 (<https://www.instagram.com/reel/CvWFCpXpSNM/?igsh=bm5vZ25hMHBzeTZ1>)

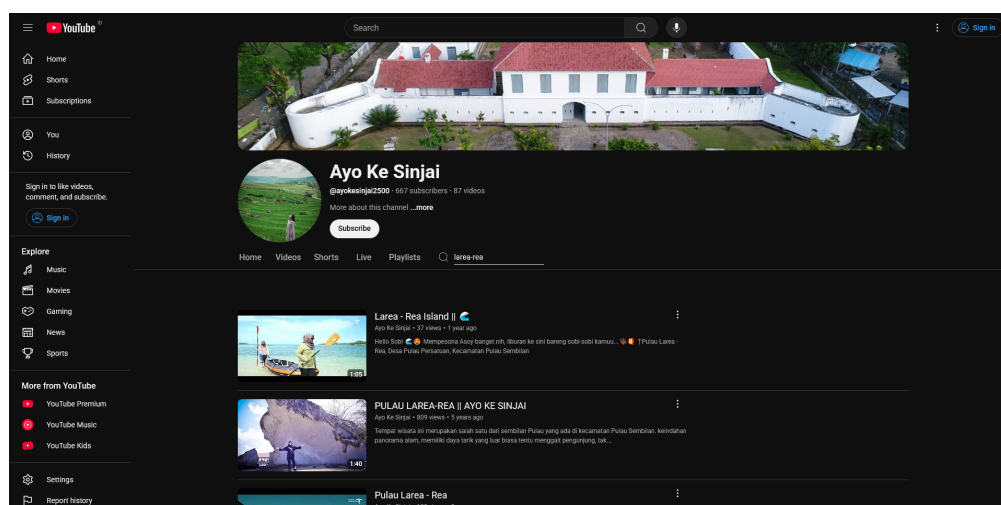


Figure 4. YouTube Channel Ayo Ke Sinjai

Source: YouTube Channel Ayo Ke Sinjai (<https://www.youtube.com/@ayokesinjai2500>)

However, based on the author's research, tourism promotions on social media platforms, both Instagram and YouTube, only appear in older posts. The most recent YouTube post, posted on December 22, 2023, has only been viewed 36 times. Meanwhile, via Instagram, posts about Larea-rea Island were also posted about 2 years ago. This indicates that local governments, particularly relevant agencies, are not maximizing their use of social media promotion, even though this is a crucial aspect in increasing tourists' interest in visiting.

However, tourism promotion must be carried out on an ongoing basis to increase the number of visits. In addition, of course, it must be accompanied by the availability of adequate facilities and good management. Do not let the promotion only be carried out at the beginning of development. Furthermore, it is not running or even

forgotten. With the position of Larea-rea Island, which is quite far from the district capital, of course, the promotion carried out by the government needs to be supported by the availability of access to reach the tourist area. Especially if the lodging facilities can be adjusted to the needs of tourists.

3.4. Preserving the Attractions in the Region

Obstacles in maintaining and preserving Larea-rea Island tourism can also be seen from the lack of public/visitor awareness in maintaining marine and environmental cleanliness, and also, there are still people/fishermen who catch fish by illegal fishing, which can damage coral reefs. And also, the lack of facilities and infrastructure that can be used to clean the environment and transport garbage on Larea-rea Island tours.

In the management of natural tourism, it is necessary to maintain and preserve the tourist attraction, namely the preservation of natural, historical and cultural resources that are the attraction of regional tourism development.

Local government policy also plays an important role in supporting tourism development on Larea-rea Island. According to research by [Haris et al. \(2021\)](#), the Sinjai Regency Tourism Office has implemented the Sapta Pesona strategy to increase tourist visits to the island. This strategy includes aspects of cleanliness, beauty, safety, and hospitality, all of which aim to create a positive experience for tourists. However, although these strategies have been implemented, further innovation and development are still needed so that tourism on Larea-rea Island can develop optimally.

Infrastructure development is also key in improving the accessibility and attractiveness of Larea-rea Island. Rauf emphasized that good infrastructure development can support the growth of the tourism sector, so local governments need to invest in the construction of roads, transportation, and other supporting facilities.

3.5. Organizing Tourism Awareness Guidance

One of the keys to the successful development of the tourism sector is how to create a tourism-aware society. According to Firmansyah, the Tourism Awareness Group is a condition that describes a group of people in directing the creation of a healthy climate for the growth and development of tourism in a tourist attraction. The Tourism Awareness Group is part of an institution or organization established by the community that has responsibility and concern and also plays an important role in encouraging the creation of a healthy or conducive climate and the achievement of Sapta Pesona, namely clean, cool, friendly, beautiful, orderly, safe and memorable elements so that it can support in building and developing tourism in an area and benefit the welfare of the local community ([Rahim, 2012](#)).

Some of the efforts made by the Office of Tourism and Culture to improve tourism are fostering tourism awareness groups or Pokdarwis aimed at increasing the role and participation of the community in terms of tourism development in their respective regions. Tourism awareness groups or Pokdarwis are part of groups that have a role and contribution in developing tourism; therefore, the Tourism and Culture Office need to provide guidance. The coaching is carried out in villages that have tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). The coaching carried out in every village that has a tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis) can increase community awareness and responsibility and act as a driving force to create a conducive climate for the development of tourism in their village area. The relationship between

tourism awareness groups or Pokdarwis and the community is very important to support the vision, mission or objectives of the tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) in their village area. Pokdarwis managers in Pulau Persatuan Village can be seen in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Tourism Awareness Group Organization

No.	Occupation	Name
1	Chairman	A. Darwis
2	Vice Chairman	Muhammad Rustan
3	Secretary	Syamsul Bahri
4	Treasurer	Sudarman
5	Security Section	Randi Syarifuddin
6	Maintenance and Equipment Section	Andi Asriandi Akbar
7	Guide tourism and organizations Section	Muamaluddin Rostam Henra
8	Cleanliness and comfort Section	Sumardi Anita Darja Mirda
9	Cleanliness friendliness Section	Sakka . L Nurfahira Fadli

Source: Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office

Tourism development on Larea-rea Island, Sinjai, is an initiative that aims to utilize the potential of nature and local culture to improve the welfare of the community. In this context, community empowerment is one of the main focuses in the development of ecotourism on the island. [Mustamin and Nur \(2023\)](#) argued that the development of ecotourism on Larea-rea Island not only aims to attract tourists, but also to empower local communities through educational programs and digital marketing. This is in line with the principle of sustainable tourism, which emphasizes the importance of community participation in natural resource management.

Tourism development on Larea-rea Island, Sinjai, represents a distinctive typology of small-island marine ecotourism that sets it apart from other tourism forms found in the region, such as mountain ecotourism or heritage-based tourism. What makes Larea-rea Island particularly unique is the integration of nautical experiences (boating, island-hopping) with the tranquility of an isolated marine ecosystem, which is not easily found in mainland-based destinations.

Unlike forest parks or waterfall-based attractions that primarily offer terrestrial recreation, Larea-rea Island offers a seascape-oriented tourism experience, where visitors can enjoy panoramic ocean views, coral reef exploration, and secluded coastal ambience. These natural assets are combined with local cultural richness—such as traditional coastal fishing practices and local culinary offerings—that further enhance its appeal.

Moreover, the island's tourism model is embedded within a community-based ecotourism framework, where residents are directly involved in providing services, managing homestays, guiding tours, and participating in conservation activities. As noted by [Mustamin and Nur \(2023\)](#), the tourism approach on Larea-rea Island is not merely visitor-oriented but designed to empower local communities through capacity building, ecoprinting workshops, and digital marketing training. This aligns with the core principles of sustainable tourism, emphasizing environmental stewardship and inclusive economic participation.

In this way, Larea-rea Island offers an experiential tourism product that blends ecological immersion, cultural authenticity, and local empowerment—setting it apart from conventional mass tourism or even other natural attractions in Sinjai Regency.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been done, it can be concluded that the role of local government in tourism development on Larea-rea Island needs to be developed and improved. This tourism development needs to be carried out so that it cannot only increase the number of visits but also provides satisfaction with visiting tourists. The level of tourist visits will affect regional income as well. So of course, the role of the local government in this case the Tourism and Culture Office of Sinjai Regency needs to be carried out with the development of tourist attractions after the determination as a mainstay tourist attraction in Sinjai Regency, then facilitating tourism development with various supporting facilities and infrastructure, conducting tourism promotions, carrying out environmental conservation and organizing tourism awareness guidance not only to Pokdarwis but also can involve all components of society in Pulau Persatuan Village, Sembilan Island District, Sinjai Regency.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the role of local government in the development of tourism on Larea-rea Island remains crucial but still faces several implementation challenges. Efforts by the Sinjai Regency Tourism and Culture Office, including infrastructure provision, destination promotion, and community empowerment through tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), have laid a foundation for sustainable tourism development. However, to maximize impact, these initiatives must be further integrated, consistently evaluated, and supported by inclusive governance mechanisms that involve all community stakeholders in Pulau Persatuan Village and the broader Sembilan Island District.

This study is limited in scope by its reliance on a qualitative case study of a single location, which may restrict the generalizability of its findings to other tourism contexts. In addition, the study did not examine in detail the financial aspects of tourism governance, private sector involvement, or the policy implementation gap at the operational level.

Future research is encouraged to adopt a comparative or mixed-methods approach by including other marine tourism destinations in eastern Indonesia, enabling broader analysis and benchmarking. Further studies may also explore the impact of digital tourism platforms, institutional capacity building, and climate adaptation strategies in island-based tourism development. These efforts will contribute to strengthening the theoretical and practical foundations of sustainable and inclusive tourism governance in Indonesia.

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