

# Sustainable Tourism Development In The Context Of Regional Development At Ponot Waterfall, Asahan Regency

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## **Abstract.**

*This Ponot Waterfall tour is located in Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan Regency, Asahan Regency, close to the Sigura-gura Dam and Rafting Tour which is an international event. The objectives of this study are (1) to analyze the strategy for developing sustainable tourism at Ponot Waterfall in Asahan Regency; and (2) analyzing the utilization of sustainable tourism development at Ponot Waterfall in the framework of regional development in Asahan Regency. The research method used is descriptive qualitative using SWOT analysis. Determination of informants using Purposive Sampling method. Data in this study were collected by interview, observation and document observation techniques. The results of this study are (1) the government needs to increase the development of Ponot Waterfall as a leading sustainable destination in Asahan Regency. (2) the importance of paying attention to the utilization of Ponot Waterfall from an economic, social and cultural perspective for the surrounding community. Thus, it is expected to increase tourist visits to Ponot Waterfall and improve the welfare of the Asahan community as a whole.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Tourism Development; Area Development and Ponot Waterfall.

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

One area that is currently focusing on tourism development in supporting regional development is Asahan Regency. Asahan Regency is an area that has a variety of interesting potential resources to be developed into tourism destination objects. One of the most famous is the Ponot Waterfall which is the opening object in a tourism promotion video uploaded by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy with the title The Heart Beat of Toba. The Heart Beat of Toba video is a video that shows or promotes the beauty of Lake Toba as a potential tourism destination in Indonesia. The video also describes the central government's attention to the development of tourism potential in Lake Toba which has made Lake Toba one of the leading tourist attractions in Indonesia. In the Asahan Regency RPJMD document for 2021-2026, it is stated that by making the Lake Toba tourist attraction one of the leading tourist attractions in Indonesia, it provides potential for Asahan Regency tourism to have a good impact on the development of the area around the Lake Toba tourist attraction. Therefore, Asahan Regency is directed to achieve the goal of developing potential with the aim of increasing the contribution of the tourism sector in Asahan Regency. Especially if you look at the level of tourist visits, the trend of which has increased every year [1]. The World Tourism Organization (WTO) defines sustainable tourism development as development that meets the needs of tourists today, while protecting and promoting opportunities for the future [9]. Leads to the management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be met while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biodiversity and life support systems. Sustainable tourism products operate in harmony with the local environment, society and culture, so that they become permanent beneficiaries and not victims of tourism development.

In this case, sustainable tourism development policies are directed at the use of natural resources and the use of human resources for the long term (Sharpley, 2008) [8]. One area that is currently focusing on tourism development in supporting regional development is Asahan Regency. Asahan Regency is an area that has a variety of interesting potential resources to be developed into tourism destination objects. One of the most famous is the Ponot Waterfall which is the opening object in a tourism promotion video uploaded by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy with the title The Heart Beat of Toba. The Heart Beat of

Toba video is a video that shows or promotes the beauty of Lake Toba as a potential tourism destination in Indonesia. The video also describes the central government's attention to the development of tourism potential in Lake Toba which has made Lake Toba one of the leading tourist attractions in Indonesia. In the Asahan Regency RPJMD document for 2021-2026, it is stated that by making the Lake Toba tourist attraction one of the leading tourist attractions in Indonesia, it provides potential for Asahan Regency tourism to have a good impact on the development of the area around the Lake Toba tourist attraction. Therefore, Asahan Regency is directed to achieve the goal of developing potential with the aim of increasing the contribution of the tourism sector in Asahan Regency. Especially if you look at the level of tourist visits, the trend of which has increased every year [1]. The level of visits to tourist attractions in Asahan Regency tends to increase in 2016-2020 the level of visits to tourist attractions is 251,740 people, 261,327 people, 279,825 people, and 298,906 people respectively.

And there was a decrease in 2020 by 170,391 people when compared to the previous year, which is understandable considering the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic at that time which limited various activities including tourism activities. Apart from the Ponot Asahan Waterfall, it still has several potential tourism destinations, such as; The Asahan River course is said to be the 3rd best rafting in the world, Lake Lotus, Mangrove Tourism in the Silau Laut Regency, the H Achmad Bakri Grand Mosque which is the icon of Kisaran City, and many others as shown in the image below [2]. In this period the Asahan Regency Government included tourism as one of the priority programs of the Asahan Regency Government as a strategy in developing tourism in Asahan Regency, the program was expected to be able to maximize tourism potential in the framework of regional development. This is in line with what was conveyed by Miraza (2005) that regional development is the utilization of regional potential, both natural and artificial potential, must be carried out in full and efficiently so that the intended potential has a maximum impact on people's welfare [4]. Based on Regional Regulation no. 3 of 2021 concerning the 2021-2026 RPJMD, Asahan Regency stipulates the Asahan Go Wisata program into 10 priority programs in achieving regional development along with other programs such as digitalization of the bureaucracy, tough human resources, independent economy, healthy Asahan, smart Asahan, strong infrastructure, Asahan religious, participatory-based environment, and Covid-19 war training. The priority program set by the Asahan Regency Government is a strategy to increase tourism development, as explained by Karyono (1997) that tourism as a regional development priority is one of the strategies used to increase the development of the tourism sector [1].

In the Asahan Regency RPJMD 2021-2026 it is also explained that the aim of Asahan Go Wisata is to increase tourism potential from all aspects and make a unified set of superior tour packages through the creation of a travel pattern (travel patron). Such as forming a Regional Regulation on Regional Tourism Master Plans, creating Asahan One Stop Adventure Tourism, religious tourism and culinary tourism. In carrying out the Asahan Go Wisata program, of course, it requires intervention from various parties in maximizing the existing potential. Zainal Arifin Sinaga as Head of the Asahan Regency Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda) explained, "Asahan Go Wisata is a priority program for the Regent in creating a prosperous, religious and character Asahan community, so that many OPDs are involved in supporting the Asahan Go Wisata program. Apart from the Disporapar which is in charge of this, other OPDs are also involved such as the Public Works Service, the Transportation Service, and the PMD Service. Everything is mobilized to support Asahan Go Wisata." [1] The Asahan Go Wisata program is a response to the lack of optimal development and development of tourism in Asahan Regency. The less optimal role of local government in promoting tourism has an impact on the potential of tourist objects that are not optimally developed. This is indicated by the results of PAD from the tourism sector which are not significant when compared to tourism potential. This argument is in line with the data found through the Asahan Regency RPJMD documents for 2021-2026. In the RPJMD document, it is explained that the formulation of problems is very important in the regional planning process, the formulation of the right problems will determine the accuracy of selecting development policies that are solutions for advancing regional development as a whole, including the tourism sector.

The following table displays the main problems, problems and root causes of regional development related to the tourism sector. To maximize the potential and contribution of the tourism sector to regional development, clear and measurable policies and plans are needed. It is this Asahan Go Wisata priority program that is expected to be the answer to these policies and plans, as explained by Edgell (2008) that clear and effective policies and planning are needed in realizing sustainable tourism, so that policy makers and stakeholders involved must be able to make tourism policies that do not harm tourists and the community [3]. In analyzing the data in this study, the authors used the sustainable tourism development model as a research point of view. The aim is to be able to see how the tourism development strategy in Asahan Regency is able to optimally utilize environmental resources and provide benefits for all elements involved or involved in the context of contributing to regional development.

## II. METHODS

This research was carried out using qualitative methods in view of analyzing the phenomenon of tourism development in Asahan Regency which focused on the tourist attraction of the Ponot Waterfall (Muhadjir, 1989). This research was conducted at the Asahan Regency Government through related offices or agencies, as well as various elements of society involved in the development and management of tourism at Ponot Waterfall. Researchers can conduct in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. In this study, the unit of analysis refers to the formulation of the problem as described in the previous section, namely regarding the development of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency (Moleong, 2007) [5] [6]. Data analysis was performed by data interpretation which consisted of several stages, namely: (1) data classification and categorization; (2) data reduction; (3) description and conclusion. The author also uses technical SWOT analysis as one of the methods used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by Asahan Regency in developing sustainable tourism.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **Sustainable Tourism Development Policy in Asahan Regency**

Based on the RPJMD of Asahan Regency for 2021-2026 [1], the following are the root causes of tourism development in Asahan Regency:

1. The attractiveness of tourist objects in Asahan Regency needs to be developed as a leading tourist destination. Apart from beautifying tourist objects, other things that are needed are improving road access to tourist areas, supporting facilities such as hotels and restaurants, and preparing a qualified tourism workforce.
2. Tourism promotion and marketing in Asahan Regency is not yet optimal
3. Not optimal PAD obtained from the development of the tourism sector. In fact, with a sufficient number of tourist visits, the Regional Government can maximize the potential of PAD by withdrawing various types of fees.
4. The development principles used in the tourism development of Asahan Regency have not been fully implemented which include the principles of sustainable tourism development.
5. development) and community-based tourism development
6. Inadequate cooperation between the local government and the private sector in advancing the tourism sector

Sustainable tourism development policies are very important to address the root causes of tourism development in Asahan Regency as described in the RPJMD. By applying the principles of sustainable development, tourism development in Asahan Regency will become more effective and sustainable. This will help to increase the attractiveness of tourist objects, promote and market tourism, increase PAD, and build cooperation between local government and the private sector. Thus, tourism development in Asahan Regency will run better and sustainably. The Asahan Regency Government through the Asahan Regency Youth, Sports and Tourism Office carried out various activities, one of which was tourism awareness socialization with the theme of the activity, "Tourism Awareness Group Development for the Formation of Asahan Regency Tourism Villages". Mr. Witoyo as the Head of the Youth, Sports and Tourism Office of the

Asahan Regency said that, "Tourism awareness groups or abbreviated as Tourism Awareness Group are self-help and self-help groups that grow from, by and for the community and aim to enhance regional tourism development and the success of national tourism development. Thus a tourism awareness group is a group that grows on the initiative and willingness and awareness of the community itself to actively participate in maintaining and preserving various tourist destinations in order to enhance tourism development in the region. One of them is the development of the tourism sector and includes the 2021-2026 Asahan Go Wisata priority program [1].

The above shows that the Asahan Regency Government through the Asahan Regency Youth, Sports and Tourism Office has carried out various activities to support the realization of tourism awareness groups. The activity aims to increase regional tourism development and succeed in national tourism development. This shows that the Asahan Regency Government has realized the importance of tourism development activities in the region. With this activity it is hoped that it can increase public awareness to participate actively in maintaining and preserving various tourist destinations in the region. Apart from that, this activity is also one of the priority programs of the 2021-2026 Asahan Go Wisata RPJMD [1]. Thus, it can be concluded that the Asahan Regency Government has made various efforts to support the realization of tourism awareness groups. Even though the Asahan Regency Government has carried out various activities to support the realization of tourism awareness groups, there are still a number of things that need attention. For example, the Asahan Regency Government must ensure that the activities carried out can increase public awareness to participate actively in maintaining and preserving various tourist destinations in the area. The Asahan Regency Government must ensure that the Asahan Go Wisata 2021-2026 priority RPJMD program can run smoothly and successfully. Thus, the Asahan Regency Government can ensure that the activities carried out can run well and be successful in supporting the realization of tourism awareness groups in the area. Because tourism awareness groups play an important role in regional tourism development. They are responsible for disseminating information about the tourism potential of the area and raising public awareness about local wisdom values. They can also help increase tourist visits to the area by providing information on available attractions, accommodations and activities.

In addition, tourism awareness groups can also help increase the income of local communities by providing business opportunities related to tourism. From the data that has been presented, it shows that the Asahan Regency Government has realized the importance of sustainable tourism development. The strategy formulated through planning by building tourism objects that have local character advantages, developing tourist villages and roadmaps for restoring tourist destinations, as well as the Asahan Go Wisata program are the right steps to increase tourist attractiveness in the area. This will increase cooperation between business actors and utilize regional superior potential in order to boost the regional economy. However, there are several things that need to be considered to ensure that sustainable tourism development is successful. First, the government must ensure that the tourism objects built are of good quality and environmentally responsible. Second, the government must ensure that the development of tourist villages and the roadmap for the recovery of tourist destinations are supported by supporting facilities for accessibility of interconnectivity between tourist objects that can be reached in a day trip. Third, the government must ensure that the Asahan Go Wisata program is supported by adequate e-commerce promotions (IT support). By following these steps, the development of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency will be successful and can increase the tourist attractiveness of the area.

### **Sustainable Tourism Development at Ponot Waterfall**

Ponot Waterfall is the object of the most potential tourist attraction in Asahan Regency. It is proven in the 2021-2026 RPJMD of Asahan Regency, one of the turning points for tourism development is the fact that the Lake Toba tourist attraction has become one of the leading tourist attractions in Indonesia, providing potential for Asahan Regency tourism to participate in getting a good impact from the development of the area around the Lake tourism object. Toba. Therefore, Asahan Regency is directed to achieve the goal of developing potential with the aim of increasing the contribution of the tourism sector in Asahan Regency [1]. The tourist object in Asahan Regency, which is adjacent to the Lake Toba tourist attraction, is the Ponot Waterfall. Not only that, in an interview with Mr. Witoyo as the Head of the Asahan Regency Youth, Sports

and Tourism Service (Disporapar), he said that, "We are currently focusing on the tourism development and development in Asahan on the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction. We consider the Ponot Waterfall to have enormous potential to be developed, the Regent also said this in various meetings regarding tourism development. Apart from having good potential, the level of security at the Ponot Waterfall tourist site is also quite good. Based on the Asahan Go Wisata Asahan Development Profile Final Report document, in terms of the security level of tourist destinations, Ponot Waterfall already has a good level of security.

The support of the apparatus in improving security has been well seen. Illegal levies at tourist attractions are not found because they have been managed properly by community groups. Transparency in tourism prices has also been conveyed properly so as to avoid misunderstandings and extortion that might occur. The crime rate around tourist attractions is also felt to be very low, thus supporting the security assessment of these tourist destinations. Based on the Asahan Go Wisata Development Profile Final Report document, that the Ponot Waterfall tourist destination has quite good potential and competitiveness as a tourist destination. In terms of the business environment, this tourist destination has received good support to optimize its existing potential. The government has issued regional regulations that support the development of these tourist destinations. Licensing matters in developing a business have also been optimal. In terms of costs, it is still quite affordable to open a new business because of its location in a rural area in Aek Songsongan Regency. The potential presence of a toll road from the capital city of North Sumatra to Lake Toba will also facilitate access to this tourist destination later. The above shows that the tourist destination of Ponot Waterfall has quite good potential and competitiveness. The government has also provided support and regulations that support the development of these tourist destinations. However, even though there is support from the government, there are still a number of things that need to be considered in the development of sustainable tourism at Ponot Waterfall. One thing to note is the lack of change felt by the local community.

### **Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy in Asahan Regency**

In formulating a strategy for developing sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency which is focused on the location of Ponot Waterfall, the first step is to look at the components contained in sustainable tourism development in Asahan Regency, such as tourism development policies in Asahan Regency and tourism development in Ponot Waterfall. After that, identify internal factors and external factors. As according to Hunger and Wheelen (2000) that an analysis of the internal and external environment is the basis for knowing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of an organization/company [4]. As for what is meant by internal factors is the description of strengths and weaknesses, while external factors are the description of opportunities and threats.

Internal factors are the identification of aspects of sustainable tourism development in Asahan Regency. These aspects are in the form of strengths and weaknesses. This factor will be used to formulate a development strategy in a SWOT analysis. From the SWOT analysis it can be concluded that to develop sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency which focuses on the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction, a strategy is needed which includes improving infrastructure and road access, establishing good cooperation between the government and the local community, more effective tourism promotion and marketing, formation of tourism awareness groups, timely preparation of Ripparda (Regional Tourism Development Master Plan), attracting greater investment, dissemination of knowledge about the importance of the concept of sustainability in tourism development, forming community groups to manage Ponot Waterfall tourist objects and attractions in a sustainable manner, as well as the establishment of an appropriate mechanism to guarantee optimal PAD obtained from the development of the tourism sector.

### **Utilization of Sustainable Tourism in Asahan Regency**

#### **1. Economic Use for Local Communities**

The community around Ponot Waterfall, to be exact, Tangga Dusun 1 Village has taken advantage of the development of Ponot Waterfall in providing jobs for the local community. The results obtained from this Ponot Waterfall vary, between Rp. 50,000 - Rp. 100,000/ person on weekdays, and Rp. 150,000 - Rp. 200,000/ person on major holidays. Apart from that, the people of the Tangga village also get income from shops at the Ponot Waterfall tourist spot.

## 2. Utilization of Sustainable Tourism Development in Asahan Regency in Environmental Aspects

The tourist location of the Ponot waterfall which is far from the city center which is about 90 km is very appropriate to make it a natural tourism object area. Coupled with cool weather conditions with vegetation in the form of forests that are still beautiful and beautiful scenery. The facilities available at this tourist location still need various developments because currently they are only being managed by the local self-help community so that the increase in tourist facilities at this location is still relatively not optimal. All parties definitely disagree if the tourism development carried out actually has a negative impact on the environment and natural sustainability, as is common in various tourist sites. This of course must be a serious concern, the utilization of sustainable tourism development that is applied must be able to ensure the management and preservation of the environment. The author considers that although the Asahan Regency Government has determined and carried out various efforts related to the use of the environment in tourism development, there is no concrete evidence that these efforts have succeeded in improving environmental quality.

Even though in Asahan Regency's Strategy and Policy Directions for 2021-2026, one of the indicators of tourism development goals is the target for the realization of Tourism Awareness Group which is set at 5 in 2021 and one more every year until 2026. It took 2 years since 2021, the author thinks it took too long in the process of realizing Tourism Awareness Group which until 2023 has not yet been realized in Tangga Village, Ponot Waterfall. In fact, Govt. Asahan himself agreed that the Ponot Waterfall is currently a tourism development priority by the Asahan Regency Government. Therefore, the Asahan Regency Government must be more serious in making efforts related to environmental utilization so that programs and socialization of environmental utilization can run effectively and efficiently. In conclusion, sustainable tourism development is a concept that can ensure that important natural resources can be used sustainably and can become a source of income for local communities. In addition, sustainable tourism development can also improve environmental quality and enhance the tourism experience for visitors. Thus, sustainable tourism development is a concept that can help in increasing public awareness about environmental protection and conservation.

## 3. Utilization of Sustainable Tourism Development in Asahan Regency in Socio-Cultural Aspects

Ponot Waterfall is one of the tourist destinations that want to be developed through a sustainable tourism development approach in Asahan Regency. Socio-cultural aspects are an important concern in the development of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency, especially Ponot Waterfall. Moreover, Malay culture which is the original culture of Asahan Regency also wants to be utilized. In this regard, Mr. Witoyo said that, "one of the objectives of tourism development in Asahan Regency is to create a superior and distinctive halal tourism destination based on Malay culture and Asahan nature, with the support of tourism facilities, public facilities and public infrastructure supporting tourism, which are integrated inter-sectoral and inter-regional development. Furthermore, increasing the understanding and support of the people of Asahan Regency for tourism development that upholds the wisdom of Malay culture.

While the goal is to develop quality Malay cultural and natural tourism products through the preservation, utilization and management of Malay cultural potential as well as coastal, small island and mainland resources and biodiversity, for the welfare of the Asahan people. However, on the other hand, we must also ensure that sustainable tourism development in Asahan Regency does not disturb the preservation of Malay nature and culture. Apart from Malay culture, in Asahan Regency there are also various other ethnicities such as Batak, Javanese, Minang, and others. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the development of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency also accommodates local culture and wisdom shared by other ethnic groups in Asahan Regency. Therefore, careful planning and concrete actions are needed to ensure that sustainable tourism development in Asahan Regency can run well and sustainably. Thus, it is expected to increase tourist visits to Ponot Waterfall and improve the welfare of the Asahan community as a whole.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted regarding the development of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency in the context of regional development, it is formulated into two problems, namely to analyze the strategy and utilization of sustainable regional development in Asahan Regency. Then it can be concluded that:

1. To develop sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency which focuses on Ponot Waterfall tourism objects, a strategy is needed which includes improving road infrastructure and access, establishing good cooperation between the government and local communities, more effective tourism promotion and marketing, forming tourism awareness groups, preparation of Ripparda (Regional Tourism Development Master Plan) in a timely manner, attracting greater investment, disseminating knowledge about the importance of the concept of sustainability in tourism development, forming community groups to manage tourist objects and attractions of Ponot Waterfall in a sustainable manner, as well as establishing mechanisms that appropriate to ensure optimal PAD obtained from the development of the tourism sector.

2. Utilization of sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency in the framework of regional development, needs to be considered from the economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects. Economic utilization can be done by increasing government involvement in the management of Ponot Waterfall, as well as maximizing economic benefits for the community. Environmental utilization can be carried out by promoting sustainable tourism in Asahan Regency, especially in Ponot Waterfall, as well as increasing public awareness about the importance of protecting and preserving the environment. While the use of socio-culture can be done by increasing promotion through social media, inviting local communities to participate in cultural attractions, and increasing public awareness about the importance of using socio-culture in the development of sustainable tourism. Thus, it is expected to increase tourist visits to Ponot Waterfall and improve the welfare of the Asahan community as a whole.

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