

# Tourism Village Development as a Grassroots Indicator of Maritime Development: A Qualitative Case Study of a Coastal Community in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Date of submission: 15 July 2025 | Date of acceptance: 8 December 2025

## ABSTRACT

Indonesia's maritime development agenda emphasizes the integration of economic growth, community empowerment, and sustainability in coastal and archipelagic regions. Among various development instruments, tourism villages—particularly those based on marine and coastal resources—have gained increasing attention as vehicles for community-based development. However, existing studies largely position tourism villages as development outcomes, with limited attention to their potential role as analytical indicators of maritime development at the local level. This study aims to examine tourism village development as a grassroots indicator of maritime development through a qualitative case study in *Kelurahan* (Subdistrict) Toronipa, Southeast Sulawesi. Employing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, non-participant observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns related to community participation, governance, socio-economic transformation, infrastructure development, and sustainability practices. The findings reveal that tourism village development in Toronipa reflects broader maritime development processes by facilitating livelihood diversification, strengthening community participation in governance, improving infrastructure accessibility, and integrating maritime cultural values into tourism activities. At the same time, the study identifies challenges related to uneven participation, environmental management, and the potential displacement of traditional maritime livelihoods. This research contributes theoretically by repositioning tourism villages as socio-economic and governance indicators of maritime development rather than merely policy outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that tourism village performance can inform more inclusive and context-sensitive maritime development policies, particularly in coastal regions of eastern Indonesia. The study highlights the importance of integrating community empowerment, governance quality, and sustainability considerations into the assessment of maritime development at the grassroots level.

## Keywords

*Tourism village, maritime development, community-based tourism, coastal communities.*

## Introduction

Indonesia is globally recognized as the world's largest archipelagic state, with more than 17,000 islands and approximately 75 percent of its territory covered by marine waters. This geographical reality positions maritime resources not merely as ecological assets but as strategic foundations for national development, economic growth, and socio-cultural sustainability. In line with this condition, maritime tourism has increasingly been promoted as one of the key pillars in strengthening Indonesia's vision as a global maritime axis, capable of generating economic value while preserving marine ecosystems and coastal cultures (Azizi, 2018; Dwi & Subekti, 2017). Among various maritime tourism models, the development of tourism villages—particularly marine and coastal-based tourism villages—has emerged as a promising approach to integrate local community empowerment, sustainable resource management, and regional economic development.

Tourism villages in Indonesia have been widely acknowledged as effective instruments for rural and coastal development, especially through community-based tourism (CBT) approaches that emphasize local participation, cultural preservation, and equitable benefit distribution (Latif, 2018; Munandar et al., 2020). Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that tourism villages can improve household income, create alternative livelihoods, reduce unemployment, and enhance social cohesion within rural and coastal communities (Andriyani et al., 2012; Fachry, 2021). In maritime contexts, marine tourism villages play a particularly important role by linking tourism activities with fisheries, coastal conservation, and maritime cultural heritage, thereby contributing to broader socio-economic and environmental outcomes (Rumiati et al., 2019; Setiawati et al., 2023).

Recent policy frameworks further reinforce the strategic role of tourism villages in Indonesia's maritime development agenda. The issuance of the Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries Regulation No. 93/PERMEN-KP/2020 on Maritime Tourism Villages reflects a formal recognition of tourism villages as instruments for improving the welfare of coastal communities while strengthening maritime identity and governance. Empirical evidence from Labengki Islands in Southeast Sulawesi indicates that marine tourism villages have significantly contributed to improving the welfare of coastal communities through increased economic opportunities, strengthened community participation, and enhanced utilization of marine resources (Harlina et al., 2023). Similar findings have been reported in various regions, including South Sulawesi, Nusa Penida, Sikakap, and Selong Belanak, where maritime tourism development has positively affected employment, infrastructure development, and social interaction patterns among coastal residents (Andriyani et al., 2012; Dewi et al., 2024; Fachry, 2021; Rumiati et al., 2019).

Despite these positive outcomes, the development of tourism villages—particularly those based on marine and coastal resources—remains uneven and faces persistent challenges. Several studies highlight that not all tourism villages succeed

in transforming local potential into sustainable economic benefits due to limitations in human resources, governance capacity, infrastructure, digital readiness, and market competitiveness (Fajri et al., 2024; Koranti et al., 2019). In addition, tensions often emerge between tourism development, traditional livelihoods such as fishing, and conservation objectives, especially in small island and coastal settings where socio-ecological systems are highly fragile (Yumi, 2018). These challenges underscore the need for more integrated and context-sensitive development models that balance economic growth, environmental sustainability, and socio-cultural continuity.

From an analytical perspective, previous studies on tourism villages and maritime tourism in Indonesia have predominantly focused on welfare impacts, competitiveness, governance strategies, or sustainability indicators as separate domains (Koranti et al., 2019; Latif, 2018; Syafruddin & Badollahi, 2023). While research on sustainable marine tourism indicators has advanced the measurement of environmental, social, and economic dimensions at the destination level (Rumiati et al., 2019), limited attention has been given to positioning tourism villages themselves as socio-economic proxies or grassroots indicators of maritime development. In other words, although tourism villages are frequently discussed as development outcomes, they are rarely conceptualized as analytical instruments for assessing how maritime development policies translate into tangible benefits at the community level.

This gap is particularly evident in the context of eastern Indonesia, where coastal and island communities possess rich maritime resources yet continue to experience structural development disparities. Studies on marine tourism villages in regions such as Komodo Island, Mattiro Matae, and Labengki emphasize the importance of local wisdom, community participation, and digital integration but stop short of framing tourism villages as indicators that reflect the performance of maritime development across governance, economic resilience, and social transformation dimensions (Annisa et al., 2024; Harlina et al., 2023; Setiawati et al., 2023). Consequently, there remains a need for empirical research that repositions tourism villages not only as development targets but also as measurable manifestations of maritime development outcomes at the local level.

Addressing this gap, the present study examines the development of a coastal tourism village as a source of maritime development indicators in *Kelurahan* (Subdistrict) Toronipa, Southeast Sulawesi. Toronipa represents a strategically important coastal area with strong marine tourism potential, active community participation, and growing government involvement in tourism infrastructure and governance. By adopting a qualitative case study approach, this research seeks to analyze how tourism village development reflects broader maritime development processes, particularly in terms of community empowerment, local economic transformation, governance dynamics, and sustainability practices. Through this

perspective, the study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on maritime tourism and community-based development by offering an alternative conceptualization of tourism villages as socio-economic indicators of maritime development, thereby providing both theoretical insights and practical implications for policy formulation in coastal and archipelagic contexts.

## Method

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how the development of a coastal tourism village functions as a source of maritime development indicators at the community level. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate because the research sought to capture in-depth social processes, governance dynamics, community participation, and socio-economic transformations that cannot be adequately understood through quantitative measurement alone. The case study strategy enabled a contextualized and holistic examination of tourism village development within its real-life setting, allowing the interaction between policy, community practices, and maritime resources to be analyzed comprehensively.

*Kelurahan* (Subdistrict) Toronipa, located in the coastal area of Southeast Sulawesi, was selected as a single instrumental case due to its strategic position as a developing marine tourism destination and its relevance to Indonesia's maritime development agenda. The village represents a coastal community where tourism, fisheries, local governance, and community-based development intersect, making it a suitable case for examining tourism villages as grassroots indicators of maritime development.

The research was conducted in *Kelurahan Toronipa, Kecamatan* (district) Soropia, Southeast Sulawesi, a coastal settlement characterized by marine-based livelihoods, particularly small-scale fisheries and emerging tourism-related economic activities. Toronipa has experienced increasing attention from local government and tourism stakeholders due to its coastal landscape, marine biodiversity, and accessibility. The area has also undergone infrastructural development related to tourism facilities, making it an appropriate setting for analyzing the socio-economic and governance dimensions of marine tourism village development.

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, based on their relevance and direct involvement in the development and governance of the tourism village. The study involved key stakeholder groups, including local government officials at the village level, community leaders, tourism managers, representatives of local institutions (such as community empowerment bodies), small tourism-related entrepreneurs, and members of coastal households whose livelihoods are connected to fisheries and tourism activities.

The selection criteria emphasized participants' knowledge of tourism development processes, maritime-related economic activities, and community participation mechanisms. This approach ensured that data were obtained from informants who could provide rich, experience-based insights into the role of tourism village development in reflecting maritime development outcomes. Sampling continued until data saturation was reached, indicated by the repetition of themes and the absence of new substantive information.

Data were collected through multiple qualitative techniques to enhance depth and credibility. Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary data source. Interviews were conducted face-to-face using an interview guide that focused on themes such as community participation in tourism development, perceived socio-economic changes, governance and policy support, integration of tourism with maritime livelihoods, and sustainability practices. The semi-structured format allowed flexibility for participants to elaborate on issues they considered most relevant while maintaining alignment with the research objectives.

In addition to interviews, non-participant observation was conducted to document tourism activities, community interactions, infrastructure conditions, and the utilization of marine and coastal resources. Observations were recorded through field notes and photographic documentation to capture contextual details that complemented interview data.

Furthermore, document analysis was undertaken to examine policy documents, local development plans, regulatory frameworks, and secondary materials related to tourism village development and maritime policy. These documents provided an institutional and regulatory context for interpreting empirical findings and understanding how national and local policies are translated into village-level practices.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, conducted through several iterative stages. First, all interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and observational notes and documents were compiled into a unified data corpus. Second, an open coding process was applied to identify meaningful units of information related to tourism development, maritime activities, governance, and community outcomes. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding, enabling the identification of patterns and relationships across data sources.

In the final stage, selective coding was used to refine and consolidate categories into key analytical themes, such as community empowerment, economic diversification, governance and communication strategies, infrastructure development, and sustainability practices. These themes formed the basis for interpreting how tourism village development operates as a proxy for maritime development indicators at the local level.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation was achieved by integrating information from interviews, observations, and document analysis. Source triangulation was also applied by involving participants from diverse stakeholder groups to capture multiple perspectives. To enhance credibility, preliminary findings were discussed informally with selected participants for member checking, allowing clarification and validation of interpretations.

The researcher maintained reflexive field notes throughout the research process to account for positionality and minimize potential bias. An audit trail documenting data collection procedures, coding decisions, and analytical steps was also maintained to enhance dependability and transparency. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity in data reporting.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **1. Tourism Village Development as a Grassroots Maritime Development Indicator**

The findings indicate that the development of the tourism village in Kelurahan Toronipa reflects broader maritime development processes at the community level. Tourism-related activities in Toronipa are not limited to recreational services but are closely intertwined with marine-based livelihoods, local governance practices, and community participation. This integration positions the tourism village as a practical indicator of how maritime development policies materialize in coastal communities.

Empirical evidence shows that tourism village development in Toronipa has facilitated the diversification of local livelihoods beyond small-scale fisheries. Community members have increasingly engaged in tourism-related micro-enterprises such as food stalls, accommodation services, equipment rentals, and guiding services. This economic diversification aligns with previous studies demonstrating that marine tourism villages can function as engines of local economic transformation by creating alternative income sources while maintaining maritime-based identities (Harlina et al., 2023; Fachry, 2021). In this context, the tourism village serves as an observable socio-economic indicator of maritime development effectiveness, particularly in terms of income generation, employment opportunities, and reduced vulnerability of coastal households.

### **2. Community Participation and Empowerment in Maritime Tourism Governance**

A central theme emerging from the data is the critical role of community participation in shaping tourism village development. Local residents in Toronipa actively participate in planning, managing, and maintaining tourism facilities through community-based institutions and informal networks. This participatory governance structure strengthens a sense of ownership and social legitimacy, which

has been identified as a key determinant of sustainable tourism village development (Latif, 2018; Pamuja et al., 2025).

The findings corroborate community-based tourism (CBT) theory, which emphasizes bottom-up development and local empowerment as prerequisites for sustainability (Munandar et al., 2020). In Toronipa, community involvement extends beyond operational roles to include decision-making processes related to resource use, visitor management, and infrastructure maintenance. Such practices indicate that tourism village development can act as an institutional indicator of maritime governance quality, reflecting the degree to which coastal communities are empowered to manage marine resources in alignment with development goals.

However, the study also reveals that community participation is not uniformly distributed. Certain groups, particularly those with stronger social capital or access to local institutions, tend to benefit more directly from tourism-related opportunities. This finding echoes concerns raised in small island and coastal tourism literature, which warns that tourism development may reproduce social inequalities if governance mechanisms are insufficiently inclusive (Yumi, 2018). Consequently, while tourism villages can indicate progress in maritime development, they also reveal underlying governance challenges that require policy attention.

### **3. Infrastructure Development and Accessibility as Supporting Maritime Indicators**

Infrastructure development emerged as another significant dimension linking tourism village development with maritime indicators. Improved road access, sanitation facilities, parking areas, coastal amenities, and supporting infrastructure have enhanced Toronipa's attractiveness as a marine tourism destination. These improvements have facilitated increased visitor flows and extended lengths of stay, generating multiplier effects for the local economy.

Consistent with competitiveness studies on tourism villages in Indonesia, infrastructure quality is a decisive factor influencing destination performance and visitor satisfaction (Koranti et al., 2019). From a maritime development perspective, infrastructure improvements in Toronipa reflect state and local government commitment to integrating coastal areas into broader economic networks. As such, infrastructure conditions function as tangible indicators of maritime development, signaling the extent to which coastal tourism is prioritized within regional development strategies.

Nevertheless, observational data indicate that infrastructure development remains uneven and, in some cases, environmentally vulnerable. Issues related to waste management and coastal cleanliness persist, highlighting the tension between tourism growth and environmental sustainability. This finding aligns with broader critiques of maritime tourism development in Indonesia, which emphasize the need for stronger environmental governance to prevent ecosystem degradation (Fauzan & Burhanuddin, 2023; Rumiati et al., 2019).

#### **4. Tourism Village Development and Socio-Economic Transformation**

The socio-economic impacts of tourism village development in Toronipa are evident in changes to income patterns, employment structures, and social interaction. Residents reported increased economic resilience due to diversified income streams, reduced dependence on seasonal fishing activities, and improved access to local markets. These findings support earlier empirical studies demonstrating that maritime tourism can enhance the welfare of coastal communities through job creation and income growth (Andriyani et al., 2012; Fachry, 2021).

Beyond economic outcomes, tourism village development has also influenced social dynamics within the community. Increased interaction with visitors has enhanced communication skills, openness, and exposure to external ideas, contributing to social learning and adaptive capacity. Similar social transformations have been observed in other marine tourism contexts, where tourism acts as a catalyst for social change and community modernization (Dewi et al., 2024).

However, the findings also suggest the need for caution. The gradual shift of labor from fisheries to tourism raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of traditional maritime livelihoods. As highlighted in studies of small island tourism, excessive reliance on tourism may undermine cultural identity and food security if not balanced with fisheries and conservation efforts (Yumi, 2018). Therefore, tourism village development should be interpreted as a dynamic maritime indicator that captures both opportunities and trade-offs inherent in coastal development.

#### **5. Sustainability, Maritime Culture, and Local Wisdom**

Sustainability practices and the preservation of maritime culture constitute another critical dimension of tourism village development in Toronipa. Local customs, culinary traditions, and marine-based cultural expressions are integrated into tourism offerings, reinforcing cultural identity while enhancing destination uniqueness. This finding resonates with sustainable marine tourism frameworks that emphasize local wisdom and cultural heritage as core assets (Azizi, 2018; Ardiwidjaja, 2016).

The incorporation of maritime culture into tourism activities also reflects Indonesia's broader vision of positioning itself as a global maritime axis through cultural diplomacy and heritage-based tourism (Dwi & Subekti, 2017). In this regard, tourism villages function as cultural indicators of maritime identity, demonstrating how local traditions are maintained and adapted within contemporary development processes.

Nonetheless, sustainability remains contingent on effective governance and community awareness. While there is growing recognition of environmental conservation, the implementation of structured sustainability indicators and monitoring mechanisms remains limited. This gap mirrors findings from other

marine tourism studies that call for clearer indicators to balance economic growth with ecological preservation (Rumiati et al., 2019; Annisa et al., 2024).

## **6. Implications for Maritime Development Policy and Theory**

Integrating the findings with existing literature, this study advances the conceptualization of tourism villages as grassroots indicators of maritime development. Rather than viewing tourism villages solely as development outcomes, the results demonstrate that they can serve as analytical lenses for assessing governance quality, community empowerment, economic resilience, infrastructure readiness, and sustainability practices in coastal areas.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study extends community-based tourism and maritime development literature by linking micro-level village dynamics with macro-level maritime policy objectives. Practically, the findings suggest that policymakers should adopt tourism village performance as part of a broader maritime indicator framework, enabling more context-sensitive and inclusive development strategies, particularly in eastern Indonesian coastal regions.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the development of a coastal tourism village in Kelurahan Toronipa, Southeast Sulawesi, by conceptualizing tourism villages as grassroots indicators of maritime development. The findings demonstrate that tourism village development in coastal areas extends beyond recreational activities and functions as a multidimensional manifestation of maritime development outcomes, encompassing economic diversification, community empowerment, governance practices, infrastructure readiness, and sustainability orientation.

Empirically, the study reveals that tourism village development in Toronipa has contributed to improved socio-economic conditions by diversifying livelihoods, reducing dependence on small-scale fisheries, and increasing local income opportunities. These changes reflect the effectiveness of maritime development policies at the community level, where tourism villages serve as observable proxies for economic resilience and employment generation in coastal regions. At the same time, enhanced social interaction and community participation indicate broader social transformations associated with maritime tourism development.

From a governance perspective, the findings highlight the central role of community participation and local institutions in shaping tourism village outcomes. Active involvement of residents in planning and management processes strengthens local ownership and institutional legitimacy, reinforcing the principles of community-based tourism. In this regard, tourism villages also function as indicators of maritime governance quality, revealing the extent to which development is inclusive, participatory, and responsive to local contexts. However, uneven participation and differential access to tourism benefits underscore persistent challenges related to social equity and inclusive governance.

The study further demonstrates that infrastructure development and accessibility are critical enabling factors linking tourism villages with maritime development performance. Improvements in transportation, amenities, and supporting facilities enhance destination competitiveness and signal governmental commitment to integrating coastal areas into regional development frameworks. Nonetheless, the persistence of environmental management issues highlights the need for stronger sustainability governance to ensure that tourism growth does not compromise marine and coastal ecosystems.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature by repositioning tourism villages from being viewed solely as development outcomes to being understood as analytical instruments for assessing maritime development at the local level. By integrating community-based tourism theory with maritime development perspectives, the study offers a conceptual lens through which tourism villages can be employed as socio-economic and governance indicators within broader maritime policy frameworks.

Despite these contributions, this study is not without limitations. As a single qualitative case study, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalizable to all coastal or island settings in Indonesia. The reliance on qualitative data also limits the ability to quantify the magnitude of observed changes. Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt comparative or mixed-methods designs, examine multiple tourism villages across different maritime contexts, and develop standardized indicator frameworks that integrate social, economic, governance, and environmental dimensions of tourism village development.

In conclusion, tourism villages hold significant potential as grassroots indicators of maritime development, particularly in archipelagic and coastal regions. Recognizing and utilizing this potential can enhance the formulation of more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable maritime development policies. By foregrounding local communities as both beneficiaries and evaluators of development processes, tourism village-based indicators can contribute meaningfully to advancing Indonesia's vision as a sustainable and socially grounded maritime nation.

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