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license**BETWEEN STATE AND SOCIETY: GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AND STAKEHOLDER
COLLABORATION FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN
THE PANTAI BATEE PUTEH AREA, WEST ACEH****Muhammad Fadhil^{1*}, Zulkarnain¹, Zulkarnaini¹, Rollis
Juliansyah²**¹Universitas Riau, Jalan HR. Subrantas KM. 12.5, Pekanbaru
28293, Indonesia²Universitas Teuku Umar, Jalan Alue Peunyareng, Aceh 23681,
Indonesia

*Correspondence E-Mail:

muhammad.fadhil8897@grad.unri.ac.idDOI: <https://doi.org/10.30598/baileofisipvol3iss1pp49-66>**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the local government's communication strategies in the development of the Batee Puteh Beach Tourism Area in Aceh Barat Regency. The research focuses on how communication is utilized to address weak promotion and limited stakeholder collaboration. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through field observations and in-depth interviews with relevant officials and local community leaders. The findings reveal that the local government's communication strategies include: (1) community socialization and engagement through a participatory approach; (2) destination promotion using social media, mass media, events, and cross-sector partnerships; and (3) stakeholder coordination involving government, private sector, community, academia, and media. These strategies have effectively increased community participation and tourist visits. Persuasive communication rooted in local wisdom and informal interactions has also been employed to align stakeholder visions. The study demonstrates that well-designed and executed communication can bridge gaps in information and coordination, positioning communication as a key factor in local tourism development. The novelty of this study lies in identifying a collaborative, participatory government communication model tailored to community-based tourism. It recommends continued communication innovation, stronger destination branding, crisis communication protocols, and long-term cross-sector partnerships. The theoretical implications contribute to social sciences, particularly in development communication and sustainable tourism governance.

Keywords: Government Communication, Local Wisdom, Participatory Development, Stakeholder Collaboration, Tourism Governance

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is not merely about beautiful destinations, but also about how a region is able to “communicate” effectively—with its own citizens, with investors, and with the outside world (Hunihua, 2023; Karyadi et al., 2024). In the midst of the West Aceh Regency Government's efforts to promote the tourism sector as a driver of the local economy, an undeniable issue arises: why are tourists still not coming in large numbers, despite the promising natural potential of places like Bate Puteh Beach? Several fundamental challenges have surfaced, ranging from suboptimal promotion efforts to weak synergy among stakeholders who should be working

together to drive the area's progress. This is not merely a matter of inadequate infrastructure or budget constraints, but a communication issue—how information is constructed, delivered, and received by the community and other development partners.

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of communication in tourism development. Akapip (2023), Mailoa et al. (2023), and Sabandar (2025) assert that effective communication between the government and the community is key to the success of destination development. Hidayati & Siregar (2024), Moriolkosu et al. (2025), and Rusli et al. (2023) add that cross-sector collaboration must be supported by structured communication to produce inclusive governance. Meanwhile, research by Andriyanto et al. (2024) and Lukman et al. (2025) emphasizes that communication not only shapes public perception of destinations but also serves as a coordination tool among tourism actors. Ahmed et al. (2023) and Nurhidayah et al. (2024) observe that low public trust in tourism projects often stems from non-transparent, top-down government communication.

More specifically, studies by Nurvianti & Hastuti (2021) and Prayudi (2022) show that participatory communication approaches in developing tourism villages in Yogyakarta have successfully increased active community involvement. Furthermore, research by Ghaisani & Afifi (2022), Putri & Sujono (2024), and Sapulette & Telusa (2024) highlights the importance of using social media as a communication strategy for tourism promotion in the digital era. Lelloitery et al. (2021) and Mawar et al. (2024) trace how communication synergy between the private sector and government in developing marine tourism in Maluku significantly increased tourist visits. On the other hand, Pasaribu et al. (2025) and Purwoko et al. (2023) found that the absence of coordination among stakeholders often becomes a major obstacle in the development of community-based tourism destinations in North Sumatra.

Furthermore, research by Kholifah et al. (2021) and Nenotek et al. (2025) points out that the use of local language and symbols in tourism communication strategies increases the community's sense of ownership of destinations. Meanwhile, studies by Sjafirah et al. (2024) and Yanti et al. (2023) underline the need for a cultural approach in conveying tourism development information in regions with strong traditional values. Additionally, research by Harfst et al. (2025) and Isabel et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of media involvement in shaping public opinion about regional tourism potential, especially in areas not yet widely recognized on a national scale.

Most of these studies agree that the success of tourism development cannot be separated from the communication dimension. However, research specifically addressing how local government communication strategies are collaboratively built—considering local wisdom and social realities—is still limited. Amidst the dominance of macro and theoretical approaches, there is a need for contextual case studies that illustrate real dynamics on the ground. In this regard, the experience of the West Aceh Regency Government in developing the Bate Puteh Beach area presents an intriguing case for deeper exploration.

This is where the importance of this study arises. This research not only documents the communication strategies implemented by the local government, but also unpacks how these processes are designed participatively, grounded in local socio-cultural contexts, and capable of bridging the relationship between the state and society in tourism development. In this way, the study offers new insights into governmental communication that is not only informative, but also transformational and collaborative—dimensions often overlooked in many discourses.

This study aims to examine in depth the communication strategies employed by the West Aceh local government in developing the Bate Puteh Beach tourism area and to assess their effectiveness in fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Through this approach, the study seeks to produce a more holistic and contextual understanding of the role of communication in community-based tourism development. By positioning communication as a bridge between the state and society, this study seeks to present a new face of inclusive, adaptive, and locally-rooted governmental communication strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the local government's communication strategy in developing the Bate Puteh Beach tourism area in West Aceh Regency. This approach was chosen for a reason. The complexity of communication issues in the context of tourism development—involving multiple actors, local values, and diverse interests—cannot be adequately explained through mere numbers and statistics. On the contrary, a qualitative approach allows the researcher to immerse into the social reality more holistically, to understand the meaning behind actions, and to capture the dynamics of social interaction as they truly are in the field (Stanley, 2023). As Lim (2025) has stated, this approach is highly appropriate when the focus is on meaning rather than observable facts. This research does not aim to test hypotheses but to describe in detail how strategic communication is designed and implemented by the local government in accordance with the socio-cultural context of the West Aceh community.

The research location was selected purposively—namely, the Bate Puteh Beach area in West Aceh Regency. This area was chosen because it is one of the flagship tourism development zones targeted by the local government, yet it faces real challenges in communication and stakeholder collaboration. By choosing this location, the researcher is able to directly observe governmental communication practices in a real and dynamic context, as well as see how policies are received, understood, and responded to by the local community. Moreover, this area reflects the general characteristics of other regions in Indonesia that are initiating community-based tourism development—with limited infrastructure and resources, yet rich in living local values that shape development directions.

Informants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, where the researcher intentionally chose individuals deemed most relevant and knowledgeable about the

communication processes surrounding the development of Bate Puteh Beach. The primary informants included the Head of the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports (Disparpora) of West Aceh, several technical officials at the sub-district level, and local community figures such as village heads (Keuchik), members of tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and local youth involved in tourism promotion. The initial number of informants was eight, but it gradually increased using the snowball technique—where initial informants recommended others who were considered to have deep knowledge of the issue. This process continued until the researcher reached data saturation, where the information obtained began to repeat and no longer provided new findings, as explained by Bazen et al. (2021).

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document studies. Observation was carried out directly at Bate Puteh Beach to observe various communication activities, such as information boards, public outreach events, or tourism promotions conducted by the government. This approach was important to capture non-verbal aspects, the atmosphere of social interaction, and symbolic forms of communication that often do not emerge in interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the opinions, experiences, and reflections of informants regarding the communication strategies being implemented. This format provided informants with the freedom to explain their views in depth while still within the research topic framework. The document study involved collecting various relevant documents such as tourism brochures, Disparpora's social media posts, government press releases, tourism development planning documents, visitor statistics, and regional investment reports. These secondary data were used to strengthen the field narrative and provide a broader context for the findings.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study applied source and method triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information from various informants with different backgrounds—for example, comparing government officials' statements with opinions of community leaders or tourism actors. The goal was to assess data consistency and avoid one-sided bias. Additionally, triangulation was conducted by comparing interview data with observations and existing documents. For instance, if an informant mentioned that promotion was done through social media, the researcher verified this by reviewing the official Disparpora West Aceh posts. To further strengthen validity, member checking was also conducted—where interview results were reconfirmed with the respective informants to avoid misinterpretation. Peer discussion techniques were used to test the sharpness of the analysis and the logic of data interpretation by involving other researchers or academic supervisors.

Data analysis followed the interactive model from Jia et al. (2022), consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, all interview transcripts were processed verbatim and then filtered for relevance to the research focus. The data were then coded and categorized into key themes such as public outreach, digital promotion, stakeholder coordination, and communication barriers. The next stage was data display, where findings were presented in descriptive narrative form along with direct quotes

from informants, written in uppercase letters to distinguish them from the researcher's narrative. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the researcher formulated key findings and continuously verified them through triangulation and reflection. This study is limited to the aspect of strategic communication carried out by the local government, particularly the West Aceh Tourism Office, in the context of developing Bate Puteh Beach. It does not delve deeply into technical development aspects such as infrastructure planning or economic analysis of tourism, although these factors are still noted as part of the social context influencing communication strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participatory Communication and Locality-Based Socialization

One of the key findings in the development of the Bate Puteh Beach tourism area is the central role of participatory communication carried out by the local government, particularly the Office of Tourism, Youth, and Sports (Disparpora) of West Aceh Regency. The approach used is not a one-way, top-down communication, but rather dialogical communication that opens space for active involvement from the local community. This aligns with the concept of participatory development communication as proposed by Servaes (2022), which asserts that communication in development should form a space for dialogue—not merely delivering information, but building mutual understanding.

The implementation of this participatory communication is clearly evident in the socialization practices conducted in Gampong Ujong Kalak, where Bate Puteh Beach is located. The local government regularly holds open meetings involving community leaders, tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and the general public. In an interview with Gk., the village chief (Geuchik) of Ujong Kalak, he stated that these meetings are not only forums to convey government development plans, but also venues for the public to express their aspirations, suggestions, and even criticisms of the tourism programs. He noted that so far, the community's aspirations have been "listened to and well accommodated" by Disparpora. This statement shows that the communication process is reciprocal and democratic rather than merely instructive.

The forms of communication used also consider the local context. The government does not rely solely on formal media such as circular letters or banners, but also incorporates cultural symbols and local language to build familiarity and emotional closeness with the community. For instance, in several socialization events, the government used the Acehese language on information boards, tourism slogans, and promotional materials, such as cleanliness campaigns written in local expressions familiar to residents. This is in line with the findings of Herstanti (2024), which emphasize the importance of the *gethok tular* approach—or word-of-mouth dissemination—through influential figures within local communities.

Field observations at Bate Puteh Beach further reinforce this finding. In a socialization event held in early February 2025, the meeting atmosphere was informal yet warm. Residents

sat in a circle at the village hall, listening to a presentation by Disarpura staff about plans to develop MSME kiosks and improve road access. The villagers did not merely listen—they actively contributed ideas, such as the proposal to hold traditional art performances every weekend as an added attraction for tourists. Several housewives even volunteered to contribute traditional food during culinary tourism training programs. This shows that the communication truly facilitates participation, rather than merely serving as an administrative formality.

Moreover, this participation is strengthened by the presence of Pokdarwis as the local communication partner of the government. Pokdarwis functions as a communication bridge between the government and the community, disseminating information informally and encouraging residents to support tourism activities, such as maintaining beach cleanliness, decorating houses with traditional ornaments, and even becoming impromptu tour guides. The presence of this group reinforces the horizontal communication structure, as discussed by Kiss et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of involving local actors in the development process to foster a sense of ownership.

In terms of message content, the local government appears to be making serious efforts to deliver messages in a simple way, adapted to the community's educational background. According to Kt., the acting head of Disarpura West Aceh, they "always convey information in easily understandable language so that people are willing to engage." This indicates the government's awareness that the success of development communication depends not only on message content but also on delivery methods and the audience's comprehension. Giertz et al. (2022) also stress that effective development communication must be tailored to the audience's characteristics—culturally, socially, and educationally—so that the message is received and internalized effectively.

The effectiveness of this approach is reflected not only in the warm dialogue observed during socialization events but also in changes in community attitudes. In recent months, local economic initiatives have begun to emerge around the tourism area. A group of housewives formed a small business unit producing Acehese handicrafts for sale to tourists. This initiative was supported by collaboration between Disarpura and the West Aceh Office of Industry, Trade, and Cooperatives (Perindagkop) through skills training and raw material provision. This condition shows that effective communication not only fosters understanding but also drives tangible social and economic transformation.

Equally important is the government's sensitivity in integrating local wisdom values into their communication messages. For example, in promoting halal tourism, the government involved religious scholars and local religious leaders to deliver messages that support sharia-compliant tourism without triggering community resistance. This approach is crucial, considering that West Aceh society is highly sensitive to sharia norms. The strategy succeeded in diffusing potential resistance and fostered understanding that tourism can align with local values, as also found by Riyad et al. (2024) in their research in Bunaken.

Promotion Strategy and Digital Transformation in Tourism Communication

In the context of tourism development aimed at competitiveness and global reach, the communication strategy of the West Aceh Regency Government demonstrates significant adaptation to digital dynamics. The promotion of Bate Puteh Beach is no longer limited to conventional approaches but has undergone a transformation toward strategic and interactive digital communication. In line with advancements in information technology and changes in tourist behavior—where travelers increasingly rely on social media—Disparpora West Aceh has adopted a multiplatform approach to introduce Bate Puteh to a wider audience.

One of the main steps taken by the local government is the utilization of social media as a primary promotional channel. Since 2022, Disparpora has managed official Instagram and Facebook accounts that actively publish content related to tourism, culture, and sports activities in the West Aceh region. According to Kt., the acting head of Disparpora, this strategy was chosen because “the interactive nature of social media allows us to reach a broader audience and enables direct engagement between potential visitors and the destination.” The content shared is diverse—ranging from documentation of events such as the Teuku Umar memorial walk, short videos of beach art festivals, to infographics on the facilities and accessibility of Bate Puteh Beach. The use of popular hashtags like #VisitAcehBarat and #BatePutehBeach supports the visibility of the destination in social search engines.

This approach is in line with strategic digital communication theory, which emphasizes that public organizations—including governments—must be able to adapt to the digital media ecosystem to maintain relevance and effectiveness (Badham et al., 2022). In this case, social media functions not only as an information channel but also as a two-way interaction tool that fosters emotional engagement between the destination and its audience. This is evident in the growing interaction on Disparpora’s posts, both in the form of comments, likes, and reposts by visitors to the site.

In addition to social media, the government has partnered with local communities in a collaborative promotion effort. Based on an interview with Br., a staff member in Disparpora’s promotion division, it was mentioned that “collaborations with photography communities and schools are part of the strategy to create authentic and relatable promotional content.” For example, Disparpora organized a photography contest themed “The Beauty of Bate Puteh Beach” in collaboration with local photographers. This initiative not only produced high-quality visual content but also strengthened the community’s sense of ownership toward the destination. Such collaboration shows that destination promotion does not always require a large budget; it can be built from the community’s creative participation.

Field observations also showed that thematic events—such as fishing boat races, seafood festivals, and Islamic sermons (tabligh akbar) on the beach—serve as effective tools of direct marketing. These activities not only attract visitors but also create memorable tourism experiences that touch emotional and spiritual aspects of the tourists. Observations at the tabligh akbar event during the Prophet Muhammad’s birthday celebration revealed the enthusiasm of

local communities who came with their families, along with visitors from other regions filling the beach area. The main stage was decorated with traditional Acehese ornaments, and the atmosphere felt religious yet inclusive. Moments like these become highly shareable content on social media while building a strong narrative that Bate Puteh is a destination that integrates religious, cultural, and natural values.

From the mass media perspective, the government continues to maintain good relationships with local journalists. Various events at the beach—such as the inauguration of tourism gazebos and student-led beach cleanups—are covered by local newspapers and news portals. According to a public relations officer at Disarpura, “we routinely send press releases to the media so that tourism news remains current.” This is part of the public communication strategy to reinforce the destination’s image across multiple channels—consistent with the assertion by Kapoor & Kapoor (2021) that combining traditional and digital media broadens the reach of information across different age segments and media consumption preferences.

However, this strategy is not without challenges. In interviews, marketing staff acknowledged that limited promotional funding from the regional budget (APBD) remains a major obstacle to reaching national media or producing professional advertisements. Therefore, the promotional strategy is maximized through free channels and third-party partnerships. For instance, visual content production is managed by involving local photography communities who are willing to contribute their work in exchange for name recognition on official government accounts. This strategy has proven effective in meeting visual content needs with public-ready quality.

Nevertheless, there are still shortcomings in the management of official information. According to the author’s observation, the official website of Disarpura West Aceh is not yet optimized as an information hub. The interface is outdated, and information about tourist destinations is incomplete, particularly for out-of-town tourists who rely on search engines when planning visits. Yet the presence of an informative and accessible official website is crucial for building trust and a professional destination image. Improving the website with multilingual features and a comprehensive tourism facilities directory should be the next development agenda.

In terms of impact, the success of the promotional strategy is evident from the rising trend in tourist visits post-pandemic. Data from Disarpura shows a significant increase in domestic tourist arrivals—from 34,449 people in 2021 to 179,223 in 2022. Although there was a decline in 2023, the number of visits remained well above the pre-2020 average. This trend indicates that digital promotion and localized event packaging have had a tangible effect on destination appeal. In addition to quantity, the quality of public perception has also improved, as seen in the emergence of Bate Puteh as a “hidden gem” in travel blogs and social media posts. This indicates that the positive narrative and aesthetic visuals being built have succeeded in establishing a strong destination image—an important achievement in destination marketing communication. However, consistency in branding remains a challenge. The lack of an official and consistently

used slogan weakens the destination's brand identity. Several slogans currently in use remain situational, such as "Bate Puteh: Hidden Paradise in West Aceh." A cohesive tagline and strong destination narrative are needed to solidify Bate Puteh's identity amidst competition among other tourist destinations.

The tourism communication promotion strategy and digital transformation implemented by the West Aceh Regency Government demonstrate significant progress. Adaptation to new media, community collaboration, the use of events as direct marketing channels, and strong visual storytelling have formed the foundation of modern, efficient, and image-oriented tourism communication. In line with the view of Pricope Vancia et al. (2023), flexible communication strategies that are adaptive to the digital landscape are key to public organizations' success in reaching audiences and building emotional closeness with their new constituents—namely, the digital-era tourists.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration and Intersectoral Communication Governance

In the pursuit of sustainable and participatory tourism development, the West Aceh District Government has adopted a collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. This approach not only addresses policy and programmatic aspects but also strategically builds a fluid, interpersonal, and adaptive cross-sectoral communication pattern. This collaboration is a tangible manifestation of governance network practices in public policy communication, demonstrating that the success of a policy often lies in how communication is horizontally conducted among actors in a complementary manner.

The local government, through the Tourism, Youth, and Sports Agency (Disparpora), acts as the coordinator and facilitator of communication within the development network of Bate Puteh Beach tourism. Internal coordination among agencies is carried out regularly to ensure policy synergy. In an interview with Sr., a Disparpora staff member, it was noted that intersectoral meetings are held at least quarterly, involving agencies such as Public Works and Spatial Planning (PUPR), Environmental Affairs, Transportation, and Communications and Informatics (Kominfo). In these forums, Disparpora reports on tourist visit trends and infrastructure needs, while other agencies present their program support. For instance, PUPR allocates budget for road improvements to the beach, while Kominfo helps disseminate information through the government's official channels. Field observations confirmed the outcomes of this coordination: the main access road to Bate Puteh has been upgraded, with the addition of tourism signage and street lighting at several vulnerable spots.

Beyond inter-agency coordination, cross-sectoral communication also involves private actors. The local government actively initiates tourism business forums to connect prospective investors with technical agencies. In one such forum held in mid-2023, Disparpora presented the tourism potential of Bate Puteh Beach, including visitor data, economic prospects, and development plans. According to Ms., an official from the regional investment office, dialogue with business actors resulted in several commitments, including plans for a beachside café by a

local entrepreneur and interest from a sharia bank to support homestay financing for local residents. Outside formal forums, personal approaches are also employed. The head of Disarpura directly contacted travel agency owners in Meulaboh to create special tour packages to Bate Puteh. This approach reflects persuasive and relational communication strategies—two essential elements in development communication.

Equally important is the synergy with academia. The government engages lecturers and researchers from the Faculty of Tourism at Teuku Umar University in discussion forums such as focus group discussions (FGDs) to draft sustainable development plans for the destination. In these forums, academics provide conceptual input, such as on the potential for mangrove ecosystem tourism or the importance of environmental impact studies. Disarpura, on the other hand, shares technical field challenges such as limited human resources and budget constraints. According to Hs., a tourism lecturer who attended one discussion, “this collaboration is important so that the policy is not merely pragmatic but also has a strong scientific foundation.” This collaboration has also resulted in the joint development of a historical narrative and destination tagline, creating communication messages that are not only visually appealing but also contextual and rooted in local cultural values. This aligns with Elgammal (2022), who argues that the sustainability of tourism programs heavily depends on how well the communication strategies resonate with the community’s local values.

From the community and media perspective, the communication pattern developed is participatory. Communities such as Pokdarwis (tourism awareness groups), photography groups, and surfers are given space to help disseminate information about the destination. They are not merely targets of government promotion but also communication agents. In one local radio program, Pokdarwis members from villages around Bate Puteh were invited to talk about their village’s readiness to welcome tourists. This provided an authentic community voice and increased the credibility of the message delivered to the public. On the other hand, the positive relationship with local media was fully utilized: journalists were given transparent access to information, ranging from activity schedules and development plans to visual documentation. As a result, coverage of Bate Puteh Beach frequently appeared in Acehese news portals and community-based social media platforms.

Overall, the communication model implemented demonstrates a practice of whole-of-society communication, where communication is no longer monopolized by the state but is distributed and collectively managed by all actors. In the context of West Aceh, relationships between parties are built through cultural and personal approaches. One concrete example is how the Regent of West Aceh informally met with traditional leaders in Ujong Kalak over coffee to casually discuss tourism issues. Although informal, such moments have proven to foster high levels of social trust. Within the framework of governance networks, this is part of the social capital that strengthens collaboration.

The unified vision among the government, community, and investors is also reflected in the shared commitment to uphold local values. For example, there are no tourism facilities that

conflict with customary norms (such as nightclubs), and all promotional efforts emphasize the narrative of “halal tourism.” Support from religious leaders for tourism development is granted as long as it aligns with sharia principles. This shows that public communication in the context of West Aceh tourism is not merely about promotion, but also about negotiating values within a local wisdom-based tourism communication model.

The multi-stakeholder communication strategy applied in West Aceh for the development of Bate Puteh Beach reflects a collaborative and human-centered approach. The government acts as an initiator, but not as a dominator. It effectively plays the role of facilitator and connector among actors through a dialogue-based and locally adaptive approach, rather than a one-way directive. Challenges remain—such as the speed of inter-agency responses or transparency in investment data—but overall, the communication model established has laid a solid foundation for synergy-based tourism governance.

Effectiveness of the Strategy and Challenges Encountered

The communication strategy implemented by the West Aceh District Government in developing Bate Puteh Beach as a tourist destination has shown several positive outcomes. However, its effectiveness needs to be evaluated comprehensively—not only based on quantitative outputs such as the increasing number of visitors, but also on the success in building a sense of ownership among the local community toward the destination. This evaluation refers to principles of effective communication, namely inclusivity, transparency, and adaptability. In the context of West Aceh, several indicators suggest that communication has been running relatively well, although it still faces a number of structural and cultural challenges that hinder its optimal effectiveness.

One notable success indicator is the increased community participation in various promotional and destination management activities. Based on interviews with Ar., a local Pokdarwis member, residents are now more actively involved in welcoming tourists and maintaining the cleanliness of the beach. Some villagers have even voluntarily opened small food stalls and rented out mats to visitors. Quantitatively, visitor data shows an upward trend following active promotion through social media by Disparpora and collaboration with local photography communities. Weekend field observations revealed an increase in the number of vehicles arriving from outside the subdistrict, as well as the growing activity of microeconomic enterprises such as food vendors and parking services. This indicates that communication efforts have successfully encouraged community engagement and stimulated the local economy.

Nevertheless, there are several fundamental weaknesses that must be critically addressed. First, destination promotion remains local in scope and lacks a structured strategy to reach wider tourism markets. Digital promotion strategies—especially through social media—are not yet supported by a strong and consistent branding narrative. Some government and community publications show conflicting messages, ranging from “sharia family beach” to “hidden paradise,” without a clear guide for the destination’s identity. According to Ma., a social

media creative staff at Disparpora, content is often created spontaneously—"as long as something gets posted"—without referring to an agreed narrative. This inconsistency potentially reduces the appeal of Bate Puteh Beach as a distinct destination amid the increasingly competitive tourism landscape.

Second, cross-sector coordination remains suboptimal. The involvement of the Investment and One-Stop Integrated Services Agency (DPMPTSP) in investment-related communication is still minimal. In one regional investment forum, Bate Puteh Beach was not even specifically mentioned. Yet tourism potential and investment opportunities are two sides of the same coin and should be promoted in parallel. According to As., an employee of DPMPTSP, "we have not received direct instructions to promote tourist destinations as investment opportunities," indicating a gap in strategic coordination.

Another significant challenge lies in resource disparities. As the lead sector, Disparpora often faces limited promotional budgets and a shortage of technical human resources capable of producing quality communication content. Field observations revealed that tourism information boards have not been updated in over two years, and there are no tourist maps or digital QR codes to help visitors access information easily. Basic public facilities such as toilets and trash bins are still lacking, which indirectly undermines the government's message that the destination is "visitor-ready."

In terms of inclusivity and communication adaptability, although participatory spaces like FGDs and community forums exist, there are still no established communication protocols for resolving differing viewpoints. For example, when the government planned to hold an acoustic music festival at the beach, some religious leaders expressed concerns about potential crowds that could conflict with local norms. In the absence of a formal communication forum to mediate such differences, discussions occurred only on social media, leading to polarized public opinion.

In-depth analysis indicates that these weaknesses in the communication strategy stem from the absence of a systematic evaluation system. There is no formal mechanism to assess the effectiveness of promotional efforts—for example, visitor surveys on how they learned about the destination, or evaluations of investor interest after promotional activities. As a result, the communication strategy tends to operate in a one-way manner and lacks responsiveness to field dynamics. To strengthen communication effectiveness, several steps are necessary: clarifying the destination's identity and narrative, integrating tourism and investment promotion, establishing regular cross-sector communication forums, and building a feedback system involving the community and business actors. Data-driven and participatory communication evaluations should become a regular part of bureaucratic practice.

As stated by Ghaisani & Afifi (2022), the success of regional tourism promotion depends heavily on message consistency, cross-sector collaboration, and well-planned branding. Meanwhile, Purwoko et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of community involvement in all communication stages, so that the messages constructed are not merely promotional appeals but also reflect local aspirations and identity. This aligns with the communication for

development approach, which views communication as a social process that builds shared understanding, not merely one-way message transmission. While the communication strategy for developing Bate Puteh Beach has shown initial positive impact, its long-term effectiveness will depend on the government's ability to address structural challenges, strengthen destination identity narratives, and establish open, strategic, and inclusive communication. If these aspects are improved, tourism development communication can become not only a promotional tool but also a vehicle for social and economic transformation for the surrounding community.

State and Society: A Participatory and Collaborative Communication Model in Local Government

In concluding this discussion, the main findings of this study on the local government's communication strategy in the development of Bate Puteh Beach in West Aceh can be summarized into a conceptual model that emphasizes the importance of participatory and collaborative communication as the foundation of community-based tourism governance. The study reveals that local government communication is not merely about disseminating information or delivering top-down policies from the center of power to the people—as often critiqued in classical development communication literature—but has evolved into an adaptive, relational social mechanism that bridges the interests of the state and its citizens.

The communication model that emerges from this case has several key characteristics. First, the communication conducted is neither rigid nor bureaucratic, but fluid and rooted in interpersonal relationships. Informal interactions such as casual discussions over coffee with community leaders, unofficial citizen forums, and personal communication between officials and entrepreneurs are part of a highly contextual communication strategy that aligns with local cultural norms. This approach demonstrates that the effectiveness of public communication heavily depends on its ability to adapt to the local community's social interaction patterns.

Second, communication is used not only as a tool to socialize programs, but also as a means to build social legitimacy for policy directions. For example, when a difference of opinion arose between the government and religious leaders regarding a proposed beach festival, the government did not impose the plan unilaterally. Instead, it opened up dialogue and adjusted the program to align with local values. This practice is consistent with the principles of inclusivity and dialogue emphasized in participatory strategic communication theory, in which communication is not merely information transfer but a process of meaning negotiation involving all stakeholders.

Third, communication is not carried out by a single actor (the government), but involves various societal elements within the pentahelix framework: academia, business, community, media, and government. Each stakeholder plays a role in crafting narratives, disseminating messages, and legitimizing the direction of destination development. In practice, this is seen in collaborations with universities in developing tourism taglines, community involvement in promotion, and the utilization of private-sector CSR for infrastructure development. These

findings reinforce the idea that the success of development communication is strongly determined by the existence of governance networks that prioritize horizontal, rather than hierarchical, relationships.

To clarify this conceptual model, the following diagram summarizes the key elements of collaborative communication observed in the field:

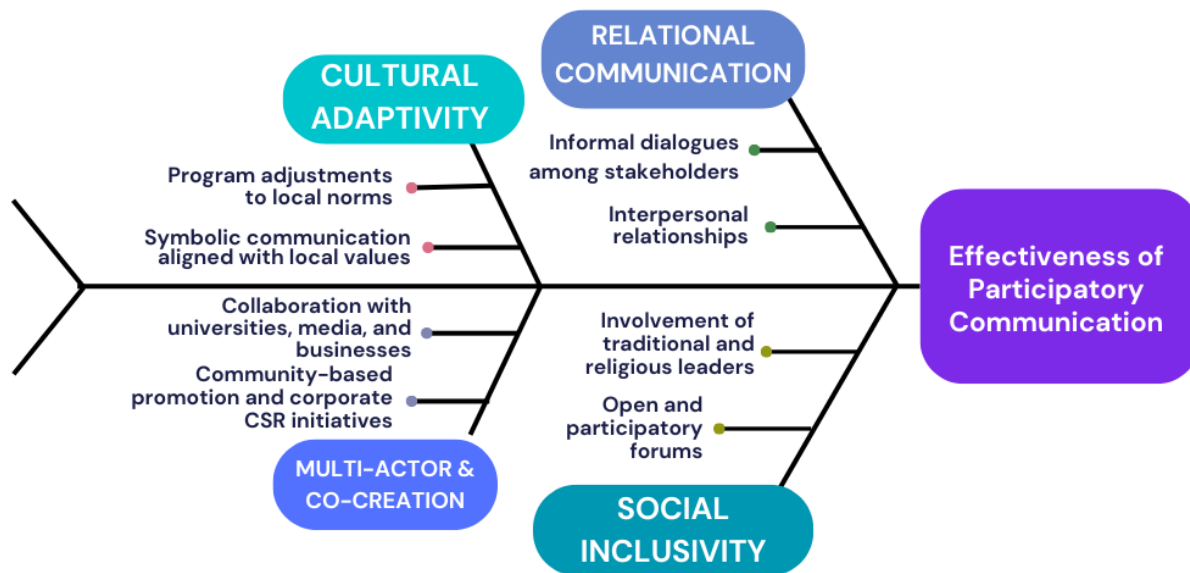


Figure 1 Local Government Communication Model Based on Participation and Collaboration
 Source: Research Analysis Results, 2025

This model illustrates that the success of community-based tourism communication is not solely the result of impressive media design or promotional campaigns, but of a continuous social process that builds trust, connection, and participation. In West Aceh, this process has unfolded gradually—through routine cross-agency forums, the involvement of creative communities, and informal synergy among stakeholders. As one academic informant (Rs.) noted, the strength of development communication lies in its ability to serve as social glue amid the diversity of actors and interests.

The practical implication of this model is that other regions wishing to develop community-based tourism can learn from this communication pattern, which does not rely solely on bureaucracy, but instead builds flexible, contextual, and relational structures. This requires a more humanistic local government communication capacity—one that is open to feedback and capable of facilitating cross-sector collaboration. Reflectively, these findings reaffirm that in the context of sustainable tourism development, communication is not just a technocratic tool, but a social mechanism that shapes policy direction and legitimacy. The communicative, creative, and participatory approach implemented in West Aceh makes a significant contribution to the discourse of development communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the local government's communication strategy in developing the Bate Puteh Beach tourism area in West Aceh functions not only as a tool for information dissemination, but as a social mechanism that builds legitimacy, strengthens collaboration, and fosters community ownership of the destination. The local government strategically integrates participatory approaches, interpersonal communication rooted in local wisdom, and cross-sector synergy within the pentahelix model framework—making communication a bridge between the state and society. These findings answer the research objectives by demonstrating that challenges such as weak tourism promotion and limited stakeholder collaboration can be addressed through an inclusive, adaptive, and relational communication strategy. The novelty of this study lies in the identification of a collaborative communication model that is locality-sensitive and non-bureaucratic, which can serve as a practical reference for other regions in developing sustainable community-based tourism governance. Theoretically, it enriches the development communication literature with a more contextual and participatory approach.

ETHICAL STATEMENT AND DISCLOSURE

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles, including informed consent, protection of informants' confidentiality, and respect for local cultural values. Special consideration was given to participants from vulnerable groups to ensure their safety, comfort, and equal rights to participate. No external funding was received, and the authors declare no conflict of interest. All data and information presented were collected through valid research methods and have been verified to ensure their accuracy and reliability. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) was limited to technical assistance for writing and language editing, without influencing the scientific substance of the work. The authors express their gratitude to the informants for their valuable insights, and to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on an earlier version of this manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content and conclusions of this article.

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