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Socio-Cultural Responses of Local Communities to Tourism Infrastructure Development in Wakatobi City

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Lake Kapota 1; local community 2; Tourism 3; Socio-Culture 4. Abstract: This study aims to examine changes in the socio-cultural conditions of the people of Kapota Utara Village, South Wangi-Wangi Sub-district, Wakatobi Regency, as a result of the development of the Kapota Lake Tourism Attraction Area. The main focus of this research is on community perceptions of spatial changes, patterns of social interaction, and the sustainability of local cultural values in the context of tourism development. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and review of tourism development planning documents. The main informants consisted of community leaders, local business actors, village officials, and visitors to the tourist area. The results showed that the development of tourist areas brought significant changes to the social structure and interaction patterns of the community. There is an increase in local economic participation, but there are also concerns related to the fading of cultural values and local wisdom due to the commercialization of social space. Some communities show resistance to the influx of labor from outside the region, while others see it as a collaborative opportunity. Recommendations from this study are the importance of integrating local culture in every stage of tourism development as well as the need for participatory communication forums between the government, communities, and businesses to minimize the potential for social conflict. In addition, there is a need for cultural preservation policies through educational programs and promotion of local values that synergize with tourism development.

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1 Introduction

The development of tourism areas is one of the regional development strategies that is currently the concern of the central and regional governments, including in the Wakatobi Regency area, Southeast Sulawesi. One of the locations being focused on in tourism development is Kapota Lake, which is located on Kapota Island, South Wangi-Wangi District. Kapota Lake, also known as Tailaro Tooge Lake, has been designated as part of the National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN), which is expected to become a driving force for the local economy while strengthening the identity of Wakatobi's internationally renowned marine tourism destination. (Wakatobi, 2024). The development of the Danau Kapota Tourism Attraction area has started since 2018 with various supporting infrastructure such as culinary plazas, gazebos, prayer rooms, public toilets, and road access. Geographically, this area is located in a coastal area with karst environmental characteristics and surrounded by local communities that still maintain traditional values and local wisdom. In this context, tourism development not only has a physical and economic impact, but also has an influence on the social and cultural life of the surrounding community (Wakatobi, 2024).

Along with changes in the function of space and increased tourism activities, there are complex social dynamics in the local community. The process of change can create tensions between pressing economic needs and efforts to preserve local culture. (Zhuang, Yao, & Li, 2019). This is where the importance of looking deeper into how local communities respond to tourism development that enters their living space, both in terms of adaptation, resistance, and forms of socio-cultural adjustment that occur. This research is important because it contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural impacts of area-based tourism development on local communities. In various literatures, it has been widely studied that tourism brings a double-edged sword, which on the one hand opens up economic opportunities and improves welfare, but on the other hand has the potential to create social pressure, degradation of local values, and commodification of culture. (Shahzalal, 2016).

The context of Wakatobi as an archipelago rich in local cultural heritage makes this issue even more important to study. So far, tourism development tends to focus on physical and economic aspects, while socio-cultural aspects are often marginalized or not a major part of planning. As a result, local communities are only spectators in the development process and experience disorientation of cultural identity due to the influx of new values brought by tourism. This research tries to fill the void by exploring in depth how the development of the Kapota Lake tourism area affects the social structure of the community, relations between individuals, cultural values, and how they interpret the space that has now turned into a tourist area. Thus, the results of this research are expected to contribute not only academically, but also as policy input for local governments and other stakeholders in managing sustainable and socially equitable tourism development.

Various previous studies have addressed the impact of tourism development on local communities. For example, some studies highlighted the economic impacts and changes in employment patterns of local communities in tourist areas (Fafurida, Purwaningsih, Mulyanto, & Suryanto, 2023; Harmelia & Edriani, 2020; Yunikawati et al., 2021). There are also studies that emphasize the commodification of local culture and the challenges of preserving traditional values in the context of tourism. (Andari, Supartha, Riana, & Sukawati, 2020; Bai & Weng, 2023; Rifa'i & Kamaludin, 2021). However, there are still few studies that specifically examine the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in the context of small island communities such as Kapota Island, which has a unique social and cultural structure.

In addition, previous research tends to view socio-cultural impacts within the general theoretical framework of modernization or globalization. Whereas in the context of local communities, there are more complex and unique dynamics of resistance, cultural negotiation and adaptation strategies, which are not always covered by overly macro theoretical approaches. This is the main gap that this research aims to bridge. Furthermore, many previous studies have separated social and

cultural aspects, whereas in the lives of local communities they are closely intertwined. In practice, changes in social structures (such as family relationships, social status and gender roles) cannot be separated from changes in culture (such as values, norms and customary practices). Therefore, this research attempts to bring these two aspects together in an integrative socio-cultural analysis framework.

The main novelty of this research lies in its approach that focuses on the perspective of the local community itself in understanding and responding to the development of tourist areas. This research does not simply observe the impact from the outside, but seeks to understand how the community interprets these changes, both personally and communally. By using a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and participatory observation, this research is able to capture micronarratives that are often missed in quantitative studies. In addition, the context of Kapota Lake as a tourist area located within a protected forest and karst area makes this research of strategic value. The unique ecological and social conditions in this area provide its own complexities in tourism development, so this research also offers new insights into how tourism development policies can be implemented without ignoring the sustainability of local culture and ecology.

Another novelty is the integration of the netnography approach (observation through social media and digital spaces) with field observations. This allows this research to identify how community perceptions are not only formed in physical spaces, but also in digital spaces, which increasingly play a role in shaping public opinion and the collective identity of local communities towards tourism development. By considering all these aspects, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to socio-cultural and tourism studies, as well as offer a model of tourism development approach based on local wisdom and community cultural awareness.

2 Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type (Creswell, 2013; So, 2011). This research aims to explore in depth the socio-cultural dynamics of the community around the Lake Kapota Tourism Attraction Area, Wakatobi Regency. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture subjective meanings and complex social realities from the perspective of local communities. The research was conducted in North Kapota Village, South Wangi-Wangi Sub-district, Wakatobi Regency, Southeast Sulawesi. This location was chosen because it is the main area of Kapota Lake tourism development. The research was conducted for three months, from August to October 2024. Research informants were determined purposively, namely those who have direct experience or indepth knowledge related to the development of tourist areas. (Unaradjan, 2019). Informants consisted of traditional leaders, local communities, small business owners, village officials, and representatives of the Tourism Office. The number of informants was 15 people, with a diverse composition based on age, gender, and social roles. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner using writing tools and voice recorders. Observations were made of community activities, social interactions, and the use of tourist spaces. The documentation includes village archives, local news, and community social media posts. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis, with stages of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation of meaning based on the main themes that emerged from the field. Data validity was tested using source and method triangulation techniques. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, triangulation strategies—such as cross-checking interview data with observation notes and document reviews—were also applied (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Roseveare, 2023). Research conclusions were drawn inductively, referencing consistent patterns of findings and considering the dynamic socialcultural dynamics that are alive and evolving within the local community. The research design can be described as follows.

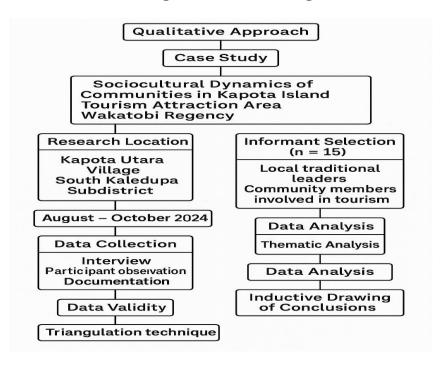


Figure 1. Research design

3 Results and Discussion

Four main findings were generated by this research, describing the socio-cultural dynamics of the Kapota Utara Village community in response to the development of the Kapota Lake Tourism Attraction Area. Each finding is based on the results of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies conducted at the research location.

Research Location Profile

The research site is in the Kapota Lake area located in North Kapota Village, South Wangi-Wangi District, Wakatobi Regency, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Kapota Lake, also known as Tailaro Tooge Lake, is one of the prominent natural tourism potentials on Kapota Island. The island is part of the Wakatobi Islands group and has good accessibility through Pasar Pagi Harbor on Wangi-Wangi Island with a travel time of about 25-30 minutes by boat, followed by a road trip of about 10-15 minutes.



Sumber: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Research-location-in-Kapota-and-Kompoone-Island-Wakatobi-South-East-Sulawesi-Indonesia_fig1_348446295

The Kapota Lake area has a tourism development footprint of 0.28 hectares, which currently has several supporting facilities such as a culinary plaza, gazebo, mushalla, toilet, and paving block road. Before being developed, this area was a shrub land. Based on the results of overlaying spatial and forest areas, the research location is included in protected areas and limited production forest areas, which require special permits in their utilization.

Geographically, Kapota Lake is located in a sloping topographic area with an altitude of 5-10 meters above sea level and is dominated by reef limestone rocks, which are characteristic of karst areas. Kapota Lake itself is a brackish water lake formed from the process of limestone dissolution (karstification), which may still be connected to sea water through rock pores. The surrounding environment is inhabited by people whose main livelihoods are fishermen and farmers. Tourism activities in this area are expected to have a positive economic impact on the surrounding community, while maintaining environmental sustainability and the sustainability of the lake ecosystem.

Changes in Patterns of Social Interaction

The development of tourist areas around Kapota Lake has had a real impact on the social structure of the Kapota Utara Village community. Before the tourism area development project began, the community lived in close social ties and was collective in nature. Daily social activities are based on the values of mutual cooperation, mutual assistance, and kinship-based solidarity and customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. In pre-tourism community life, interactions occurred more in the extended family environment, traditional deliberations, religious ceremonies, and collective activities such as harvesting, house construction, or religious activities such as joint prayers and village dhikr. However, since the entry of physical development of tourist areas and the presence of various new actors-both from outside the village and outside the region-the pattern of social interaction has changed. The community began to interact with tourists, project workers, business actors outside the region, and even government agencies that are now more actively present in the village. This interaction brings openness, but also at the same time brings about a change in orientation in the social life of the community.

Communal to Transactional

Social interactions in society are slowly shifting. Whereas in the past family values and collective spirit strongly colored daily life, there is now a tendency to be more oriented towards pragmatic interests and transactional relationships. This is reflected, for example, in the decline of gotong royong activities, such as repairing village roads, cleaning mosques, or harvesting together, which were once done voluntarily, are now increasingly rare and sometimes require reward-based agreements.

In addition, new dynamics have also emerged with the development of the tourism sector, which has led to a tendency to form social groups, for example between residents who are directly involved in tourism businesses-such as food stall owners, boat renters, and parking managers-and those who are not. This creates a sense of awkwardness and reduces the frequency of communication between residents. (Hien & Thanh, 2022). Some communities even expressed a feeling of unfamiliarity with their surroundings, as outsiders became increasingly involved in various village economic and social activities.

Openness and Social Fragmentation

On the other hand, the social openness brought about by tourism also creates new social spaces, kiosks and photo spots, where different age groups and backgrounds meet. These spaces open up opportunities for cross-cultural interaction, especially for younger generations who are more adaptive to change. However, social fragmentation remains a real risk if no social and cultural interventions accompany the physical development process. Some elders and traditional leaders are concerned about the erosion of social civility, the rise of individualism, and the potential for conflict

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due to different economic interests. They see that tourism is not only changing the shape of village buildings and facilities, but also slowly changing the face of community social interaction (Daly, Dias, & Patuleia, 2021; Zhuang et al., 2019).

Changes in the pattern of community social interaction in Kapota Utara Village reflect the social dynamics that are common in areas undergoing tourism development. These changes are not entirely negative, but if not managed properly, they can lead to a loss of social solidarity and a decline in the community's socio-cultural functions. Therefore, tourism development needs to be accompanied by social strategies that reaffirm local social ties and strengthen community social capital as the foundation for long-term sustainability.

Multiple Perceptions of the Impact of Tourism Development

In the process of developing the tourist area at Lake Kapota, the community has shown mixed views on the changes that have occurred. On the one hand, many residents, especially the younger generation and small business owners, welcome this development. They see the presence of tourists as an opportunity to increase their standard of living and improve their family's economic conditions. The presence of tourists is considered to open up various opportunities, such as selling local food and drinks, opening small lodging businesses, selling handicrafts, and offering transportation or tour guide services. With more visitors, residents hope to expand their businesses, create new jobs, and boost the overall economic growth of the village.

For young people, this development is also an entry point to learn new skills, such as foreign languages, tourist services, and small business management. They feel optimistic that with a thriving tourist area, their village will be more widely known, and opportunities for the future will open up (Basri, Paramma, Hudriati, & Tamrin, 2022). However, on the other hand, there are community groups who welcome this development with a sense of anxiety. Especially the older generation, elders, and traditional leaders, feel that the changes taking place have the potential to threaten the cultural values and social order that have been well maintained. They worry that the influx of outside culture through tourists could slowly erode the local identity that Kapota people are proud of. The customary norms that regulate community life, from how to interact to the use of public spaces, are feared to shift to follow the new patterns of life brought by outside cultures.

In addition, there is a fear that the role of traditional leaders in regulating social balance in the village will be increasingly marginalized. On several occasions, community leaders expressed concerns about the younger generation's lack of respect for traditions and customs, which have been the basis of community harmony. They also warned that too much rapid change, without considering local values, could lead to cultural stuttering, social inequality, and even potential conflict between residents.

This dual perception reflects the tension between the need to improve economic welfare and the importance of maintaining cultural heritage. For some, a better economy is seen as an urgent need; while for others, maintaining cultural identity is a non-negotiable pride. If these different views are not managed well, there is the possibility of social friction, which in the long run could weaken solidarity and harmony within the community (Amrullah, 2022). Therefore, a wise and fair approach is needed from all parties, including the government, community leaders, and tourism businesses. Efforts to embrace both sides of this aspiration are very important, for example by ensuring that every development always considers input from various groups, strengthening the role of customary institutions in tourism management, and holding cultural education programs for tourists. Thus, tourism development not only brings economic benefits, but also maintains cultural authenticity and strengthens local identity, which is the main strength of the Kapota community. The above explanation can be illustrated as follows.

Figure 2. Community Perception

DUAL PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELPIMENT 80% 60% 40% 20% Improves Reduces role Erodes economy of traditional local identity

Shifting Space Functions and Local Cultural Meanings

1) Changes in Space Function around Kapota Lake

The development of tourist areas around Lake Kapota has had a real impact on changes in the function of space in the area. Prior to development, the lake was a natural space that played an important role as a source of life and the center of the community's spiritual activities. Kapota Lake was not only seen as a source of water or a natural recreation area, but also as a sacred place full of spiritual values. Various traditional ceremonies are held around the lake, such as bathing at the beginning of the month for self-purification, as well as rituals to honor the spirits of ancestors that are part of the hereditary traditions of the local community. Every corner of the lake has a symbolic meaning, binding the relationship between humans, nature and ancestors in a unity of values. However, along with the construction of various tourist facilities, the function of this space has shifted. The lake that was once guarded with respect is now seen as an economic asset.

Spaces previously used for ritual activities are now turning into locations for picnicking, relaxing and other entertainment activities. Facilities such as gazebos, open dining areas and other recreational areas have sprung up, transforming the sacred into a more relaxed and consumptive atmosphere. This commodification of space illustrates the changing orientation of society towards its environment. Spiritual values that were previously the basis for space use are slowly being displaced by economic and tourism considerations (Wen et al., 2023). As a result, some communities are beginning to feel a loss of emotional attachment to their living spaces, as the deep meanings that were once attached are now being replaced by new, more pragmatic functions.

2) Challenges in Preserving the Meaning of Local Culture

The shift in the function of space in Kapota Lake not only impacts physical activities, but also poses a major challenge in maintaining the meaning of local culture. Previously, indigenous communities had full authority in regulating the use of space around the lake. Customary rules governing the prohibition and permission of activities in the area were implemented to maintain the sacredness and sustainability of the environment. However, with the entry of management from outside parties, such as local governments or tourism managers, this control began to diminish. Tourism policies and management that are insensitive to local cultural values risk eroding the sacred meaning that has been maintained for generations. Many residents, especially traditional elders, feel that their cultural identity is increasingly marginalized in the flow of changes that occur. This shift illustrates how economic development, if not managed wisely, can have unintended social impacts.

Therefore, a development approach that pays more attention to the sustainability of cultural values is needed. The development of tourist areas should be carried out by actively involving local communities, respecting existing traditions, and ensuring that sacred spaces maintain their function,

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this is also expressed in the research findings. (Alsaloum, Romagosa, & Alotaibi, 2024). Thus, tourism development at Lake Kapota not only brings economic benefits, but also strengthens cultural identity and maintains harmony between humans, nature and ancestral heritage.

Identitas Cultural Adaptation and Identity Negotiation Strategies

1. Cultural Adaptation in the Midst of Change

Although social and cultural changes are inevitable due to the development of tourist areas in Lake Kapota, local communities do not remain silent. They show various forms of creative adaptation to adjust to new conditions without having to lose their cultural identity. Some village youths, for example, began to package traditional dance performances into attractive attractions for tourists. Dances that were previously only performed in traditional events are now given a new narrative that is more friendly to visitors, without leaving elements of cultural authenticity. In addition, groups of women in the village formed cooperatives to process local potential into marketable products. They produce regional specialties, handicrafts and souvenirs that are not only a new source of income, but also a means of introducing their culture to the outside world.

Not stopping there, some community members, especially the younger generation, utilize social media to promote local culture. They create content about traditions, culinary delights, and folk tales that are packaged in the form of photos, videos, or interesting writings. This adaptation strategy can be seen as a form of cultural affirmation, where the community tries to maintain and affirm their identity amidst modernization, this is also revealed in the research findings (Peulić et al., 2023). In this way, the changes that occur do not mean giving in to outside culture, but rather cultivating new opportunities to strengthen the existence of local culture in a format that is more relevant to the times.

2. Identity Negotiation Strategies and Challenges Faced

In the adaptation process, the community is actually negotiating their identity. They try to balance maintaining tradition with meeting the demands of the modern world, especially in the tourism sector. However, it is important to realize that not all residents have the same opportunity to make this adaptation. Vulnerable groups, such as the elderly or women who do not have access to training, business capital or social networks, are often left behind. They risk being further marginalized in this fast-changing social dynamic. This finding is in line with the expression (Ginanjar, 2023).

Skills training, providing access to capital, and strengthening local capacity must reach all levels of society, without exception. The four main findings in the dynamics of tourism development in Lake Kapota show that the socio-cultural transformation that occurs is complex. The impact is not only limited to economic aspects and physical environmental changes, but also touches on cultural values, identity, and social structure of the community. On the one hand, there are opportunities to improve welfare and strengthen local capacity. But on the other hand, there is a real risk of loss of cultural meaning and the emergence of new social inequalities.

To face this challenge, a tourism development approach that is more sensitive to the local social and cultural context is needed. Active participation of the community in decision-making, involvement of traditional leaders in the management of tourist areas, and preservation of local values through education and cultural promotion are important steps that must be strengthened in the future. That way, tourism development not only brings economic benefits, but also maintains cultural sustainability and social harmony in the midst of change. The following can be explained in a pie chart image.

Cultural Adaptation and Identity Negotiation of the Community at Kapota Lake

Creative Cultural Adaptation

• Modification of Performances Passes and Community at Kapota Lake

CHANGES DUE TO TOURISM

CHANGES DUE TO TOURISM

CHANGES DUE TO TOURISM

Social Cultural Opportunities & Risks

• Opportunities & Risks

• Opportunity to increase Welfare

• Emerging new social inequalities

• Emerging new social inequalities

Figure 3. Draw a circle diagrams

This diagram illustrates five key aspects of socio-cultural change resulting from tourism development in the Lake Kapota community. First, Identity Negotiation highlights the community's efforts to preserve traditions while meeting modern demands, although vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly face access challenges. Second, Social Cultural Opportunities & Risks highlights opportunities for improved welfare, but also the emergence of new social inequalities. Third, Strategic Recommendations emphasizes the need for culturally sensitive development through active community participation and the involvement of traditional leaders. Fourth, Women's Coop describes the empowerment of local women through the production of food, crafts, and souvenirs. Finally, Creative Cultural Adaptation covers the modification of traditional performances and dances to appeal to tourists. These five aspects are interrelated in showing that the transformation caused by tourism not only has an economic impact but also touches on identity, values, and social structures. Therefore, an inclusive and sustainable approach to tourism development is urgently needed.

4 Conclusion

This study shows that the development of the Kapota Lake Tourism Area has had a complex impact on the socio-cultural life of the community in Kapota Utara Village, Wangi-Wangi Selatan Subdistrict, Wakatobi Regency. These impacts are not only physical and economic in nature, but also touch on deeper aspects of the social structure, interaction patterns, and local cultural values of the community. First, the development of the tourism area has altered the community's traditional familyand custom-based social interaction patterns into more individualistic patterns driven by economic interests. Second, there are differing perceptions among the community regarding this development, with some groups viewing it as an opportunity and others expressing concerns about its potential threats to local culture. Third, there has been a shift in the function and meaning of space, where sacred spaces and cultural values are now commercialized for tourism purposes. This has altered how communities perceive their living spaces. Fourth, communities have demonstrated various forms of adaptation and negotiation of cultural identity, such as commercializing local culture as a tourist attraction or utilizing social media to strengthen their cultural image. All these findings highlight the importance of an inclusive and sustainable approach to tourism development, which is not only focused on economic benefits but also considers social aspects such as cultural preservation and the social balance of local communities. Therefore, active involvement of all community elements in the planning and management of tourism areas is necessary, along with government policies that promote the protection of local cultural values as part of a community-based tourism development strategy.

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