

Sustainable River Tourism Development Strategy through Collaboration among Government, Local Communities, and MSMEs to Enhance Local Economic Growth in Banjarmasin City

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Abstract

Sustainable river tourism has become an important strategy for promoting inclusive local economic growth while preserving environmental and cultural resources. The Martapura River tourism area in Banjarmasin City represents a unique river-based destination where tourism activities involve government institutions, local communities, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). However, the sustainability of tourism development depends largely on the effectiveness of collaboration among these stakeholders. This study aims to explore stakeholders' understanding of collaboration, examine their perceptions of the opportunities and challenges in sustainable river tourism development, and formulate a collaborative strategy to enhance local economic growth. The research was conducted from 17 to 30 July 2026 using a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Participants included government officials, community leaders, *klotok* boat operators, MSME owners, tourism workers, and visitors selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that stakeholders perceive collaboration as a shared responsibility based on trust, communication, and mutual commitment. Although the Martapura River possesses strong tourism potential, challenges remain, including fragmented coordination, uneven tourist arrivals, environmental pressures, and limited MSME capacity. The study proposes a collaborative strategy consisting of five interconnected pillars: collaborative governance, community participation, MSME empowerment, environmental sustainability, and integrated tourism experiences. These strategic pillars provide a comprehensive framework for strengthening destination competitiveness, preserving river heritage, and fostering sustainable local economic growth in Banjarmasin City..

Keywords: *sustainable river tourism; collaborative governance; stakeholder collaboration; MSMEs; local economic growth; Banjarmasin*

INTRODUCTION

River tourism has become one of the fastest-growing sectors within sustainable tourism development, particularly in cities whose identity and economic activities are closely connected to waterways. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism), tourism contributes approximately 10% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supports nearly one in every ten jobs worldwide. In Indonesia, tourism has increasingly become a strategic sector for regional economic development because of its strong multiplier effect on transportation, accommodation, culinary businesses, handicrafts, creative industries, and other micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). River tourism is considered one of the most promising forms of urban tourism because it combines environmental conservation, cultural heritage preservation, and community-based economic development. Nevertheless, many river tourism destinations continue to face governance challenges, including fragmented stakeholder collaboration, uneven economic benefits, environmental degradation, and fluctuating visitor demand.

Banjarmasin City, widely recognized as the "City of a Thousand Rivers," possesses unique comparative advantages for developing sustainable river tourism. The Martapura River serves not only as the city's historical transportation corridor but also as a cultural landscape that reflects the daily life of riverside communities. In recent years, the Banjarmasin City Government has invested substantially in riverfront revitalization through pedestrian walkways, decorative lighting, floating public facilities, public spaces, and cultural attractions designed to attract domestic and international visitors. One of the city's flagship attractions is the Martapura River Cruise, where visitors travel using traditional *klotok* boats along a river corridor illuminated by decorative lighting, fountain attractions, floating mosques, traditional settlements, and various river-based economic activities. These developments have significantly improved the attractiveness of the destination while creating new opportunities for local entrepreneurship and employment.

The rapid growth of tourism activities has stimulated the emergence of an integrated local economic ecosystem surrounding the Martapura River. More than 60 traditional *klotok* boats operate regularly, each accommodating approximately 20–30 passengers per trip. With ticket prices averaging IDR 10,000 per visitor, the tourism activity generates continuous revenue for local boat operators while supporting a wide range of supporting businesses. Field observations indicate that the tourism corridor accommodates over 1,000 MSMEs, including food vendors, beverage sellers, souvenir shops, handicraft producers, toy vendors, photographers, cultural performers, parking attendants, and various informal service providers. Consequently, tourism expenditure is distributed across numerous sectors, creating significant employment opportunities and strengthening the local economy through direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts.

Despite these achievements, the distribution of tourism benefits remains uneven both spatially and temporally. Visitor concentration is heavily dependent on weekends, particularly Saturday evenings, when the tourism area reaches peak activity due to night markets, cultural performances, live music, and family entertainment. During weekdays, however, visitor numbers decline considerably, reducing business revenues for MSMEs and tourism service providers. Such fluctuations indicate that the tourism destination has not yet achieved stable year-round economic performance. This seasonal concentration also affects

income stability among local entrepreneurs, many of whom rely primarily on weekend tourism activities for their livelihoods.

Another significant challenge concerns the effectiveness of collaboration among stakeholders involved in destination management. Although the local government has invested in infrastructure and destination promotion, community participation and MSME integration remain uneven. Coordination among government agencies, tourism operators, local communities, and private businesses is often implemented through separate programs rather than an integrated governance framework. As a result, issues such as inconsistent service quality, informal parking management, waste disposal, environmental cleanliness, visitor flow management, and business organization continue to emerge during periods of high tourist arrivals. These conditions suggest that physical infrastructure development alone is insufficient without strengthening institutional collaboration among key stakeholders.

Environmental sustainability also represents a critical issue for the long-term development of the Martapura River tourism destination. Increased tourism activities generate higher volumes of solid waste, greater pressure on river water quality, increased fuel consumption by *klotok* boats, and intensified use of public spaces along the riverbanks. While tourism generates substantial economic benefits, insufficient environmental management may gradually reduce destination attractiveness and threaten the ecological sustainability of the river ecosystem. Therefore, sustainable tourism development requires balancing economic growth with environmental protection and cultural preservation through coordinated actions involving government institutions, local communities, and business actors.

From an academic perspective, previous studies on river tourism have primarily focused on tourist satisfaction, destination image, service quality, visitor loyalty, or economic impact analysis. Comparatively fewer studies have examined collaborative governance as a strategic mechanism for integrating government institutions, local communities, and MSMEs to achieve sustainable tourism development while simultaneously enhancing local economic growth. Furthermore, empirical evidence explaining how multi-stakeholder collaboration influences the sustainability of river tourism destinations in developing countries remains limited. This research gap highlights the need for a more comprehensive governance model capable of integrating tourism development, community empowerment, environmental sustainability, and regional economic development into a unified analytical framework.

Based on these considerations, this study investigates strategies for sustainable river tourism development through collaboration among government, local communities, and MSMEs to enhance local economic growth, using the Martapura River tourism destination in Banjarmasin as the research setting. The study seeks to formulate an integrated collaborative governance strategy capable of strengthening destination competitiveness, expanding economic opportunities for local communities, improving MSME performance, preserving the river environment, and ensuring that tourism development contributes to sustainable and inclusive local economic growth. The findings are expected to provide both theoretical contributions to sustainable tourism governance literature and practical recommendations for policymakers and destination managers in river-based tourism destinations.

Collaborative Governance Theory explains that public problems can no longer be effectively addressed solely by government institutions; instead, they require collaboration among government, the private sector, local communities, academia, and other organizations through a shared decision-making process. Such collaboration is built upon effective communication, mutual trust, commitment, resource sharing, and common goals to produce more effective and sustainable public policies.

In tourism destination development, collaborative governance serves as a fundamental framework because the success of destination management largely depends on the ability of multiple stakeholders to work synergistically. Governments are responsible for providing regulations, infrastructure, and destination promotion, while local communities play a vital role in preserving cultural and environmental resources. Meanwhile, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) contribute by providing products and services that enhance visitors' experiences while simultaneously strengthening the local economy. When coordination among stakeholders is effectively implemented, destination quality, environmental sustainability, and community well-being can be improved simultaneously (Valderrama & Polanco, 2024; Jaafar et al., 2026).

In this study, Collaborative Governance Theory serves as the primary theoretical foundation for explaining how the synergy among the Banjarmasin City Government, communities living along the Martapura River, and MSMEs can establish sustainable river tourism governance that promotes local economic growth.

Stakeholder Theory, originally introduced by Freeman, argues that the success of an organization or tourism destination depends on its ability to effectively manage relationships with all stakeholders who have interests in or are affected by its activities. In the context of tourism, stakeholders include government agencies, tourists, local communities, business operators, investors, community organizations, the media, academic institutions, and civil society organizations.

Recent literature suggests that the success of sustainable tourism development is strongly influenced by the degree of collaboration among stakeholders. The greater the level of stakeholder participation in planning, implementation, and policy evaluation, the greater the opportunity to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Conversely, weak coordination among stakeholders often results in conflicts of interest, unequal distribution of economic benefits, and ineffective tourism destination management (Jaafar et al., 2026; Ginting et al., 2024).

In this research, Stakeholder Theory is employed to explain the importance of active participation by all stakeholders in the development of the Martapura River tourism destination, ensuring that economic benefits are distributed not only to the government but also to local communities and MSMEs in a sustainable manner.

Sustainable Tourism Development Theory emphasizes that tourism development should meet the needs of present tourists and host communities without compromising the ability of future generations to utilize the same resources. This concept integrates three key dimensions of sustainability: economic sustainability, socio-cultural sustainability, and environmental sustainability.

Within the context of river tourism, sustainable development is not measured solely by increases in tourist arrivals or regional revenue but also by the ability to maintain river environmental quality, preserve the cultural heritage of riverside communities, strengthen the capacity of local MSMEs, and ensure that economic benefits are distributed equitably throughout the community. Recent studies indicate that adaptive, collaborative, and participatory destination governance is a critical factor in achieving sustainable tourism (Bhuiyan et al., 2023; Ginting et al., 2024).

In this study, Sustainable Tourism Development Theory serves as the conceptual framework for assessing whether collaborative strategies involving government, local communities, and MSMEs can foster the sustainable development of the Martapura River tourism destination. Such development is expected not only to increase tourist arrivals but also to preserve the river environment, strengthen the local economy, and enhance the long-term competitiveness of the tourism destination.

METHODS

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a descriptive case study design. A qualitative approach was selected because the research seeks to understand the strategies for sustainable river tourism development through collaboration among government, local communities, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the Martapura River tourism area of Banjarmasin City. Rather than measuring variables statistically, qualitative research enables an in-depth exploration of stakeholders' experiences, perceptions, interactions, and collaborative practices in managing river tourism.

The case study approach was chosen because the Martapura River tourism destination represents a unique case of community-based river tourism involving multiple stakeholders, including local government agencies, klotok boat operators, MSMEs, local residents, tourism visitors, and supporting service providers. This approach facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the social, economic, institutional, and environmental dimensions of sustainable tourism development within a real-life context.

The study adopted a constructivist paradigm, assuming that the reality of sustainable tourism development is socially constructed through interactions among stakeholders. Therefore, multiple perspectives were explored to understand how collaborative governance contributes to strengthening local economic growth while maintaining environmental sustainability and cultural preservation.

Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted in the Martapura River tourism area, Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. This destination was selected because it is one of the city's flagship tourism attractions and serves as an important center of river-based economic activities. The area accommodates traditional *klotok* river cruises, culinary businesses, souvenir markets, cultural performances, public recreation spaces, and numerous MSMEs that depend on tourism activities.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, whereby informants were chosen based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the management and utilization of the tourism destination. Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, meaning that additional interviews no longer generated new information.

Tabel 1. The participants consisted of:

No	Participants	Expected Number
1	Officials from the Banjarmasin City Tourism Office	3
2	Officials from related local government agencies	3
3	Klotok boat operators	10
4	MSME owners	15
5	Community leaders	5
6	Tourists	10
7	Parking attendants, photographers, entertainers, and other tourism workers	10
Total	Approximately 56 participants	

The number of participants was flexible because qualitative research emphasizes information richness rather than sample size.

Data Collection Techniques

This study employed three complementary data collection techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders to obtain detailed information regarding tourism management, stakeholder collaboration, economic impacts, institutional challenges, and future development strategies. An interview guide ensured consistency while allowing participants to elaborate on issues emerging during the discussion.

The researcher conducted direct observations within the Martapura River tourism destination to understand tourism activities, visitor behavior, interactions among stakeholders, MSME operations, tourism facilities, environmental conditions, and public services. Observations were carried out during weekdays and weekends to capture differences in tourism dynamics.

Secondary data were collected from government reports, tourism development plans, regional regulations, statistical publications, tourism promotional materials, previous research, and official documents related to river tourism development. These documents provided contextual information and supported data triangulation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of four interconnected stages.

1. Data Collection. All interview transcripts, observation notes, photographs, and documentary evidence were compiled into a comprehensive research database.
2. Data Condensation. The collected data were coded, categorized, and simplified by identifying themes related to collaborative governance, stakeholder participation,

sustainable tourism, MSME development, environmental management, and local economic growth.

3. Data Display. The organized data were presented through narrative descriptions, thematic matrices, comparison tables, and conceptual diagrams to facilitate interpretation and identify relationships among emerging themes.
4. Drawing Conclusions and Verification. The final stage involved interpreting findings, identifying recurring patterns, verifying consistency across multiple data sources, and developing a collaborative strategy model for sustainable river tourism development.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the findings, this study applied the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba, consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation of interview, observation, and documentary data, member checking, and peer discussions. Transferability was achieved by providing detailed descriptions of the research setting, participant characteristics, and contextual conditions so that readers can assess the applicability of the findings to similar tourism destinations.

Dependability was maintained by documenting all stages of the research process, including participant selection, interview procedures, coding, and data analysis, thereby creating a transparent audit trail. Confirmability was ensured through reflexive documentation, triangulation of evidence, and maintaining a clear linkage between empirical findings and the conclusions drawn. These procedures minimized researcher bias and strengthened the objectivity and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

RESULTS

Overview of the Research Site

This study was conducted in the Martapura River Tourism Area in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The Martapura River is one of the city's most iconic waterways and forms an integral part of Banjarmasin's identity as the "City of a Thousand Rivers." For centuries, the river has served as the center of transportation, trade, and community life. In recent years, the local government has transformed the river corridor into a flagship tourism destination by integrating natural scenery, cultural heritage, recreational activities, and local economic development into a single tourism ecosystem.

One of the main attractions in the study area is the Martapura River Cruise, locally known as the *klotok* river tour. Visitors travel along the river using traditional motorized wooden boats (*klotok*), paying an entrance fee of approximately IDR 10,000 per person for a round-trip journey of more than 2 kilometers. Each boat accommodates approximately 20–30 passengers, and more than 60 *klotok* boats operate regularly, particularly during weekends and public holidays. The river cruise has become one of the most popular tourism activities in Banjarmasin, attracting both domestic and international visitors seeking to experience the city's unique river culture.

The cruise offers visitors a distinctive perspective of Banjarmasin's riverside landscape. Along the journey, tourists pass illuminated bridges featuring colorful fountain displays, decorative lighting installations that beautify the riverbanks at night, floating mosques, traditional riverside houses, and daily community activities that continue to depend on the river for transportation and commerce. Visitors can also observe floating fuel vendors supplying diesel to *klotok* operators, traditional fishing boats, and small commercial vessels that continue to operate as part of the local river-based economy. These attractions create an authentic tourism experience that combines natural beauty, local culture, and living heritage.

Beyond its tourism appeal, the Martapura River tourism area has evolved into a vibrant local economic hub. The riverfront accommodates more than 1,000 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) offering a wide range of products and services, including traditional Banjar cuisine, beverages, local snacks, handicrafts, souvenirs, clothing, accessories, children's toys, and regional specialty products. The concentration of MSMEs demonstrates the important role of tourism in generating business opportunities, supporting entrepreneurship, and increasing household incomes among local communities.

The tourism ecosystem also supports numerous informal and formal economic activities. In addition to *klotok* operators and MSMEs, the area provides employment opportunities for official parking attendants, informal parking services, professional photographers, street performers, musicians, tour guides, and vendors of recreational services. During weekends, particularly on Saturday nights, the area becomes significantly more vibrant with night markets, live music performances, traditional entertainment, and family-oriented recreational activities. These events substantially increase visitor numbers and stimulate higher levels of economic transactions across multiple sectors. In contrast, visitor traffic during weekdays is considerably lower, indicating that tourism demand remains highly concentrated on weekends and holidays.

The economic benefits generated by the Martapura River tourism destination extend beyond individual businesses. Local government collects revenue through tourism-related fees, parking charges, and other local retributions, while tourism simultaneously stimulates consumption across transportation, food services, retail trade, creative industries, and hospitality sectors. Consequently, the destination generates a substantial economic multiplier effect, creating employment opportunities, increasing household income, strengthening MSMEs, and contributing to regional economic growth.

The governance of the tourism area involves collaboration among multiple stakeholders. The Government of Banjarmasin City is responsible for providing public infrastructure, maintaining environmental cleanliness, improving security, organizing tourism facilities, developing riverfront amenities, and managing tourism-related regulations and local revenue collection. Local communities participate as *klotok* operators, traders, cultural performers, and service providers while preserving the river-based cultural heritage that distinguishes the destination. MSMEs contribute by supplying goods and services that enhance the overall visitor experience and expand the local tourism value chain. The interaction among these stakeholders forms the foundation of the destination's management system and determines its long-term sustainability.

Supporting facilities surrounding the tourism area further strengthen its attractiveness. These include regional cultural galleries, public libraries, culinary centers, public open spaces, pedestrian walkways, riverside parks, and improved transportation access. Such facilities enhance visitor satisfaction while extending tourists' length of stay and expenditure within the destination. Nevertheless, field observations indicate that the utilization of tourism resources remains uneven throughout the week, suggesting opportunities to improve destination management and diversify tourism products to attract visitors beyond peak periods.

Overall, the Martapura River tourism area represents more than a recreational destination; it constitutes an integrated river tourism economic ecosystem where transportation services, MSMEs, creative industries, cultural performances, public services, and local government revenue interact within a single destination. Every increase in tourist arrivals generates direct income for *klotok* operators while simultaneously creating indirect and induced economic impacts for traders, service providers, creative workers, and surrounding communities. This interconnected economic structure highlights the strategic importance of collaborative governance in maximizing tourism's contribution to sustainable local development.

Given these characteristics, the Martapura River tourism destination provides an appropriate case study for examining strategies for sustainable river tourism development through collaboration among government, local communities, and MSMEs to enhance local economic growth. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the formulation of an integrated tourism development model capable of balancing economic prosperity, socio-cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and inclusive community participation in river-based tourism destinations.

Findings on the Understanding and Interpretation of Collaboration among Government Officials, Local Communities, and MSMEs in the Development of Sustainable River Tourism

The first research question sought to explore how government officials, local communities, and MSMEs understand and interpret collaboration in the development of sustainable river tourism in the Martapura River tourism area, Banjarmasin City. The findings reveal that collaboration is not merely perceived as administrative coordination among institutions but as a continuous process of building partnerships, sharing responsibilities, and creating mutual benefits for all stakeholders involved in river tourism. Although each stakeholder group has a different perspective based on its roles and responsibilities, all participants acknowledged that sustainable river tourism cannot be achieved without effective collaboration among government, communities, and local businesses.

Interviews with officials from the Banjarmasin City Tourism Office and other related government agencies indicate that collaboration is interpreted as a governance mechanism that enables multiple stakeholders to participate actively in tourism development. Government officials emphasized that the local government serves primarily as a facilitator,

regulator, and coordinator rather than the sole actor responsible for managing the tourism destination.

One participant explained:

"River tourism belongs to everyone. The government provides infrastructure, establishes regulations, and promotes tourism, but without community participation and MSME involvement, tourism development would not be sustainable."
(Government Official 1)

Government representatives described collaboration as a process of integrating tourism policies with community participation and local economic development. According to them, the government's responsibilities include improving riverfront infrastructure, maintaining environmental cleanliness, ensuring visitor safety, organizing tourism events, and facilitating MSME participation through training programs and promotional activities.

Several officials also acknowledged that effective collaboration requires continuous communication among stakeholders. Regular coordination meetings, public consultations, and community engagement activities were considered essential mechanisms for identifying local needs and addressing emerging tourism-related issues. However, participants admitted that communication among agencies and community organizations still requires improvement to achieve better policy integration.

Overall, government officials viewed collaboration as a strategic governance approach that enhances destination competitiveness while ensuring that tourism development generates broader economic and social benefits. Local community members interpreted collaboration primarily as collective participation in maintaining and developing the tourism destination. Unlike government officials who emphasized institutional coordination, community members focused on mutual cooperation, shared responsibility, and preserving the river as both a tourism attraction and a source of livelihood.

Residents living along the Martapura River explained that tourism has significantly changed their economic opportunities. Many households now participate directly as *klotok* operators, food vendors, parking attendants, cultural performers, or providers of tourism-related services. Consequently, they perceive collaboration as a partnership in which every community member contributes according to their capacity.

One community leader stated:

"If the river is clean and tourists feel comfortable, everyone benefits. Boat operators earn more, traders sell more products, and local families have better income. Therefore, protecting the river is everyone's responsibility." (Community Leader 2)

Community members also highlighted the importance of local wisdom (*gotong royong*) in supporting tourism sustainability. Collective cleaning activities, neighborhood security, visitor assistance, and participation in cultural events were regarded as practical forms of collaboration that strengthen community ownership of the tourism destination. Nevertheless, some participants expressed concerns regarding unequal participation. Several residents believed that opportunities to participate in tourism planning and decision-making remain limited, particularly for smaller community groups. They suggested that more inclusive communication mechanisms would improve trust between local communities and government institutions.

MSME owners viewed collaboration primarily from an economic perspective. They interpreted collaboration as an opportunity to strengthen business performance through improved access to tourists, government support, and partnerships with other local businesses. Most MSME participants explained that tourism development has expanded market opportunities by increasing visitor arrivals and consumer spending. Business owners appreciated government initiatives such as tourism festivals, destination promotion, infrastructure improvements, and MSME exhibitions, all of which contributed to higher business revenues.

One MSME owner explained:

"Our businesses depend on tourist arrivals. When the government organizes tourism events and boat operators bring more visitors, our sales also increase. Therefore, collaboration benefits everyone." (MSME Owner 5)

At the same time, MSME participants emphasized that collaboration should extend beyond promotional activities. They expected stronger support in business development, digital marketing, product innovation, access to financing, and capacity-building programs. Several participants believed that MSMEs should be recognized as strategic partners rather than merely supporting businesses within the tourism destination.

These findings indicate that MSMEs perceive collaboration as a mutually beneficial economic partnership capable of improving both business competitiveness and local economic resilience. Although government officials, community members, and MSMEs emphasized different aspects of collaboration, several common themes emerged across all participant groups.

First, collaboration was consistently understood as shared responsibility. Participants agreed that sustainable tourism cannot be managed by a single institution but requires collective efforts from all stakeholders. Second, collaboration was interpreted as mutual benefit. All stakeholder groups believed that successful tourism development should improve public welfare, increase employment opportunities, strengthen MSMEs, and generate additional local government revenue. Third, collaboration was associated with continuous communication. Participants emphasized that regular dialogue, coordination meetings, and transparent information sharing are essential for maintaining stakeholder commitment and resolving conflicts. Fourth, collaboration was viewed as long-term partnership rather than temporary cooperation. Respondents emphasized that sustainable tourism requires ongoing commitment to environmental conservation, cultural preservation, business development, and destination improvement.

These shared understandings demonstrate that stakeholders perceive collaboration not merely as institutional coordination but as a comprehensive governance approach that integrates social, economic, cultural, and environmental objectives.

Table 2. The thematic analysis

Theme	Government	Local Communities	MSMEs
Shared responsibility	Tourism governance	Collective participation	Joint business development

Mutual benefit	Regional development	Community welfare	Increased business income
Communication and coordination	Policy integration	Community dialogue	Business networking
Long-term sustainability	Sustainable governance	River conservation	Business continuity

These themes illustrate that collaboration is understood as a multidimensional concept encompassing governance, participation, economic cooperation, and sustainability.

The findings indicate that stakeholders share a common understanding that collaboration is the cornerstone of sustainable river tourism development in the Martapura River tourism area. Government officials emphasize collaboration as a governance mechanism, local communities interpret it as collective responsibility rooted in community participation, while MSMEs perceive it as an economic partnership that enhances business opportunities and local prosperity. Despite these different perspectives, all stakeholders agree that sustainable river tourism requires trust, continuous communication, shared commitment, and equitable participation among government, communities, and local businesses. These findings suggest that collaborative governance in the Martapura River tourism destination extends beyond administrative coordination, representing a socially constructed partnership that supports sustainable tourism while fostering inclusive local economic growth.

Findings on Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Opportunities, Challenges, and Dynamics of Sustainable River Tourism Development through Collaborative Governance in the Martapura River Tourism Area

The second research question explored how stakeholders perceive the opportunities, challenges, and dynamics of developing sustainable river tourism through collaborative governance in the Martapura River tourism area. The findings indicate that stakeholders recognize the Martapura River as a strategic tourism asset with significant economic potential. However, they also acknowledge that maximizing this potential requires stronger collaboration, improved institutional coordination, continuous innovation, and balanced attention to environmental sustainability, community participation, and local economic development. The analysis identified three major dimensions: perceived opportunities, perceived challenges, and collaborative dynamics.

Across all participant groups, the Martapura River tourism destination was viewed as possessing considerable opportunities for sustainable development due to its unique combination of natural landscapes, cultural heritage, and river-based economic activities. Government officials considered river tourism as one of Banjarmasin's most valuable tourism assets because it reflects the city's historical identity while supporting regional economic growth. According to one official:

"Very few cities still maintain river culture as part of everyday life. This uniqueness gives Banjarmasin a competitive advantage that should be developed sustainably."
(Government Official 2)

Participants also emphasized that the destination offers a distinctive tourism experience through *klotok* river cruises, riverside settlements, floating religious landmarks,

culinary attractions, cultural performances, and vibrant night-time activities. These attractions collectively differentiate the Martapura River from other urban tourism destinations in Indonesia. Local communities viewed tourism as an opportunity to improve household welfare. Many residents explained that tourism has created new employment opportunities beyond traditional occupations. One community member stated:

"Before tourism became popular, many people depended only on fishing or small trading. Now, tourism provides additional income through boat services, food stalls, parking, handicrafts, and entertainment." (Community Member 6)

Similarly, MSME owners perceived tourism as an expanding market that allows them to diversify products and increase business revenues. They noted that visitor demand stimulates local entrepreneurship and encourages innovation in culinary products, souvenirs, and tourism-related services.

Participants identified several major opportunities, including increasing tourist arrivals, strengthening the creative economy, expanding employment, preserving river culture, attracting private investment, and increasing local government revenue. Despite recognizing substantial opportunities, participants consistently acknowledged numerous challenges that hinder the sustainable development of the Martapura River tourism destination. One of the most frequently discussed challenges concerns visitor concentration. Tourism activities are heavily concentrated during weekends, particularly Saturday evenings, while weekdays experience relatively low visitor numbers. An MSME participant explained:

"Business is very good on Saturday nights, but during weekdays sales can decrease significantly. Income is still highly dependent on weekend visitors." (MSME Owner 8)

This uneven distribution of visitors creates unstable income for tourism-dependent businesses and reduces the efficiency of tourism infrastructure utilization. Environmental sustainability also emerged as a major concern. Community members reported increasing amounts of waste generated during peak tourism periods, while government officials highlighted the need to improve waste management systems and strengthen environmental awareness among visitors and local businesses. A community representative commented:

"Tourism brings economic benefits, but if people ignore cleanliness, the river will eventually lose its attractiveness." (Community Leader 3)

Infrastructure maintenance was identified as another challenge. Participants suggested improvements in pedestrian facilities, parking management, sanitation, public transportation access, visitor information systems, and tourism signage. MSME owners additionally emphasized limited access to business financing, digital marketing capabilities, product innovation, and entrepreneurship training. They argued that many small businesses still operate traditionally and require greater institutional support to remain competitive.

Government officials also recognized challenges related to institutional coordination. Although collaboration exists, coordination among government agencies, tourism associations, community organizations, and business groups often remains fragmented, resulting in overlapping responsibilities and inconsistent implementation of tourism programs. Participants described collaborative governance as a dynamic process characterized by continuous interaction, negotiation, and adaptation among stakeholders.

Government officials explained that tourism development requires regular coordination meetings involving multiple agencies responsible for tourism, public works, environmental management, transportation, security, and local economic development. These meetings aim to synchronize policies and address emerging issues. However, participants acknowledged that coordination mechanisms remain largely project-based rather than institutionalized. One government official stated:

"Collaboration is improving, but it still depends on specific programs or events. We need stronger institutional mechanisms that support continuous collaboration."
(Government Official 4)

Community representatives emphasized that trust plays a fundamental role in sustaining collaboration. They believed that communities become more willing to participate when they perceive government policies as transparent, inclusive, and beneficial.

Meanwhile, MSMEs highlighted the importance of business networks. They reported increasing cooperation among traders, *klotok* operators, event organizers, and tourism associations in promoting tourism packages and improving visitor experiences. Participants generally agreed that collaboration has evolved positively over time but still requires stronger institutional arrangements, clearer stakeholder roles, and more inclusive decision-making processes.

Stakeholders' Expectations for Sustainable Tourism Development

Participants expressed strong expectations regarding the future development of the Martapura River tourism destination. Government officials expected tourism to become an engine of inclusive economic growth while preserving environmental quality and cultural identity. Community members hoped tourism would continue creating employment opportunities without disrupting traditional river life.

MSME owners emphasized the need for stronger government support through business development programs, digital marketing and promotion, improved access to financial assistance, the organization of tourism events, and initiatives that encourage product innovation and market expansion. They believed that such support would enhance the competitiveness of local businesses, increase visitor spending, and strengthen the contribution of MSMEs to the tourism economy. Across all stakeholder groups, sustainability was consistently understood as achieving a balanced integration of three interconnected objectives: protecting the ecological integrity of the Martapura River, improving the welfare and livelihoods of local communities, and maintaining the long-term competitiveness of the tourism destination. Participants agreed that these objectives are mutually reinforcing and should guide all future tourism development policies and collaborative initiatives in Banjarmasin City.

Participants emphasized that achieving these objectives requires continuous collaboration rather than isolated interventions by individual institutions. The thematic analysis identified five dominant themes describing stakeholders' perceptions of opportunities, challenges, and collaborative dynamics.

Table 3. Stakeholders' Expectations for Sustainable Tourism Development

Theme	Government	Local Communities	MSMEs
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Economic opportunity	Regional economic growth	Household income	Business expansion
Destination uniqueness	City branding	Cultural identity	Tourism attraction
Institutional collaboration	Policy coordination	Community participation	Business partnerships
Development challenges	Governance coordination	Environmental management	Market uncertainty
Future sustainability	Long-term planning	River conservation	Business resilience

These themes demonstrate that stakeholders perceive sustainable river tourism as a multidimensional development process requiring simultaneous attention to governance, environmental management, economic development, and community participation.

The findings reveal that stakeholders share an optimistic perception regarding the future of the Martapura River tourism destination. They recognize significant opportunities arising from the destination's distinctive river culture, expanding tourism market, and strong local entrepreneurial activities. Nevertheless, they also acknowledge persistent challenges, including seasonal visitor fluctuations, environmental pressures, fragmented institutional coordination, limited MSME capacity, and unequal stakeholder participation.

Collaborative governance is therefore interpreted not as a fixed administrative arrangement but as an evolving social process that depends on trust, communication, shared commitment, and adaptive leadership. Stakeholders perceive that sustainable river tourism can only be achieved when government institutions, local communities, and MSMEs move beyond sectoral interests and jointly develop integrated strategies that balance economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability.

The second research question demonstrates that stakeholders perceive the development of sustainable river tourism as both an opportunity and a continuing challenge. While the Martapura River offers considerable potential to stimulate local economic growth through tourism, its long-term sustainability depends on strengthening collaborative governance among government institutions, local communities, and MSMEs. Participants consistently emphasized that successful tourism development requires integrated planning, transparent communication, inclusive participation, environmental stewardship, and continuous institutional collaboration. These findings provide the empirical basis for formulating a collaborative strategy model, which is presented in response to the third research question.

Findings on the Collaborative Strategy for Sustainable River Tourism Development Based on Stakeholders' Experiences and Perspectives

The third research question sought to explore how stakeholders' experiences and perspectives can be synthesized into a collaborative strategy for sustainable river tourism development that supports local economic growth in Banjarmasin City. Unlike the previous two research questions, which focused on understanding collaboration and exploring stakeholders' perceptions, this section integrates the findings into a comprehensive collaborative strategy. The strategy emerged inductively from the interview data, field observations, and document analysis. Rather than representing a government policy or a pre-

existing framework, it reflects the collective experiences, expectations, and recommendations expressed by government officials, local communities, MSMEs, and other tourism actors.

The analysis revealed that stakeholders consistently emphasized the need for a collaborative strategy that is adaptive, participatory, and sustainable. Although participants differed in their institutional roles, they shared a common aspiration to transform the Martapura River tourism area into a destination that generates inclusive economic benefits while preserving environmental quality and river-based cultural heritage.

The first strategic theme concerns the establishment of a more integrated collaborative governance structure. Participants argued that tourism development should no longer rely solely on government initiatives but should involve all relevant stakeholders in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Government officials proposed the formation of a permanent collaborative forum involving representatives from local government agencies, *klotok* boat associations, MSMEs, community organizations, tourism awareness groups (*Pokdarwis*), universities, environmental organizations, and private-sector partners. One government official explained:

"We need a permanent coordination forum rather than meeting only when problems arise. Continuous collaboration will produce more sustainable tourism management."
(Government Official 3)

Participants believed that such a collaborative platform would improve communication, reduce institutional fragmentation, and facilitate collective decision-making.

The second strategic theme emphasizes strengthening community participation as the foundation of sustainable tourism. Community members consistently expressed that tourism should not only generate economic benefits but should also strengthen community ownership of the destination. They argued that residents should participate not only as beneficiaries but also as planners, decision-makers, and guardians of the river environment. A community leader stated:

"If local people feel that tourism belongs to them, they will naturally protect the river, welcome visitors, and support tourism development." (Community Leader 1)

Participants suggested increasing community involvement through participatory planning meetings, environmental conservation campaigns, volunteer tourism programs, cultural festivals, and local tourism awareness initiatives. The findings indicate that stronger community participation would increase trust, improve social cohesion, and reinforce the sustainability of tourism management.

Another major strategic priority identified by participants was strengthening MSMEs as the primary drivers of the local tourism economy. MSME owners explained that sustainable tourism depends heavily on their ability to provide high-quality products and services while adapting to changing tourist preferences. One MSME owner commented:

"Tourism attracts visitors, but visitors stay longer and spend more because of the food, souvenirs, and local products. MSMEs should therefore become strategic partners in tourism development." (MSME Owner 7)

Participants recommended several strategic initiatives to strengthen the role of MSMEs in sustainable river tourism development, including improving product quality, enhancing

digital marketing capabilities, expanding access to financing, encouraging product innovation, providing entrepreneurship training, developing integrated tourism marketplaces, and strengthening the branding of local products. They believed that these initiatives would improve business competitiveness, increase visitor spending, and generate greater economic benefits for local communities. Participants believed that strengthening MSMEs would increase the economic multiplier effect generated by tourism while improving household incomes.

Environmental sustainability emerged as one of the most critical strategic priorities. Participants consistently acknowledged that the attractiveness of the Martapura River tourism destination depends largely on maintaining a clean, healthy, and attractive river environment. A government representative stated:

"Without a healthy river, there will be no sustainable tourism." (Government Official 5)

Community members proposed regular river-cleaning programs involving local residents, tourism operators, schools, universities, and environmental organizations. MSME owners suggested improving waste management facilities and encouraging environmentally friendly business practices, including reducing single-use plastics and promoting eco-friendly packaging.

Participants also recommended introducing environmentally responsible tourism guidelines for visitors and boat operators to minimize environmental impacts while maintaining tourism activities. Participants emphasized that future tourism development should focus on creating integrated visitor experiences rather than offering only *klotok* river cruises. According to stakeholders, the Martapura River already possesses numerous complementary attractions, including culinary tourism, cultural performances, floating mosques, riverside settlements, local handicrafts, public parks, night markets, and creative industries.

Participants proposed integrating these attractions into a unified tourism package capable of increasing visitor satisfaction and extending tourists' length of stay. One tourism operator stated:

"Visitors should not only take a boat ride. They should also enjoy local food, cultural performances, handicrafts, and community activities along the river." (Boat Operator 4)

The integration of multiple tourism products was viewed as an effective strategy for increasing tourism expenditure while distributing economic benefits more evenly across local communities. Based on the thematic analysis, stakeholders' experiences and perspectives were synthesized into a collaborative strategy consisting of five interrelated strategic pillars.

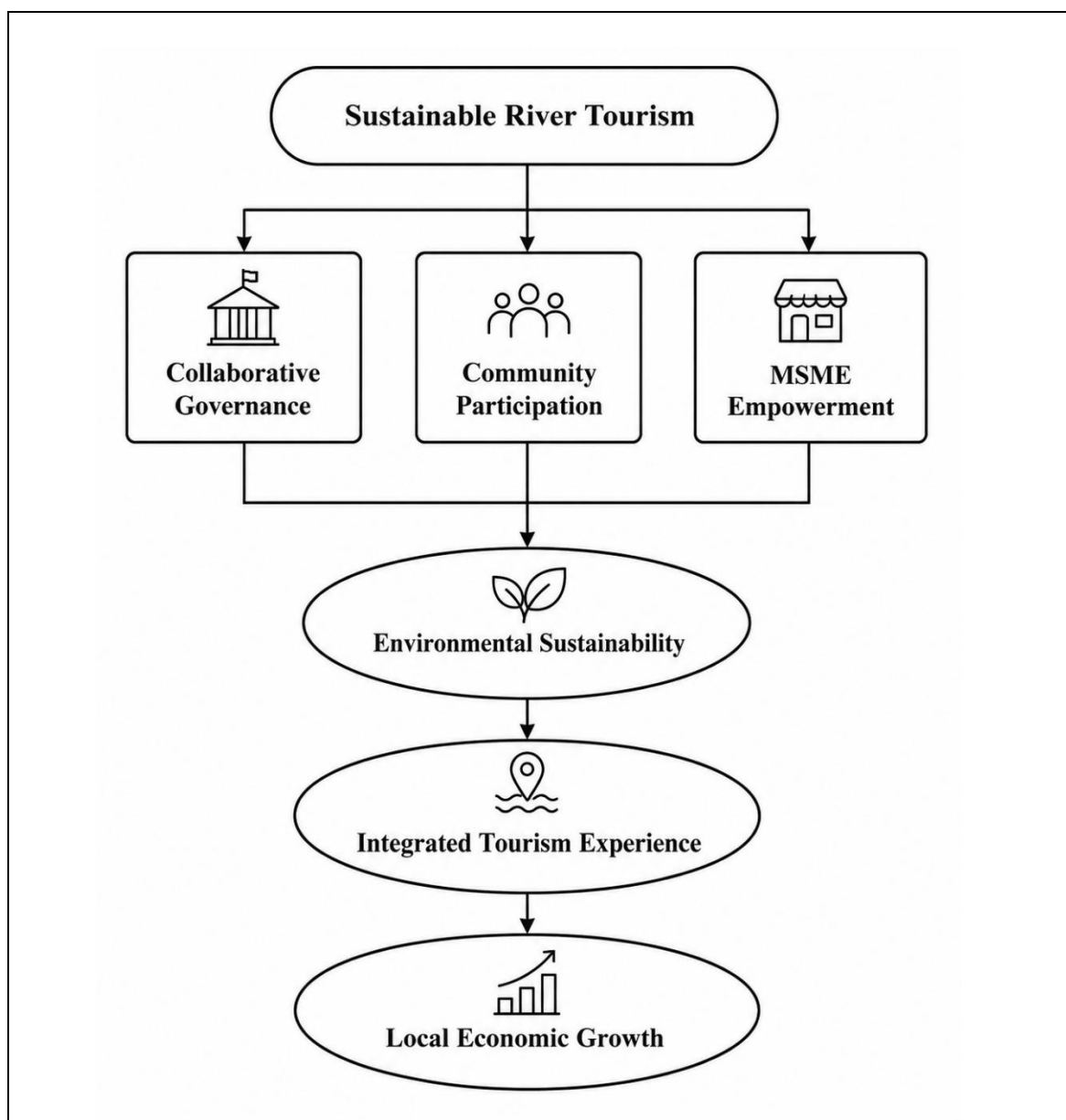


Figure 1. Collaborative Strategy for Sustainable River Tourism Development

The proposed model demonstrates that sustainable river tourism development is achieved through the integration of five mutually reinforcing strategic components. Collaborative governance provides the institutional foundation by strengthening coordination and shared decision-making among government, local communities, MSMEs, and other stakeholders; community participation fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility for tourism development; MSME empowerment enhances local economic competitiveness by improving entrepreneurship, innovation, and business opportunities; environmental sustainability protects the river ecosystem and preserves the natural and cultural resources that support tourism; and integrated tourism experiences create greater visitor value by combining river cruises with culinary attractions, cultural performances, local crafts, and other tourism activities. Together, these interconnected components establish a holistic framework that not only strengthens the competitiveness and sustainability of the Martapura River tourism destination but also promotes inclusive and

sustainable local economic growth in Banjarmasin City. Together, these components contribute to sustainable local economic growth.

Table 4. The synthesis of stakeholder perspectives resulted in the following strategic framework.

Strategic Component	Main Actions	Expected Outcomes
Collaborative Governance	Multi-stakeholder coordination forum	Stronger institutional collaboration
Community Participation	Participatory planning and tourism awareness	Increased community ownership
MSME Empowerment	Training, innovation, digital marketing, financing	Improved business competitiveness
Environmental Sustainability	River conservation, waste management, eco-tourism	Protected tourism resources
Integrated Tourism Experience	Tourism packages, cultural festivals, culinary tourism	Higher visitor satisfaction and spending

The findings demonstrate that stakeholders do not perceive sustainable tourism development as a series of isolated government programs. Instead, they view it as an adaptive and collaborative process requiring continuous interaction among institutions, communities, businesses, and tourism operators.

Rather than prioritizing infrastructure development alone, participants emphasized strengthening governance quality, empowering local communities, supporting MSMEs, preserving environmental resources, and diversifying tourism experiences. These findings suggest that successful river tourism development depends not only on physical investment but also on building collaborative relationships that generate trust, shared responsibility, collective learning, and long-term commitment.

The findings addressing the third research question indicate that stakeholders' experiences and perspectives can be synthesized into a collaborative strategy centered on five strategic pillars: collaborative governance, community participation, MSME empowerment, environmental sustainability, and integrated tourism experiences. Together, these pillars form a comprehensive framework for sustainable river tourism development in the Martapura River tourism area. Stakeholders believe that strengthening these interconnected dimensions will improve destination competitiveness, expand economic opportunities, preserve river culture and environmental quality, and ultimately enhance inclusive and sustainable local economic growth in Banjarmasin City.

DISCUSSION

Stakeholders' Understanding and Interpretation of Collaboration in Sustainable River Tourism Development

The findings of this study demonstrate that government officials, local communities, and MSMEs share a common understanding that collaboration is the cornerstone of sustainable river tourism development in the Martapura River tourism area. However, each stakeholder interprets collaboration according to its institutional role and socio-economic

interests. Government officials perceive collaboration as a governance mechanism for coordinating policies and public services, local communities interpret it as collective responsibility and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), while MSMEs view collaboration as an economic partnership that creates business opportunities and improves livelihoods. These findings indicate that collaboration extends beyond administrative coordination and evolves into a socially constructed process that integrates governance, participation, and local economic development. This interpretation aligns with Collaborative Governance Theory, which emphasizes that complex public issues require shared decision-making and collective action among multiple stakeholders rather than unilateral government intervention (Musleh et al., 2023; Mulyani et al., 2021).

The government officials interviewed consistently emphasized that sustainable tourism cannot be achieved solely through infrastructure development or destination promotion. Instead, they regarded collaboration as an institutional arrangement in which government acts primarily as a facilitator, coordinator, and regulator while encouraging active participation from communities and businesses. This finding supports the argument of Sentanu et al. (2023), who concluded that collaborative tourism governance is most effective when public institutions create enabling conditions for stakeholder participation, trust-building, and shared responsibility. Rather than exercising hierarchical control, governments should facilitate partnerships that allow different stakeholders to contribute according to their capacities and interests.

From the perspective of local communities, collaboration was interpreted as shared ownership of the tourism destination. Community members believed that protecting the river environment, preserving local culture, and providing hospitality to visitors constitute collective responsibilities that directly influence community welfare. The findings suggest that local participation is not merely operational but also represents social commitment to maintaining the sustainability of river tourism. This interpretation is consistent with Zhang et al. (2022), who argued that residents' willingness to collaborate increases when they perceive tourism as generating equitable benefits and when they are meaningfully involved in destination governance. Similarly, community-based tourism studies emphasize that sustainable tourism depends on local empowerment, social trust, and participatory decision-making rather than on infrastructure investment alone.

The experiences of MSMEs reveal another important dimension of collaboration. Business owners understood collaboration primarily as a mechanism for strengthening business performance through improved market access, government support, tourism promotion, and partnerships with other tourism actors. Their perspectives demonstrate that tourism development generates value not only for visitors but also for local entrepreneurs who provide food, handicrafts, transportation, accommodation, and supporting services. This finding reinforces previous studies indicating that stakeholder collaboration stimulates value co-creation, encourages entrepreneurship, strengthens destination competitiveness, and increases local economic resilience through integrated tourism ecosystems (Achmad et al., 2023, as discussed in Purmanto & Yuniati, 2026).

An important finding emerging from this research is that all stakeholder groups consistently identified trust, communication, shared commitment, and mutual benefit as the

essential elements of collaboration. These elements appeared repeatedly across interviews regardless of stakeholder category, indicating that collaboration is perceived as a relational process rather than merely a formal institutional arrangement. This finding strongly supports Emerson and Nabatchi's collaborative governance framework, which emphasizes principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint capacity as the foundation of successful collaborative governance. Recent empirical studies in tourism similarly conclude that destinations characterized by continuous communication, inclusive participation, and transparent decision-making are more capable of achieving sustainable tourism outcomes than destinations relying solely on government-led initiatives (Yesayabela & Utama, 2025; Hidayat & Pramudya, 2025).

Although stakeholders demonstrated similar understandings regarding the importance of collaboration, this study also identified differences in emphasis that enrich the collaborative governance literature. Government institutions tended to prioritize policy coordination and institutional effectiveness, communities emphasized social solidarity and environmental stewardship, whereas MSMEs focused on business sustainability and market opportunities. Rather than representing conflicting perspectives, these differences illustrate the complementary nature of stakeholder roles within a tourism ecosystem. Similar observations were reported by Alfandri et al. (2024), who found that sustainable ecotourism governance depends on the integration of governmental leadership, community participation, and private-sector engagement within a collaborative institutional framework.

Overall, the findings indicate that collaboration in the Martapura River tourism area should be understood as a multidimensional governance process integrating institutional coordination, community participation, and local entrepreneurship to achieve sustainable tourism and inclusive economic growth. Compared with previous studies that primarily examined collaboration as an administrative or managerial mechanism, this research demonstrates that stakeholders construct collaboration through everyday experiences, shared values, and reciprocal relationships developed within the tourism destination. This broader interpretation contributes to the understanding of collaborative governance by highlighting that sustainable river tourism depends not only on formal institutional arrangements but also on socially embedded trust, collective ownership, and mutually beneficial partnerships among government, local communities, and MSMEs.

Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Opportunities, Challenges, and Dynamics of Sustainable River Tourism Development through Collaborative Governance

The findings of this study reveal that stakeholders perceive the Martapura River tourism destination as possessing substantial opportunities to stimulate local economic growth while simultaneously recognizing significant challenges that must be addressed to achieve long-term sustainability. Government officials emphasized the strategic role of river tourism in strengthening regional competitiveness and increasing local revenue, whereas local communities and MSMEs viewed tourism primarily as a source of employment, entrepreneurship, and household income. These findings indicate that tourism is interpreted not only as a recreational activity but also as an integrated socio-economic system that creates value for multiple stakeholder groups. This perspective is consistent with Sustainable

Tourism Development Theory, which argues that tourism should generate balanced economic, social, and environmental benefits while improving the quality of life of host communities (Bhuiyan et al., 2023).

One of the major opportunities identified by participants is the unique competitive advantage of the Martapura River as a tourism destination. Stakeholders highlighted the authenticity of river culture, traditional *klotok* transportation, riverside settlements, floating religious landmarks, culinary attractions, and night-time tourism experiences as distinctive tourism assets that are difficult to replicate elsewhere. Such uniqueness strengthens destination attractiveness and contributes to destination branding. Similar findings were reported by Ginting et al. (2024), who concluded that destinations with strong cultural identity and community participation possess greater capacity to achieve sustainable tourism because authenticity enhances visitor experiences while encouraging local economic participation. Therefore, preserving the cultural landscape of the Martapura River should be viewed not only as heritage conservation but also as a strategic investment in tourism competitiveness.

Despite these opportunities, stakeholders consistently identified several challenges that threaten the sustainability of the destination. One of the most significant issues is the uneven distribution of visitor arrivals, with tourism activities heavily concentrated on weekends while weekdays remain relatively quiet. This pattern creates unstable income for *klotok* operators, MSMEs, and informal tourism workers. Participants also identified environmental pressures associated with increased tourism activities, including waste management, river cleanliness, and the maintenance of public facilities. These findings support previous studies showing that rapid tourism growth often generates environmental externalities if not accompanied by integrated destination management and effective environmental governance (Bhuiyan et al., 2023; Ginting et al., 2024). Consequently, tourism growth should be accompanied by sustainable environmental management strategies to preserve the long-term attractiveness of the destination.

Another important finding concerns institutional coordination among stakeholders. Although collaborative initiatives already exist, participants perceived that coordination remains fragmented and is frequently implemented through temporary programs rather than continuous institutional mechanisms. Government agencies, community organizations, tourism operators, and MSMEs often pursue similar objectives but operate independently with limited strategic integration. This finding is consistent with the systematic review conducted by Jaafar et al. (2026), which concluded that fragmented stakeholder relationships reduce the effectiveness of sustainable tourism governance, whereas continuous collaboration, shared vision, and inclusive participation significantly improve destination performance. Accordingly, strengthening institutional coordination should become a strategic priority in the governance of the Martapura River tourism destination.

The findings also demonstrate that collaboration is a dynamic and evolving social process rather than a fixed institutional arrangement. Participants emphasized that trust, communication, mutual respect, and adaptive leadership determine the quality of stakeholder relationships. Community members indicated that they are more willing to participate actively when government policies are transparent and responsive to local needs, while

MSMEs emphasized the importance of being recognized as strategic partners rather than merely supporting actors. These findings reinforce Collaborative Governance Theory, which emphasizes that effective collaboration develops gradually through continuous interaction, reciprocal learning, and the development of shared commitment among stakeholders (Valderrama & Polanco, 2024). Therefore, strengthening interpersonal relationships is equally important as improving formal institutional structures.

Another noteworthy aspect emerging from this study is stakeholders' shared expectation that future tourism development should balance economic growth with environmental conservation and cultural preservation. Participants did not view sustainability solely from an ecological perspective but interpreted it as the integration of economic prosperity, community well-being, and protection of river heritage. This broader understanding reflects the triple-bottom-line approach to sustainable tourism, where economic viability, social inclusiveness, and environmental responsibility are mutually reinforcing rather than competing objectives (Bhuiyan et al., 2023). The findings therefore suggest that successful river tourism development depends on maintaining equilibrium among these three dimensions.

Overall, this study demonstrates that stakeholders perceive sustainable river tourism development as both an opportunity and a governance challenge requiring continuous collaboration among government institutions, local communities, and MSMEs. While previous studies have generally examined opportunities and challenges separately, the present findings show that both dimensions are closely interconnected through the dynamics of collaborative governance. The sustainability of the Martapura River tourism destination ultimately depends on stakeholders' collective capacity to transform shared opportunities into collaborative actions while addressing institutional, environmental, and economic challenges through adaptive governance. This integrated understanding provides an important foundation for developing the collaborative strategy presented in the following section.

Synthesizing Stakeholders' Experiences and Perspectives into a Collaborative Strategy for Sustainable River Tourism Development

The findings addressing the third research question demonstrate that stakeholders' experiences and perspectives can be synthesized into a collaborative strategy built upon five interconnected pillars: collaborative governance, community participation, MSME empowerment, environmental sustainability, and integrated tourism experiences. Rather than proposing isolated interventions, participants consistently emphasized that sustainable river tourism requires an integrated governance approach in which government institutions, local communities, and MSMEs share responsibilities, resources, and decision-making processes. This finding supports Collaborative Governance Theory, which argues that sustainable solutions to complex public issues emerge through collective action, continuous dialogue, and shared commitment among diverse stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Valderrama & Polanco, 2024). In the context of the Martapura River tourism destination, collaboration is therefore understood as an adaptive governance system that aligns institutional objectives with community aspirations and local economic development.

The first strategic pillar identified in this study is strengthening collaborative governance through institutionalized coordination mechanisms. Participants argued that collaboration should move beyond temporary project-based cooperation toward a permanent multi-stakeholder governance platform involving government agencies, *klotok* associations, MSMEs, community organizations, tourism awareness groups (*Pokdarwis*), universities, and private-sector partners. Such an institutional arrangement would facilitate regular communication, joint planning, conflict resolution, and coordinated implementation of tourism policies. This finding is consistent with Valderrama and Polanco (2024), who concluded that collaborative governance significantly improves the sustainability of tourism destinations by enhancing institutional trust, stakeholder coordination, and adaptive decision-making. Likewise, Jaafar et al. (2026) emphasized that long-term tourism sustainability depends on establishing governance structures that encourage continuous stakeholder engagement rather than fragmented institutional actions.

The second and third strategic pillars focus on community participation and MSME empowerment as the principal drivers of inclusive local economic development. Participants viewed local communities not merely as beneficiaries of tourism but as active custodians of river culture, environmental conservation, and destination hospitality. Similarly, MSMEs were recognized as strategic economic actors whose products and services shape visitor experiences while generating employment and household income. The findings therefore suggest that strengthening entrepreneurial capacity, digital marketing, product innovation, access to financing, and business networking would substantially increase the local economic multiplier effect of tourism. These findings are supported by Ginting et al. (2024), who argued that sustainable tourism governance requires active community participation combined with local economic empowerment to ensure that tourism benefits are distributed equitably among residents rather than concentrated within a limited number of businesses.

Environmental sustainability emerged as the fourth strategic pillar underpinning the proposed collaborative strategy. Stakeholders consistently emphasized that the long-term attractiveness of the Martapura River depends on maintaining river cleanliness, preserving ecological quality, reducing pollution, and promoting environmentally responsible tourism practices. Importantly, participants viewed environmental conservation not as a separate environmental agenda but as an integral component of tourism competitiveness and economic sustainability. This interpretation reflects the Sustainable Tourism Development Theory, which emphasizes balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and socio-cultural preservation (Bhuiyan et al., 2023). Similar conclusions were reached by Bhuiyan et al. (2023), who demonstrated that destinations adopting integrated environmental governance are more capable of sustaining tourism competitiveness while protecting natural resources and improving community welfare.

The fifth strategic pillar concerns the development of an integrated tourism experience that combines river cruises with culinary tourism, cultural performances, handicrafts, creative industries, public spaces, and riverside attractions into a unified destination experience. Stakeholders believed that extending visitor activities beyond the traditional *klotok* cruise would increase visitor satisfaction, prolong the length of stay, stimulate higher tourism expenditure, and distribute economic benefits more broadly throughout the local

economy. This finding aligns with recent tourism destination management studies emphasizing that experiential tourism and value co-creation enhance destination competitiveness by integrating multiple tourism products into a coherent visitor experience (Jaafar et al., 2026; Ginting et al., 2024). Therefore, tourism diversification should become a central strategy for strengthening the resilience and competitiveness of the Martapura River tourism destination.

An important theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the five strategic pillars are mutually reinforcing rather than independent. Collaborative governance creates the institutional foundation for community participation and MSME empowerment; active community participation strengthens environmental stewardship and destination authenticity; empowered MSMEs enhance visitor experiences and local economic resilience; environmental sustainability protects the core tourism resource; and integrated tourism experiences generate higher visitor satisfaction and economic returns. This interconnected relationship suggests that sustainable river tourism should be understood as a holistic governance system rather than a collection of separate tourism development programs. The findings therefore extend previous collaborative governance studies by illustrating how governance, community empowerment, environmental management, and tourism product development interact simultaneously within a river tourism ecosystem.

Overall, this study proposes a context-specific collaborative strategy for the sustainable development of the Martapura River tourism destination that integrates governance, community empowerment, MSME development, environmental sustainability, and tourism experience enhancement into a unified framework. While previous studies have generally examined these dimensions independently, the present research demonstrates that sustainable river tourism can only be achieved when these strategic components operate synergistically through continuous stakeholder collaboration. Consequently, the proposed collaborative strategy contributes both theoretically and practically by offering a comprehensive governance model capable of enhancing destination competitiveness while promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic growth in Banjarmasin City.

CONCLUSION

Conclusions

This study concludes that sustainable river tourism development in the Martapura River tourism area depends on effective collaboration among government, local communities, and MSMEs. Although each stakeholder interprets collaboration differently according to its role—government as a facilitator and regulator, communities as active participants and custodians of local culture, and MSMEs as drivers of the local economy—all stakeholders agree that trust, communication, shared commitment, and mutual responsibility are fundamental to achieving sustainable tourism.

The study also finds that the Martapura River possesses significant opportunities to stimulate local economic growth through its unique river culture, tourism attractions, and vibrant MSME activities. However, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges such as uneven tourist arrivals, environmental issues, and fragmented coordination. Based on stakeholders' experiences, this research proposes a collaborative strategy consisting of five key pillars: collaborative governance, community participation, MSME empowerment,

environmental sustainability, and integrated tourism experiences to strengthen sustainable tourism and enhance local economic growth.

Implications

The findings imply that the Banjarmasin City Government should strengthen institutional collaboration by establishing a permanent multi-stakeholder forum involving government agencies, local communities, MSMEs, tourism associations, universities, and other relevant stakeholders. Tourism policies should also emphasize community participation, MSME capacity building, environmental conservation, and integrated tourism management to ensure that economic benefits are distributed more equitably while preserving the sustainability of the Martapura River tourism destination.

From a theoretical perspective, this study enriches the literature on Collaborative Governance Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Sustainable Tourism Development Theory by demonstrating that sustainable river tourism is achieved through continuous interaction among stakeholders rather than through government intervention alone. The collaborative strategy model developed in this research offers a practical and conceptual framework that can be adapted by other river tourism destinations seeking to strengthen destination competitiveness while promoting inclusive and sustainable local economic growth.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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