Stakeholder Cooperation Patterns in Overcoming Tourism Scams in the KEK (Special Economic Zone) Tourism Area of Mandalika, Central Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract. This research aims to identify forms of stakeholder cooperation to address tourism scams in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, Central Lombok. Scam tourism is a fraudulent activity perpetrated by perpetrators to profit personally, ultimately damaging a destination's reputation and undermining tourism sustainability. This research uses a qualitative case study approach. The researchers collected data through non-participant observation, distribution of questionnaires, in-depth interviews with key actors—including the Central Lombok Tourism Office, the police/tourist protection task force, ITDC Mandalika, business owners, and local communities—and documentation. The data analysis technique employs the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Source triangulation is used to verify and validate data by comparing information across informants to ensure the credibility of the research findings. The research results indicate that a pattern of cooperation has emerged, with the Central Lombok Tourism Office as the primary driver. Support is provided by security personnel, ITDC Mandalika, local communities, and business operators through several initiatives, including the formation of a tourism security team, training, and law enforcement against fraudulent actors.

Nevertheless, the implementation of this collaboration has not been optimal. Public education remains limited; the case-reporting system is not technology-based; and active public participation in the decision-making process remains minimal. The main constraints include weak inter-agency coordination and insufficient human resources. This research recommends stronger inter-sectoral coordination, increased human resource capacity, the development of digital reporting systems, and the active involvement of the community and business actors. The research recommends formalising cooperation through joint regulations, emphasising continuous education, emphasising the role of the community, establishing an integrated task force, integrating reporting, and optimising technology to build sustainable destinations.

Keywords: stakeholder collaboration; scam tourism; sustainable tourism; tourist protection.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a fundamental role as one of the most dynamic and rapidly growing sectors of the Indonesian economy. As an archipelagic nation rich in natural beauty and cultural diversity, Indonesia is striving to innovate in developing premier tourist destinations to generate state revenue and improve community welfare. According to the Global Tourism Index, Indonesia, which was previously ranked 44th, is now ranked 32nd out of 117 countries in the Travel

and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2021, published by the World Economic Forum. This improvement reflects significant progress across various aspects of Indonesia's tourism and travel sector [1].

Therefore, to ensure the smooth growth of the tourism sector, all relevant parties must actively participate. If all stakeholders can work together and have a shared understanding of how to perform their duties, progress in the tourism sector will be faster. Government involvement must ensure that collaboration between the public and private sectors is well-regulated; the government is expected to be responsible for setting the rules and regulations governing these types of cooperative projects, according to According to authors [2], there are four main stakeholders considered necessary in the development of tourism destinations: the government, managers, business actors (private sector), and the community. For optimal tourism development, comprehensive planning and strong participation from all parties, especially the local community that will directly benefit, are required.

The Indonesian government inaugurated the Mandalika Kuta Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, in 2017 as one of its ambitious tourism development projects to create world-class tourist destinations that can compete internationally. With an area of 1,035.67 hectares, Mandalika SEZ is projected to become a tourism centre offering a range of modern facilities, including luxury hotels and resorts, an international MotoGP circuit, and a variety of tourist attractions that combine natural beauty with technological innovation. Along with the rapid development of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the number of tourist visits in the last five years has shown a positive trend [3].

According to a report from ITDC Mandalika, the number of tourist visits to the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) temporarily decreased in 2020 to 152,331 due to COVID-19 pandemic-related social restrictions. However, the number of tourists began to increase in 2021, reaching 205,447, as the government relaxed regulations and reopened tourist areas under the 3M health protocols. In 2022, visits rose dramatically to 498,756, and in 2023 they continued to increase to 827,047, influenced by the easing of the pandemic and the MotoGP at the Mandalika circuit. 2024 saw a significant surge to 1,241,742 tourists, a 51.1% increase from the previous year, driven by various international events [3].

However, as the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Central Lombok and the number of tourists continue to grow, various serious challenges have also emerged, namely the phenomenon of scam tourism, or tourism fraud targeting tourists. This practice not only financially harms tourists but can also ultimately damage the overall reputation of the tourist destination, threatening the sustainability of the tourism business in the area [4]. Scammers take advantage of opportunities to interact with tourists, for example, by exploiting visitors' willingness to communicate, which opens the door to scammers seeking personal gain through certain tricks, ultimately draining tourists' money [5].

According to a global survey conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), the tourism sector experiences approximately 41,000 fraud cases annually, indicating a significant prevalence of fraud. In each fraud case, the average financial loss is roughly $73,000 [6]. According to a report from the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) Tourist Protection Task Force in Central Lombok, the number of tourism-related cases in the Mandalika KEK continues to increase every year. In 2020, 23 cases were recorded, rising to 37 in 2021, 52 in 2022, and 61 by the third quarter of 2023. This increase reflects the prevalence of fraudulent practices as tourism activity in the region increases (Tourist Protection Task Force).

According to media reports, fraudsters have committed various forms of fraud in the Mandalika area, employing increasingly diverse and damaging methods. One of the most detrimental issues during major events like WSBK and MotoGP is the emergence of car rental scams, where cars are pawned or not returned, resulting in losses of approximately Rp 598 million from 65 vehicles [7]. Fraud also occurs through fake tickets sold via illegal websites and WhatsApp, with losses ranging from Rp 30–70 million. In the hotel and souvenir sector, tourists are charged unfair rates without clear information, resulting in losses ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions of rupiah. Parking fees are also rampant, with private tickets and direct payments to illegal parking attendants [8]. Although the losses are difficult to quantify, this practice remains detrimental and tarnishes Mandalika's image as a tourist destination.

Given the complexity and negative impact of scam tourism, a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders is needed to address this issue. Previous literature studies have extensively discussed the role of stakeholders in addressing fraud in tourist areas. Research by the authors [9-11] shows that listening to the voices of all stakeholder groups in tourism planning and decision-making can help identify and address existing problems, including tourism fraud. Next, research by authors [12-14] indicates that a strong partnership among the public, private, and local community sectors can help reduce fraud risk and increase tourists' trust in the destination.

Based on the background previously explained and prior studies, many have highlighted the significant role of stakeholders in addressing fraud in tourist areas. However, previous research has focused on the role of only one or two stakeholders, such as the government and the local community, and has discussed fraud in general without specifically addressing scam tourism. Unfortunately, to date, no specific study has identified the patterns of cooperation that have emerged in addressing scam tourism in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone in Central Lombok. Therefore, this research is essential for providing a comprehensive understanding of cross-agency cooperation dynamics in addressing scam tourism and for offering strategic recommendations to strengthen sustainable, reliable governance of tourism destinations.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive case study design. According to authors [15], qualitative research is conducted to describe, explain, explore, and understand the meanings held by individuals or groups, often stemming from social or humanitarian issues. It aims to provide a detailed description and understanding of the phenomenon of scam tourism and the patterns of stakeholder cooperation in the tourism area of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, Central Lombok. The researcher chose this approach to naturally and contextually explore social interactions, perceptions, and cross-actor collaboration dynamics. The researcher collected data through non-participant observation, distributed questionnaires to respondents who had experienced tourism scams in the KEK Mandalika tourism area of Central Lombok, conducted semi-structured interviews

with key actors—namely the Central Lombok Tourism Office, the tourist protection task force/police, ITDC Mandalika tourism area management, tourism business actors, and local communities—and gathered documentation as supporting data. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. Source triangulation is applied to verify and validate the data by comparing information across informants to ensure the credibility of the research findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Collaboration patterns among stakeholders in addressing scam tourism in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (KEK) tourism area, Central Lombok

1) Collaboration patterns among stakeholders formed in addressing scam tourism. This subsection explains the forms of cooperation among stakeholders, including policies, regulations, supervision, reporting, socialisation, education, and the use of technology to address tourism scams in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone.

2) Policies and Regulations. A policy is a series of activities or steps taken by the government or an institution to achieve a specific goal in regulating, relying on, or changing an existing situation within a country or region [16]. In this study, it was found that in overcoming tourism scams, there are several policies formed by the Department of Tourism, including:

a) The establishment of tourism information centres (panparwisata) located in several locations in Central Lombok, including the Mandalika Special Economic Zone;

b) Requiring tourism business operators to have training certificates; and

c) The application of criminal law for perpetrators of fraud. However, the findings indicate that training implementation is not yet uniform and still depends on provincial-level coordination. The identification system using ID cards and cenderawasih pins is implemented to distinguish between official and illegal guides.

Not only through policy, but also through formal regulations established to deter fraud. According to the author [17], regulation is the process by which governments manage the economy and

society through various legal and policy instruments. He emphasises the importance of regulation in creating a framework that supports social justice and public welfare. In this case, if the researcher finds that the enforcement of scam tourism laws violates consumer rights under Law No. 8 on Consumer Protection. Additionally, the scammers can be charged under Article 378 of the Criminal Code for fraud, consistent with the authors' research findings [18]. By establishing strict regulations and imposing sanctions on fraudsters, the government can create a safe environment for tourists.

3) Supervision and Reporting. Emphasising that supervision during government organisational change to improve quality is very important, authors [19, 20] State That Supervision aims to prevent deviations from the goals to be achieved. This research found that efforts to monitor various issues in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, particularly in the practice of scam tourism, have involved various parties through cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms. The Central Lombok Tourism Office has formed a tourism monitoring team and is collaborating with security and police to conduct daily routine patrols in line with each region's responsibilities, as well as regular monitoring at strategic points such as Kuta Mandalika Beach, Merese Hill, Aan Beach, and Kuta Mandalika Beach. CCTV is also utilised for technological support, though it remains limited to specific locations.

Despite intensive surveillance and reported success in directly suppressing scam incidents, several cases have occurred in the last 5 years, particularly during major events such as MotoGP and WSBK. The detected modus operandi includes the sale of fake tickets, manipulation of accommodation prices, vehicle rental fraud, fake investment schemes and land ownership disputes; this indicates that there are still gaps in oversight, particularly regarding informal actors and authorised figures who abuse their positions.

Furthermore, the research found that an integrated reporting system has not supported field monitoring. Self-reporting is the process of conveying information, whether orally or in writing. According to good reporting, it must meet specific criteria, such as mastery of the issues being reported. Both the tourism department and the police still rely on manual reports or existing social media, and not all tourists are aware of these platforms. A survey distributed via social media

supports this finding, showing that 47.5% of respondents did not know where to report, 42.5% felt that reporting had no impact, and only 15% reported that authorities followed up on their complaints; this reflects a fundamental weakness in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) aspect of case handling. The absence of clear, structured SOPs leaves victims of tourism scams confused about how to identify the appropriate reporting steps, including the competent authority, the administrative procedures to follow, and the expected follow-up mechanisms.

4) Socialisation and education. Socialisation is the process by which a person learns and interacts to understand and internalise the values, norms, and behavioural patterns prevalent in society [21]. In the tourism sector, socialisation is generally aimed at business owners and the community as a form of education to improve their understanding of providing exemplary service and other aspects that support positive tourism. The head of human resources for Central Lombok explained that they regularly hold socialisation sessions for business owners and the public, covering topics such as service, pricing, and sales techniques. However, specific material about scam tourism has never been discussed in depth. Representatives from the Kuta village tourism group revealed that although the community is often involved in socialisation, not all residents have the opportunity to participate, and the material presented remains general.

Business owners and travel agents stated that they frequently participate in training. However, the material remains limited to service, and the issue of scam tourism has not been specifically addressed. Authors [22] at Lake Toba showed that training without field assistants and ineffective for local issues had only a limited impact. The relevant agencies have not systematically conducted education regarding scam tourism. The head of the tourism department's human resources acknowledged that while the focus is on sustainable tourism development, there is no specific educational program addressing tourism scams. Local communities reported that they had never openly educated tourists about scam tourism but had always advised them to remain cautious.

Interestingly, some tour guides have taken the initiative to provide Mandarin education to the guests they accompany. A tour guide and travel agent revealed that they regularly educate tour-

ists about standard rates and potential scams. However, cases of fraud, especially by street vendors around the Mandalika circuit, still occur frequently. According to the authors [23], mitigating fraud risk requires a collaborative approach, facilitated by communication-based education and supervision.

5) Utilisation of technology. According to the author [24], the utilisation of technology in tourism is the application of various digital technologies to improve operational efficiency, enrich the tourist experience, and strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism industry. Ideally, premier tourism destinations like the Mandalika Special Economic Zone require integrated and easily accessible technology. Based on the researchers' findings, no dedicated technology application system has been utilised to date to address scam tourism. Information management is still handled through public media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and the official Go Mandalika website, which primarily focus on promoting Mandalika as a destination. Reporting is possible via the WhatsApp number listed on the Go Mandalika website, but not all tourists, especially international and domestic ones, are aware of the website's existence.

This is also in line with the research findings with the police, who still manage their own platform. This condition makes the reporting function passive and limited, requiring tourists to rely on their own awareness to access service contacts independently. Various studies state that a technology-based reporting system is an essential foundation for transparent and accountable destinations [25]. The use of technology can serve as a source of data for real-time analysis of trends in tourism problems and for policy evaluation.

Challenges faced in the cooperation pattern to overcome scam tourism in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone. According to the authors [26], challenges in an organisational context are conditions that require individuals or groups to change and adapt to achieve desired results. Author [27] highlights the importance of cross-sectoral integration in sustainable tourism management, as well as the obstacles posed by a lack of shared leadership and ineffective communication systems. Authors [28] emphasise that the main challenge in managing the Mandalika tourism area is the lack of coordination among different agencies.

1) Challenges for the Central Lombok Tourism Office government. According to the author [27], cross-sectoral integrity among government, business, and community actors is crucial for sustainable tourism management. She also notes obstacles such as a lack of shared leadership and an effective communication system. If researchers find that the constraints/challenges faced by Central Lombok in overcoming tourism scams are:

a) A lack of consistent and effective coordination among stakeholders on an ongoing basis, both in the planning, implementation, and follow-up stages of reports from the field; and

b) A limited number of competent human resources, both in terms of quantity and supervisory capacity, which also poses a constraint in realising a responsive tourist protection system.

2) Challenges for the Mandalika Tourist Protection Task Force. The task force (satgas) faces challenges such as a limited number of officers for a large surveillance area, frequent delays in coordinating with other agencies, especially when handling emergency reports, and limited awareness among tourists of the task force's existence and reporting procedures. The task force also lacks supporting facilities such as online reporting systems and information about scam tourism.

3) Challenges for business actors/enterprises. Business actors face severe challenges due to a lack of clear communication and cross-agency coordination, especially with the government. Business actors are rarely involved in official coordination meetings or forums, so when faced with problems in the field, they tend to act on their own, without clear direction or support from relevant parties. This condition reflects the weak collaboration scheme between the public and private sectors, which should mutually strengthen efforts to create safe and sustainable tourism. According to the author [29], active participation by business owners is crucial for inclusive tourism governance.

4) Challenges for local communities. The challenges faced by local communities lie in the lack of open communication and sustained involvement in the formulation of policies and prevention programs at the field level. Community involvement is often symbolic or sporadic, without leading to a clear, tangible role in the decision-making process. According to the author [30],

their research indicates that certain elites still dominate local communities' involvement in destination governance. Hence, grassroots community groups like Pokdarwis are often only involved as supplements, not as decision-makers. This condition leads to a low sense of community ownership of the implemented policies and weakens collective commitment in efforts to prevent scam tourism.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, the study concludes that stakeholders have established a pattern of cooperation to address tourism scams in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone through various policies, monitoring mechanisms, education, and technology. The Central Lombok Tourism Office plays a central role in coordinating cross-sectoral initiatives, including forming a tourism security team, certifying business operators, and enforcing laws against tourist fraud. This collaboration also involves security forces in field supervision and risk control through routine patrols and monitoring at strategic points. However, the cooperation established has not yet operated optimally. Education and socialisation regarding scam tourism are not structured, remain general, and have not reached all tourism stakeholders and local communities equally. Case reporting is also not yet supported by an integrated technology-based system, resulting in a slow, unsystematic response to tourist reports. Business actors and the community continue to play a limited role in policy-making for prevention; their involvement tends to be symbolic and lacks a formal, sustainable coordination scheme.

The main challenges faced in this cooperation pattern include weak cross-agency coordination, limited human resources, and a lack of active involvement from local communities and business actors; this indicates that stakeholder cooperation is still in its early stages and requires improvements in structural aspects and processes to achieve safe, fair, and sustainable tourism governance in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone. Therefore, this study recommends strengthening a more regular inter-agency collaboration framework, increasing human resource capacity, developing an easily accessible technology-based reporting system, and actively involving business actors and the community in the policy formulation and implementation process. With these steps, it is hoped that the Mandalika Special Economic Zone can become a premier tourist destination that is not only attractive but also safe and reliable for all tourists. For future development, researchers can expand this study by including a comparative analysis of other tourist destinations facing similar issues. Further research could also delve deeper into community participation and the effectiveness of digital technology use in protecting tourists.

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