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The Role of Locally-Based Regulations and Nature Tourism Marketing Strategies on Muna Island

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ABSTRACT: This study examines how locally grounded regulation and nature-tourism marketing can be integrated to strengthen destination governance on Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. Using a qualitative intrinsic case-study design, the research combines semi-structured in-depth interviews, field observation, documentary analysis, and regulatory review. Informants represented local government, customary leaders, tourism businesses, destination managers, communities surrounding tourism sites, and tourism academics or observers. The analysis focuses on six major destinations—Lake Napabale, Liangkabori Cave, Meleura Beach, Topa Bathing Area, Walengkabola Beach, and Moko Lake—and interprets the findings through tourism governance, community-based tourism, living-law, destination marketing, and institutional perspectives. The findings show that Muna's nature-tourism potential is constrained less by the absence of attractions than by fragmented destination management, uneven basic facilities, weak visitor-information systems, sporadic promotion, and the absence of a locally specific regulatory architecture that translates customary values into operational standards. Four local principles—pamoa-moasigho, popia-piara, poangka-angatau, and poadha-adhati—provide a normative basis for environmental stewardship, visitor safety, service ethics, collective harmony, and dispute resolution. Marketing becomes more credible when these principles are converted into a consistent destination narrative, integrated tourism packages, transparent service standards, digital information, and inter-destination connectivity. The study proposes a mutually reinforcing policy–marketing mechanism: locally based regulation establishes trust, safety, participation, and service certainty, while culturally grounded marketing converts those institutional qualities into a distinctive destination promise. The resulting approach positions regulation not as a constraint on marketing but as part of the tourism product itself and as a foundation for sustainable nature-tourism competitiveness on Muna Island.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature-based island destinations increasingly compete not only through scenery but through the quality of governance, cultural authenticity, safety, accessibility, and the credibility of the destination promise. Contemporary destination-management research therefore treats marketing and governance as interdependent rather than separate domains. Governance determines who participates, how responsibilities are allocated, and how standards are enforced, while marketing shapes the meanings through which visitors recognize and choose a place [1, 2, 3]. In culturally distinctive destinations, the challenge is sharper because market visibility must be increased without reducing local culture to a promotional ornament.

Muna Island in Southeast Sulawesi illustrates this tension. The dissertation on which this article is based identifies substantial nature and cultural assets, including Lake Napabale, Liangkabori Cave, Meleura Beach, Topa Bathing Area, Walengkabola Beach, and Moko Lake. These sites combine coastal, karst, freshwater, archaeological, and community-cultural experiences, yet they have generally been managed and promoted as separate attractions rather than as a coherent island destination. The field evidence further

indicates uneven infrastructure, limited visitor information, fragmented stakeholder coordination, and insufficiently integrated local cultural values in destination services.

Tourism governance literature consistently shows that local residents and community institutions are not peripheral stakeholders. They contribute place-specific knowledge, legitimacy, stewardship, and social capital that are difficult to reproduce through top-down administrative systems [4, 5, 6]. Research on community-based tourism similarly emphasizes that sustainable outcomes depend on meaningful participation, fair benefit distribution, heritage conservation, and the capacity of communities to influence tourism decisions [7, 8]. These findings are particularly relevant to Muna, where customary principles remain socially meaningful and can function as locally legitimate rules of conduct.

The regulatory dimension is equally important. Formal tourism law can establish minimum rights, duties, service standards, safety obligations, complaint mechanisms, and institutional responsibilities. Yet formal rules may be weak in practice when they are detached from the social norms that guide everyday behaviour. The living-law perspective helps explain why locally recognized norms can complement formal regulation rather than compete with it [9]. Institutional theory likewise suggests that predictable rules reduce uncertainty and structure interactions among public agencies, communities, businesses, and visitors [10]. For a developing nature destination, locally based regulation can therefore operate as destination infrastructure: it clarifies expectations, protects resources, supports visitor confidence, and defines the conditions under which marketing claims can be delivered.

Marketing research adds another layer. Destination brands are co-produced by governments, businesses, communities, tourists, and cultural actors, meaning that a destination cannot sustainably communicate an identity that local institutions are unable or unwilling to enact [11, 12]. Place-branding studies also warn that apparently inclusive branding processes can reproduce unequal influence if community actors lack effective participation [13]. Thus, the question for Muna is not merely how to promote nature tourism more intensively, but how to construct a credible marketing strategy whose promises are supported by locally legitimate regulation and shared governance.

Recent work on destination internal marketing shows that residents can be treated as collaborators, power holders, and responsibility bearers rather than passive beneficiaries [14]. Other studies link local tourism governance to destination brand image, awareness, and attachment [15]. These insights imply a two-way relationship. Regulation and governance shape the quality that visitors experience, while marketing can communicate the values embedded in governance. When local rules protect landscapes, standardize safety, encourage fair pricing, and institutionalize community participation, those same features can become components of the destination's value proposition.

The research gap lies in the limited integration of these two domains in emerging island destinations. Studies commonly address destination marketing, community-based tourism, cultural heritage, or tourism governance separately. Fewer studies explain how locally grounded regulatory design can itself support nature-tourism marketing by converting customary values into observable standards and marketable assurances. This study addresses that gap through the Muna case and develops a policy–marketing interpretation grounded in qualitative field evidence. Accordingly, this article aims to analyze the role of locally based regulations and nature-tourism marketing strategies in strengthening destination governance on Muna Island. Specifically, it examines how Muna customary values can be translated into regulatory principles; how current governance and visitor-service conditions affect the credibility of tourism marketing; how integrated nature-tourism packages can strengthen the destination narrative; and how regulation and marketing can be combined in a mutually reinforcing framework for sustainable destination development.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design and Study Context

This study used a qualitative intrinsic case-study design. The case was tourism governance based on local culture in Muna Regency, with individual destinations treated as contextual sub-units. The design was exploratory and interpretive, enabling the research to investigate processes, meanings, stakeholder relationships, local norms, destination facilities, and policy practices without reducing the inquiry to a predetermined causal model. Qualitative case-study approaches are appropriate when a contemporary phenomenon must be understood within its institutional and social context [16, 17].

The principal study context was Muna Island, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The empirical focus included Lake Napabale, Liangkabori Cave, Meleura Beach, Topa Bathing Area, Walengkabola Beach, and Moko Lake. Together these destinations represent a varied nature-tourism portfolio: karst and geo-heritage landscapes, archaeological heritage, beaches, freshwater recreation, and

community-based visitor experiences. Their diversity enabled comparison of governance and marketing problems within one regional policy environment.

2.2 Informants and Data Sources

Informants were selected purposively from categories directly involved in or affected by tourism governance: local-government officials responsible for tourism, culture, planning, or policy; customary and community leaders; tourism business operators; destination managers; residents living around tourism sites; and academics or tourism observers. The number of informants was not fixed in advance. Data collection followed the principle of saturation, with interviewing continuing until additional accounts no longer produced materially new themes.

Primary data consisted of interview narratives, field observations, and the researchers' records of tourism-management practices, facility conditions, stakeholder interactions, and local cultural expressions. Secondary data included tourism regulations, policy documents, planning materials, official tourism statistics, destination-management documents, and scientific literature. This combination enabled the study to compare formal rules with their practical operation.

2.3 Data Collection and Trustworthiness

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were the main data-collection technique. Interview prompts explored local tourism governance, customary values, stakeholder roles, visitor safety, service practices, promotion, destination packaging, infrastructure, and policy needs. Non-participant field observation was used to examine facilities, spatial arrangements, visitor-information conditions, management practices, and interactions among managers, communities, and visitors. Documentary analysis provided regulatory and institutional context.

Credibility was strengthened through source and method triangulation. Interview accounts were compared across stakeholder categories and checked against observations and documents. Analysis was conducted iteratively alongside data collection, allowing emerging interpretations to be refined through subsequent interviews and field checks. This follows established qualitative principles emphasizing credibility, contextual depth, and analytic transparency [18, 19, 20].

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed descriptively and thematically using an interactive process of data condensation, display, interpretation, and conclusion drawing [21]. The first analytic stage identified recurring problems in governance, infrastructure, visitor protection, promotion, and inter-destination coordination. The second mapped Muna customary values to concrete tourism-management functions. The third examined the relationship between regulatory certainty and destination-marketing credibility. The fourth synthesized the findings into an integrated policy-marketing mechanism and destination-package strategy.

The study did not treat customary law as a substitute for Indonesian positive law. Instead, local norms were analyzed as a socially grounded source of principles that can be translated into formal local policy, operational standards, service protocols, and collaborative governance arrangements. This distinction is important because sustainable tourism governance requires both legitimacy within the host community and consistency with the broader legal system.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Nature-Tourism Assets and the Governance-Marketing Gap

The findings show that Muna's central tourism problem is not a shortage of attractions. The six focal destinations provide a sufficiently diverse portfolio to support multi-day nature and culture itineraries. The problem is that the portfolio is not yet consistently governed or marketed as one destination system. Individual sites tend to be presented as stand-alone attractions, limiting cross-selling, length of stay, visitor expenditure, and the formation of a recognizable island-level narrative.

This fragmentation is visible in the relationship between physical quality and promotion. Marketing can generate attention, but visitor satisfaction depends on whether access, basic facilities, information, safety procedures, price transparency, local guiding, and complaint handling are sufficiently reliable. Destination-management research increasingly emphasizes that marketing organizations cannot be separated from governance capacities, resilience, visitor-flow management, and stakeholder coordination [2, 22]. For Muna, promotional expansion without service and regulatory strengthening risks widening the gap between destination image and destination experience.



The findings also suggest that nature tourism should not be marketed as scenery alone. Muna’s comparative value lies in the combination of landscape and living culture. Lake, cave, beach, freshwater, archaeological, culinary, and community experiences can be connected through stories of stewardship, hospitality, harmony, and customary responsibility. This approach is consistent with cultural-tourism research showing that heritage value emerges from interpretation and community meaning, not only from the physical resource [7, 23].

3.2 Local Cultural Principles as a Regulatory Foundation

Four recurring local principles provide a normative foundation for locally based tourism regulation. First, pamo-a-moasigho can be interpreted as a living-law orientation toward collective responsibility in managing shared spaces and resources. In tourism, this principle supports environmental stewardship, community participation, and shared responsibility for destination quality. It gives regulatory meaning to the idea that a tourism site is not merely a commercial asset but part of a social and ecological commons.

Second, popia-piara emphasizes care, protection, and mutual safeguarding. Translated into tourism governance, it supports preventive safety obligations, maintenance of facilities, risk communication, emergency readiness, and protection of visitors. This is important because safety is simultaneously a legal, managerial, and marketing concern. A destination that can demonstrate visible safety standards can transform regulatory compliance into visitor confidence.

Third, poangka-angatau provides an ethical basis for respectful service and recognition of human dignity. In operational terms, it can support hospitality standards, non-discriminatory treatment, truthful information, respectful guiding, and fair interaction between visitors and hosts. Service ethics are especially important in community-based destinations where the visitor experience is inseparable from direct social encounters.

Fourth, poadha-adhati emphasizes collective harmony, fairness, deliberation, and socially accepted dispute resolution. Within a local regulation, this principle can inform stakeholder consultation, transparent pricing, benefit sharing, community representation, and culturally appropriate complaint handling. The field evidence suggests that these values should not remain symbolic statements in promotional material; they become strategically useful when translated into observable rules, responsibilities, and service indicators.

This translation from cultural principle to institutional practice reflects the broader argument that social and cultural capital can shape community-focused co-management [5]. It also addresses a recurrent governance problem: participation is often celebrated rhetorically while decision rights remain concentrated elsewhere [4, 13]. A locally based regulation can make participation procedural by specifying representation, consultation, responsibilities, and accountability rather than merely declaring that communities are important.

Table 1. Translation of Muna cultural principles into tourism governance and marketing functions.

Local principle	Governance meaning	Regulatory translation	Marketing implication
Pamo-a-moasigho	Collective responsibility and stewardship	Community roles, resource protection, destination maintenance	Authentic stewardship narrative
Popia-piara	Care and protection	Safety standards, risk information, emergency procedures	Trust and visitor reassurance
Poangka-angatau	Respectful treatment and service ethics	Hospitality, truthful information, non-discrimination	Warm and credible service identity
Poadha-adhati	Harmony, fairness, deliberation	Consultation, fair pricing, benefit sharing, dispute handling	Fair and community-rooted destination promise

3.3 Why Locally-Based Regulation Matters for Nature Tourism Marketing

The evidence supports a view of regulation as an enabling component of destination marketing rather than simply an administrative restriction. In an emerging destination, visitors face uncertainty about access, safety, service quality, pricing, information, and recourse when problems occur. Local regulation can reduce this uncertainty by defining minimum standards and assigning

responsibility. Institutional predictability is especially important when multiple small operators and community actors collectively produce the tourism experience [10].

Three mechanisms explain the marketing role of local regulation. The first is assurance. Safety protocols, facility standards, accurate information, transparent tariffs, and complaint mechanisms create observable signals that reduce perceived risk. The second is authenticity. When customary principles are incorporated into governance through community participation and culturally appropriate service standards, the destination can make a stronger claim that its cultural narrative is lived rather than staged. The third is coordination. Rules for stakeholder roles, destination maintenance, guiding, ticketing, benefit distribution, and information systems make it easier to deliver a consistent experience across sites.

This relationship is supported by evidence that partnership and institutionalization in local tourism governance can strengthen destination brand awareness and image [15]. It is also consistent with destination internal-marketing research, which shows that residents' collaboration is facilitated by participation systems, support, value communication, and shared goals [14]. In Muna, therefore, locally based regulation can create the institutional conditions under which residents, businesses, customary institutions, and government jointly deliver the destination promise.

The regulatory strategy should avoid over-formalizing culture. Customary values are dynamic social norms, and their tourism application requires consultation with legitimate cultural actors. The objective is not to convert every customary practice into a legal command. Rather, regulation should identify principles that are relevant to public tourism functions—stewardship, safety, service ethics, fairness, participation, and dispute handling—and then establish operational standards that remain compatible with national law.

3.4 Nature-Tourism Marketing Strategy: From Sporadic Promotion to a Coherent Island Narrative

Field findings indicate that tourism promotion in Muna has tended to be sporadic and destination-specific. A stronger strategy requires a shift from promoting isolated attractions to communicating an integrated island experience. Marketing communication should organize Muna's assets around a small number of memorable themes while preserving the distinctiveness of each site. Research on local destination organizations shows that marketing capability improves when organizations coordinate learning, resources, co-creation, and creative-tourism development [24].

The first marketing priority is narrative integration. Nature should be connected to local cultural meanings rather than advertised as generic scenery. A cave visit can include archaeological interpretation and stories of stewardship; a lake or beach route can incorporate local food, guiding, customary etiquette, and conservation practices. Cultural communities can strengthen tourism resilience when culture is embedded in social-ecological relationships rather than treated merely as an attraction [25].

The second priority is product integration. The research proposes three complementary travel clusters. The Karst and Ancient Heritage Cluster combines Lake Napabale and Liangkabori Cave as a geo-heritage route. The Southern Marine Cluster combines Meleura Beach and Topa Bathing Area with local culinary and micro-enterprise experiences. The Twin-Water Cluster combines Walengkabola Beach and Moko Lake around their contrasting coastal and freshwater characteristics. Packaging encourages visitors to move between attractions rather than consume a single site.

The third priority is service integration. A single-pass or cluster ticket, scheduled inter-destination transport, common guide and safety standards, centralized visitor information, digital booking, and transparent benefit-sharing can reduce friction in the visitor journey. Such mechanisms also allow marketing claims to be verified through consistent service delivery. Tourist-flow research in Indonesia demonstrates that itinerary design and information provision can materially shape how visitors move through destinations [26].

The fourth priority is digital discoverability. A destination information platform should provide verified descriptions, maps, transport information, opening conditions, safety notices, tariffs, guide contacts, booking options, cultural etiquette, and package itineraries. Digital marketing should therefore be treated as an information-governance function, not only a social-media campaign. The credibility of online promotion depends on the accuracy and institutional ownership of the information being distributed.

The fifth priority is community co-branding. Local residents, customary leaders, guides, micro-enterprises, and destination managers should participate in deciding which cultural stories are appropriate for tourism communication. Place-branding scholarship shows that stakeholder legitimacy and influence are uneven, making procedural inclusion important if a brand is to

represent the place rather than only the priorities of powerful actors [13]. Co-branding can also prevent cultural misrepresentation and improve community ownership of tourism growth.

3.5 Integrated Tourism Package as a Marketing and Governance Instrument

The proposed umbrella identity, “Poadha-Adhati Muna Tourism Package,” expresses the principle of harmony while linking the three destination clusters. Its strategic value lies not simply in naming a package but in creating a governance platform. A package requires coordination of schedules, prices, transport, guiding, safety, information, revenue distribution, and quality control. In this sense, product packaging forces fragmented actors to cooperate around a visitor journey.

The integrated package can also increase the economic depth of tourism. The field analysis identified seven conditions that encourage visitor satisfaction and expenditure: a sense of safety and legal protection; physical and cognitive comfort; hospitable service rooted in local values; distinctive local products and culinary experiences; multiple activities within one trip; transparent prices and fair treatment; and easy access to information and digital transactions. These conditions show why marketing expenditure alone cannot maximize tourism value. Demand stimulation must be matched by institutional and service capacity.

From a sustainability perspective, packaging should distribute visitors and economic opportunities rather than concentrate them at a single iconic site. This is particularly important for island destinations where ecological capacity and local livelihoods can be sensitive to rapid visitor growth. Sustainable destination management requires monitoring, local indicators, and attention to barriers that prevent sustainability commitments from becoming operational [27]. The Muna package should therefore be accompanied by visitor-flow monitoring, community-benefit indicators, safety records, environmental maintenance measures, and visitor-feedback data.

3.6 A Policy–Marketing Reinforcement Model

The central theoretical contribution of the study is a policy–marketing reinforcement model. The model begins with local cultural legitimacy. Customary principles supply socially recognized values for stewardship, protection, respectful service, fairness, and deliberation. Local regulation then translates selected values into formal roles, minimum standards, participation procedures, and accountability mechanisms. These rules improve destination reliability. Marketing subsequently communicates that reliability through a culturally distinctive narrative and integrated tourism products. Visitor experience and feedback then provide evidence for regulatory and managerial refinement.

This sequence is cyclical rather than linear. Effective marketing increases visitor flows and therefore increases pressure on infrastructure, communities, and natural resources. Regulation must adapt to these pressures. Conversely, improved governance generates new marketable attributes: verified safety, transparent prices, community participation, environmental stewardship, and authentic interpretation. Destination competitiveness thus emerges from the alignment of rules, services, stories, and stakeholder behaviour.

The model also clarifies why governance failures can undermine marketing. Fragmented responsibilities produce inconsistent information; weak standards produce variable service quality; limited participation weakens authenticity; and unclear benefit distribution can generate community resistance. Studies of hierarchical heritage governance show that vertical and horizontal conflicts can threaten destination sustainability [28]. Sustainable governance therefore requires coherence across government levels and among local stakeholders.

At the same time, local governance should not be romanticized. Community-based tourism can produce empowerment while also reproducing dependency, uneven benefits, and vulnerability [8, 29]. Regulation must therefore include transparency and representation safeguards. The role of customary institutions should be clear, but so should the rights of businesses, visitors, women, youth, and other community groups whose interests may not be automatically represented by traditional structures.

Figure 1 is conceptualized as a five-stage loop: local cultural values → locally based regulation → coordinated destination services → culturally grounded nature-tourism marketing → visitor trust, satisfaction, and local economic value → monitoring and policy adaptation. The distinctive proposition is that regulation is not positioned outside the market process. It is one of the mechanisms through which the destination makes its marketing promise credible.

Figure 1. Policy–marketing reinforcement model for Muna Island.

Local cultural values	Local regulation	Coordinated services	Nature-tourism marketing	Trust, value & feedback
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3.7 Discussion in Relation to Tourism Governance Literature

The Muna findings reinforce the argument that destination governance should be designed around residents as active actors. Governance arrangements that exclude local residents lose access to contextual knowledge and weaken long-term legitimacy [4]. The present study extends this argument by showing that customary principles can do more than justify participation; they can supply substantive content for service, safety, fairness, and stewardship standards.

The findings also complement work on social and cultural capital in tourism-resource governance [5]. In Muna, cultural capital is not only a resource for heritage interpretation. It can become an institutional resource when customary values are translated into procedures and standards. This translation is crucial because culture used only in advertising may generate symbolic differentiation without improving governance quality.

The study further supports the growing convergence between destination management and destination marketing. The 2022 consensus on destination management identifies governance, resilience, visitor-flow measurement, and emergent destinations as interconnected research priorities [2]. Muna illustrates why these themes converge in practice. A nature-tourism marketing strategy determines where visitors go and what they expect, while governance determines whether those flows are safe, sustainable, socially legitimate, and economically beneficial.

Local regulation also offers a response to the credibility problem in destination branding. Brand narratives are strongest when institutional practices support them. If Muna markets harmony, hospitality, pristine nature, and community culture, visitors should encounter fair prices, clear information, safe facilities, environmental care, and respectful interaction. In this way, the brand becomes a summary of governance performance rather than an advertising slogan.

Finally, the study contributes to sustainable tourism debates by emphasizing local–formal complementarity. Sustainable tourism governance is shaped by both local and broader institutional scales [30]. Muna needs local rules that are culturally grounded, but these rules must remain coherent with national tourism, consumer-protection, environmental, and administrative frameworks. The policy objective is therefore institutional nesting: local specificity within a wider legal order.

3.8 Practical Policy Priorities

Implementation should proceed in stages. The first stage is a destination-safety and information baseline: inventory risks, repair essential facilities, standardize signs, publish verified tariffs, establish emergency contacts, and create a visitor-complaint channel. These actions provide immediate substance for a trust-based marketing message.

The second stage is regulatory consolidation. A local tourism regulation should define institutional responsibilities, community and customary participation, minimum service and safety standards, environmental obligations, visitor-information requirements, price transparency, complaint handling, guide standards, and principles for benefit sharing. Cultural values should appear as operational principles linked to these provisions rather than as ceremonial preambles only.

The third stage is integrated product development. Government, destination managers, tourism businesses, customary institutions, and communities should pilot the three proposed clusters, test transport connections, develop common guide scripts, curate local products, and establish a digital booking and information point. The pilot should generate data on visitor movement, satisfaction, spending, and operational problems.

The fourth stage is coordinated marketing. Promotional content should use one destination architecture while allowing each cluster to retain its identity. Campaigns should emphasize nature–culture combinations, verified visitor information, local hosts, conservation practices, and practical itineraries. Partnerships with travel intermediaries, universities, creative communities, and regional tourism networks can extend reach without surrendering local narrative control.

The fifth stage is monitoring and adaptive governance. Indicators should include visitor satisfaction, safety incidents, complaint resolution, community participation, local-business involvement, environmental condition, average length of stay, cross-destination

movement, and local economic capture. Monitoring turns regulation into a learning system and enables marketing intensity to be adjusted to destination capacity.

Table 2. Integrated regulatory and marketing priorities for Muna Island nature tourism.

Priority	Regulatory action	Marketing action	Expected outcome
Safety and information	Minimum standards, signs, complaint channel	Promote verified visitor assurance	Higher trust
Cultural legitimacy	Formal community/customary participation	Co-created cultural narratives	Greater authenticity
Integrated products	Common service and package rules	Three-cluster itinerary architecture	Longer stays and wider visitor distribution
Transparency	Published tariffs and fair-treatment standards	Clear package prices and inclusions	Reduced uncertainty
Digital coordination	Verified information responsibilities	Unified information/booking platform	Improved discoverability and conversion
Adaptive management	Monitoring and review obligations	Use feedback to refine campaigns	More sustainable growth

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that locally based regulation and nature-tourism marketing on Muna Island should be designed as mutually reinforcing strategies. Muna possesses a diversified nature and cultural tourism portfolio, but destination value is weakened when attractions are managed separately, promotion is sporadic, visitor information is fragmented, and service or safety standards are not consistently institutionalized.

The local principles of pamoasigho, popia-piara, poangka-angatau, and poadha-adhati provide a culturally legitimate foundation for stewardship, protection, service ethics, fairness, participation, and dispute handling. Their strategic importance emerges when they are translated into operational regulatory provisions. Such regulation can reduce visitor uncertainty, strengthen community legitimacy, improve service consistency, and give marketing claims an institutional basis.

The recommended marketing direction is an integrated nature–culture architecture built around coherent narratives, three complementary destination clusters, common visitor–service standards, digital information, transparent pricing, local product linkages, and community co-branding. The proposed “Poadha-Adhati Muna Tourism Package” can function simultaneously as a market offering and a coordination mechanism.

The broader implication is that emerging destinations should not treat regulation as external to competitiveness. Well-designed local rules can become part of the destination product by making safety, authenticity, fairness, and environmental stewardship visible and credible. Future research should test the proposed policy–marketing reinforcement model after local regulatory and package interventions are implemented, using visitor, community, environmental, and economic indicators over time.

4.1 Theoretical Implications, Managerial Implications, and Research Limitations

The findings have three theoretical implications. First, they connect destination governance and destination marketing through institutional credibility. Much of the tourism literature treats governance as the arrangement through which actors coordinate and marketing as the process through which destination value is communicated. The Muna case suggests that these processes are analytically separable but operationally inseparable. A marketing promise about authenticity, safety, fairness, or environmental responsibility is sustainable only when governance mechanisms make that promise repeatable. Conversely, governance becomes more visible to visitors when its outcomes are translated into understandable market signals. This relationship helps explain why a destination with strong attractions may remain competitively weak when rules, information, coordination, and service standards are fragmented.

Second, the study gives local culture an institutional rather than merely symbolic role. Cultural tourism commonly uses stories, rituals, landscapes, crafts, and community identity as visitor attractions. In the proposed Muna framework, local culture also supplies principles for organizing tourism. Pamo-a-moasigho, popia-piara, poangka-angatau, and poadha-adhati are interpreted as sources of stewardship, protection, respectful service, fairness, and deliberation. Their contribution therefore extends beyond differentiation in promotional communication. When carefully translated into policy through consultation and legal harmonization, they can influence who participates, how visitors are treated, how resources are protected, and how conflicts are addressed. This expands the meaning of cultural value from content consumed by tourists to a governance resource used by the destination.

Third, the study contributes to island-destination management by showing that integrated packaging can operate as an institutional device. A tourism package is usually understood as a commercial combination of attractions and services. In Muna, however, the proposed clusters require common schedules, information, safety practices, guide standards, transport arrangements, pricing transparency, and benefit-sharing rules. Product integration therefore creates pressure for governance integration. This is important for emerging destinations where attractions may be geographically dispersed and managed by different actors. Rather than waiting for complete institutional consolidation before marketing begins, carefully designed packages can be used as practical pilot arenas for building coordination.

The managerial implication is that tourism promotion budgets should be linked to destination-readiness indicators. Before increasing campaign intensity, managers should verify basic safety, access information, tariff clarity, complaint channels, destination cleanliness, guide availability, and the accuracy of digital information. Promotional performance should not be evaluated only through impressions, followers, or visitor counts. It should also be assessed through length of stay, movement across destinations, local expenditure, complaint resolution, visitor satisfaction, repeat intention, community participation, and environmental condition. Such a balanced dashboard would make marketing accountable to destination quality rather than to visibility alone.

For local government, the proposed regulatory agenda should be developed through co-design. Tourism agencies, legal bureaus, planning bodies, customary institutions, destination managers, tourism businesses, micro-enterprises, community representatives, and relevant safety or environmental actors should review the operational implications of each proposed standard. The regulatory process should distinguish mandatory minimum requirements from aspirational guidelines. Safety, truthful information, transparent pricing, environmental protection, and complaint handling are suitable for clear minimum rules, whereas cultural interpretation and hospitality practices may require more flexible protocols developed with customary authorities and local communities.

For tourism businesses and community enterprises, the integrated-cluster approach creates opportunities for cross-selling and shared promotion. Homestays, food vendors, guides, transport providers, craft producers, photographers, and local experience providers can be incorporated into itineraries rather than operating at the margins of destination promotion. This requires transparent criteria for participation and mechanisms that prevent the benefits of tourism packages from being captured by a small number of intermediaries. A visible local-supplier directory, rotating opportunities, common service training, and transparent package commissions can strengthen local economic capture while preserving service quality.

The study has limitations. It is a qualitative intrinsic case study designed to produce contextual understanding rather than statistical generalization. The proposed policy–marketing reinforcement model is derived from the institutional and cultural conditions of Muna and should therefore be tested before being transferred to other island destinations. In addition, the study analyzes marketing strategy primarily from governance, stakeholder, and destination-development perspectives; it does not estimate visitor demand elasticities, campaign conversion rates, willingness to pay, or the causal effect of particular digital-marketing interventions. Future quantitative work could test how perceived regulatory assurance, cultural authenticity, safety, destination image, and digital information quality affect trust, satisfaction, expenditure, and revisit intention.

Longitudinal research is also needed after regulatory and product interventions are implemented. A useful evaluation design would establish baseline measures for visitor satisfaction, safety incidents, complaint resolution, local-business participation, average length of stay, cross-destination visitation, tourism expenditure, and selected environmental indicators. Repeated measurement could then determine whether the integrated package and locally based regulation produce observable changes. Comparative studies with other culturally distinctive islands in Indonesia would further clarify which elements of the Muna model are context-specific and which can inform a broader theory of locally grounded tourism governance and marketing.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Anugrah Ryandra Fahlevi: Conceptualization, investigation, data curation, analysis, writing—original draft. Usman Rianse: Supervision, conceptual development, methodology, writing—review and editing. Herman: Legal analysis, supervision, validation, writing—review and editing. Guswan Hakim: Legal and policy analysis, supervision, validation, writing—review and editing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The study used qualitative interviews and field observation. Participation was voluntary and informants were approached with an explanation of the research purpose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data supporting the findings are contained in the underlying dissertation research materials. Additional non-confidential information may be made available by the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to participant confidentiality and applicable institutional requirements.

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