



Self-Governance and Local Wisdom in Tourism Governance: Evidence from Samosir Regency

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Received: Mai 01, 2025
Revised: Mai 20, 2026
Accepted: July 06, 2026
Available online: July 29, 2026

KEYWORDS

Tourism Policy, Self-Governance, Community, Local Wisdom, Tourism Area

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ABSTRACT

Efforts to improve tourism sustainability that integrates local cultural values, preserves the environment and empowers local communities. In the era of globalization, this approach is expected to prevent negative acculturation that can harm local identity. The purpose of this study is to explore and identify the principles of self-governance that can be implemented in tourism management in Samosir Regency, as well as to analyze its impact on local economic development. The method used in this study is a qualitative approach, in-depth interviews were conducted with FGDs with various stakeholders such as community leaders, tourism managers and local communities. The analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques to identify key issues and potentials. The results of the study indicate that the application of self-governance in tourism management can increase community participation in decision-making, strengthen local cultural identity, and increase economic benefits for local communities. In addition, this study found that local wisdom is a valuable asset that can be used as a foundation for sustainable tourism development. Therefore, cooperation between all stakeholders is needed to realize these goals.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism, especially that based on local wisdom, is one of the important issues in the management of natural and cultural resources in Indonesia. Tourism is one of the significant sectors in the global economy, including in Indonesia. Samosir Regency, located in the middle of Lake Toba, is a tourist destination rich in culture, history and natural beauty. With its background as the center of Batak culture, Samosir has great potential to attract tourists, both domestic and international. However, challenges in managing sustainable tourism continue to arise. One approach that is now recognized as important is self-governance, or self-government based on local wisdom in managing tourism.

Based on data from the Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia's tourism sector contributes around 12% to national GDP and is one of the main sources of income for tourist areas, including Samosir. According to (Ahmad & Abu Talib, 2015; Hajar, Siti, Kholik, 2021) found that revitalizing community participation in the tourism sector can strengthen local cultural identity and improve economic welfare. This shows the urgency to implement a self-governance model that encourages active community participation.

The importance of this topic cannot be underestimated, based on data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, the tourism sector contributed around 12.5% to Indonesia's GDP in 2019, with the potential for significant increase after the COVID-19 pandemic (Syariah, 2020), that specifically in Samosir, the increase in the number of tourist visits has also been recorded as having increased drastically. In 2018, Samosir received more than 1 million tourists, and this figure is projected to continue to increase. However, on the same scale, this tourism growth is also faced with serious problems, such as

environmental exploitation, declining cultural quality, and social conflicts between local residents and entrepreneurs. Another interesting fact is that Samosir has a unique cultural wealth, such as the Tor-Tor dance, typical foods, and traditional traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation (Ramlan et al., 2023). Data shows that more than 80% of the Samosir community is of Batak descent, and this local wisdom plays an important role in attracting tourists looking for authentic experiences. According to a survey conducted by the Samosir Regional Tourism Agency, around 70% of tourists expressed their interest in local culture in choosing a tourist destination. However, despite the enormous potential, tourism management in Samosir is still hampered by a top-down approach that often ignores the active role of the community. The policies taken often do not consider the needs and desires of the local community, leading to dissatisfaction. Therefore, it is important to explore and implement a self-governance model that supports local wisdom.

Self-governance in the context of tourism refers to a system in which local communities play an active role in decision-making processes related to the development and management of tourism resources (Van Bets et al., 2017). This approach provides communities with opportunities to integrate cultural values and local wisdom into tourism governance practices. Through community involvement, tourism development is expected to become not only economically beneficial but also socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. According to (Hauser & Tiegna, 2021; Maurer, 2017), self-governance refers to the ability of communities to organize and manage their own affairs. Previous studies also suggest that this model can strengthen trust, cooperation, and collective responsibility among local stakeholders (Maurer, 2017; Michael, 2015). In tourism

governance, self-governance has the potential to improve sustainability while reducing conflicts between business actors and local communities. Through active participation, communities are able to maintain cultural values and utilize natural resources in a more sustainable manner.

In this study, self-governance is not interpreted as complete autonomous community control where communities independently manage tourism resources without external involvement. Rather, it is understood as a form of co-governance arrangement in which local communities exercise substantial decision-making authority while remaining connected to government institutions and other stakeholders. The government retains an important role in providing regulations, infrastructure, and policy support, while communities contribute local knowledge, cultural values, and contextual understanding of local conditions. Therefore, self-governance in tourism governance in Samosir Regency represents a collaborative governance mechanism with strong community autonomy rather than merely delegated authority from the state. This arrangement allows local wisdom to function as an institutional mechanism that guides collective action and supports more adaptive and sustainable tourism governance.

This study aims to examine the application of self-governance as the primary theoretical framework in the management of local wisdom-based tourism in Samosir Regency. In this study, self-governance is positioned as a community-centered governance approach that emphasizes local autonomy, collective participation, and shared responsibility in managing tourism resources. Within this framework, local wisdom does not merely represent cultural values or traditions but functions as an institutional mechanism that guides community norms, social interactions, and decision-making processes in tourism governance (Hajar, ., et al., 2024; Ocay & Hinlayagan, 2022). Community-Based Tourism (CBT), in turn, is conceptualized as the operational approach through which self-governance principles are implemented, enabling local communities to actively participate in tourism planning, development, and management processes (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021; Ullah & Kim, 2020). The integration of these concepts is expected to contribute to sustainable tourism outcomes by strengthening local ownership, preserving cultural identity, and enhancing socio-economic benefits for communities.

In the context of globalization, where modernization frequently threatens the continuity of local cultural values, strengthening institutional mechanisms based on local wisdom becomes increasingly important. Previous studies (Fitriyani & Rachmawati, 2024; Thi et al., 2024) suggest that tourists are increasingly attracted to authentic experiences reflecting local culture and identity. Therefore, involving communities in designing and managing tourism products based on local values is essential. Consistent with the principles of CBT, studies by (Dangi & Petrick, 2021; Pasanchay & Schott, 2021) indicate that community involvement contributes to local economic development while supporting cultural preservation. Moreover, self-governance has strong theoretical support in promoting community participation, social justice, and sustainability in resource management (Tortia, 2016). Experiences in several regions also demonstrate that active community involvement produces more equitable and effective governance outcomes (Tongkotow, 2021). However, challenges remain due to the gap between policy formulation and practical realities, where local needs are often marginalized (Shafiee et al., 2019; Tleuken et al.,

2022). Therefore, collaborative efforts among governments, communities, and tourism stakeholders are necessary to ensure that self-governance principles, institutionalized through local wisdom and operationalized through CBT, can effectively support sustainable tourism development.

Although previous studies have extensively discussed community participation, Community-Based Tourism (CBT), and tourism sustainability, several important scholarly gaps remain. Existing studies primarily emphasize the role of education, community empowerment, and stakeholder collaboration in improving tourism outcomes (Arma et al., 2024; Ocay & Hinlayagan, 2022). Similarly, studies on social innovation have highlighted how collaboration among local communities may generate tourism products that enhance authenticity and visitor experiences (Chu et al., 2024; Hestiriniah et al., 2023). However, these studies tend to treat community participation, local wisdom, and tourism sustainability as separate dimensions rather than examining the institutional mechanisms through which these elements interact within a governance framework.

Furthermore, while self-governance has been recognized as an approach capable of promoting local participation and social justice, previous studies have paid limited attention to how self-governance principles are operationalized through local wisdom in tourism governance practices, particularly in community-based tourism settings. Most existing studies focus on formal governance structures and stakeholder collaboration, while insufficient attention has been given to the role of local wisdom as an institutional mechanism that shapes collective decision-making, community norms, and resource management practices. This limitation creates a theoretical and empirical gap in understanding how self-governance, local wisdom, and CBT can be conceptually integrated to support sustainable tourism development.

To address these theoretical and empirical gaps, this study examines the implementation of self-governance in local wisdom-based tourism management in Samosir Regency by positioning self-governance as the primary analytical framework, local wisdom as the institutional mechanism supporting governance processes, and Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as the operational approach through which these principles are implemented. The study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how community autonomy, stakeholder collaboration, and local cultural values interact in shaping sustainable tourism governance. Specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) How is self-governance operationalized in tourism management in Samosir Regency? and (2) What institutional and socio-cultural conditions enable or constrain its implementation? These questions are intended to explain not only the practical implementation of self-governance but also the underlying institutional and socio-cultural factors that influence its effectiveness in tourism governance.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative research method. This method is the right approach to understand social phenomena more deeply, especially in the context of local wisdom-based tourism management in Samosir Regency. (Sidney, 2017) that the selection of qualitative methods is based on several reasons related to the objectives of the study which want to reveal the views, experiences, and perspectives of local communities that cannot be explained quantitatively. According to (Saldana, 2014) that qualitative research provides space for

researchers to explore various meanings that may be hidden behind the data obtained, as well as understand the social and cultural contexts that influence community behavior. There are several important reasons why qualitative methods were chosen in this study. First, the phenomena studied are closely related to the cultural and social context of the Samosir community. Qualitative research allows researchers to interact directly with informants, so that they can explore the values, norms, and beliefs of the community related to tourism. Second, this method can produce rich and in-depth data, which helps researchers investigate how communities interpret their situations and experiences in tourism management. In addition, in the context of local wisdom-based tourism, many factors are subjective, such as people's views on the benefits of tourism and how they maintain local culture. Therefore, a qualitative approach allows for in-depth exploration of these issues. As noted in a study by (Creswell, 2014), qualitative data collection can provide deeper insights and rich context, which are often lost in quantitative approaches.

Data collection in qualitative research is carried out through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation. In this study, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, including community leaders, tourism managers, and local community members. Then, focus group discussions were also held to summarize the views and experiences of community groups more broadly. The interview and focus group discussion methods allow researchers to obtain concrete data regarding community views on tourism management, the challenges faced, and their hopes for the future. After the data is collected, researchers continue by conducting a thematic analysis. (Brandler & Roman, 2007) that thematic analysis is one of the analysis methods in qualitative research that aims to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) in the data. This process helps researchers understand the meaning of the data collected and relate it to research questions. (Brandler & Roman, 2007) that the stages of thematic analysis usually include several steps, namely 1) familiarization with the data; 2) data coding; 3) searching for themes; 4) theme review; 5) definition and naming of themes; and 6) report writing.

Qualitative research methods with thematic analysis provide an in-depth approach to understanding the dynamics of local wisdom-based tourism management in Samosir Regency. The flexibility of this method in collecting and analyzing data allows researchers to capture social nuances and rich experiences of the local community. Through systematic steps in thematic analysis, researchers can formulate findings that can provide positive contributions to the development of sustainable tourism that prioritizes local wisdom and community participation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Why Governance Failures Occur in Tourism Management,

Tourism governance failures in Samosir Regency occur because the institutional arrangements among stakeholders are unable to effectively integrate community autonomy, local values, and collaborative decision-making processes into tourism management practices. From a self-governance perspective, effective tourism management depends on the ability of local communities to exercise collective responsibility in regulating and managing tourism resources according to locally accepted norms and values. However, the findings indicate that governance failure emerges when the mechanisms supporting self-governance do not function properly. This condition creates

a disconnect between policy formulation, local community needs, and the practical realities of tourism development.

The first source of governance failure lies in the weak institutionalization of local wisdom within tourism governance processes. Although Samosir communities possess strong cultural values and traditional practices, these values often remain symbolic cultural assets rather than becoming operational principles that guide tourism policies and management decisions (Hajar, Siti; Ramlan; Kholik, 2025). Consequently, local wisdom is insufficiently translated into formal tourism planning and governance structures (Sibarani et al., 2025; Yusri & Hajar, 2025). This creates a situation where tourism development tends to prioritize economic objectives and external interests over cultural sustainability and local identity preservation. As a result, tourism policies may fail to reflect community aspirations and weaken local ownership over tourism resources.

Second, governance failures arise from limited community capacity and unequal access to resources. Self-governance assumes that communities possess sufficient knowledge, skills, and resources to manage tourism activities independently. However, many local communities still face limitations in managerial capability, business knowledge, technological literacy, and understanding of sustainable tourism principles. These limitations reduce the ability of communities to actively participate in decision-making processes and weaken their bargaining position relative to external actors such as government institutions and private investors (Mandić et al., 2025; Outeda, 2024). Consequently, tourism governance becomes asymmetrical, where decision-making authority is concentrated among actors with greater resources and institutional power.

Third, the findings reveal that weak stakeholder coordination contributes significantly to governance failures. Effective tourism governance requires continuous interaction and collaboration among local communities, governments, and private sector actors. However, the relationships among these stakeholders are frequently characterized by fragmented communication, conflicting interests, and a lack of institutional mechanisms for collective decision-making. Government policies often adopt top-down approaches that insufficiently accommodate local needs, while private sector involvement may prioritize economic gains over socio-cultural sustainability (Junus et al., 2024; Lian & Li, 2024). This condition generates institutional fragmentation and reduces the effectiveness of governance arrangements.

Furthermore, inadequate supporting infrastructure also contributes to governance failures. Tourism development requires enabling conditions such as transportation access, sanitation facilities, electricity, and communication infrastructure. Limited infrastructure not only affects tourist satisfaction but also constrains community participation in tourism activities. Poor infrastructure limits market access, reduces economic opportunities for local communities, and creates disparities in tourism development outcomes. Therefore, governance failure is not solely an issue of policy design but also reflects structural constraints that inhibit the implementation of self-governance principles.

Overall, the findings suggest that governance failures in tourism management do not occur simply because of insufficient stakeholder involvement, but because the institutional mechanisms connecting self-governance, local wisdom, and collaborative action remain weak. Governance failure emerges when local wisdom is not institutionalized, community capacity

remains limited, stakeholder relationships are fragmented, and supporting structures are inadequate. Therefore, strengthening self-governance requires not only increasing participation but also building institutional arrangements that enable local values, community capacity, and stakeholder collaboration to function as interconnected components within sustainable tourism governance.

Institutional Fragmentation and Challenges to Self-Governance in Tourism Management

The findings indicate that self-governance in tourism management in Samosir Regency is strongly influenced by the interaction between community participation, stakeholder relationships, and the institutional role of local wisdom. Community involvement emerges not merely as a supporting component but as a central mechanism through which tourism governance gains legitimacy and sustainability. Interviews with local communities and tourism managers revealed that active participation in tourism decision-making creates a stronger sense of ownership and strengthens the relationship between cultural identity and tourism practices. One community leader stated, *"We want our voices to be heard. When we are involved in management, we can maintain our culture and ensure that tourism benefits everyone, not just a few."* This finding suggests that community participation functions as a core principle of self-governance, where local actors are not passive recipients of tourism policies but become active agents responsible for determining tourism development directions. Studies by (Downs et al., 2022; Gritsenko & Wood, 2022) similarly argue that inclusive tourism governance enhances community ownership and social responsibility, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism outcomes.

The findings further demonstrate that local wisdom plays an important institutional role in shaping tourism governance practices. In Samosir Regency, local wisdom is not limited to cultural traditions and customary values but functions as an informal governance mechanism that regulates social behavior, collective responsibilities, and relationships among actors involved in tourism activities. Informants consistently emphasized the importance of preserving Batak cultural values and traditions within tourism development processes. This finding supports previous studies ((Hajar & Saputra, 2024; Irjayanti & Lord, 2024), which suggest that integrating local wisdom into tourism management prevents cultural erosion while creating more meaningful tourism experiences. Therefore, local wisdom becomes an institutional foundation that supports self-governance by providing socially accepted norms and values for collective action.

However, despite the strong role of community participation and local wisdom, the findings reveal that tourism governance in Samosir still faces challenges related to stakeholder relationships and coordination mechanisms. Interviews indicate that although collaboration exists between local governments, communities, and tourism industry actors, communication gaps frequently hinder effective decision-making processes. Several informants expressed dissatisfaction regarding limited transparency and insufficient involvement in policy formulation. As stated by one local entrepreneur, *"We want to work together, but often decisions are made without involving us. We know the local conditions better."* This situation illustrates a critical governance issue where decision-making processes remain partially centralized, reducing the effectiveness of self-governance principles. Research by (Dearden et al., 2023; Indama, 2022) similarly found that communication

barriers often weaken community participation and reduce policy responsiveness.

The findings suggest that governance failures in tourism management do not necessarily emerge because of the absence of stakeholder participation, but rather because of weaknesses in the mechanisms connecting stakeholders through transparent and collaborative processes. Government institutions possess strategic roles in designing policies and providing supporting infrastructure, while the private sector contributes through investment, innovation, and tourism business development. Research by (Callegaro, 2025; Najiyati et al., 2024) shows that stronger collaboration between government institutions and local communities generates policies that are more responsive to local conditions. Similarly, studies by (Nurjaya, 2022; Zhuang et al., 2024) indicate that private sector engagement can strengthen sustainable practices and stimulate local economic growth. However, if these actors operate independently without effective coordination mechanisms, governance fragmentation can emerge, resulting in policy inconsistencies and declining public trust.

From a self-governance perspective, these findings indicate that sustainable tourism governance requires more than simply increasing community participation. It requires institutional arrangements that effectively connect local wisdom, stakeholder collaboration, and collective decision-making processes. The establishment of participatory dialogue forums among communities, governments, and private actors becomes critical to strengthening trust and improving communication quality. As emphasized by (Amin et al., 2025; Glass et al., 2025), inclusive decision-making processes create policies that are more acceptable and responsive to community needs. Therefore, tourism governance in Samosir Regency should be understood as a dynamic interaction between formal governance structures and informal institutions represented by local wisdom. Stronger integration of these elements can enhance self-governance capacity, strengthen local ownership, and ensure that tourism development contributes not only to economic growth but also to long-term cultural and environmental sustainability.

Self-governance in Tourism Governance Policy

The findings indicate that self-governance has emerged as a significant approach in tourism governance policy in Samosir Regency, particularly in integrating community participation, local wisdom, stakeholder collaboration, environmental sustainability, and technological innovation into tourism management practices. In this study, self-governance is not merely understood as community independence in carrying out tourism activities, but as a broader governance mechanism through which local communities collectively participate in planning, organizing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating tourism policies. The concept emphasizes that communities should not function only as recipients of government policies but should become active actors with the authority and responsibility to influence tourism development according to local values and community aspirations (Huang et al., 2025; Wanner et al., 2020). The findings demonstrate that tourism governance becomes more effective when communities are given sufficient space to contribute to decision-making processes, because such involvement creates stronger ownership and accountability toward tourism resources and development outcomes.

The interview findings reveal that community participation constitutes a fundamental mechanism supporting self-

governance practices in Samosir Regency. Most informants emphasized that their involvement in tourism activities and policy discussions creates a sense of belonging and strengthens the relationship between local identity and tourism development. Local communities perceive tourism not only as an economic opportunity but also as a medium for preserving their traditions and cultural identity. One community leader stated, *"We want our voices to be heard. When we are involved in management, we can maintain our culture and ensure that tourism benefits everyone, not just a few."* This statement illustrates that participation is viewed as more than a procedural requirement; rather, it becomes a mechanism for creating legitimacy and strengthening social responsibility within tourism governance processes. When communities feel directly involved in tourism management, they tend to show stronger commitment toward protecting local resources and ensuring that tourism benefits are distributed more equitably across society.

The findings further indicate that local wisdom serves as an institutional mechanism that supports the implementation of self-governance in tourism policy. In Samosir Regency, local wisdom extends beyond cultural performances or traditional customs and acts as an informal institution that shapes collective behavior, social norms, and decision-making processes within communities. Cultural elements such as Batak traditions, Tor-Tor dances, Gondang Batak music, traditional culinary practices, and customary values represent not merely tourism attractions but essential components of local social systems that guide interactions among stakeholders (Dahlia Nopelina Siallagan et al., 2024; Octavianna, Yessy; Sibarani, Robert; Situmorang, Hamzon; Hasibuan, 2020). Informants consistently highlighted the importance of preserving Batak cultural identity because they believe cultural authenticity constitutes one of the primary attractions for tourists visiting Samosir. One tourism manager explained, *"We have to involve the younger generation in our traditions. Otherwise, our culture will be lost."* This finding demonstrates that local wisdom functions as an important institutional resource for maintaining social cohesion and creating community responsibility in tourism management. Local wisdom therefore strengthens self-governance because it provides a socially accepted framework for collective action and community-based decision-making.

Moreover, the study findings suggest that integrating local wisdom into tourism governance creates both cultural and economic benefits. Informants reported that tourism activities incorporating local traditions and cultural practices generate additional economic opportunities for local communities while simultaneously strengthening awareness regarding cultural preservation. Tourism products based on authentic local experiences have become increasingly attractive to tourists seeking meaningful cultural interactions (Hajar, Ramlan, et al., 2024; Séraphin et al., 2018). Therefore, culture should not be viewed solely as a complementary aspect of tourism but rather as a strategic component that contributes to destination competitiveness and sustainable development. However, the findings also reveal concerns regarding cultural exploitation and acculturation resulting from increasing tourist activities. Several informants expressed concerns that local traditions may gradually lose their original meaning when cultural practices become excessively commercialized. Consequently, tourism governance policies should create mechanisms that protect cultural authenticity while enabling communities to obtain economic benefits from tourism development.

Despite the strong role of community participation and local wisdom, the findings reveal several governance challenges associated with stakeholder relationships and policy implementation processes. One of the major issues identified by informants concerns weak coordination and communication among government institutions, communities, and private tourism actors. Although collaboration between these stakeholders exists, communication channels are often ineffective and decision-making processes remain insufficiently inclusive (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Tien et al., 2024). Several informants complained that government policies are frequently designed without adequately considering local conditions and community perspectives. One local entrepreneur explained, *"We want to work together, but often decisions are made without involving us. We know the local conditions better."* Such findings indicate that tourism governance still faces institutional fragmentation where formal policy structures and local governance mechanisms operate separately rather than collaboratively.

This fragmentation creates a gap between policy formulation and practical implementation in the field. Government institutions possess important responsibilities in establishing tourism regulations, providing infrastructure, and creating strategic development programs (Chand et al., 2025; Fan et al., 2024). However, when policies are developed without adequate community consultation, implementation effectiveness becomes limited because communities may perceive such policies as externally imposed interventions rather than collectively agreed solutions. Similarly, private sector actors play important roles in investment, innovation, and tourism service provision; however, their activities sometimes prioritize economic interests over social and environmental sustainability. Therefore, stakeholder relationships become critical in determining the effectiveness of self-governance practices. Effective tourism governance requires stronger institutional arrangements capable of integrating different interests into collaborative decision-making processes (Heslinga et al., 2018; Pilving et al., 2019).

According to (Chemmanur et al., 2025; Hajar, Siti; Haris, Aisyah Rillia; Prianto, 2026) that environmental sustainability also emerged as an important issue influencing tourism governance policy in Samosir Regency. The increasing number of tourists has generated concerns regarding environmental degradation, particularly related to pollution, waste management, and pressure on natural resources surrounding Lake Toba. Several informants expressed concerns regarding the negative impacts of tourism development on local ecosystems. One farmer managing a homestay stated, *"We are happy for tourists to come, but if they do not keep it clean, our lake will be polluted. This is very important for our lives."* Such concerns demonstrate that tourism growth without adequate environmental management can threaten the sustainability of local livelihoods and tourism itself.

Within a self-governance framework, communities are expected to play active roles in environmental monitoring and resource management. Community participation in environmental protection creates stronger awareness and responsibility toward ecosystem sustainability (Chen, Yu-Chen; Tsai, Chua-Hua; Zendejas, 2025; Chu et al., 2024). Community-based initiatives such as waste management programs, environmental campaigns, and local conservation activities can become practical mechanisms supporting sustainable tourism governance. Furthermore, adaptive governance approaches are necessary to ensure that tourism policies remain responsive to changing environmental conditions and local needs. The findings

also indicate that technology increasingly plays an important role in strengthening self-governance in tourism management. Social media platforms, websites, and digital applications have provided communities with opportunities to promote tourism products, communicate with tourists, and access information regarding tourism management practices. Several tourism operators stated that digital platforms helped them expand their markets and improve business performance. Technology also enables communities to obtain knowledge regarding business management, sustainable tourism practices, and tourism innovations (Ocay & Hinlayagan, 2022; Sururi, 2018). Consequently, technology functions not only as a management tool but also as an instrument for community empowerment.

Nevertheless, challenges related to digital literacy remain significant. Several informants highlighted that older community members often face difficulties in using digital technologies effectively. Therefore, technological development alone is insufficient without corresponding efforts to improve community capacity and digital skills. Government support through training programs, technological infrastructure development, and digital inclusion policies becomes essential for ensuring equitable participation in tourism governance processes. Overall, the findings indicate that self-governance in tourism governance policy in Samosir Regency should be understood as a dynamic process involving interactions among communities, governments, private actors, local wisdom, environmental considerations, and technological developments. Effective tourism governance depends not only on formal policy structures but also on the capacity of institutions to integrate local values, strengthen participation, and facilitate collaborative decision-making processes (Nandini et al., 2024; Toledo Gómez et al., 2024). Strengthening self-governance requires developing participatory policy mechanisms, transparent communication systems, and adaptive institutional arrangements capable of responding to social, cultural, economic, and environmental changes (Gritsenko & Wood, 2022; Tortia, 2016). Through stronger integration of these elements, tourism development in Samosir Regency can achieve not only economic benefits but also long-term cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

CONCLUSION

Self-governance in local wisdom-based tourism management in Samosir Regency contributes theoretically by demonstrating that local wisdom functions not merely as a cultural attribute but as an institutional mechanism that strengthens self-governance practices in tourism governance. The study highlights an important governance implication that effective tourism management depends not only on stakeholder participation but also on the ability of governance arrangements to integrate community autonomy, collaborative decision-making, and local values into policy implementation processes. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single regional context, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other tourism destinations with different socio-cultural and institutional characteristics.

The findings indicate that self-governance can become an effective approach for strengthening sustainable tourism development through active community participation and collaborative stakeholder relationships. Community involvement in tourism management creates stronger ownership over tourism resources while supporting cultural preservation and socio-

economic development. In the context of Samosir Regency, integrating local wisdom into tourism governance has strengthened the relationship between tourism activities and local cultural identity, enabling tourism development to function not only as an economic driver but also as a mechanism for preserving Batak cultural values.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the effectiveness of self-governance depends on several supporting factors, including community capacity, institutional support, stakeholder collaboration, and technological adaptation. Education and training programs play a critical role in enhancing community capability in managing tourism businesses and implementing sustainable practices. Collaboration among governments, communities, and private actors also contributes to creating more responsive and transparent tourism policies. However, several challenges remain, including communication gaps, infrastructure limitations, and disparities in digital literacy, which may weaken the implementation of self-governance principles.

Overall, this study emphasizes that strengthening tourism governance requires moving beyond conventional top-down policy approaches toward more inclusive and adaptive governance arrangements. Self-governance should be understood as a dynamic governance process that integrates local institutions, stakeholder collaboration, and community participation into policy implementation mechanisms. Such an approach contributes not only to improving tourism competitiveness and economic development but also to strengthening cultural sustainability and environmental resilience for long-term tourism development.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank the Chancellor of the University of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara who has provided facilities in the implementation of this study, especially the budget through LP2M UMSU. Thank you also to the Samosir tourism office who helped and the data needed to complete this research.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Agung Saputra: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization. **Siti Hajar:** Conceptualization, Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration. **Sigit Hardiyanto:** Methodology, Formal Analysis, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing. **Noppawan Phuengpha:** Conceptualization, Resources, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing, International Collaboration.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Ethical Statement

According to the institutional guidelines of the authors' affiliation, ethical approval was not required for this type of social science research. Nevertheless, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Some interview transcripts and field notes are not publicly available to protect the confidentiality of research participants.

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