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**DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOURISM VILLAGE POTENTIAL OF TANGGA PONOT WATERFALL  
FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ASAHAN REGENCY**

Faisal Akbar<sup>1\*</sup>, Cut Nuraini<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student, Magister of Regional & City Planning,  
University of Pembangunan Panca Budi, Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Lecturer, Architecture Program and Magister of Regional & City Planning,  
University of Pembangunan Panca Budi, Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia

\*Correspondence Address: ha.akbar@gmail.com

***Abstract***

This research aims to research the Development of the Potential of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village in the Context of the Development of the Asahan Regency Area. This research uses a qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to explore the potential, challenges, and expectations of the community related to the development of the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village in depth. Researchers will conduct in-depth interviews with local communities, tourism managers, and other related parties to obtain comprehensive information on the potential and challenges of tourism village development. Researchers will compare data obtained from various sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents. Member Check The researcher will verify the findings of the study by asking for feedback from key informants to ensure that the resulting interpretation is in accordance with their views. The research method used in this study aims to explore the potential, challenges, and development strategies of the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village. The results of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village have extraordinary natural beauty, especially the existence of waterfalls which are the main attraction. The development of tourism in this village is expected to have a positive impact on the local economy. Community involvement in the planning and management of tourism villages is essential to ensure that the benefits of tourism development are felt directly by them. Tourism development must be carried out with a sustainable approach, maintaining a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation.

*Keywords: Development of Tourism Village Potential, Ponot Waterfall, Asahan Regency Area Development*

**Introduction**

The development of the tourism sector is expected to provide benefits to the community, because the tourism sector is one of the development sectors in the economic sector. Tourism activities are one of the non-oil and gas sectors that are expected to make a considerable contribution to the country's economy. This effort to develop the world of

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tourism is supported by Law No. 10 of 2009 which states that the existence of tourist objects in an area will be very profitable, including increasing Regional Original Income (PAD), increasing people's living standards and expanding job opportunities considering the increasing number of unemployed today, increasing love for the environment and preserving local nature and culture. Tourism is one of the sectors that can increase Asahan Regency's Regional Revenue. As an area that has an area located in hilly plains and flowing rivers, Asahan Regency has great potential to be used as a tourist visit area. Currently, the problems that often occur in tourism management in addition to the decline in environmental quality and the existence of inadequate facilities and infrastructure are the lack of integration between the surrounding community and the tourism area itself. One form of effort to develop tourism is the Development of Facilities and Infrastructure in Tourism Areas. The development of Facilities and Infrastructure is a must to develop tourism in Asahan Regency.

Asahan Regency, located in North Sumatra Province, has a variety of natural and cultural potentials that are very rich. One of the potentials that can be developed is natural tourism, especially waterfall attractions. Ponot Waterfall, which is located in Tangga Village, is one of the tourist destinations that has a high attraction for visitors. Its natural beauty, as well as its cool and fresh atmosphere, make this place ideal to be used as a tourist attraction. The development of the potential of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village not only provides benefits for the development of the tourism sector, but also has a positive impact on the local economy and community welfare. Through this development, it is hoped that it can increase tourist visits, create new jobs, and reduce poverty levels in the region. The phenomenon of tourism village development in Indonesia, including in Asahan Regency, is increasingly attracting the attention of the community and the government. With abundant natural beauty, Asahan Regency has various tourism potentials that can be optimized, one of which is the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village. This waterfall has its own attraction due to its natural beauty, clear water, and serene atmosphere, making it an attractive choice for tourists. However, even though the potential is very large, the development of tourist areas in Tangga Village still faces a number of challenges. This phenomenon reflects the complexity that occurs

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between the desire to develop tourism and the need to maintain environmental sustainability and the welfare of local communities.

Ponot Waterfall is located in Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency, with an altitude of  $\pm$  250 meters and the water comes from a tributary of the Asahan River (<http://www.bandar-pulau.co.cc/wisata.html>). The beauty of Ponot Waterfall lies in its very heavy water draw and also the arrangement of the waterfall which is a 3-level waterfall. Under the waterfall there are many natural rocks that are very large so that they become a special attraction as a complement to the beauty of Ponot Waterfall. The location is about  $\pm$  90 km from the city of Kisaran (the capital of Asahan Regency). The natural condition of this area has enough potential to be developed as a tourist object and superior attraction, because of its unique characteristics and diversification of natural products that are still natural, surrounded by cliffs and forests. The tourism potential of Ponot Waterfall is also supported by the potential of the Asahan river. The Asahan River with a discharge of 120 cubic meters per second is used as a rafting sport that has amazing natural beauty.

Ponot Waterfall with a height of  $\pm$  250 meters is the highest waterfall in Indonesia. However, the potential of Ponot Waterfall Tourism is still unexplored, to be developed as a tourism product for the welfare and improvement of the quality of life of the people around the area, both in the form of natural beauty, natural phenomena and landscapes. Infrastructure and facilities that still seem to be simple are not well managed. This can be seen from the existing road infrastructure, many potholes and many asphalt that has been eroded by rainwater. This Ponot Waterfall tour is located in a mountainous area where the area is hilly and valley, with damaged roads making it difficult for tourists, especially motorcycle users. In addition, the location of vehicle parking is not well organized, so that visitors' vehicles are not neatly arranged and also make it difficult for vehicles to enter and exit. In addition, facilities such as restaurants are not available, public toilets are only 1, garbage disposal is not available. Food sellers at the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction only sell during the holiday season. Another problem that is an obstacle to the development of Ponot Waterfall tourism is the transportation problem that connects the place where tourists live with this tourist attraction. The available transportation facilities

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are very minimal, so it is difficult to come. Furthermore, the problem of accommodation, this ponot waterfall tour does not have a place to stay. The tourist object will actually encourage economic activities around the tourist object area. From here, a celebration emerges on how to encourage economic activities if the management and development of the potential tourist attraction of Ponot Waterfall does not go well. However, if the presence of this Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction has a positive influence, business sustainability will generally be maintained because of the support from the surrounding community.

Expectations in the planning and development of tourist areas are significant for socio-economic and cultural progress. But no less important is the opportunity for the sustainability of the business in the future. The question that arises is whether the prospects are quite positive or not, the extent of socio-economic and cultural progress that has been achieved by the region with the establishment of the tourist attraction. Next, are there many obstacles in its development, and what about the form of obstacles that have hindered the progress of the tourist object. Factors that are obstacles in the development of tourism objects, for example, are the lack of attractions, tourism promotion, the state of the charm that is not implemented, and the incomplete infrastructure and tourism facilities. It is also unclear how the government's efforts are related to the provision of infrastructure and facilities, the community plays a role in *Sapta Pesona* and entrepreneurs play a role in the management, provision of accommodation and tourism promotion. Ponot waterfall ecotourism has a diversity of natural resources that are quite potential, unique, enchanting and still natural is a valuable asset to be optimized into attractive objects and attractions, this can be a great opportunity to advance the region.

The non-physical potential that supports the development of Ponot waterfall ecotourism is the friendly residents who are welcoming to visitors. Meanwhile, the non-physical potential that is an obstacle is the lack of tourist attractions as supporting attractions and the lack of tourism facilities and infrastructure. Road access to the damaged Ponot waterfall ecotourism is an obstacle in its development. The facilities and infrastructure at the Ponot waterfall ecotourism location are inadequate, this is seen from the lack of spacious parking, huts, toilets and restaurants that are not available. It is

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necessary to have the participation of the village government, district government, tourism office and the community to work together in efforts to preserve and develop the natural resources of Ponot waterfall tourism. Its development is necessary to maintain the continuity of the ecosystem. It is also necessary to have tourist attractions displayed by the community as a supporting attraction. It is hoped that the government will pay attention to the condition of the road so that access to the Ponot waterfall tourist location is smooth, thus increasing tourist visits. With the slope of the slope that is quite extreme, the government is expected to be observant and careful in building tourism infrastructure.

### **Method Approach**

This research uses a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research aims to understand and interpret social phenomena from the point of view of individuals or groups. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to explore the potential, challenges, and expectations of the community related to the development of the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village in depth.

The location of this research was carried out in Tangga Village, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra. The selection of this location is based on the existence of considerable tourism potential in Ponot Waterfall and the relevance of tourism development to the development efforts of the Asahan Regency area.

Data collection is carried out through several techniques as follows:

- a) interview. Kvale (2016) and Moleong (2004 in Nuraini et al, 2023; Nuraini And Thamrin, 2017; Rahmadani et al, 2023) states that interviews are one of the effective methods to collect qualitative data. Researchers will conduct in-depth interviews with local communities, tourism managers, and other related parties to obtain comprehensive information on the potential and challenges of tourism village development (Nuraini et al, 2023);
- b) observation: According to Mason (2018; Nuraini & Suprayetno, 2021; Hidayat et al, 2023)), observation is an important method to understand social and cultural contexts. Researchers will make direct observations of tourist activities at Ponot Waterfall, infrastructure conditions, and interactions between tourists and local communities. To

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ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several steps taken include:

- c) triangulation Denzin (2017) stated that triangulation is an important method to improve the validity of data. Researchers will compare data obtained from various sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents. Member Check The researcher will verify the findings of the study by asking for feedback from key informants to ensure that the resulting interpretation is in accordance with their views. Maintain clear records regarding the research process, from data collection to analysis, to ensure transparency and accountability in research (Sinar et al, 2023; Mujahidin et al, 2022; Fachri et al, 2023).

The research method used in this study aims to explore the potential, challenges, and development strategies of the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village. Through a qualitative approach, it is hoped that the results of the research can provide in-depth insights into the development of tourist villages in Asahan Regency, as well as contribute to the development of the region as a whole.

## **Results And Discussion**

### **Definition of Tourism and Tourism Village Development**

Tourism is a form of travel carried out by individuals or groups to take a vacation, enjoy the beauty of nature, and learn about the culture and traditions of an area. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), tourism is a combination of various industries that provide services to visitors, which includes accommodation, transportation, and attractions.

Tourism village development refers to efforts to utilize local potential in increasing tourist attraction in a village. According to Baba (2012), a tourist village can be defined as an area that utilizes the potential of natural and cultural resources to attract tourists, while maintaining environmental sustainability and the welfare of local communities.

### **Tourism Potential**

Tourism potential includes all resources that can be used to attract tourists, be it natural, cultural, or artificial resources. Bramwell and Lane (2011) emphasized the importance of identifying tourism potential to plan for sustainable development, taking into account the needs and expectations of the community and visitors. **Natural**

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**Resources:** Natural resources such as waterfalls, forests, lakes, as well as beautiful natural scenery are the main attractions for tourists. Chhetri et al. (2014) stated that natural beauty is a key factor in tourists' decision to visit a destination. **Cultural Resources:** Local culture, traditions, and community activities are also potential that can be developed. According to Smith (2013), cultural tourism offers a unique experience for tourists who want to understand the local culture.

**Sustainability in Tourism Development**

Sustainable tourism development is a concept that emphasizes the need to maintain a balance between economic, social, and environmental development. Butler (2018) stated that tourism must be carefully planned so as not to damage the environment and local culture. Therefore, it is important to involve the community in the planning and management of tourist villages. Community participation is an important element in the development of tourist villages. Arnstein (2016) stated that community participation in the decision-making process increases the sense of ownership and responsibility for the results achieved. The involvement of local communities in the planning and management of tourist villages can improve the quality of services and tourist experience.

**1. The potential possessed by the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village**

Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village is located in Asahan Regency and has a number of potentials that can be optimized to attract visitors and improve the local economy. The Amazing Natural Beauty of Ponot Waterfall is the main attraction of this village. The existence of a beautiful waterfall surrounded by lush forests offers a mesmerizing view. Photography Activities Tourists can enjoy the beauty of nature while taking pictures, which can be one of the main attractions. Arranging interesting photo spots can enhance the tourist experience. Family Picnic The area around the waterfall is also suitable for family picnic activities, providing space for visitors to relax and enjoy nature. The location, potential, and appearance of this tourist site can be seen in figure 1.

**Development of Natural Tourism Activities.**

This village has great potential to develop various natural tourism activities, such as: Trekking and Hiking The existing trekking trails can be expanded and well arranged. Local guides can be involved to provide knowledge about local flora and fauna, thus

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adding educational value to visitors. Camping: Facilitating a camping area near the waterfall will provide a unique experience for tourists who love outdoor activities.



Figure 1. The Appearance of Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village

Others potential possessed by the Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village are describes below :

**1. Cultural Tourism and Local Wisdom.**

The people of Tangga Village have a unique culture and traditions, which can be used as tourist attractions: Art and Cultural Performances Organizing local art performances, such as traditional dances or folk music, can provide a different



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experience for tourists. This event can also be held during festivals or traditional celebrations. Community Handicrafts can produce handicrafts, such as wicker or jewelry, which can be sold as souvenirs. This not only increases income but also preserves the local culture.

2. **Community Economic Empowerment** Tourism development in Tangga Village can improve the local economy through: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) With visitors, local communities can open businesses in the culinary and handicraft sectors, which will create new jobs. Tour Guide Services Involving the community as tour guides provides opportunities for them to earn additional income while introducing the natural wealth and culture of the village to visitors.
3. **Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness** The potential for environmental education in Tangga Village can also be utilized: Environmental Education Program Organizes a program that teaches the importance of nature conservation to visitors, especially children. This can be in the form of conservation activities or workshops on local flora and fauna. Environmental Awareness The community and visitors can be invited to maintain the cleanliness and sustainability of the surrounding environment, for example by cleaning activities in tourist areas.
4. **Infrastructure Development and Accessibility** Adequate infrastructure development is essential to support tourist visits: Road Access and Transportation Improve road access to villages and waterfalls to improve visitor comfort. The construction of public transportation or the provision of local transportation services can also be considered. Public Facilities: The provision of toilets, rest areas, and tourist information centers will increase convenience for visitors. This can also be an indicator of professionalism in the management of tourist villages.
5. **Marketing and Promotion** An effective marketing strategy is essential to attract visitors: Digital Marketing Using social media and websites to promote the beauty and activities in the Stairs Tourism Village. Engaging visual content can increase the interest of tourists. Cooperation with Travel Agents Establish cooperation with travel agents or online booking platforms to facilitate access and information for tourists.

**Challenges faced in the development of Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village**

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Some of the challenges faced in the development of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village, namely : Limited Infrastructure Access The road to the waterfall and the village may not be completely good, especially in the rainy season. These limitations can hinder accessibility for tourists. Limited Public Facilities The lack of facilities such as public toilets, rest areas, and information centers can reduce the comfort of visitors. Waste Environmental Management and Hygiene Poor waste management can reduce tourist attractions. Public and visitor awareness of the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness needs to be increased. Nature Conservation Tourism activities that are not properly managed can threaten the preservation of local flora and fauna. The need for good supervision and management is very important to protect the environment. Community Empowerment Community Involvement There is still a lack of community involvement in tourism development. Without active participation, tourism development will not be in accordance with the needs and expectations of the local community. Community Education and Training may not have sufficient knowledge or skills in managing tourism businesses or providing services to tourists.

Promotion and Marketing Lack of Promotion of Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village may not be widely known by tourists, so it is difficult to attract visitors. Effective marketing through social media and digital platforms is necessary to increase visibility. Competition with Other Destinations With many tourist destinations around, the competitiveness of Tangga Village needs to be increased through innovation and differentiation. Funding and Investment Community and village managers may face obstacles in obtaining funds for the development of infrastructure and tourist facilities. Finding investors or partners who are willing to invest in tourism development can also be challenging. Sustainability of Development Without good planning, tourism development can lead to negative impacts on the environment and society. A clear and strategic plan is needed to ensure sustainable development. Rapid tourism development can result in undesirable social and cultural changes in local communities, such as an increase in the cost of living or loss of cultural identity. The existence of a beautiful waterfall makes it attractive, but high rainfall can affect the number of visitors and also affect road access.

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**Strategies that can be applied to optimize the development of tourism potential in Tangga Village**

Some strategies that can be applied to optimize the development of tourism potential in the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village: **Infrastructure Improvement** Prioritizing the repair of roads to the village and waterfalls to facilitate tourist access. The provision of signage and safe pedestrian paths is also very important. Build and maintain public facilities such as toilets, rest areas, and tourist information centers to improve the convenience of visitors. **Tourism Product Development** Offers a variety of activities such as trekking, camping, and cultural activities, as well as creating attractive tour packages for various market segments. Developing local tourism products, such as handicrafts and typical culinary, to be used as an additional attraction for visitors. **Community Empowerment** Provides training to local communities on tourism management, customer service, and management of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Involve the community in the management and planning of tourism villages to ensure that they benefit directly from tourism development. **Promotion and Marketing** Utilizing social media, websites, and digital platforms to promote the Tangga Tourism Village and attract the attention of tourists. Engaging visual content can help increase visibility. Collaborate with travel agents or booking platforms to promote tour packages involving Tangga Village.

**Environmental and Cultural Preservation** Implementing conservation programs to preserve nature and the environment. Inviting visitors to participate in conservation and environmental cleanup activities. Encourage the development of activities involving local arts and culture, such as traditional art performances, to increase tourist attractions. **Human Resource Development** Conduct training for local tour guides so that they can provide accurate and interesting information about the tourism potential in the area. Build an organized and professional tour guide system to provide a pleasant experience for tourists. **Cooperation with Stakeholders** Invite local governments to support infrastructure development and tourism promotion through policies and funds. Collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or organizations that have a focus on tourism development and environmental conservation to obtain technical and financial support. **Monitoring and Evaluation** Create a system to monitor the number of visitors and get

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feedback from them. This information may be used for further improvement and development. Periodically evaluate tourism development programs to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. By implementing these strategies, the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village can optimize its tourism potential, increase attraction for visitors, and provide sustainable economic benefits for the local community. Community involvement, support from the government, and good management will be the key to the success of tourism development in this village.

**The development of this tourism can contribute to the improvement of the economy and the welfare of the local community**

Tourism development in the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village can make a significant contribution to improving the economy and welfare of the local community in several ways:

1. **Increase in Income of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs):** Local communities can open businesses in the field of culinary, handicrafts, or the provision of accommodation (homestays) for tourists. This can create new jobs and increase household income. **Tour Guides:** By engaging the community as tour guides, they can earn additional income while sharing knowledge and stories about the local culture and environment.
2. **Diversification of New Economic Opportunity Income Sources:** The development of the tourism sector provides an alternative source of income for people who previously relied on the agricultural sector or other jobs that may be less stable. **Involvement in the Supply Chain:** Communities can play a role in the tourism supply chain, from the provision of local food to handicrafts, which increases the demand for local products.
3. **Improving the Quality of Infrastructure Infrastructure Improvement:** Tourism development is often accompanied by infrastructure improvements, such as roads, electricity, and public facilities. This improvement is not only beneficial for tourists, but also improves the quality of life of the local community. **Better Public Facilities:**

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With visitors, public facilities such as toilets, parking lots, and information centers will be improved and upgraded.

4. **Education and Community Empowerment Training and Skills:** Training programs offered to local communities in tourism management, customer service, and business management can enhance their skills and knowledge. **Environmental Awareness:** Tourism development can encourage people to be more concerned about environmental preservation and local culture.
5. **Involvement in Community Participation Decision-Making:** By involving communities in tourism planning and management, they can contribute to decisions that affect their lives, which in turn increases their sense of belonging and responsibility for village development.
6. **Improving the Quality of Life of Socialization and Community:** Tourism development can strengthen social relations and community networks, which has a positive impact on the quality of life of the community. **Recreational Opportunities:** Local communities can also enjoy the benefits of tourism development, such as access to recreational facilities and cultural activities.
7. **Increased Tax Revenue for Local Governments Taxes and Levies:** An increase in the number of tourists will contribute to local tax and levy revenues, which can be used to improve public services and infrastructure in the area.

### **Conclusion**

The development of the potential of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village has a strategic role in improving tourism and community welfare in Asahan Regency. Through the analysis that has been carried out, several important points can be concluded as follows:

1. **Natural and Cultural Potential:** The Ponot Waterfall Ladder Tourism Village has extraordinary natural beauty, especially the existence of waterfalls which is the main attraction. In addition, the culture and traditions of the local community can be used as unique tourism products, which can enhance the tourist experience.

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2. **Economic Benefits:** The development of tourism in this village is expected to have a positive impact on the local economy. Opening new businesses, increasing people's income through MSMEs, and creating new jobs will help improve people's welfare.
3. **Community Empowerment:** Community involvement in the planning and management of tourism villages is essential to ensure that the benefits of tourism development are felt directly by them. Training and education to the public about tourism management will improve the quality of services provided to visitors.
4. **Challenges and Solutions:** Despite the various potentials, the development of the Ponot Waterfall Stairs Tourism Village also faces a number of challenges, such as limited infrastructure, environmental management, and ineffective promotion. Therefore, a mature strategy and collaboration between the government, the community, and the private sector are needed to overcome this challenge.
5. **Sustainability:** Tourism development must be carried out with a sustainable approach, maintaining a balance between economic growth and environmental conservation. Awareness of the importance of nature and cultural conservation needs to be instilled in the community and visitors.

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