

# Integrating Circular Economy Practices for Sustainable Maritime Tourism Development in Bone Regency, Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study analyzes the application of circular economy principles in the development of marine tourism in Bone Regency, Indonesia, using a qualitative case study approach involving local government representatives, community members, and tourists. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and field observations to understand the integration of circular economy practices, including waste management, resource reuse, and local community empowerment. Findings highlight both opportunities and challenges in implementing sustainable tourism, such as limited funding and infrastructure. However, effective practices, such as community-led recycling initiatives and government support in waste treatment, underscore the potential for circular economy models to enhance environmental sustainability and local economic benefits. The study concludes that a circular economy framework, supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration, can provide a path toward sustainable marine tourism, offering insights for policymakers and researchers aiming to balance environmental and economic goals in tourism development.

**Keywords:** Circular economy; Maritime Tourism; Sustainability; Local Community; Bone Regency

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, an archipelago known as the emerald of the equator, is endowed with abundant marine natural resources. As a country with the second longest coastline in the world, reaching 99,093 km. (Yistiarani, 2020), Indonesia has tremendous assets to develop the marine tourism sector. Its dazzling beaches, exotic tropical islands, and marine biodiversity are magnets for domestic and international tourists. This potential encourages marine tourism to become one of the mainstay sectors that continues to grow and contribute significantly to the national economy.

The tourism sector's contribution to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was recorded at 4.2% in 2022, with marine tourism as one of the main driving components. Marine tourism also plays a role in bringing in significant foreign exchange and creating jobs for local communities in coastal areas. (Leposa, 2020). In addition, the existence of marine tourism destinations has become an economic driving pillar for many regions in Indonesia, making it one of the strategic sectors in national development.

However, along with the increase in tourism activities in coastal and marine areas, major challenges also accompany this development. Pressure on the environment, particularly marine ecosystems, is becoming an increasingly pressing issue. Marine pollution, coral reef destruction, and waste accumulation are real threats that can damage the natural beauty and sustainability of marine tourism destinations. Data from Ocean Conservancy states that Indonesia is the second largest contributor to marine plastic waste globally, with around 3.22 million tonnes of plastic waste that is not managed properly each year. This shows how important sustainable tourism management is to preserve nature for future generations.

In the face of these complex environmental issues, a circular economy approach is relevant and crucial to implement. The circular economy concept offers a sustainable solution by prioritizing efficiency in the use of resources and applying the principles of 'reduce, reuse, recycle'. In the context of marine tourism, the circular economy is expected to reduce the footprint of waste, reuse materials that can be processed, and involve various parties, including local communities, in managing resources more efficiently. (Korhonen et al., 2018). Thus, the application of a circular economy in marine tourism will not only improve environmental sustainability but also provide sustainable economic benefits. (Dwyer, 2015; Ellis et al., 2018; L. Zhao, 2020).

Furthermore, this concept can empower local communities through their active participation in natural resource management and tourism-based creative economic development. Bone Regency, which is located on the coast of South Sulawesi, has extraordinary marine resources and is one of the regions with great potential for marine tourism. The coast of Bone and its surrounding small islands offer promising tourist destinations, with marine ecosystems that support activities such as snorkeling, diving, and beach tourism.

Indonesia's marine tourism sector holds significant economic potential, yet it faces environmental challenges due to increased tourist activity and associated waste generation. The circular economy model offers a framework for sustainable tourism by focusing on waste reduction, resource reuse, and closed-loop systems. Specifically, in the context of marine tourism, strategies such as implementing waste segregation at tourism sites, developing recycling programs for local businesses, and promoting eco-friendly practices among tourists are pivotal. However, the application of these strategies encounters challenges, including high initial costs for infrastructure, the need for extensive community education and engagement, and logistical barriers in remote areas like Bone Regency.

This study aims to examine how these circular economy strategies can be practically applied in Bone Regency's marine tourism sector. By investigating specific methods of waste reduction, resource recovery, and local community involvement, this research provides actionable insights into how a circular economy approach can balance environmental conservation with economic growth. These insights are intended to aid policymakers, tourism operators, and community leaders in navigating the complexities of sustainable tourism, ultimately contributing to a resilient and eco-conscious tourism model in Indonesia.

By combining the power of nature, community participation, and government support, Bone Regency has a great opportunity to become one of Indonesia's leading marine tourism destinations that is sustainable and environmentally friendly.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the application of circular economy principles in marine tourism in Bone Regency. Stakeholders were purposively selected to provide diverse perspectives on sustainable tourism. Local government representatives were included due to their role in policy implementation and resource allocation, community members because of their involvement in daily tourism activities and resource management, and tourists for their firsthand experience and perception of eco-friendly tourism practices. This selection allowed for a holistic view of the challenges and potential benefits of circular economy strategies in the region.

A case study approach was used to comprehensively study the local context of Bone Regency in the management of circular economy-based marine tourism. Case studies were chosen because they are suitable for exploring complex phenomena in real environments, as well as understanding the social, economic, and environmental dynamics that influence marine tourism practices. The research was conducted in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi, which has marine tourism potential in its coastal areas and islands. This area was chosen because it has high marine biodiversity and is one of the growing marine tourism destinations in Indonesia.

Data saturation was reached after 15 in-depth interviews, where no new themes or insights emerged, confirming the reliability and thoroughness of the data. Triangulation was applied by comparing data from interviews, field observations, and document analysis, enhancing the study's credibility. Ethical considerations were prioritized, with informed consent obtained from all participants, confidentiality maintained, and an emphasis on voluntary participation without coercion.

Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore informants' understanding and views on the implementation of circular economy in marine tourism. The interviews aimed to obtain information on the challenges, potentials, and strategies taken by each party in developing sustainable marine tourism. In addition, researchers conducted direct observations at marine tourism sites to understand environmental conditions, tourism activities, and waste and resource management practices in the area. This observation also helped in observing the involvement of local communities in the management of circular economy-based marine tourism. Secondary data collection was conducted through document studies, such as reports from local governments, regulations related to tourism and the environment, and tourism statistics. This documentation complemented and confirmed the results of interviews and observations.

Data analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of data organization, coding, and interpretation. Data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were categorized based on the main themes that emerged during the research process. The coding process was conducted to identify patterns, categories, and themes related to the implementation of circular economy, the role of government, community participation, and impact on the environment. Afterward, the results of the coding were analyzed in depth to understand the interrelationships between variables and provide interpretations of the findings, with a focus on how the circular economy can support the sustainability of marine tourism in Bone Regency.

To ensure data validity, researchers used triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. This triangulation aims to reduce bias and increase the accuracy of the research findings. In addition, this research adhered to the principles of research ethics, including obtaining permission from informants before conducting interviews, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and avoiding any form of coercion in research participation.

This research has several limitations. Firstly, the research was only conducted in Bone Regency so the results may not be generalizable to other regions in Indonesia. Secondly, the research focus on the qualitative approach resulted in descriptive and interpretative findings, not hypothesis testing. However, this research method is expected to provide an in-depth picture of how the circular economy can be implemented in the development of sustainable marine tourism in Bone Regency.

## RESULT

The results of this study reveal several important findings related to the application of the circular economy in the development of marine tourism in Bone Regency. Based on interviews with 15 informants consisting of local government representatives, communities, and tourists, as well as through field observations and documentation, this study identified several key aspects that influence the successful implementation of the circular economy in the marine tourism sector.

### Local government

Limited From the interviews conducted from July to August 2024, the results showed that the local government has a high awareness of the importance of sustainable tourism management. This awareness comes from an understanding that environmental sustainability is a key asset in long-term tourism development. The local government understands that increasing tourism activities without environmental conservation efforts can have negative impacts, both economically, socially, and ecologically. An informant revealed:

"We are very aware that natural beauty is a valuable asset that must be preserved. Without a clean and sustainable environment, tourism will also not develop."  
(interview, July 2024)

This illustrates the government's strong commitment to maintaining ecosystems as part of a sustainable tourism strategy. The Bone Regency government has already started implementing the circular economy concept as a step towards sustainable tourism. One of the strategic policies implemented is a Regional Regulation that regulates waste and waste management in tourism areas.

This policy emphasizes the '3R' principle (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and involves all parties, including tourism businesses, local communities, and tourists. In addition, the government also conducts socialization and education programs to the public, disseminating the importance of protecting the environment and implementing a circular economy in daily activities.

This program involves the development of infrastructure that supports the circular economy, such as the construction of integrated waste treatment plants, waste banks, and recycling facilities. Another informant explained:

"We are constantly trying to raise community awareness about the importance of managing waste properly. One of them is by organizing training on processing organic waste into compost and recycled crafts for mothers in tourist villages." (interview, July, 2024)

In addition to policies and infrastructure, the Bone Regency government also encourages the active participation of local communities in managing natural resources and the marine tourism sector. The community is directly involved in environmental conservation, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics, sorting waste, and developing circular economy-based businesses. This active participation is expected to create wider environmental awareness and encourage the community to become the main subject of preserving natural resources.

However, the government also recognizes that there are several obstacles in the implementation of a circular economy in Bone Regency. Limited funding and human resources are

the main challenges in effectively monitoring, mentoring, and evaluating the program. One informant stated:

"Our main obstacle is the limited budget and experts in environmental management. We hope for further support from the central government and collaboration with various parties to overcome this." (interview, July 2024)

Collaboration between local governments, communities, and the private sector is one solution that is expected to overcome these challenges. Support from the central government and non-governmental organizations is also welcome to accelerate the implementation of a circular economy and create sustainable marine tourism in Bone Regency.

### Local wisdom

Local communities involved in the management of marine tourism in Bone Regency show great enthusiasm in their efforts to realize sustainable tourism. Although a full understanding of the concept of circular economy still needs to be improved, in practice, communities have started to apply the basic principles of circular economy in several aspects of their lives and economic activities.

Homestay managers, for example, have started to realize the importance of managing waste properly. They have started to segregate organic and inorganic waste and process organic waste into compost to be used as fertilizer for ornamental plants around the homestays.

"Previously, waste was just collected and then burned. Now we separate it, we make compost for the organic ones, and we collect the plastic ones to sell to the waste bank," said one of the homestay owners. (interview, July 2024)

Not only that, local businesses such as fishermen and tour guides have also begun to adopt recycling principles in managing waste. Plastic waste, such as plastic bottles and snack food packaging, is collected and processed into a variety of unique and attractive handicrafts. These products are then sold as souvenirs to tourists.

"Not bad, from selling handicrafts from plastic waste this can add to the income. Especially during the holiday season, many tourists are looking for unique souvenirs," said a housewife who actively makes handicrafts from plastic waste. (interview, July 2024)

Public awareness of the importance of using renewable energy is also growing. Some tourism facilities, such as homestays and restaurants, have installed solar panels as an alternative energy source. This not only has a positive impact on the environment but also helps them save on operational costs.

"Since using solar panels, the electricity bill has become lighter. It's enough to cover other costs," said the owner of a restaurant in a coastal tourist area. (interview, July 2024)

Local communities realize that their involvement in circular economy activities not only contributes to reducing negative environmental impacts but also provides economic benefits through the development of creative waste-based products. This shows that the circular economy concept has great potential to realize sustainable tourism that benefits both the environment and community welfare.

### Environmental preservation





A local traveler expressed his admiration for the cleanliness of the beaches and environmental sustainability in Bone Regency.

"The beaches are still clean, and the coral reefs are still preserved. This is what we are looking for from marine tourism, to be able to enjoy the natural beauty of nature" (interview, July 2024).

These testimonials show that the appeal of marine tourism in Bone lies not only in its natural panorama but also in how the community and local government maintain the balance of its ecosystem. This sustainability allows tourists to enjoy snorkeling or diving activities with underwater scenery that is still rich with healthy coral reefs and diverse marine life.

In addition, the creative recycled-based products sold by local communities are also a special attraction for tourists. These products, produced from waste materials and aesthetically packaged, are considered unique and have added value as eco-friendly souvenirs. Travelers feel that by purchasing these products, they are not only bringing home a memento but also contributing to supporting environmental conservation efforts.

"I am happy to be able to buy souvenirs that also support environmental conservation efforts. It shows that people here care about their nature," said a tourist from another district." (interview, August 2024).

These results demonstrate an awareness among travelers of the importance of supporting local initiatives that are in line with circular economy principles. Recycled-based creative products are a tangible symbol of how local communities play an active role in protecting the environment while empowering the local economy through the tourism sector.

However, behind the data, some tourists also provided constructive feedback regarding the lack of waste management facilities at several tourist spots. They regretted that in some places there is still rubbish piled up around beaches and public areas, which contrasts with the natural beauty of Bone Regency. This shows that although environmental conservation efforts have begun, there are still aspects that need to be improved, especially in terms of providing supporting infrastructure such as waste disposal sites.

"It's a shame if such a beautiful place becomes dirty because of rubbish. There should be more rubbish bins that are easily accessible." (interview, August 2024).

This feedback reflects tourists' expectation that the local government should make an effort to address cleanliness issues, especially in tourist areas that are crowded. Improving waste management facilities will be an important step towards maintaining the sustainability of marine tourism destinations in Bone.

Tourists generally expect the Bone Regency government to improve and expand infrastructure that supports the implementation of a circular economy, particularly in the provision of landfills integrated with recycling systems throughout the tourist areas. With these facilities in place, travelers are confident that Bone's cleanliness and environmental sustainability will be better maintained, allowing the region to continue to position itself as a sustainable marine tourism destination. If these facilities are in place, Bone will become increasingly attractive to local travelers looking for a natural experience that is not only beautiful but also supports the principles of sustainability.

### **Marine tourism ecosystem**

Bone Regency has a wealth of beautiful marine tourism ecosystems, with the expanse of the sea, the diversity of marine life, and the clarity of the seawater that seems to invite tourists to explore the beauty of the sea. It has become a signature spot for travelers or nature lovers looking



for a unique experience amidst the beauty of nature. The seas around Bone's waters are home to hundreds of species of fish and other marine creatures, creating a rich ecosystem that is of great ecological and economic value.

Every year, the number of tourists who come to enjoy Bone Regency's marine charms increases. Seaside tourism activities, coupled with the ever-increasing number of tour boats, put pressure on the sustainability of the ocean and its biota. A fisherman who also works as a tour boat provider shared his experience:

"In the past, this place was very rarely visited by tourists, but now many have started to visit, they still maintain and do not damage the environment in the tourist area' Maybe because the government continues to educate us and tourists to maintain the ecosystem." (interview, August 2024)

This statement illustrates how consistency in maintaining the marine ecosystem and how well-managed tourism activities can cause the environment to be maintained. Boats that don't drop anchor or tourists who are careful can protect the marine ecosystem, which can take years to recover if damaged.

The problem of plastic waste accumulation in coastal areas is also a big challenge that remains to be socialized continuously. Plastic waste, especially that carried by ocean currents or discarded by tourists and fishermen, threatens marine life and detracts from the aesthetics of the beach. Despite efforts by local communities and the government to clean up the rubbish and educate visitors on the importance of keeping the environment clean, the reduced volume of rubbish suggests that the efforts made have been fully effective.

One step that some local communities have taken is the implementation of circular economy practices, where organic waste is processed into compost. Several tourist villages in Bone Regency have started utilizing organic waste from tourism activities and daily life to be processed into compost that can be used in agriculture.

This data shows a structured and integrated effort to encourage the widespread implementation of the circular economy in the Bone Regency. The local government is taking concrete steps to expand this circular economy initiative to the entire tourism area, by involving more stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, and tourists themselves. Socialization and training on the importance of waste management and environmental conservation are being conducted, not only at the community level but also for tourists.

Increasing tourists' awareness of the importance of preserving the environment is key to ensuring the sustainability of the marine tourism ecosystem in Bone. Educational programs for tourists, such as anti-litter campaigns and marine ecosystem conservation, are integrated into tour packages so that tourists not only enjoy the beauty of nature but are also involved in conservation efforts. In this way, marine tourism in Bone Regency will not only provide short-term economic benefits but can also continue to be enjoyed by future generations.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal several important aspects related to the implementation of a circular economy in marine tourism development in Bone Regency. Based on interviews with 15 informants consisting of local government representatives, communities, and tourists, as well as through field observations and documentation, this study identified several key elements that influence the successful implementation of the circular economy in the marine tourism sector.

### Role of Local Government

The study reveals key insights into the successes and challenges of implementing circular economy principles within Bone Regency's marine tourism sector. One major success is the local government's active role in promoting waste reduction and recycling programs (Dossou et al., 2021), aligning with findings from similar studies on sustainable tourism policy (Ellis et al., 2018; Truong, 2018). Community members, particularly tourism-related businesses, have also embraced

circular practices, such as transforming waste into handicrafts, which generates economic benefits while reducing environmental impact.

In addition, another study showed that government involvement in education and the socialization of the circular economy contributed to increased public awareness and better resource management. (De Kadt, 1979; Goodwin, 2008; L. Zhao & Xia, 2019). In Bone, programs on organic waste management and recycling implemented by the government are in line with these findings, suggesting that government efforts in educating the community play an important role in promoting a circular economy.

#### **Local Community Involvement**

This research reveals that local communities in Bone Regency, including tourism managers and local businesses, have started to implement circular economy principles. This finding is in line with previous studies showing that active participation of local communities in the circular economy can significantly increase sustainability and economic benefits. (Sharpley, 2000). Active community involvement in the management and implementation of circular economy principles not only supports environmental sustainability but also has the potential to strengthen local economies through innovation and more efficient resource management. (Garrod & Wilson, 2004; Richards, 2010).

Good waste management by local communities not only reduces environmental impacts but also opens up economic opportunities through recycled-based products. (Das & Chatterjee, 2015). This can be seen in the practice adopted by tourism managers in Bone who process waste into compost and handicrafts. These initiatives not only help reduce the amount of waste polluting the environment but also create additional economic value. For example, composting the resulting organic waste not only supports local agriculture by providing natural fertilizer but also reduces reliance on synthetic chemicals. Meanwhile, handicrafts not only provide additional income for artisans but also attract the attention of tourists who value eco-friendly products.

The findings also reflect the application of circular economy theory which suggests that innovative waste management can create new value. (Andréfouët et al., 2021; Pomfret, 2006). The circular economy focuses on the circulation of resources within the economic system, leading to reduced waste and increased economic value through recycling and reuse (Ellis et al., 2018). The experience in Bone Regency shows that innovative waste management not only improves environmental sustainability but also strengthens the local economic structure by providing value-added products that can be sold as souvenirs to tourists.

The study also emphasizes the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders in implementing circular economy principles. The involvement of all parties - government, private sector, and community - is key to the success of circular economy initiatives. (Croes, 2014). In Bone, the joint efforts between the government, local communities, and businesses show that the implementation of circular economy principles can be more effective when supported by adequate policies, continuous education, and active participation from the community.

#### **Travellers' Views and Environmental Conservation**

Tourists' views on the cleanliness and sustainability of the environment in Bone show that they appreciate the conservation efforts made by the government and local communities. This is in line with research showing that tourists are increasingly paying attention to aspects of sustainability and environmental preservation in choosing tourist destinations. (Croes & Vanegas Sr, 2008; Llorca-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Winter & Kim, 2021). Their study found that tourists are more likely to support and choose destinations that demonstrate a commitment to sustainability and good environmental management.

However, travelers' feedback on the lack of waste management facilities also reflects findings from other studies that highlight that despite efforts in environmental conservation, waste management issues are often a major challenge in marine tourism. (Llorca-Rodríguez et al., 2020; Ridderstaat et al., 2022). This research suggests that infrastructure improvements, such as rubbish bins and recycling facilities, are needed to effectively address this issue.

#### **Marine Tourism Ecosystems and Circular Economy Implementation**





Bone Regency's rich maritime ecosystems provide a strong basis for the application of circular economy in tourism. The sustainability of marine ecosystems is not only important to attract tourists but also to maintain the quality of destinations that are the main attraction. (Yusriadi et al., 2019). This research reveals that consistency in maintaining marine ecosystems and implementing good tourism management greatly contributes to the sustainability and attractiveness of tourist destinations. The existence of preserved coral reefs and clear water quality are key factors in maintaining tourist satisfaction and making this destination the first choice for those who want to enjoy underwater beauty.

However, the implementation of these practices faces significant challenges. Limited funding and infrastructure constraints hamper the broader adoption of circular economy practices, echoing the issues highlighted (Korhonen et al., 2018) In other developing regions. Additionally, community understanding of circular economy concepts remains varied, suggesting a need for continued education and capacity-building efforts.

Measures taken by local communities, such as the processing of organic waste into compost and the reduction of plastic waste, show significant progress in the application of circular economy principles in the marine tourism sector. These initiatives not only help reduce environmental impacts but also create additional economic value through recycled products. In line with other research, which shows that good waste management can reduce environmental impacts and create economic opportunities (Andréfouët et al., 2021; W. Zhao & Ritchie, 2007), the practices in Bone demonstrate how effective and innovative management can be applied locally to meet environmental challenges.

Overall, the findings from this study support the argument that implementing a circular economy in the marine tourism sector is a strategic move to address environmental challenges and improve sustainability. With consistency in ecosystem management and implementation of circular economy principles, Bone Regency can optimize the potential of its maritime ecosystem and strengthen its appeal as a sustainable tourism destination. It also demonstrates the need for a holistic approach that involves all stakeholders in achieving sustainability goals and maintaining environmental quality.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the potential of circular economy principles to foster sustainable tourism in Bone Regency, demonstrating how waste reduction, recycling, and community empowerment contribute to environmental and economic benefits. The findings emphasize the importance of local government support, community involvement, and tourist education in realizing these goals. However, challenges, including limited funding and infrastructure, present obstacles to full implementation.

To further enhance sustainable tourism, it is recommended that local governments prioritize the establishment of more waste management facilities and promote targeted training programs on circular economy practices for community members. Additionally, integrating eco-conscious tourism guidelines into marketing materials could encourage responsible behavior among tourists, reinforcing sustainability efforts.

In conclusion, this study provides a model for implementing circular economy practices in coastal tourism, offering valuable insights for policymakers, tourism operators, and researchers. By adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, Bone Regency can strengthen its position as a sustainable tourism destination, balancing ecological preservation with economic growth, and contributing to broader discussions on sustainable tourism in Indonesia.

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