



STRENGTHENING DESTINATION GOVERNANCE THROUGH INTEGRATED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: EVIDENCE FROM AIR MANIS BEACH PADANG, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates strategies to enhance destination governance in the integrated development of coastal tourism, situating Air Manis Beach in Padang, West Sumatra, as a strategically significant case. The destination is endowed with considerable natural and cultural capital, most notably the culturally resonant Malin Kundang legend, and has been investigated through diverse thematic lenses in prior scholarship. Nevertheless, a meaningful gap persists in the synthesis of governance strengthening, spatial planning, institutional coordination, and strategic policy formulation into a single, coherent developmental framework. To address this gap, the research employs a descriptive qualitative design, triangulating structured field observation and in-depth interviews. Discussions involving all five elements of the Pentahelix model, corroborated by documentary analysis of regional spatial and tourism planning instruments and thematic analysis. Three principal findings emerge. First, the destination possesses a diverse portfolio of attractions, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary assets that constitute a robust foundation for a coherent, experience-oriented visitor journey. Second, governance represents the most critical dimension for improvement, encompassing inter-institutional coordination, formalised service standards and operating procedures, environmental management, visitor comfort, and systematic area-retribution arrangements. Third, the study proposes a phased integrated development framework, sequencing early low-cost improvements before institutionally demanding governance reform. The findings contribute an empirically grounded account of how destination competitiveness and Pentahelix governance interact in a locally managed coastal setting, and offer a transferable governance model for comparable, locally managed coastal destinations across Indonesia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the development of tourism destinations has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift, increasingly positioning governance capacity, institutional coordination, and sustainability integration as decisive determinants of long-term competitiveness. A consistent body of scholarship demonstrates that destinations supported by robust governance mechanisms are better positioned to sustain coherent development trajectories, consistent service-quality standards, and high levels of visitor satisfaction, thereby converting their natural and cultural assets into enduring competitive advantage (Hartman, 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Camilleri, 2026). This consideration is especially pertinent for coastal destinations, where environmental dynamics, community economic engagement with tourism, and rich multi-stakeholder participation together call for well-coordinated and adaptive institutional arrangements (Louisabethania et al., 2026; Tran et al., 2025).

Contemporary scholarship has established robust linkages between sustainable tourism governance and the systematic integration of spatial planning frameworks, institutional capacity building, and collaborative multi-stakeholder engagement (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; UNWTO, 2018; Xiang et al., 2021). Empirical evidence from recent Scopus-indexed literature confirms that integrated destination management approaches yield measurable improvements in destination competitiveness, environmental resilience, and local economic performance, provided they are anchored in structured and adaptive governance systems (Beritelli et al., 2020; Panagiotopoulou & Skoultzos, 2025; Erol et al., 2026). These

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cumulative findings underscore that governance reform extends well beyond administrative restructuring; it constitutes the strategic foundation upon which sustainable destination development is constructed and sustained.

Situated along the coast of Padang City, Air Manis Beach is one of the most culturally resonant coastal tourism destinations in West Sumatra, distinguished by its deep association with the Malin Kundang legend and its scenic coastal landscape. Prior scholarly investigations have examined the destination from several vantage points, encompassing visitor perception and service-quality assessment (Taklim et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2024), analyses of community-based tourism potential (Salsabilah et al., 2024), and evaluations of local economic participation within the broader coastal tourism system (Rozaki et al., 2025; Wahyuni et al., 2025). Collectively, these studies affirm that Air Manis Beach possesses formidable attractions and, at the same time, point to promising avenues for further strengthening service consistency, environmental stewardship, and institutional coordination so that the destination's full tourism potential can be progressively realised.

Building on the valuable contributions of prior research, there remains a meaningful opportunity to advance the literature on Air Manis Beach toward greater thematic integration. Most studies to date have explored discrete dimensions, such as visitor perceptions, destination marketing, or community participation, and there is now scope to synthesise governance strengthening, spatial organisation, institutional coordination, and strategic policy formulation within a coherent, unified development framework. Developing such an integrated, governance-oriented model would, in turn, support clearer strategic policy direction, fuller use of digital transformation potential, and the progressive standardisation of amenity provision and ancillary service delivery.

From a theoretical standpoint, destination competitiveness is predicated on the balanced, synergistic integration of four foundational components: attraction, accessibility, amenities, and ancillary governance infrastructure (Lee et al., 2020). The literature consistently highlights that well-developed ancillary structures, particularly cohesive institutional arrangements and clearly defined managerial roles, are among the most influential enablers in the development of emerging coastal destinations (Brandão et al., 2019; Voyer et al., 2020; Alhowaish, 2026). In the specific context of Air Manis Beach, the designated managing authority fulfils an important coordinating function, and there is a valuable opportunity to develop further its capacity to operate as a comprehensive and professionally managed destination management organisation (DMO) through a structured, evidence-based, and strategically articulated operational roadmap.

In response to this opportunity, the present study proposes an integrated development framework explicitly designed to strengthen destination governance at Air Manis Beach. Distinguishing itself from prior investigations, the study synthesises governance strengthening, spatial development planning, short-term operational enhancements, and medium-term strategic programming within a unified, policy-oriented model. Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives: (1) to map the destination's developmental potential across attraction, accessibility, amenities, and institutional support capacity; (2) to analyse governance-related opportunities for strengthening sustainable tourism management and service quality; and (3) to formulate integrated strategic interventions to guide evidence-informed policy and investment decisions.

This governance agenda aligns with Indonesia's Medium-Term National Development Plan (RPJMN) and contributes to SDG 8, SDG 11, SDG 12, and SDG 17 by strengthening institutional coordination, environmental stewardship, and inclusive community participation positioning Air Manis Beach as a strategically significant case for advancing national tourism priorities while reinforcing Padang's competitiveness as a coastal tourism city.

The novelty of this study lies in synthesising governance strengthening, spatial development planning, and short- to medium-term operational programming into a single, policy-oriented framework for Air Manis Beach an integration that prior, thematically discrete studies of this destination have not attempted. By bridging governance theory with applied spatial planning practice, the study offers a conceptually grounded yet practically actionable model that is transferable to other locally managed coastal destinations facing comparable governance challenges.

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to systematically examine the prevailing conditions, developmental potential, governance constraints, and strategic development imperatives of the Air Manis Beach destination. Primary data were collected through a triangulated methodological approach encompassing structured field observations, and in-depth interviews involving stakeholders representing all five components of the Pentahelix model: government agencies, local community representatives, private business operators, civil-society organisations, and academic experts. These stakeholders were selected because of their direct involvement in Air Manis Beach, which provides rich data on collaborative processes and tourism outcomes. Table 1 reports on the informants' characteristics.

Table 1. Informants Characteristics

No	Informant	Stakeholders	Gender	Occupation
1	DH	Government agencies	Male	Civil Servants
2	BR	Government agencies	Male	Civil Servants
3	HS	Government agencies	Male	Civil Servants
4	MS	Local community representatives	Male	Entrepreneur
5	HO	Local community representatives	Male	Entrepreneur
6	MS	Local community representatives	Female	Entrepreneur
7	HS	Private business operators	Male	Entrepreneur
8	AS	Private business operators	Male	Tour Leader
9	IW	Civil-society organisations,	Male	Tour Guide
10	YS	Civil-society organisations,	Male	Entrepreneur
11	A	Academic experts	Male	Lecturer
12	JM	Academic experts	Male	Lecturer

Source: Researcher compilation.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, guided by a criterion-based strategy requiring direct, ongoing involvement in Air Manis Beach's management, operation, or governance; snowball referral was used within each Pentahelix category to identify additional knowledgeable informants where initial contacts indicated further relevant stakeholders. This strategy was chosen over random sampling because the study required information-rich cases capable of speaking to collaborative governance processes rather than statistically representative views. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted face-to-face at or near the destination, audio-recorded with informed consent, and transcribed verbatim. Ethical considerations included voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymisation of informants through coded identifiers, and the right to withdraw at any stage. To strengthen credibility, the study employed source triangulation across the five Pentahelix categories, method triangulation combining interviews, field observation, and documentary analysis, and member checking, whereby preliminary interpretations were shared with selected informants to confirm accuracy of representation.

Subsequently, systematic field observations focused on assessing the destination's physical and operational aspects, including accessibility infrastructure, environmental cleanliness, facility condition, visitor safety, and the variety of available tourism activities. Additional documentary analysis was conducted of relevant regional planning and policy instruments, including the Regional Spatial Plan (RTRW), the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARD), and official tourism statistics, to assess the alignment between on-the-ground realities and the prevailing policy framework.

Data analysis proceeded in three sequential phases: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, in line with established qualitative frameworks. All collected data were systematically coded and thematically analysed to identify recurrent patterns, structural issues, and emergent themes related to destination management and development dynamics. Based on these findings, a phased short- and medium-

term development roadmap was formulated, with a continued focus on improving facility-quality standards, governance effectiveness, institutional capacity, and overall destination competitiveness.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

This study seeks to systematically identify the destination's intrinsic developmental potential, examine prevailing management and governance dynamics, and formulate preliminary strategic orientations and grand-design directions for the development of the *Air Manis Beach Tourist Destination* in Padang City. The findings are presented in a structured sequence derived from the triangulation of field observations, in-depth interview data, and documentary evidence, collectively analysed to address the principal research questions.

3.1.1 The Potential and Appeal of Air Manis Beach as a Destination

Field observations confirm that the *Air Manis Beach Tourist Destination* possesses a rich and diverse portfolio of tourism attractions that have been partially activated by both local community actors and visiting tourists. Among the most prevalent and economically significant tourism activities are ATV rides, traditional motorised rickshaw excursions (*ojek wisata*), beach-based recreation, and a vibrant array of community-operated trade and culinary enterprises. Furthermore, Pisang Gadang Island is currently being developed as an emerging tourism attraction and possesses considerable potential to support the sustainable development of the destination. Centrally positioning the destination within the regional tourism landscape is the legend of Batu Malin Kundang, a culturally powerful narrative that constitutes the primary identity asset of *Air Manis Beach* and fundamentally distinguishes it from competing coastal destinations in Padang City.



Figure 1. Air Manis Beach Destination

Source: Researcher Documentation, 2026.

The findings further reveal that local community participation is closely intertwined with the tourism potential of Air Manis Beach. At present, this participation is largely individual and informal, offering a promising basis for consolidating it within a more structured community-based tourism management system. Developing a coherent thematic concept and greater integration among the existing attractions would further strengthen the destination's overall offering. This perspective was reflected by field informants, as articulated in the following statement:

“...Actually, the community already exists; what we need is to strengthen collaboration and cooperation so that we can establish a clear direction for the further development of tourism potential in this area...” (HS)

From an accessibility perspective, field observations indicate that the Air Manis Beach area is generally accessible, supported by adequate road infrastructure that facilitates convenient visitor arrival. Building on these advantages, there is significant scope to introduce professional parking management and facilities that accommodate visitors with disabilities, which, together, would further enhance the destination's inclusivity. These observations were affirmed by field informants, as reflected below:

“... the road access is good,” (AS)

Assessment of destination amenities through systematic field observation reveals that foundational visitor facilities, including public toilets, prayer rooms (musholla), and rest gazebos, are already present within the destination area. Strengthening the quality and routine maintenance of these facilities, with particular attention to public toilets, represents a valuable opportunity to further elevate visitor comfort and perceptions of destination quality, as reflected by field informants:

“...Toilet facilities are available; however, improvements are needed in terms of both maintenance and the number of toilets provided in this area...” (MS)

An examination of ancillary service infrastructure highlights a particularly strategic area for development at Air Manis Beach. Introducing an integrated tourism information system, a formalised visitor feedback and response mechanism, and consistent service-delivery standards would substantially support a more uniform and professional delivery of tourism services. This perspective was reflected in the following informant account:

“... “...The complaint service needs to be improved so that, if any problems arise, tourists can easily submit complaints. Although a complaint service is already available, additional complaint points should be provided in locations that are easily accessible and highly visible to tourists...” (HS)

Taken collectively, the findings demonstrate that *Air Manis Beach* possesses substantial and multidimensional natural and cultural appeal, which the local community has actively mobilised as a foundation for economic livelihood. This considerable potential offers a strong basis for further organisation within a coherent, integrated destination management concept, through which the destination can increasingly deliver a holistic, high-quality, and sustainable tourism experience that maximises its competitive potential and long-term viability. A comprehensive synthesis of the principal developmental assets identified at *Air Manis Beach* is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Synthesis of the Potential of *Air Manis Beach* as a Tourist Destination

No	 Potential Asset	 Description
1	 The Legend of Batu Malin Kundang	The principal cultural identity of Air Manis Beach. Widely recognized, it can be developed into a narrative-based and educational cultural attraction.
2	 Coastal landscape	An extensive shoreline with scenic seascapes and relatively calm waves, supporting recreational and family-oriented tourism.
3	 Pisang Gadang Island	Marine and nature tourism potential that functions as a supporting attraction, enriching the overall visitor experience at Air Manis Beach.
4	 Community tourism activities	ATV services, motorised ridesaw excursions, and beach recreation managed by the local community as supporting attractions.
5	 Trade and culinary activities	Community-operated trade and culinary enterprises that demonstrate the potential of a tourism-based local economy.

Source: Processed data, 2026.

3.1.2 Management and Governance Development Priorities at Air Manis Beach

Triangulated findings from field observations and stakeholder interviews consistently identify destination management as the most strategic priority for advancing *Air Manis Beach*. Strengthening the destination's governance by enhancing inter-stakeholder coordination mechanisms, formalising tourism service-quality standards, and developing a transparent, consistently applied area management system would provide a strong foundation for the destination's continued growth. This perspective was clearly articulated by research informants:

"... coordination between the government and the community needs to be improved and sustained." (MS)

Environmental cleanliness and coastal-ecosystem management constitute a second strategic priority for development. Waste-collection activities are conducted on a periodic basis, and field observations indicate that the coastal area is periodically affected by marine debris and naturally deposited materials transported by tidal action. Strengthening sustained environmental management would therefore further enhance the destination's aesthetic quality and environmental integrity. This priority was directly referenced by informants:

"... the most urgent issue is cleanliness..." (HO)

"... when the tide rises, trash from the sea washes ashore, and that overwhelms us..." (IW)

A third dimension of development concerns visitor safety and comfort. Observational data indicate that introducing a formalised security framework and an institutionalised visitor feedback mechanism would meaningfully strengthen the visitor experience. The orderly arrangement and standardisation of area retribution likewise represent a valuable opportunity to reinforce the destination's public image and visitor trust. These considerations were reflected in the following informant testimony:

"... the image of Air Manis Beach will improve once the arrangement of area retribution is made clearer and more orderly." (A)

In synthesis, the development priorities at *Air Manis Beach* are primarily strategic and managerial, focusing on the continued strengthening of the destination governance architecture rather than on physical limitations alone. Given the destination's considerable intrinsic potential, addressing these priorities offers a clear pathway to enhancing tourism management effectiveness and the consistent delivery of high-quality visitor services. A structured summary of the principal governance and management development priorities identified at *Air Manis Beach* is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Governance and Management Development Priorities at Air Manis Beach

Source: Processed data, 2026.

3.1.3 Initial Strategy for Developing Air Manis Beach as a Destination

Drawing on the systematic synthesis of the identified destination potential and the documented development priorities, the preliminary development strategy for *Air Manis Beach* is deliberately oriented toward the targeted enhancement of foundational destination components within a defined short-term implementation horizon. Strategic priorities at this initial stage encompass advancing environmental cleanliness standards, enhancing basic visitor facilities, structuring the organisation of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and measurably improving visitor safety and comfort. These priorities were affirmed by stakeholder informants:

"... the most important thing is to improve cleanliness and facilities first." (YS)

"... safety, comfort, and cleanliness are the most important things." (A)

Complementing the imperative for physical infrastructure, community human resource capacity building emerges as an equally critical strategic priority. The relatively limited community familiarity with the principles of tourism awareness (*sadar wisata*) and service excellence standards underscores the urgent need for sustained, structured, and contextually appropriate training programmes. This assessment is corroborated by the following informant statements:

"... the community needs training to understand tourism." (DH)

"... the community here needs training centres to develop creative ideas." (BR)

Beyond institutional intervention, government representatives further emphasise that cultivating genuine public awareness and community ownership of tourism development is an indispensable precondition for achieving sustainable outcomes. As one senior informant observed:

"... it does not have to be support from the government alone, because if only the government takes action while the people remain unaware, nothing will change." (JM)

The aggregate evidence generated by this study thus affirms that the sustainable development of *Air Manis Beach* necessitates a realistic, measurable, and sequentially structured initial strategy that simultaneously addresses the improvement of core destination components, elevates the substantive role of the local community as active development agents, and institutionalises more disciplined and accountable collaboration among all relevant Pentahelix stakeholders. This preliminary strategy framework, shown in Figure 3, serves as the foundation for systematically developing a comprehensive grand design for *Air Manis Beach* development.



Figure 3. Initial Strategy for Developing Air Manis Beach as a Destination

Source: Processed data, 2026

Discussion

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The findings of this study, when read against the destination competitiveness literature, confirm that the four foundational components of attraction, accessibility, amenity, and ancillary infrastructure are not equally developed at Air Manis Beach, and that this imbalance is the central explanatory factor behind the destination's current performance (Lee et al., 2020). Attraction and accessibility emerge as comparatively mature assets, anchored by the Malin Kundang legend and supported by adequate road infrastructure, whereas amenity and, in particular, ancillary governance infrastructure remain underdeveloped. This pattern departs somewhat from destinations where physical scarcity is the principal constraint; at Air Manis Beach, the constraint is organisational rather than material, a distinction that has direct implications for the sequencing of any development intervention.

The cultural distinctiveness of the Malin Kundang narrative corroborates earlier work on Air Manis Beach's visitor appeal and community-based tourism potential (Taklim et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2024; Salsabilah et al., 2024), yet the present findings extend this literature by showing that community engagement, although vibrant, remains largely individualised and has not yet been consolidated into a coordinated management structure. This observation is consistent with Rozaki et al. (2025) and Wahyuni et al. (2025), who note that local economic participation in coastal tourism tends to intensify informally ahead of institutional support catching up. The informant account that community actors are "still working independently and have not been given clear direction" captures precisely this gap between grassroots enthusiasm and structured facilitation, and it suggests that community-based tourism at Air Manis Beach would benefit less from additional promotional effort than from a deliberate organisational intervention that channels existing energy toward a shared thematic concept.

That governance surfaces as the most consequential development priority is broadly consistent with the wider destination governance literature, which repeatedly finds that coherent institutional arrangements, rather than the presence of attractions per se, differentiate destinations that sustain visitor satisfaction over time from those that do not (Hartman, 2023; Wang et al., 2025; Camilleri, 2026). The specific governance deficits identified here, namely fragmented inter-institutional coordination, the absence of formalised service standards, and an unresolved area-retribution system, mirror the coordination and capacity-building challenges documented in Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018), UNWTO (2018), and Xiang et al. (2021). What the present case adds is empirical texture: informants did not describe an absence of institutions so much as an absence of shared operating procedures among institutions that already exist, a nuance that reframes the intervention required from institution-building toward institution-coordinating. This is a materially different, and arguably more tractable, policy task, one that aligns with Beritelli et al.'s (2020) argument that measurable gains in destination competitiveness follow from structured coordination mechanisms rather than from new administrative bodies alone.

Environmental management presents a related but distinct governance challenge. The recurring reference by informants to tidal debris and inconsistent waste handling indicates that Air Manis Beach's environmental pressures are only partly attributable to visitor behaviour; a meaningful share originates from marine processes beyond the destination's immediate control. This finding resonates with the coastal tourism governance literature, which emphasises that environmental dynamics in coastal settings demand adaptive, rather than fixed, institutional arrangements capable of responding to seasonal and tidal variability (Louisabethania et al., 2026; Tran et al., 2025). Framing beach cleanliness purely as an operational housekeeping issue, as current practice at the destination appears to do, likely understates the scale of coordination needed; a more durable response would treat environmental stewardship as a recurring governance function with defined responsibilities, rather than an ad hoc task performed when conditions become visibly unacceptable.

The comparatively underdeveloped state of ancillary infrastructure, most notably the absence of an integrated information system and a formal visitor-complaint mechanism, echoes findings elsewhere that ancillary and institutional arrangements are frequently the last destination component to mature, even in locations where natural and cultural assets are already strong (Brandão et al., 2019; Voyer et al., 2020; Alhowaish, 2026). In the case of Air Manis Beach, the managing authority already performs a coordinating role, which suggests that the path toward a fully professionalised destination management organisation is one of capacity expansion rather than institutional creation. The informant's remark that tourists are

“confused about who to report to” when problems occur is a useful diagnostic: it points not to the absence of management, but to the absence of a clearly signposted channel through which visitors can reach that management, a comparatively low-cost gap to close relative to the coordination and environmental challenges discussed above.

The phased, first-year strategy summarised in Table 3 translates these priorities into a sequence that begins with cleanliness, basic facilities, MSME organisation, and visitor safety before progressing to the more institutionally demanding work of formal governance architecture. This sequencing is deliberate rather than arbitrary: it follows the logic, established in the destination management literature, that early, visible improvements build the stakeholder trust and momentum required to sustain the harder institutional reforms that follow (Panagiotopoulou & Skoultos, 2025; Erol et al., 2026). Beginning with governance restructuring before addressing basic facility and cleanliness deficits would risk asking stakeholders to invest in coordination mechanisms before they see tangible benefit, a sequencing error that has undermined comparable initiatives elsewhere.

Table 3. Initial-Stage Strategy (Year 1) for the Development of Air Manis Beach

Strategic Focus	Principal Programme	Objective
 Area management	Flow/Zone initiative: demarcating of commercial MSMEs	Improve site cleanliness and visitor quality of the destination
 Basic facilities	Revitalisation of toilets, prayer rooms, and parking areas	Enhance visitor comfort and satisfaction
 Destination management	Establishment of a Destination Management Unit and at least 50%	Streamline coordination and service standards
 Tourism products	Community-based tourism (CBT) packages	Create meaningful and memorable visitor experiences
 Destination marketing	Main Kuning brand development	Respond to the competition in the regional market

Source: Processed data, 2026.

The quarterly roadmap depicted in Figure 4 operationalises this sequencing further by distributing responsibilities across a defined implementation timeline, which is consistent with adaptive governance approaches that treat destination development as an iterative rather than a one-off process (Beritelli et al., 2020). Embedding review points at each quarter would allow the managing authority and Pentahelix partners to recalibrate priorities as early interventions reveal which coordination bottlenecks are most binding, rather than committing to a fixed plan that cannot absorb what is learned along the way. This iterative logic is particularly important given that the governance deficits identified in this study are relational rather than purely structural; they are likely to shift in character, if not necessarily in severity, as coordination improves.

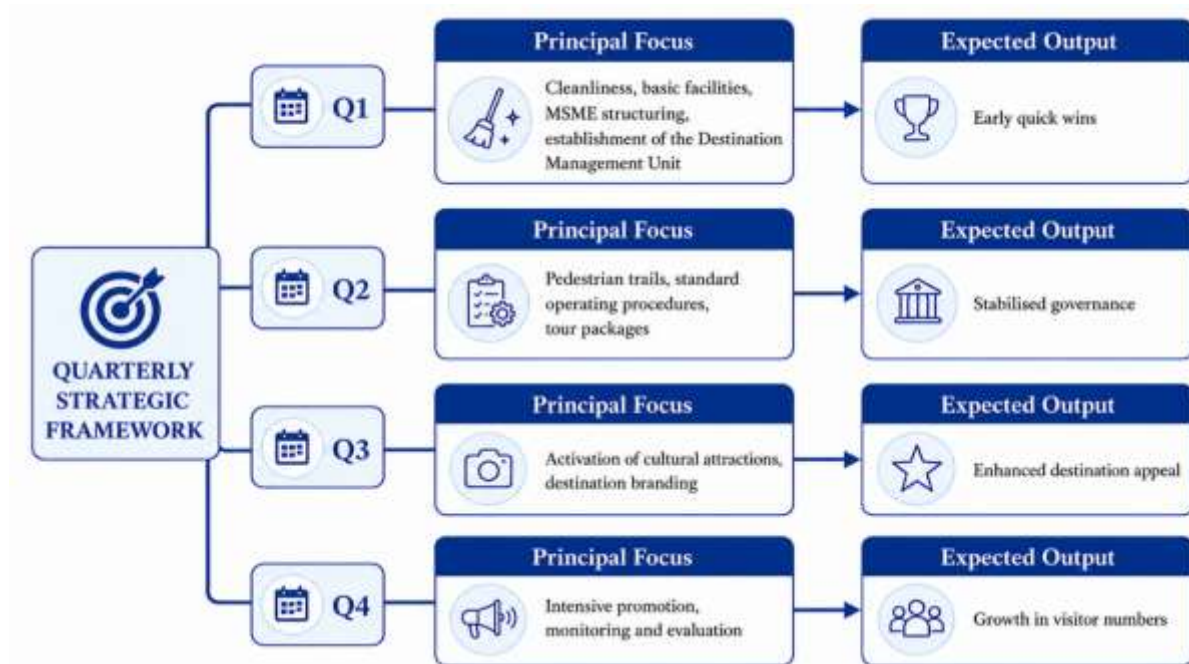


Figure 4. Year 1 Implementation Roadmap

Source: Processed data, 2026.

Collectively, these findings reinforce the view that community ownership and government facilitation are complementary rather than substitutable conditions for sustainable destination development, a point made explicitly by one senior informant who observed that unilateral government action, absent corresponding community awareness, is unlikely to produce lasting change. This is consistent with the Pentahelix model's underlying premise that government, community, business, academia, and civil society each hold distinct and non-transferable roles in destination governance, and it lends empirical support to the proposition that integrated coastal destination development in Indonesia depends as much on cultivating shared responsibility as on formal policy instruments (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018; Azwar et al., 2025). Read together with Indonesia's RPJMN priorities and the SDG commitments referenced earlier in this study, the Air Manis Beach case illustrates a plausible, if modest, pathway through which locally managed coastal destinations can align practical, on-the-ground governance reform with national development objectives.

Two limitations warrant acknowledgement. As a single-site qualitative study, the transferability of the proposed framework should be treated as analytically rather than statistically generalisable; destinations with different institutional histories may require different sequencing. Additionally, the cross-sectional design constrains the study's ability to observe whether informal community participation evolves as anticipated once formal coordination structures are introduced. Longitudinal or comparative multi-site research would help establish how robust this sequencing logic proves in implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

This study mapped the developmental potential of Air Manis Beach, analysed the governance conditions shaping its tourism management, and translated these findings into an integrated development framework. Three conclusions follow. The destination is well endowed with attraction, accessibility, and basic amenity assets, most distinctively the Malin Kundang narrative, providing a credible foundation for a coherent visitor experience. Governance, rather than physical endowment, is the binding constraint, manifest in fragmented inter-institutional coordination, the absence of formalised service standards, unresolved environmental management, and an unstructured area-retribution system. A phased development pathway anchored in a first-year strategic plan and quarterly implementation roadmap offers a realistic route toward a more professionally governed destination.

For the destination's managing authority and Perumda Padang Sejahtera Mandiri, the priority is to formalise coordination routines, service standards, and a visible complaint-handling channel rather than to pursue new physical infrastructure. For local government, policy support is best directed toward facilitating inter-agency coordination and community capacity building rather than stand-alone infrastructure grants. For community and private operators, the findings point to value in consolidating individualised trade and service activities under a shared thematic identity. Collectively, these implications position Air Manis Beach's governance reform as a concrete contribution to Indonesia's RPJMN priorities and to SDG 8, 11, 12, and 17.

Theoretically, the study contributes an empirically grounded account of how the 4A destination-competitiveness framework and the Pentahelix governance model interact in a locally managed, culturally distinctive coastal setting, extending prior Air Manis Beach scholarship toward a more integrated governance perspective. As a single-site qualitative inquiry, these conclusions should be read as analytically rather than statistically generalisable; the proposed framework would benefit from longitudinal validation and, where feasible, comparison with other coastal destinations undergoing similar governance transitions.

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