

Implementation of the National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) Development Policy for North Rupert Beach in Bengkalis Regency

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Policy Implementation, Tourism, North Rupert Beach, Edwards III, Van Meter & Van Horn

Received : 16 May

Revised : 20 June

Accepted: 22 July

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ABSTRACT

North Rupert Beach in Bengkalis Regency has been designated as a National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN), yet the implementation of its tourism development policy has not yielded optimal results. Key issues such as inadequate infrastructure, limited community participation, weak promotional strategies, and fragmented coordination among stakeholders hinder the effectiveness of the policy implementation. This study aims to analyze the implementation of the tourism development policy at North Rupert Beach by employing George C. Edwards III's policy implementation model, which emphasizes four main variables: communication, resources, disposition, and bureaucratic structure. Additionally, the Van Meter and Van Horn model is utilized as a supporting framework to further explore variables such as policy standards and objectives, characteristics of implementing agencies, sociopolitical conditions, and implementers' attitudes. The research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. Informants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, involving government officials, tourism actors, and local community members directly engaged in policy implementation. The findings reveal that the policy implementation has not been effective. Communication among actors remains inconsistent and fails to effectively reach the broader community. Limited human resources and underdeveloped infrastructure further weaken implementation capacity

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has significant potential for development as a source of income for regions and local communities. Article 4 of Law Number 23 of 2014 emphasizes that regencies/cities are not only administrative areas but are also responsible for the implementation of general government affairs. This provides regional governments with greater freedom to explore and manage regional potential, including the tourism sector.

The legal basis for tourism development in Indonesia is Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, which emphasizes the importance of developing destinations based on cultural uniqueness, natural resources, and community needs for tourism activities. To strengthen this development direction, the central government issued Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011 concerning the National Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARNAS), which includes Rupert Island as a National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN).

The elaboration of provincial-level policies is outlined in Riau Provincial Regulation Number 5 of 2022, which designates Rupert Island as one of the priority tourism development destinations in Riau, with an ecotourism, cultural, and marine-based approach. Furthermore, at the regional level, Bengkalis Regency Regulation No. 2 of 2021 focuses tourism development on North Rupert Beach, through destination development programs, the establishment of tourist villages, and strengthening the role of local communities.

These policies, from the central to the regency level, demonstrate a clear commitment to promoting the development of North Rupert Beach as a leading destination. However, the implementation of these policies on the ground still faces various challenges, which are the focus of this research.

Rupert Island is administratively located in Bengkalis Regency, bordering the Strait of Malacca to the north and Dumai City to the south. Its territory is divided into two sub-districts: Rupert and North Rupert. Its strategic location, due to its proximity to international waters, makes Rupert Island one of Indonesia's vanguard regions, boasting natural attractions and advantageous geographic position.

Spatially, the North Rupert area has been included as a priority for regional development in the Bengkalis Regency 2021–2026 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) and reaffirmed in the 2025–2029 RPJMD Plan (Ranwal RPJMD) as part of the Rupert Island Tourism Special Economic Zone (KEK) development plan. Furthermore, various strategic plans have been developed, such as the Rupert Beach Development Master Plan and the establishment of seven tourist villages on Rupert Island. This support demonstrates the government's commitment to developing the tourism sector as an economic driver in border areas. The following is the Bengkalis Regency Medium-Term Development Plan for Tourism Development.

This situation demonstrates a gap between formulated policies and the reality of implementation on the ground, resulting in low-quality tourism services and the failure to develop an integrated tourism ecosystem.

From the researchers' observations, they identified several problems, including ineffective cross-sectoral tourism management and a lack of public understanding of the potential of Rupert Beach, which offers significant opportunities to increase participation in Bengkalis Regency and strategies for introducing Rupert Beach to domestic and international visitors to increase visits. The researchers also believe that tourism development at Rupert Beach is still suboptimal due to the lack of understanding of how to optimize tourism management at Rupert Beach.

This research was conducted to fill the research gap in the study of tourism development policy implementation, particularly in strategic but underdeveloped border areas. To date, there has been little research that has examined the implementation of tourism policies in depth in areas such as North Rupert Beach, Bengkalis Regency.

Furthermore, most previous studies have used only a single theoretical model, while this study combines the approaches of George C. Edwards III and Van Meter & Van Horn to gain a more comprehensive understanding. This study also enriches the literature by providing analysis of local institutions and community involvement, two important aspects often overlooked in tourism development policy studies.

For this reason, this research is important to conduct in-depth study of the implementation of tourism development policies in North Rupert Beach. Based on the problems and research gaps that the researcher has outlined above, the researcher raises this into a title "Implementation of the National Strategic Tourism Area Development Policy (KSPN) North Rupert Beach in Bengkalis Regency", the researcher uses the George C. Edwards III policy implementation model, which includes communication variables, resources, disposition and bureaucratic structure. With this approach, it is hoped that inhibiting and supporting factors for policy implementation can be found, so that appropriate and applicable improvement strategies can be formulated and can provide recommendations for local governments, communities and the tourism sector in creating more effective and sustainable tourism governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public policy is a series of decisions made by government authorities aimed at addressing specific issues emerging in society. Dye (2008, p. 201) succinctly describes public policy as "what governments do, why they do it, and what impacts those actions have." This means that public policy is not limited to official documents or statements, but encompasses concrete actions and the consequences of those actions in a social context.

Anderson (2010, p. 18) adds that public policy is a conscious step taken by government actors, both individual and collective, to respond to a specific problem. In his view, policies have clear objectives, reflect specific value preferences, and are realized through concrete actions. The decision to act, or even not to act, is part of the policy itself.

Meanwhile, according to (Hayat, 2018, p. 57), public policy is a decision or choice that directly regulates the management and distribution of natural, financial, and human resources for the benefit of society, the public, and citizens. For this public interest to be realized, there must be oversight and management of relevant aspects. Nugroho (2018:33-35) explains that public policy is an instrument used by the government to regulate and direct development, emphasizing the importance of an evidence-based approach, transparency, and public participation.

According to (Subarsono, 2020, p. 39), implementation is an activity related to completing a task using means (tools) to achieve results. When associated with public policy, public policy implementation can be defined as the activity of completing or carrying out established public policies using means (tools) to achieve policy objectives.

Then (Dunn, 2020, p. 132) defines implementation more specifically, calling it policy implementation in his book, *Public Policy Analysis*. According to (Purwanto, 2022, p. 21), implementation is the activity of distributing policy outputs (to deliver policy outputs) carried out by implementers to target groups in an effort to realize policy objectives. It is hoped that policy outputs will be well-received and utilized by target groups, thereby realizing long-term policy outcomes.

Van Meter and Van Horn (in Winarno, 2022, p. 102) define public policy implementation as actions that follow from previous decisions. These actions include efforts to transform decisions into operational actions within a specific timeframe, as well as continuing efforts to achieve major and minor changes established by policy decisions. According to Pressman (in Tangkilisan, 2022, p. 52), implementation is defined as the interaction between the formulation of objectives and the means of action to achieve those objectives, or the ability to connect the desired outcomes with the means to achieve them.

Based on the explanations above, it can be concluded that policy implementation will not begin until goals and objectives are established or identified by policy decisions (Winarno, 2022, p. 121). Sustainable tourism theory emphasizes the importance of balancing economic interests, environmental preservation, and socio-cultural values in tourism development. Butler (1993) states that sustainable tourism is tourism developed and managed to meet the needs of tourists and communities today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Inskeep (1991) also emphasizes that a sustainable approach aims to ensure that tourism provides long-term benefits, not just short-term profits. According to Todaro and Smith (2012: 455), sustainable development is not only about economic growth, but also how that growth is achieved inclusively and within the limits of ecological carrying capacity. This requires a development strategy that considers the long-term impacts on the environment and the social structure of society.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the problem formulation and research objectives, this study uses a descriptive type with a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to obtain an in-depth description and understanding of a social phenomenon. In this study, the researcher chose to use a descriptive research method with a qualitative approach. Qualitative research aims to uncover information and in-depth understanding of the problem, process, and meaning by describing a problem. Specifically, qualitative methods are often used to demonstrate three related concepts: a non-positivistic qualitative research epistemology; a qualitative research strategy that is more directed at interpretation or disclosure of meaning than generalization of causal relationships; and qualitative research techniques that are not operationalized with numbers, such as interviews (Gabrielian, Yang, & Spice, 2008, p. 142). This research was conducted within the North Rupal Beach tourism area in Bengkalis Regency from February to May 2025. The researchers chose North Rupal Beach as the research site because it has significant potential as a leading tourist destination. Based on Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011, Rupal Island is designated a National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN), meaning this area is prioritized nationally for development as a leading tourism destination. Therefore, the selection of this research location was based on the relevance of the study's focus, namely the Implementation of the National Tourism Strategic Area Development Policy (KSPN) for North Rupal Beach in Bengkalis Regency. The research timeframe refers to the entire research process, from preparation, data collection, analysis, and preparation of the research report (Creswell, 2014:45). In this research, all activities were carried out from February to May 2025.

The selection of key informants in this study used a purposefully selected technique. This technique involves deliberately selecting informants with specific considerations in line with the research objectives (Creswell, 2014:189). Furthermore, a snowball sampling technique was used to determine the information used in this study.

The informants, or data sources in this study, consisted of parties involved in the implementation of the North Rupal Beach National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) development policy in Bengkalis Regency. Informants were selected based on their ability to provide information relevant to the research substance and to answer the established research questions.

The researchers conducted interviews with research subjects who had a deep understanding of and direct involvement in the issues being studied. Informant selection was based on information regarding their roles in the implementation of the North Rupal Beach National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) development policy. The following is a list of 26 informants selected by the researchers based on their function and involvement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of the National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) Development Policy for North Rupert Beach in Bengkalis Regency

Policy implementation is the most crucial stage in the public policy cycle. Without effective implementation, policies will remain mere administrative documents with no real impact on the community. In the context of North Rupert Beach tourism development, policy implementation is a key test of the Bengkalis Regency Government's commitment to transforming potential into sustainable, inclusive, and equitable economic value. This research utilizes two primary theoretical approaches: the policy implementation model by George C. Edwards III and the model by Van Meter & Van Horn, both of which emphasize the importance of implementing variables and environmental conditions in supporting or hindering successful policy implementation.

In North Rupert Beach tourism development, policy communication serves as a bridge between policy makers at the district and provincial levels, technical implementers in the field, and the local community as both partners and beneficiaries. However, research findings indicate that policy communication in this region still faces various obstacles, both in terms of substance, channels, and actor participation.

Edwards III emphasized that effective policy communication requires three key elements:

1. Accurate transmission of information from policymakers to implementers;
2. Clarity of policy content to avoid multiple interpretations; and
3. Consistency between implementing units, to prevent siloed or overlapping implementation.

However, in North Rupert, information transmission from the Bengkalis Regency Government to the village level and tourism operators is often not systematic and comprehensive. Communication tends to only reach village heads and government officials, without a public communication strategy that involves the wider community.

Furthermore, the policy language used in planning documents such as the RPJMD (Regional Medium-Term Development Plan) or RIPPANDA (Regional Development Plan) is considered too formal and is not accompanied by easily understood technical operational guidelines for field implementers. This results in differing interpretations and inconsistent implementation directions among tourism villages in the North Rupert region.

Furthermore, the lack of consistency between implementing organizations hinders building a unified understanding and execution of policies. Several cases demonstrate that the Public Works and Housing Agency, the Tourism Agency, and village governments operate based on their respective sectoral perceptions without adequate coordination, resulting in tourism infrastructure development not always aligned with the needs and priorities of the destination.

Limited media and outreach methods also pose significant challenges. The lack of optimal use of digital media, the limited visual-based policy content, and the absence of operational communication standards mean that the socialization process is carried out using conventional methods and has limited reach. This is despite the fact that the public is increasingly relying on social media and digital platforms to obtain information, including on development directions and participation opportunities (Ritonga et al., 2024).

From Van Meter & Van Horn's perspective, these communication barriers indicate that the characteristics of implementing organizations are not yet fully adaptive to changes in the social and technological environment. Successful policy implementation requires not only bureaucratic instructions but also interactive, flexible, and contextual communication strategies.

Information transmission is a key aspect of communication, as emphasized by Edwards III. In the context of policy implementation, information transmission refers to the extent to which policy information is conveyed comprehensively, accurately, and on target from policymakers to technical implementers and the community, the object or subject of the policy. If this process is not effective, the policy is at high risk of being misdirected or even failing to be implemented.

In Bengkalis Regency, information transmission regarding the North Rupa Beach tourism development policy is carried out through various formal and informal channels. Structurally, information is conveyed through the RPJMD (Regional Medium-Term Development Plan), RIPPARKAB (Regional Tourism Development Plan), Regent's Decree, and the annual programs of relevant agencies. Implementation is carried out through development planning meetings (Musrenbang), technical guidance (Bimtek), coordination forums for regional government agencies (OPD), and policy dissemination to village governments and tourism village managers.

However, interviews with several informants revealed that information transmission from the government to implementers in the field often encounters substantial obstacles. Several technical implementers in the villages stated that they did not fully understand the policy direction because the information conveyed was in the form of administrative documents and not broken down into operational technical guidelines.

This situation reflects a vertical gap in information transmission, where policy information does not flow effectively from the top level of policy makers to the technical implementers in the field (street-level bureaucrats). This contradicts Edwards III's principle that poor transmission can lead to implementers misunderstanding policy content or even failing to implement it properly.

Furthermore, from the community perspective, the transmission of policy information is also suboptimal. Communities generally obtain information about tourism programs from village social media, informal announcements, or news from neighbors. The lack of visual information media such as notice boards, brochures, or policy billboards prevents them from fully understanding the direction of destination development in their villages. Effective communication

is not only about sending messages but also includes the ability to ensure that messages are received, understood, and responded to in accordance with the policy's intent. In George C. Edwards III's theory, communication is the primary foundation for successful implementation, where information transmission, clarity of policy content, and consistency of implementation must work synergistically. However, in practice, policy communication is often hampered by various technical, structural, and cultural factors that hinder the understanding and participation of implementing actors and the community.

The Role of Digital Information and Social Media in Policy Delivery

The development of information technology has fundamentally changed the way governments interact with the public, including in the delivery of public policy. In the context of policy implementation, digital information and social media serve not only as promotional tools but also as communication media, enabling rapid, broad, and participatory policy transmission. In George C. Edwards III's policy implementation model, digital information media is part of a communication channel that can strengthen or weaken the implementation process, depending on how it is used (Rambe et al., 2023).

In the implementation of the North Rupert Beach National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) development policy, the use of digital information and social media has not been optimally utilized (Purba et al., 2025). Observations and interviews indicate that although several tourist villages have social media accounts such as Facebook or Instagram, their content has not been developed professionally and sustainably as a tool for policy communication and destination promotion.

From Van Meter & Van Horn's perspective, the lack of utilization of modern communication technology reflects weaknesses in the characteristics of implementing organizations, particularly in their ability to adapt to an increasingly digital social environment. Meanwhile, according to Edwards III, communication channels that do not align with the needs and habits of the target recipients will lead to distortions in information transmission.

This situation also contributes to the lack of visibility of the North Rupert destination at the national level. Several tourists interviewed stated that they only learned the name "Tanjung Lapin Beach" from friends' stories or unofficial posts, not from local government sources. Within the framework of policy implementation theory, according to George C. Edwards III, resources are one of the key variables determining the success or failure of a policy. Public policy, no matter how well formulated, cannot be effectively implemented without adequate resources. These resources include human resources (HR), finances, infrastructure, time, and supporting data and information.

In the context of tourism development in North Rupert Beach, the availability and quality of resources pose a serious challenge to policy implementers at various levels. Several development programs have been launched, such as the development of Tanjung Lapin Beach, the construction of public facilities, and the establishment of tourist villages. However, the lack of resource readiness at the implementing level has resulted in suboptimal implementation and uneven distribution across regions. These resource

challenges manifest themselves in various forms, ranging from the limited number and competence of human resources implementing in tourist villages, the low participation of professional staff in tourism management, the lack of capacity building budgets, to limitations in promotional tools and information technology. As a result, many development policies and programs fail to run as planned or are unsustainable. Field implementers often operate on individual initiative without systematic institutional support and technical capacity.

Human resources (HR) are a crucial prerequisite for the successful implementation of public policy. In George C. Edwards III's theory, HR is not just about quantity, but also encompasses capabilities, technical competencies, and effective utilization to support the achievement of policy objectives.

In North Rupat District, the presence of the Rupat Island Tourism Management Unit (UPT), with 22 field staff, demonstrates quantitatively that human resources for policy implementation are adequate. These personnel include cleaners, security personnel, park managers, and stadium staff, all within a single tourism management organizational structure.

Infrastructure and supporting facilities are crucial components for the successful implementation of tourism development policies. According to George C. Edwards III, the availability of physical resources such as roads, bridges, transportation, and public facilities significantly impacts the accessibility, comfort, and attractiveness of a tourist destination. Without adequate and optimally functioning infrastructure, tourism policy objectives are difficult to achieve effectively.

One important indicator of effective policy implementation is the availability of financial resources and legal certainty within the policy area, as stated by George C. Edwards III. In the context of tourism development on Rupat Island, these two issues pose a major challenge: all budgets come solely from the local government, and the legality of land used for tourism development is still limited to government-owned assets.

All physical and non-physical development activities for tourist destinations on Rupat Island, such as road access construction, public facilities, human resource training, and promotion, are fully funded by the Bengkalis Regency Government. To date, there has been no direct financial assistance or support from the central government, even though Rupat Island has been designated as part of the National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) through Government Regulation Number 50 of 2011.

In George C. Edwards III's theory, the disposition of implementers refers to the attitudes, commitments, and perceptions of policy implementers toward the policy being implemented. This disposition is crucial for successful implementation, because even if communication is smooth, resources are available, and a bureaucratic structure is established, policies will still not be optimally implemented if the implementers lack a strong will and commitment. In the context of implementing the policy for developing the North Rupat Island National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN), the disposition of implementers encompasses various elements, from the local government (Tourism Office, Public Works and Housing Office, Regional Development Planning Agency

(Bappeda), sub-district heads, and village heads), field technical staff (UPT), and community-based tourism managers. Overall, research findings indicate that the implementer's disposition is positive and quite strong, although they still face a number of cultural and structural barriers.

From the perspective of George C. Edwards III's theory of public policy implementation, the quality and orientation of individual policy implementers are crucial for successful implementation. This encompasses not only the attitude or disposition but also the competence and suitability of bureaucrats for their strategic positions. When bureaucrats are placed in positions that do not align with their background or interests, policy implementation is highly likely to be ineffective, even with the availability of resources and good communication.

In the context of tourism development on Rupat Island, the appointment of officials and technical bureaucrats at the agency and technical implementation unit (UPT) levels generally follows structural rotation and transfer procedures based on the regional personnel management system, rather than on a sector-specific basis. As a result, many officials assigned to the tourism sector do not come from a tourism background, but are the result of a general bureaucratization process.

In public policy implementation, incentives are a key instrument that can strengthen implementers' disposition towards the policy. George C. Edwards III emphasized that incentives can increase the loyalty and motivation of implementers, which in turn strengthens the quality of implementation on the ground. Incentives do not have to be solely financial, but can include recognition, training, access to opportunities, and trust in decision-making.

On Rupat Island, providing incentives for implementing tourism development policies still faces challenges, particularly in terms of direct (financial) incentives. However, the Bengkalis Regency Government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting the capacity building of implementers by providing training and technical guidance (*bimtek*) for village officials, tourism managers, and local communities.

Interviews with several field staff from the Technical Implementation Unit (UPT) indicate that they carry out their duties of maintaining cleanliness, security, and managing tourist facilities without additional incentives beyond their base salary. Furthermore, in the context of tourism development on Rupat Island, the bureaucratic structure handling the tourism sector involves various units, from the Bengkalis Regency Tourism Office, the Technical Implementation Unit (UPT), the sub-district government, to the village government. Furthermore, coordination also encompasses other sectors, such as the Public Works and Housing Agency (PUPR), the Regional Development Planning Agency (Bappeda), and vertical agencies (e.g., forestry and the National Land Agency (BPN) regarding land legality). However, this study shows that the existing bureaucratic structure is not yet fully effective in managing comprehensive and coordinated policy implementation.

In the case of the implementation of the National Strategic Tourism Area (KSPN) development policy on Rupert Island, fragmentation among implementing units was a significant obstacle encountered in the field. Although various agencies have direct and indirect links to the tourism sector, coordination and integration between these units remained weak, resulting in a lack of synchronization in policy planning and implementation.

The study found that the Tourism Agency, PUPR Agency, Bappeda, sub-district governments, village governments, and Technical Implementation Units (UPTs) often implemented programs sectorally without structured initial coordination. This led to overlapping activities, misaligned priorities between levels of government, and slow implementation of tourism facility development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on George C. Edwards III's theory, communication consists of three sub-dimensions: Transmission: The delivery of policy information has not been effective. Communication channels are still limited to formal forums, resulting in many policy implementers and the public not fully understanding the content and direction of the policy. Clarity: Messages conveyed during the implementation process remain unclear and often technocratic. This results in policy implementers at the operational level not fully understanding their duties and responsibilities. Consistency: There is inconsistency in the delivery of information between the central, provincial, and district governments, as well as between agencies within the Bengkalis Regency Government. This results in uncoordinated and unsustainable program implementation. The resource dimension includes four sub-dimensions: Human Resources: The number and quality of human resources implementing the policy are still inadequate, both in terms of quantity and competence in developing the tourism sector. Information: The availability of data and information supporting policy implementation is still limited, both for planning and policy evaluation. Authority: There is a lack of clarity in the delegation of authority between implementing agencies, resulting in overlapping tasks and slowing down the decision-making process. Facilities: Supporting infrastructure and tourism facilities, such as access roads, accommodation, and tourism promotion facilities, are still very limited and do not meet the basic needs of tourist destinations. The disposition of implementers includes two sub-dimensions: Appointment of Bureaucrats: The appointment of policy implementers is still not based on professional competence, but rather on administrative assignments, thus reducing the effectiveness of policy implementation. Incentives: There is no adequate incentive mechanism for implementers or the community involved in tourism development, resulting in low work motivation. The bureaucratic structure consists of two sub-dimensions: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): The SOPs used in policy implementation are not yet properly standardized and are not fully understood by implementers. Fragmentation: The level of institutional fragmentation remains very high, as evidenced by the lack of coordination between technical agencies, resulting in a partial implementation process without proper synergy. The North Rupert Beach tourism development policy has general and non-operational objectives, making

it difficult to implement measurably on the ground. The socio-political environment demonstrates low public awareness of tourism potential and low community participation in tourism development. Economically, there have been no concrete interventions to improve the local economy through tourism sector development. The implementing organization is still dominated by a formal bureaucracy with weak institutional capacity. The organizational structure does not support effective program implementation, compounded by minimal oversight. Coordination between implementing agencies remains weak, particularly in program synchronization and resource allocation. This results in many programs being sectorally managed and not integrated. Implementing agencies do not demonstrate optimal commitment due to various structural barriers, resource constraints, and weak communication both internally and externally.

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