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## Development of Ponot Waterfall Tourism Objects and Attractions in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Development Object Tourist attraction Waterfall</p>	<p>Tourism is a very strategic sector in supporting development programs. This research also explains the development strategy implemented at Ponot Waterfall. Ponot Waterfall is one of the highest waterfalls in Indonesia with a height of ± 250 meters located in Aek Songsongan District, precisely in Tangga Dusun I Village. The formulation of the problem in this research is (1) What is the condition of the Waterfall Tourist Attraction Object and Data? Ponot in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency. (2) What is the role of the Village Government in managing Ponot Waterfall Tourist Attractions and Attractions in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency. (3) What is the management carried out by the community for Ponot Waterfall Waterfall Tourist Objects and Attractions in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency. The method used by researchers in this research is a descriptive research method using a qualitative approach which is carried out by directly going out into the field to observe community activities. The conclusions in this research are: (1) The condition of the Ponot Waterfall tourism environment in Tangga village, Aek Songsongan subdistrict, Asahan Regency looks good; (2) The regional government is only permitted to act as supervisor in the development of Ponot Waterfall Objects and Attractions; (3) The community-based development strategy for Ponot Waterfall Objects and Attractions, where the community is the most important party in the development of Ponot Waterfall. The suggestions in this research are: (1) The development of facilities and infrastructure for Ponot Waterfall tourist objects and attractions must be further improved to make it easier for tourists to visit this object; (2) It is hoped that the Regional Government will pay more attention to the process of developing Ponot Waterfall tourist objects and attractions; (3) Local communities must be more creative in promoting Ponot Waterfall tourist objects and attractions through social media such as Facebook, Instagram and others and also build cooperation with other investors.</p>

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a very strategic sector in supporting development programs. Tourism also plays a big role in regional tourist locations, because it can provide more value to the region. The tourism sector is an alternative source of income for regional income as well as for foreign exchange and national economic development, even for developed countries, even though tourism is serious about developing. To develop this sector, the government is trying hard to make plans and various policies by exploring, inventorying and developing existing tourist objects as tourist attractions. Tourism will be able to foster and increase recognition and love for one's homeland, so that it can motivate attitudes of tolerance in

relationships, apart from that, tourism can also broaden the horizons of personal views towards the values of life.

The development of tourism in an area will bring many benefits to society, namely economically, socially and culturally. However, if the development is not prepared and managed well, it will actually give rise to various problems that are difficult or even detrimental to society. From a social perspective, tourism activities will expand employment opportunities both from facilities and infrastructure development activities from both direct and indirect business sectors. From an economic perspective, tourism activities can contribute to regional revenues from taxes, parking fees and tickets or can bring in foreign exchange from visiting foreign tourists. The existence of tourism will also grow economic businesses that link together and support their activities so that they can increase people's income.

Asahan Regency is an area that has tourist destinations that have potential and are no less interesting than other areas in Indonesia. One of the tourism sectors in Asahan Regency is Ponot Waterfall, which is a tourist attraction located in Tangga Village, Aek Song-songan District, North Sumatra. Basically, Asahan Regency has quite large potential for developing tourism businesses. This area has a number of natural tourist attractions which have their own charm, including: white water rafting tourism in the upper reaches of the Asahan river, Ladder Village, Bandar Pulau District, Simonang-monang waterfall natural tourism, Bandar Pulau District, Aek Sisapa waterfall natural tourism, District Bandar Pasir Mandoge and others.

Ponot Waterfall is a waterfall that has a height of approximately 250 meters which is one of the highest waterfalls in Indonesia and has three waterfall steps. This waterfall is in the Ponot River which is a tributary of the Asahan River at an altitude of around 500 meters above sea level. The beauty of Ponot Waterfall lies in its very fast water flow. Under the waterfall there are many very large natural rocks so that it becomes a special attraction as a complement to the beauty of Ponot Waterfall. The water is still clear and cold, which is the reason why many visitors come even though the location is far from the city center with a distance of approximately 90 km from the city of Kisaran (the capital of Asahan Regency).

As a tourist location for quite some time, this tourist attraction has not had much management and development to become an advanced tourist location. Because the road infrastructure is not good, there are lots of holes in the roads and a lot of the asphalt has been eroded by rainwater. The Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction is located in a mountainous area where the area is hilly and valleys, with roads making travel difficult for tourists, especially motorbike users. Apart from that, the vehicle parking location is not well arranged, so that visitors' vehicles are not neatly arranged and it also makes it difficult for vehicles to get in and out. There are only a few facilities such as restaurants, public toilets are not cleaned properly, rubbish disposal is not well organized. Most food vendors at the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction only sell during the holiday season. Another problem that is an obstacle to developing Ponot Waterfall tourism is the transportation problem that connects where tourists live with this tourist attraction. Next is the issue of accommodation, the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction does not have accommodation.

This tourist attraction will actually encourage economic activity around the tourist attraction area, from here the question arises of how to encourage economic activity if the management and development of the Ponot Waterfall tourist object and attraction has a positive influence.

The development of a tourist attraction is a capability and attraction possessed by a tourist attraction which drives tourist attendance. Generally, tourist attractions are based on the presence of resources that can create a feeling of joy, beauty, cleanliness and accessibility that can be visited.

## METHODS

### Research Approaches and Types

The type of research in this paper is descriptive qualitative, namely explaining data obtained through observation while conducting research in the field and applying theory that has been obtained from lectures.

### Research sites

The location of this research was carried out at Ponot Waterfall which is located in Tangga Village, Sampuran Siarimo, Halado, Pintu Pohan Merant, Halado, Pintu Pohan Merant, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra 21274.

#### **Research time**

This research was carried out in March 2021 by carrying out research activities in the field.

#### **Research subject**

According to Suharsimi Arikonto (2016: 26), research subjects define research subjects as objects, things or people where data for research is concerned. In research, the research subject has a very strategic role because in the research subject, the data is observed.

In qualitative research, respondents or research subjects are referred to as informants, namely people who provide information about the data the researcher wants related to the research being carried out. The subjects in this research are key informants, namely:

1. There were 2 tourists;
2. There is 1 village head;
3. There are 2 Youth Sports and Tourism Agencies/Departments.

#### **Data collection technique**

Data collection techniques used in conducting research use several methods, namely:

#### **Observation**

Observation has more meaning than just a data collection technique. However, in this context, observation is focused on the researcher's efforts to collect data and information from primary data sources by optimizing the researcher's observations. This observation technique also involves listening, reading, smelling and touching activities (Rully and Poppy, 2016: 134).

In this research, researchers carried out direct observations by analyzing every tourist who came to visit and observing the situation and conditions in the tourist attraction's environment.

#### **Interview**

Interviews in a qualitative approach are in-depth. Interviews and observations can be carried out simultaneously. Interviews can be used to dig deeper into the data obtained from observations. In this way, there is no disconnect between what is seen and what is heard and recorded. In-depth interview, an activity carried out to obtain information directly by asking questions to the source to obtain in-depth information. (Rully and Poppy, 2016: 136)

#### **Literature Study**

The literature study carried out is collecting data by creating or studying books that support the problem under study so that it can be used as a basis for preparing written work.

#### **Data analysis technique**

According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data is a source of broad and solidly based descriptions, and contains explanations of processes that occur locally. The method chosen by the researcher is a qualitative method, namely in the form of a direct field survey, carrying out various analyzes and comparisons with the reality that occurs in the field.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Condition of Objects and Tourist Attractions of Ponot Waterfall in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency**

Tangga Village is one of the villages in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency, which is located at an altitude of between 300 m - 570 m above sea level. The distance of Tangga Village from the sub-district capital is 28 Km, the distance between the village and the capital of Kabupaten (Kisaran) is ± 90 Km. The area of Tangga Village is 31.50 Km<sup>2</sup> (3150 Ha). Based on sources that researchers obtained from the Asahan Regency Central Statistics Agency in 2020, the recorded population in Aek Songsongan District was 17,976 people.

From observations by researchers in the field, the Ponot Waterfall Tour is located in Tangga Village, Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency, close to the Siguragura Dam and White Water Rafting Tourism which is an international event. The potential of the Asahan River also supports Ponot Waterfall Tourism.

The Ponot Waterfall tourist location, which is far from the city center at a distance of 90 km, is very suitable as a natural tourist attraction area. The location of a good tourist attraction that meets the criteria as a good tourist destination is located far from industrial areas, residential areas or other areas that are not suitable for future development. The Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction is located to the south of Kisaran City, with a distance of 90 km from the Regency capital with a travel time of 2-3 hours and 30 km from the District capital with a travel time of 1-1.5 hours. With a hilly location with a height of 570 m above sea level and the average air temperature reaches 23.65°C with cool air conditions during the day and cold at night.

Based on observations by researchers in the field, these conditions are very supportive for the existence of natural tourist attractions, as well as for Ponot Waterfall Tourism, these climatic conditions are very supportive in the tourism development process. Relief is a natural factor that needs to be taken into consideration in development. In the development and development of the Ponot Waterfall tourist area, which is located in a hilly area with a height of 570 meters above sea level and a slope of 25%, the slope is relatively steep with high cliffs. Apart from that, this factor is also used as a consideration in determining the location of tourist attractions and determining the buildings that will be built to maintain tourist safety. Ponot Waterfall Tourism, which has been used as a center for the growth of natural tourist attractions in Aek Songsongan District, has an area of forest

200 Ha with various types of plants, dominated by ferns, sugar palms, lichens and some oil palm trees. The Ponot Waterfall Tourist Area, which occupies an area of 2 Ha in Tangga Village, presents very attractive natural conditions with forests spread throughout the tourist attraction. Meanwhile, the fauna collection consists of swallows, monkeys, fish and butterflies which visitors can enjoy.

The climate conditions are very cool with average monthly rainfall and an average air temperature of 23.65 °C, causing water conditions in this area to be quite abundant. Based on observations by researchers in the field, Ponot Waterfall tourism does not yet have a variety of attractions or supporting attractions, tourists come to visit only to enjoy the existing tourist attractions. The main tourist attraction of Ponot Waterfall is the phenomenon of a waterfall flowing through a rock formation that is 250 meters high with natural rocks.

Meanwhile, additional attractions include the beautiful natural scenery, the cliffs around the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction, the fast water flow of the Asahan River which is used for white water rafting, and the bridge building that connects Tangga Village with Meranti Village. The attraction here is only natural attraction, while there is no artificial attraction. Based on the results of visitor assessments regarding memories, visitors (90%) want to return to visit Ponot Waterfall Tourism. Based on the observations above, natural tourism is more popular and less boring.

### **Location and access to Ponot waterfall**

From the literature review carried out by researchers geographically, Ponot waterfall is at an altitude of 700 meters above sea level, Ponot waterfall is located in an area with cold temperatures with quite high rainfall. Ponot waterfall can be reached from three cities in North Sumatra, namely:

1. Firstly, it can be reached from the city of Porsea in Tobasa district.
2. The distance between the city of Porsea and Ponot waterfall is ±35 km, with the distance between Ponot waterfall from Porsea city being ±1.5 hours (by car) and ± 1 hour (by motorbike).
3. Second, from the city of Pematang Siantar in Simalungun district, tourists who want to go to the Ponot waterfall via Pematang Siantar first go to Limapuluh Regency with a distance of ± 62 km then from Limapuluh Regency, then tourists will go to Kisaran with a distance of ± 39 km. After tourists arrive at Kisaran, tourists will go to Ponot waterfall via the Kisaran route. Most tourists from Kisaran rent public transportation, such as private cars, mini buses, etc.
4. Third from the city of Kisaran in Asahan Regency. Based on the researcher's experience when conducting research, the route from Kisaran city to Ponot waterfall is not too difficult, but there are several roads that still have potholes, most of the journey will pass through oil palm plantations and after passing quite a long way through oil palm plantations, tourists will arrive at Markerja village. Aceh, from Marjiwa Aceh village it is close to the Ponot waterfall. Travel time from Kisaran City to Ponot waterfall is ± 3-4 hours with a distance of ± 100km.

5. Finally, from the city of Medan, the route from the city of Medan to the Ponot waterfall is quite far, where tourists who come from the city of Medan must first go to the city of high cliffs with a distance of  $\pm$  50 km, then tourists go to Limapuluh Regency with a distance of  $\pm$  44 km. after that tourists will head to Kisaran with a distance of  $\pm$  39 km. After tourists arrive at Kisaran, tourists will then follow the range route to Ponot waterfall. Most tourists from Medan who visit Ponot waterfall use private vehicles and use car rental services.

6.

**Figure 1.**Conditions of Ponot Waterfall



*Source: Researcher Process, 2021*

### **Transportation**

Based on interviews conducted by researchers with tourists, the location of the Ponot waterfall is far from the city, so transportation is really needed by tourists to reach the Ponot waterfall tourist location. Most tourists use private vehicles to get to Ponot waterfall, such as private cars and private motorbikes. Currently, the only vehicles that pass through the Ponot waterfall tourist attraction are inter-city vehicles such as Karya Agung, Operanto, and others. Tourists can also take the PT.INALUM bus, only this bus rarely passes.

Based on the researcher's interview with Mr. Humala Tua Panjaitan (Village Head), the current state of transportation has not been optimal to get to the Ponot Waterfall tourist spot, hampering the development of tourist destinations and forcing most tourists who do not have private vehicles to have to dig deeper into their pockets to reach the tourist spot. This. The development of the Ponot waterfall in the transportation sector is less than optimal.

### **Highway**

As in general, highway tourist attractions are something that tourists really pay attention to before visiting tourist destinations. If the road to a tourist attraction is difficult for vehicles to pass over a long distance, tourists will be reluctant to visit tourist attractions. Especially with this increasingly developing era and the development of technology which makes people increasingly lazy. Based on the results of research conducted by researchers in the field, the road to the Ponot waterfall tourist attraction is quite good, where if tourists go through the city of Porsea to this tourist attraction, tourists will take a fairly smooth highway, only 100 meters to the road to the Ponot waterfall tourist attraction. hollow. The management has built roads to this tourist spot several times, but due to environmental conditions, the road to this tourist spot has been damaged again.

### **Lodging**

Supporting infrastructure such as accommodation for tourists is really needed for tourists who want to spend the night or tourists who want to enjoy the cool morning atmosphere at tourist attractions, especially natural tourist attractions. To build an accommodation requires quite a large amount of funds, so most tourism managers are unable to provide the infrastructure to support this tourism. Usually those who provide accommodation are rich people or private investors who want to reap profits from a tourist destination. By establishing good cooperation between investors and tourism managers, it will provide benefits for each party.

where investors will receive income from tourists who stay overnight and with accommodation, tourists do not need to go back and forth to tourist attractions so that tourist attractions are never empty of visitors. Based on the results of researchers' interviews with tourists, Ponot Waterfall does not yet provide accommodation for tourists, the main thing is that it does not provide accommodation for tourists. Tourists who visit the Ponot waterfall tourist spot and want to stay overnight must provide their own camping equipment and lighting equipment. The Ponot waterfall management allows tourists to camp without charge, but tourists who stay overnight must follow the existing rules, namely not doing bad things at tourist attractions.

### **The role of the Village Government in managing Ponot Waterfall Tourist Attractions and Attractions in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency**

Based on the researcher's interview with Mr. M Imron Siagian (Village Head), the government as regional officials also needs to contribute to the development of a tourist destination. Policies made by local governments need to be implemented in developing a tourist destination so that environmental sustainability is maintained and the development of tourist destinations does not damage the city's spatial planning.

Each region has its own regional policies made by their own regional government and these policies will be applied to the development of tourist destinations in the area. The policies made by the regional government will become a reference for developers of a tourist destination. Based on the results of research conducted by researchers at the Asahan Regency Youth, Sports and Tourism Service, the Asahan regional government has not contributed to the development of the Ponot waterfall. Spatial planning policies for developing tourist destinations have never been implemented at Ponot waterfall. The local government has not made a real contribution, not because the local government does not want to help in developing Ponot waterfall. Constraints on development permits from the local community mean that the local government cannot intervene in the development of the Ponot waterfall.

The Asahan regional government has tried to ask the head of the management to take over the management of the Ponot waterfall by the regional government, but this request was met with strong resistance from the head of the management and the local community. The regional government is only permitted to act as a supervisor in the development of the Ponot waterfall, the regional government is not permitted to play an active role in the development of the Ponot waterfall because it is not based on the priority scale for the government to develop this tourist attraction. The local community does not want the local government to participate in the construction of the Ponot waterfall.

### **Management carried out by the local community for Ponot Waterfall Tourism Objects and Attractions in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency**

Based on interviews by researchers with people in the field, there have been quite a lot of developments carried out by Ponot waterfall managers or local communities to date, including:

1. Physical Improvements by Local Communities  
Many local people have carried out physical improvements to the Ponot waterfall, starting from being inaugurated as a tourist attraction until now, much has changed at the Ponot waterfall. Developments that have been carried out by the Ponot waterfall management include; construction of roads to the falls of Ponot waterfall, cementing of paths and construction of stairs to the falls of Ponot waterfall, construction of shops at tourist attractions, construction of public bathrooms, construction of parking lots and construction of resting places for tourists.
2. The management of the Ponot Waterfall always pays attention to the spatial planning of the Ponot Waterfall. When the local community sees a tree that is too tall and obstructs the view of

the Ponot Waterfall, the management immediately trims the tree covering it so that tourists' view is not obstructed when visiting. The Ponot waterfall management has made daily pickets at the Ponot waterfall tourist attraction. Apart from receiving visiting tourists, this daily picket also pays attention to the cleanliness of the Ponot waterfall environment.

3. Promotion of Ponot Waterfall by young people from Tangga Village, Dusun I. The development of Ponot Waterfall involves the entire community of Tangga village, especially the people in Hamlet I. Apart from the parents who are involved in the development and management of Ponot Waterfall, young people in Tangga village, especially the hamlet I was involved in the development of the Ponot waterfall, one of the participation of the young people from Tangga village in the development of the Ponot waterfall was promoting the Ponot waterfall on social media.
4. Improving the performance of Ponot waterfall tourism also involves improving employee performance or improving the performance of local communities in managing Ponot waterfall. This performance improvement aims to improve services to tourists and increase members' insight into good management of tourist attractions. This performance improvement is carried out in various ways, one of which is by providing understanding and direction by the chairman of the manager to his members. This understanding of tourism was obtained by the chairman of the manager from his friends who had already opened tourist attractions and from visits by the chairman of the manager to various tourist attractions. has developed well. Before carrying out activities, every new member at the Ponot Waterfall tourist attraction must be given an understanding of the values that apply to this tourist attraction and an understanding of the work system that has been established. This is done to avoid poor service from the local community in serving tourists.

**Figure 2.**Welcome gate to Ponot waterfall



Source: Researcher's Process, 2021

## CONCLUSION

From the results of research conducted by researchers regarding the development of tourist objects and attractions at Ponot Waterfall in Aek Songsongan District, Asahan Regency, the researchers reached several conclusions. The condition of the Ponot Waterfall tourist environment in Tangga village, Aek Songsongan subdistrict, Asahan Regency looks good, but the facilities and infrastructure are still not supportive. The local government is only permitted to act as a supervisor in the development of Ponot

Waterfall Objects and Attractions. The development strategy for the Objects and Attractions of Ponot Waterfall is community-based, where the community is the most important party in the development of Ponot Waterfall.

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