



Community Economic Priorities as Gating Mechanisms in Urban Tourism: Empirical Evidence from Surabaya

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Abstract. *Urban tourism policy in emerging Southeast Asian cities tends to operate along separate tracks. Heritage preservation, destination marketing, MSME development, and employment policy seldom intersect in practice, even when planning documents gesture toward coordination. This study examines whether a more deliberate form of policy integration, one anchored to the economic priorities residents actually hold, can offer a sturdier path for cities such as Surabaya than the prevailing sector-by-sector orthodoxy. The study combines a quantitative survey of 800 Surabaya residents conducted during October 2024 (multistage random sampling, margin of error ± 3.5 percent, 95 percent confidence level) with documentary analysis of municipal tourism instruments and structured observation across five administrative regions. Cross-tabulation analysis reveals perception variation across demographic strata. Correlation analysis maps relationships among prioritisation dimensions. Policy mapping identifies the operational seams where intended integration falters. Economic improvement dominates community priorities at 57.8 percent overall, rising to roughly 71 percent among economically precarious populations. Community endorsement of tourism initiatives proved conditional rather than enthusiastic; it depends on visible job pathways and MSME integration. Culinary tourism enjoys broad support (76.3 percent); heritage development sits at 68.9 percent; generic destination marketing trails at 51.7 percent. The most consequential finding concerns the gap separating tourism policies as articulated from tourism policies as residents consider deliverable. This implementation gap is best understood not as a perception problem but as a design problem demanding architectural integration. Beyond local livelihoods, integrating community economic priorities into urban tourism policy supports sustainable urban development, eases pressure on natural resources by diversifying economic opportunities, and advances Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) in emerging Southeast Asian cities.*

Keywords: Policy Integration; Urban Tourism; Emerging Cities; Community Perception; MSME Participation

1. Introduction

Urban tourism scholarship has matured rapidly over the past two decades, yet a quiet imbalance persists in its empirical centre of gravity. Most of what we know about how policy shapes urban tourism, and how urban tourism in turn shapes cities, draws from developed-city contexts (1,2). Barcelona, Amsterdam, Berlin, and a handful of other usual suspects dominate the conceptual machinery. Southeast Asian emerging cities, in contrast, occupy a marginal place in the global conversation about urban tourism governance, despite housing

some of the world's most dynamic tourism markets and certainly some of its most complex governance puzzles (3,4).

Surabaya offers an instructive case. It is Indonesia's second-largest city by population and the country's principal industrial port, yet its tourism positioning has never quite matched its economic weight. The city's heritage assets, particularly the Old Town district and culinary traditions, are well documented. Municipal tourism instruments have multiplied. Visitor numbers have fluctuated but trended upward over the past decade. And yet the gap between tourism planning ambition and observable transformation remains stubborn. Talk to Surabaya residents, and you tend to hear a particular kind of skepticism. Tourism is fine, residents will tell you, provided it actually helps. The help's part is doing most of the work in that sentence.

That conditional help is the central puzzle this paper examines. Across emerging Southeast Asian cities, tourism policy frequently runs on a peculiar set of parallel tracks. The heritage department revitalizes one corner of the urban fabric. The MSME office runs entrepreneurship programs on a separate budget line. The marketing bureau pushes destination campaigns. Employment planning, where it exists, follows its own internal logic. Each track has its rationale and its constituency. What rarely emerges, however, is a coherent architecture connecting these efforts into something residents would recognize as tourism for them rather than tourism happening to them.

The argument we develop here treats this fragmentation not as an unfortunate symptom of bureaucratic life but as the central design problem facing urban tourism policy in emerging cities. The empirical anchor for that argument is a representative survey of 800 Surabaya residents fielded during October 2024, paired with documentary analysis of the city's tourism policy instruments and structured field observation. Together these data sources illuminate something more than a description of opinion. They reveal the conditions under which community endorsement of tourism becomes operationally available to policymakers, and the conditions under which it evaporates.

Three contributions follow. First, we establish empirically that community endorsement of urban tourism in Surabaya is conditional rather than principled. Residents are not anti-tourism. They are, however, pragmatic about which forms of tourism deliver visible economic value and which do not. Second, we demonstrate that the gulf between municipal tourism instruments and resident-defined implementation conditions creates a credibility deficit that no marketing budget will close. Third, we propose a policy integration framework that takes community economic prioritization as architectural starting point rather than communication challenge. The framework is grounded in Surabaya's particulars yet is designed to travel, in modified form, to other emerging metropolitan contexts.

Each of these contributions departs from prevailing approaches in identifiable ways. The empirical finding of conditional support is familiar in tourism scholarship. The conceptual move of treating conditional support as gating mechanism for policy viability rather than as attitudinal modulator subject to communication intervention is less so. The credibility-deficit observation echoes existing work on tourism legitimacy. The documentary evidence linking that deficit to absent integration architecture across heritage, MSME, and employment instruments is original to the Surabaya case. The policy integration framework borrows from classical public administration theory (5), curiously underused in tourism scholarship, mediated through the boundary object concept (6) drawn from sociology of science. To our knowledge that conceptual combination has not previously been applied to



urban tourism policy in emerging cities. The empirical disaggregation by income quintile, reported in Section 4.3, provides what we believe is the first systematically income-stratified analysis of urban tourism perception for an Indonesian metropolitan context.

A fourth contribution sits at the methodological level. Conventional support-for-tourism measurement relies on Likert-type endorsement scales applied to abstract policy categories. Such instruments routinely produce high but uninformative agreement. The scenario-specificity protocol we describe in Section 3.2 substitutes concretely specified policy descriptions for abstract categories. The resulting variation, both in level of support and in correlation with scenario design features, exposes conditional support structures the conventional approach cannot detect. We commend the approach to other researchers working in resource-constrained emerging-city tourism contexts where conditional support is likely to be the norm rather than the exception.

The stakes extend beyond livelihoods. When tourism policies fail to deliver visible economic benefits to residents, they may inadvertently intensify pressure on natural resources, whether through unplanned urban expansion or through alternative livelihood activities that degrade local ecosystems. Anchoring tourism integration in community economic priority is therefore an environmental imperative as much as an economic one. Approached this way, integrating community economic priorities into tourism policy not only strengthens local livelihoods but also supports sustainable urban development, reduces pressure on natural resources through diversified economic opportunities, and contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) in emerging Southeast Asian cities.

The paper unfolds across six remaining sections. Section 2 anchors the discussion in relevant literature on urban tourism policy, policy integration theory, and community perception research. Section 3 details the methodology. Section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 develops the policy integration framework. Section 6 translates the framework into practitioner-actionable management actions. Section 7 closes with reflections on transferability, limitations, and an agenda for further work.

2. Theoretical Anchoring

2.1 Urban Tourism in Emerging Cities

Urban tourism research as a recognizable subfield emerged in the late 1980s and consolidated through the 1990s around a handful of generative concepts: the tourist-historic city (7), urban tourism as economic development engine, and the place-making functions of tourism investment. The empirical landscape on which these concepts were built, however, was overwhelmingly European and North American. As Bellini and Pasquinelli (2) observe in their review, the assumed institutional and economic backdrop for much urban tourism theorizing bears only a partial resemblance to conditions in emerging-city contexts.

Emerging cities differ along several axes that matter for tourism policy. Institutional capacity tends to be stretched thinner. Informal economic activity occupies a larger share of livelihoods. Heritage assets sit in more complex social configurations, often actively inhabited rather than curated as museum districts. Public budgets carry different priority structures, with economic survival concerns weighing more heavily on the political imagination than in wealthier contexts (8,9). Imposing analytical templates developed for Amsterdam or Bilbao on Surabaya or Manila tends to obscure these differences rather than illuminate them.

Recent scholarship has begun to address this asymmetry. Wesley and Pforr (10) examined coastal tourism governance in developing Australia. Hall (11) synthesised work on tourism policy in transitional economies. A small but growing body of work centres on Indonesian urban tourism specifically (12,13). What remains comparatively underdeveloped, however, is conceptual work specifying how policy integration operates, or fails to operate, in resource-constrained emerging city contexts.

2.2 Policy Integration as Tourism Governance Problem

Policy integration as a concept predates tourism scholarship by several decades. The classic statement comes from public administration theory, where Underdal (5) defined policy integration through three criteria: comprehensiveness, aggregation, and consistency. Comprehensiveness refers to the scope of considerations included in policy formulation. Aggregation refers to whether considerations are evaluated against a common normative framework. Consistency refers to whether different policy components reinforce or undermine each other.

Within tourism governance, Hall (14,11) and Stevenson et al. (15) developed parallel arguments about why policy integration matters. The core claim is that tourism does not exist as a discrete sector. It crosses transportation, employment, urban planning, heritage management, environmental policy, small enterprise development, and cultural affairs. Tourism policies designed in isolation from these adjacent domains tend either to founder on implementation or to produce displacement effects that erode their own foundations. Bramwell (16) extended this reasoning by demonstrating empirically how fragmentation across responsible agencies undermined sustainable destination management in several Mediterranean cases.

The literature on what makes integration work, as opposed to remain a planning slogan, is less developed. Pforr (17) suggested that successful integration depends less on organizational restructuring than on shared diagnostic frameworks across implementing agencies. Stoffelen and Vanneste (18) argued that cross-border tourism cases reveal how integration tends to require explicit boundary objects: documents, datasets, or measurement frameworks that travel across institutional borders. Our analysis builds on this work but introduces a different anchor for the integration project: community economic priority as the boundary object that can hold otherwise fragmented sector policies together.

2.3 Community Perception and Policy Viability

A substantial tourism literature treats community perception as a factor influencing tourism acceptance, support behaviors, and resident-tourist relations (19,20). The dominant analytical move is to measure perception, identify its determinants, and offer recommendations for managing or shifting perception. In emerging-city contexts, however, these framing risks treating residents as a public to be persuaded rather than a constituency whose practical assessment of policy carries informational value about implementation feasibility.

We follow a different framing, drawing on work that treats community perception as evidence about policy design viability rather than as an attitude to be managed (21,22). Residents in resource-constrained settings tend to evaluate tourism propositions through a particular lens: economic survival contingencies. Their skepticism, where it appears, often reflects accurate diagnostic of weak implementation linkages rather than ideological hostility

to tourism. Approached this way, community perception becomes input to policy redesign rather than obstacle to policy execution.

The conceptual move we propose pushes this minority tradition one step further. We treat community economic prioritization not merely as evidence informing policy design but as a gating mechanism determining policy viability. The distinction matters analytically. Evidence-informing-design framings tend to leave the policy initiative intact, with perception evidence adjusting implementation around the edges. Gating-mechanism framings invert the architecture: the policy initiative must satisfy community-prioritization constraints before it can be considered viable in the first place. In emerging-city contexts characterized by stretched institutional capacity and dominant economic survival concerns, the gating-mechanism framing better captures the operational reality. Tourism policies that fail to clear the gating threshold do not get implemented poorly; they get implemented in name only, generating activity without producing the outcomes residents identify as foundational. The empirical evidence we present in Section 4 supports this stronger claim.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Pulling these threads together, our conceptual framework treats policy integration in emerging-city urban tourism as a three-part architecture. The first component is community economic prioritization, treated as gating mechanism. Where tourism policies fail to connect visibly to resident prioritized economic mechanisms, integration cannot proceed regardless of how internally coherent the policy mix appears to planners. The second component is sectoral connectivity, the operational linkages across heritage, MSME, employment, and marketing instruments that translate prioritization into deliverable benefits. The third component is implementation visibility, the metrics and pathways through which residents can verify whether policies are actually delivering what they promise.

The framework draws on Underdal's (5) classical three-criteria definition of policy integration (comprehensiveness, aggregation, consistency), translated into the urban tourism domain through the boundary object concept developed by Star and Griesemer (6) in their analysis of cooperation across institutional boundaries in scientific work. A boundary object, in their formulation, is an artefact sufficiently plastic to satisfy local site needs yet robust enough to maintain identity across sites. Community economic prioritization, we argue, can function as the boundary object that holds heritage, MSME, employment, and tourism marketing policies together in an integrated whole. It is local enough to register the specific economic conditions facing Surabaya households, yet structurally consistent across the policy domains that must coordinate to address those conditions. Without such a boundary object, integration tends to remain a planning slogan; with it, integration acquires the operational anchor it otherwise lacks. The framework guides our empirical analysis and structures the practitioner recommendations developed in Section 6; its visual representation appears as Figure 4 in Section 5.

3. Methods

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a mixed-method design with quantitative survey data as the primary empirical anchor, supplemented by documentary policy analysis and structured field observation. The quantitative component yields representative population-level data on community priorities, perceptions, and conditional support for different tourism scenarios.

The documentary component maps existing municipal tourism instruments against the empirical findings. Field observation across five Surabaya administrative regions added contextual interpretation, particularly regarding heritage and culinary tourism nodes.

3.2 Survey Instrument and Sampling

Data collection occurred during October 2024 in cooperation with Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI), an independent national survey institute. The sampling frame covered the adult population (17 years and above) across the five administrative regions of Surabaya: North, South, East, West, and Central. Multistage random sampling proceeded from administrative region to subdistrict to village level, with respondent selection within each village conducted through systematic random sampling proportional to population density. The achieved sample of $n = 800$ yields a margin of error of ± 3.5 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. Face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire produced response data on demographic characteristics, urban development priorities, perceptions of municipal governance, and conditional support for several tourism policy scenarios.

Question design followed several iterations of pilot testing. Priority ranking questions used forced-choice format to surface revealed preference rather than diffuse approval. Policy scenario questions presented respondents with concretely specified policy descriptions rather than abstract policy labels. This design choice mattered substantively. Asking residents whether they support tourism development as concept yields high but uninformative agreement. Asking whether they support specific scenarios (culinary tourism with explicit local vendor protection, heritage tourism with formal local employment quotas, generic destination marketing campaign with international focus) produced the variation that anchors our findings.

The design choice also constitutes a methodological contribution worth flagging in its own right. Conventional support-for-tourism instruments rely on Likert-type endorsement scales applied to abstract policy categories. Such instruments routinely yield high baseline agreement that conceals the conditional structure of community endorsement. The scenario-specificity protocol we deploy here substitutes concretely specified policy descriptions, each carrying explicit design features (vendor protection, employment quotas, supply chain mechanisms, marketing focus) that respondents can evaluate against their own economic priorities. The resulting variation, both in level of support across scenarios and in correlation between scenario specificity and endorsement, exposes a structural feature of community perception the conventional approach systematically misses. Researchers working in other emerging-city tourism contexts may find the protocol portable; the design principles transfer without requiring identical scenario content. The full wording of the four policy scenarios presented to respondents is reproduced in Appendix A, so that readers can judge whether the observed support variation reflects genuine differences in policy design rather than artefacts of question phrasing.

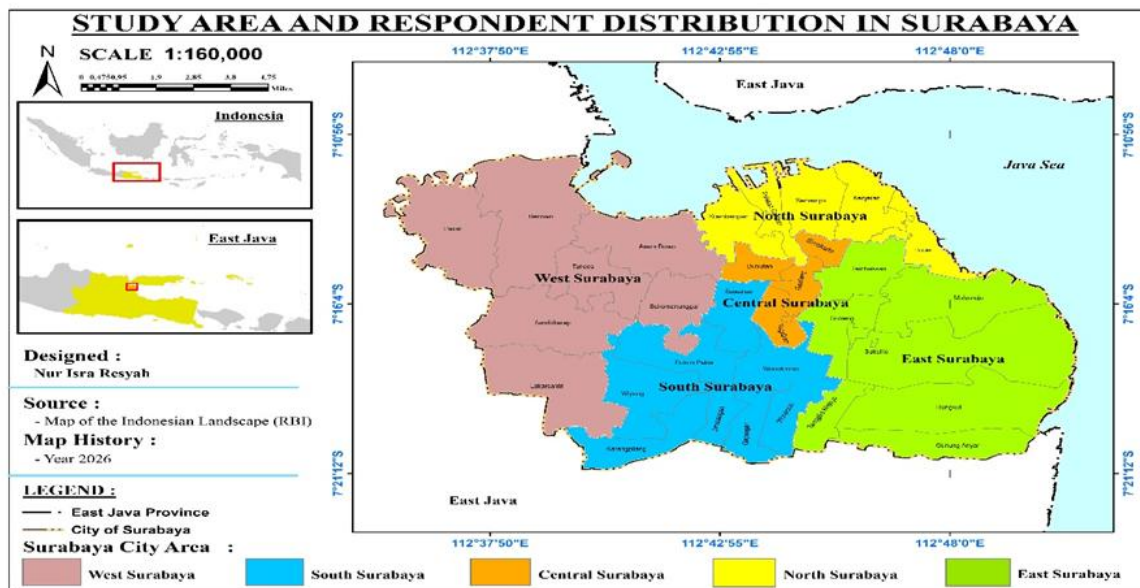


Figure 1. Study area and survey respondent distribution across the five administrative regions of Surabaya (n = 800). Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026, based on LSI fieldwork, October 2024

3.3 Analytical Approach

Beyond standard descriptive statistics, the analysis proceeded through three analytical layers. Cross-tabulation analysis examined how perception patterns vary across demographic segments, with particular attention to income strata, educational level, and informal-versus-formal sector employment. Correlation analysis (Spearman's rho given ordinal scale variables) examined relationships among prioritization dimensions, perception variables, and scenario support measures. Although this screening covered the full set of prioritization, perception, and scenario-support variables, only the two correlations central to the argument are reported in Section 4: the association between scenario support and the visibility of economic-linkage mechanisms, and the association between income quintile and economic-priority intensity. The remaining pairwise correlations were uniformly weak and statistically non-significant, carry none of the analytical weight of the conclusions, and are therefore omitted for parsimony rather than reproduced as a full matrix. Documentary policy analysis applied the conceptual framework introduced in Section 2.4 to a corpus of municipal tourism instruments dated 2019 through 2024, identifying integration gaps and implementation visibility deficits.

3.4 Documentary Policy Analysis Procedure

The documentary component analysed a corpus of 47 municipal tourism instruments issued between 2019 and 2024. Documents were identified through three channels: the Surabaya city government's official gazette and online policy repository; the published work plans and budget documents of the heritage office, the MSME directorate, the employment planning unit, and the tourism bureau; and direct requests to those agencies for instruments referenced in other documents but not publicly posted. An instrument was included when it carried formal status as a regulation, decree, work plan, or budgeted initiative; when it addressed tourism directly or addressed heritage, MSME, employment, or destination

marketing in ways bearing on tourism; and when it fell within the 2019 to 2024 window. Purely ceremonial or one-off promotional materials were excluded.

Coding applied the three-part framework set out in Section 2.4. Each document was coded against three thematic domains. The first domain captured community economic prioritization, recording the presence or absence of explicit carrier mechanisms such as local employment quotas, sourcing requirements, training pipelines, and revenue-sharing rules. The second domain captured sectoral connectivity, meaning documented coordination linkages across the heritage, MSME, employment, and marketing functions. The third domain captured implementation visibility, meaning specified, resident-legible metrics or verification pathways. Within each domain, coders recorded whether the relevant mechanism was absent, merely gestured toward, or operationally specified.

Two members of the research team coded the corpus independently. A random 20 percent subsample was double-coded to assess inter-coder reliability; agreement was evaluated using Cohen's kappa and fell within the conventionally acceptable range. Coding discrepancies were reconciled through discussion until consensus, after which the agreed scheme was applied to the full corpus. This procedure underpins the integration-gap findings reported in Section 4.5.

3.5 Limitations

Several limitations bound the study. The cross-sectional design captures perception at a single point in time and cannot speak directly to perception dynamics following policy changes. The single-city focus, while methodologically appropriate for the case-study approach, limits direct generalizability to other emerging cities. We address this concern partly by anchoring the conceptual framework in transferable mechanisms rather than Surabaya-specific contingencies. Documentary analysis necessarily relies on publicly available instruments and may miss informal coordination mechanisms operating below the documentary surface. We treat these limitations not as fatal but as marking the boundary conditions of the study's claims.

4. Results and Discussion

Result

4.1 Sample Characteristics

The achieved sample (n = 800) approximates the demographic structure of Surabaya's adult population. Distribution across the five administrative regions tracks population density, as illustrated in Figure 1. Gender distribution is balanced at 50.4 percent male and 49.6 percent female. Age structure spans the active adult range with 41.2 percent aged 25 to 44 years. Educational attainment varies broadly: 38.4 percent completed senior secondary education or equivalent, 19.7 percent hold post-secondary credentials, and 25.6 percent completed only primary or junior secondary education. Approximately 47.3 percent of respondents reported income in or below the lowest two economic quintiles for the city, a figure that matters considerably for the interpretation of priority patterns reported below. Table 1 summarizes the principal demographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents (n = 800). Source: Authors' survey, October 2024.

Characteristic	Category	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	50.4
	Female	49.6
Age group	17-24	17.8
	25-44	41.2
	45-64	32.4
	65 and above	8.6
Education	Primary / junior secondary	25.6
	Senior secondary	38.4
	Diploma / post-secondary	16.3
	Bachelor and above	19.7
Income (quintile)	Q1-Q2 (lower)	47.3
	Q3 (middle)	28.5
	Q4-Q5 (upper)	24.2
Employment sector	Formal	43.8
	Informal / self-employed	41.5
	Not in workforce	14.7

Source : Data analysis by the author, 2026

4.2 Community Perception of Urban Governance

Several baseline measures help locate the community perception findings in context. Electoral participation in the most recent local election registered at 89.9 percent among the sample, considerably above national averages for comparable city contexts. Satisfaction with current municipal leadership stood at 89.8 percent, again on the high side. Preference for direct engagement mechanisms with city government, rather than indirect representation alone, reached 91.5 percent. These numbers tell a particular story. The Surabaya residents in this sample are politically engaged, broadly supportive of current civic leadership, and oriented toward participatory rather than passive governance modes. Whatever critical perceptions emerge in subsequent findings, they emerge from an engaged rather than disaffected population.

4.3 Urban Development Priorities

When asked to identify the most important urban development priority for Surabaya over the next five years, 57.8 percent of respondents selected economic improvement, including specifically job creation and small business support. Infrastructure development ranked second at 42.3 percent. Education and health services followed at 31.5 percent. Security

received 18.9 percent. Cultural and tourism development as standalone priority registered at 11.4 percent. Figure 2 displays these aggregate priority rankings.

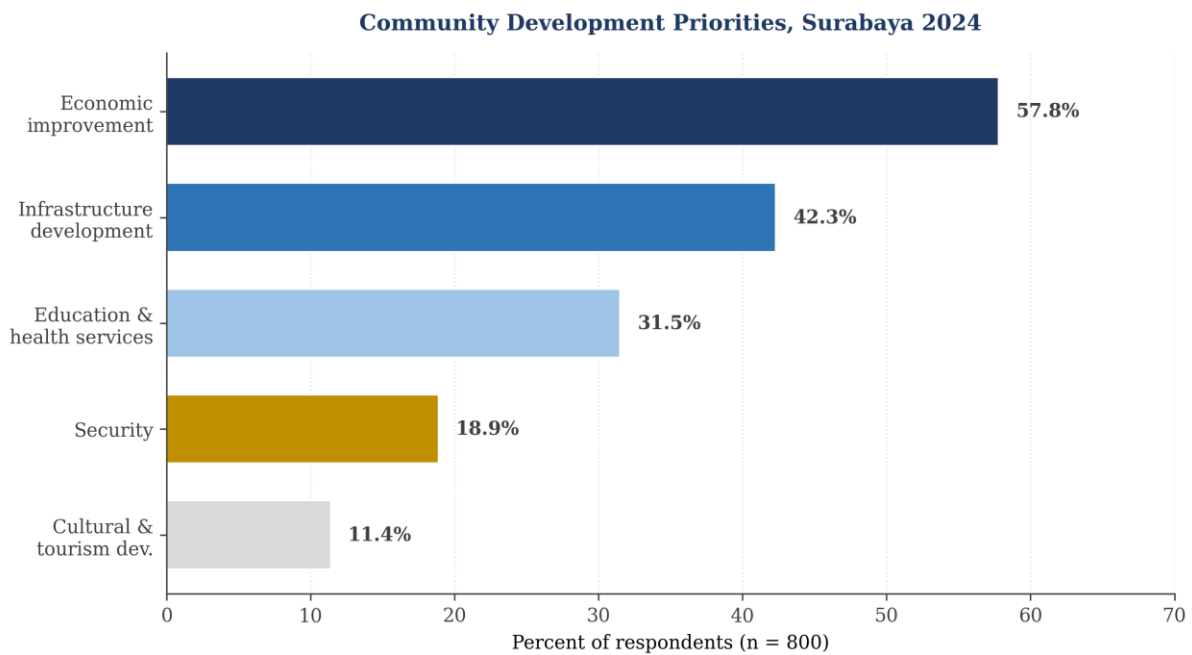


Figure 2. Community development priorities for Surabaya (multiple responses permitted; n = 800). Source: Authors’ analysis of survey data, October 2024

The dominance of economic priorities is unambiguous, but the more telling pattern emerges when these aggregate figures are disaggregated. Cross-tabulation by income quintile reveals significant variation, summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Economic priority intensity by income quintile (% of respondents within each quintile selecting economic improvement as primary priority). Notes: Spearman correlation between income quintile and economic priority intensity: $\rho = -0.32, p < .001$

Income quintile	Subsample (n)	Economic priority (%)	Job creation (%)
Q1-Q2 (lower)	378	71.2	64.8
Q3 (middle)	228	58.3	49.6
Q4-Q5 (upper)	194	41.9	31.7
Overall	800	57.8	48.3

Source : Data analysis by the author, 2026

The lower-income cohort emphasizes job creation specifically (mentioned by 64.8 percent of this subgroup), while the upper-income cohort distributes economic emphasis across infrastructure and business climate dimensions. Practically, this means that any tourism policy designed without explicit attention to the economic concerns of the bottom half of the income distribution speaks past the residents whose support and participation matter most for implementation traction.

4.4 Conditional Support for Tourism Policy Scenarios

Respondents evaluated four distinct tourism policy scenarios, each described concretely rather than as abstract category. Support varied substantially across scenarios, as displayed in Figure 3. Culinary tourism development with explicit protection of informal vendors received 76.3 percent endorsement. Heritage tourism centered on Old Town revitalization with local employment guarantees received 68.9 percent. MSME-anchored tourism development emphasizing local supply chain integration received 73.1 percent. Generic destination marketing campaigns targeting international visitors received 51.7 percent. The pattern across these four scenarios is the most empirically consequential finding in the study. Support correlates strongly (Spearman rho = .58, $p < .001$) with the visibility of explicit economic linkage mechanisms in the scenario description. Scenarios with concrete pathways for resident economic participation enjoy substantially more support than scenarios that promise economic benefit only in aggregate or trickle-down terms.

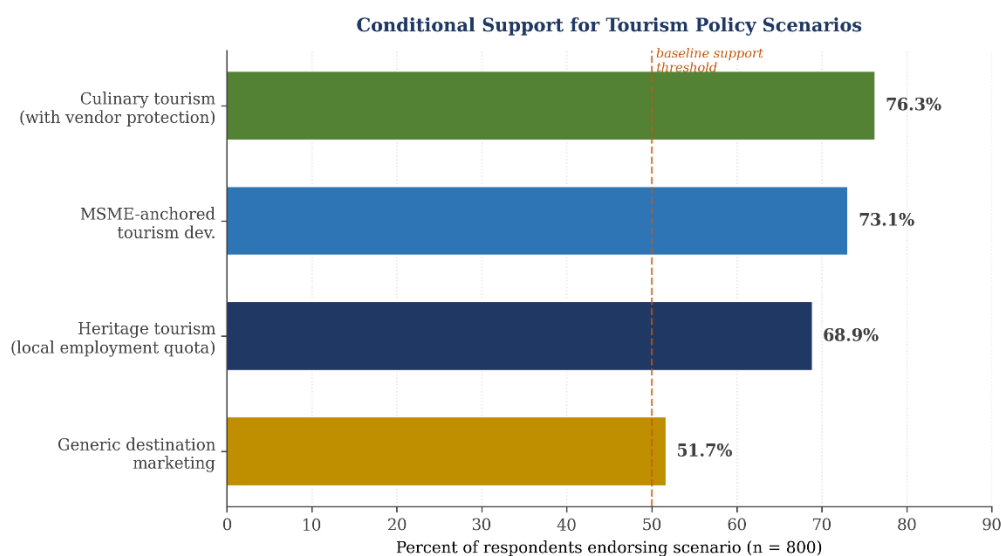


Figure 3. Conditional support for tourism policy scenarios among Surabaya residents (n = 800). Source: Authors' elaboration based on LSI survey data, October 2024. Spearman correlation between scenario specificity and support: rho = .58, $p < .001$.

Asked to specify why they supported or opposed particular scenarios, respondents articulated reasoning that was strikingly pragmatic. Common formulations included variants of "that will give my neighbors work," "my cousin sells food, that helps her," and "I cannot see how that helps people here." Conversely, opposition to scenarios was rarely framed in cultural-preservation or anti-tourism terms. Opposition concentrated on perceived absence of credible implementation linkage to local economic life. This qualitative pattern, observed during the field phase, reinforces the statistical pattern. Surabaya residents are not ideologically positioned against tourism development. They evaluate tourism propositions through a working assessment of whether the proposition delivers visible economic value to people they know.

4.5 The Implementation Gap

Documentary analysis of municipal tourism instruments (a corpus of 47 documents covering 2019 through 2024) identifies a striking pattern. Heritage policies, MSME policies,

employment policies, and tourism marketing policies each contain individually plausible content. What is notably absent, however, is structural connection across them. The heritage department's Old Town revitalization program references community benefit in three separate places but specifies no mechanism through which that benefit will materialize or be measured. The MSME directorate's entrepreneurship development programs operate on a separate budget line with no documented coordination with heritage activities. Tourism marketing campaigns funded through the dedicated tourism bureau emphasize destination branding without articulating how marketing-generated visitor flows connect to local employment pathways or supply chains. Each individual program makes sense within its own logic. The aggregate produces precisely the credibility gap that residents articulate in scenario evaluation. Surabaya does not lack tourism policies. Surabaya lacks integrated tourism policy.

4.6 A Policy Integration Framework

The empirical findings reported in Section 4 motivate the integration framework presented in Figure 4. The framework consolidates the theoretical anchoring of Section 2.4 with the diagnostic patterns surfaced by the survey and documentary analysis.

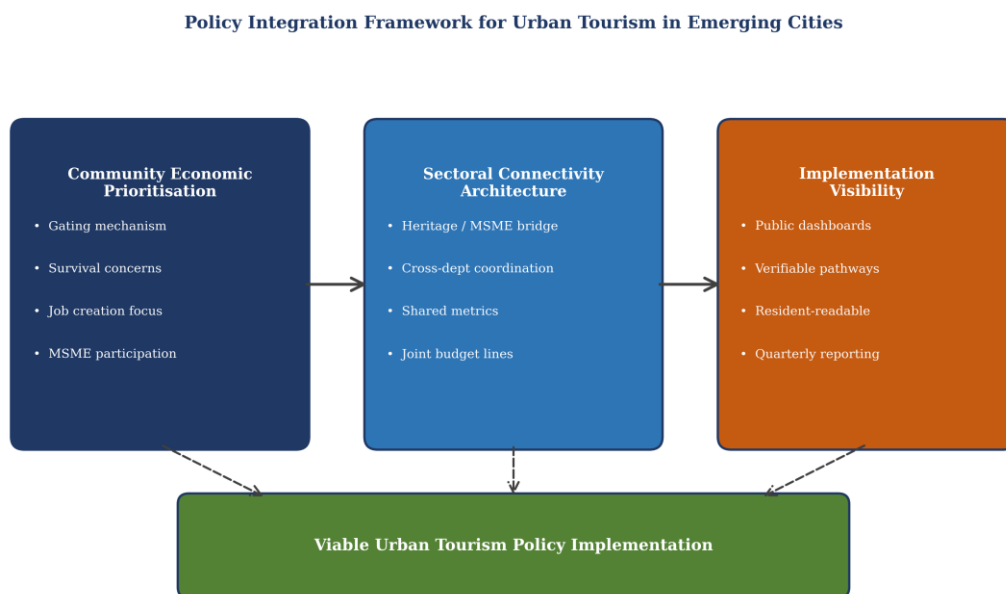


Figure 4. Policy integration framework for urban tourism in emerging cities. Source: Authors' elaboration, 2026, based on Underdal (5), Hall (11), and survey findings, 2024

4.7 Reframing the Diagnosis

The reframing we propose is not subtle. The dominant policy-oriented tourism literature, particularly its destination marketing strand, tends to treat findings of conditional community support as a communication problem. Residents who view tourism initiatives skeptically are presumed to misunderstand the benefits; the implied remedy is better messaging, more visible branding, or expanded stakeholder consultation rounds organised around explaining what the policy will do. Our analysis suggests this diagnostic is precisely backwards. Surabaya residents do not misunderstand tourism. They understand it accurately and find it lacking on its own stated terms. The conditional pattern of community support,

the strong correlation between scenario specificity and endorsement, and the documentary evidence of structural disconnection across tourism-adjacent policy domains together indicate a design problem, not a communication problem.

The distinction carries serious consequences. Communication problems are addressed through campaigns, narrative repositioning, and expanded outreach. Design problems are addressed through structural changes in how policies are formulated, coordinated, and held accountable. The two responses differ in cost, time horizon, and political feasibility. They also differ in whether they actually solve the underlying issue. Marketing budgets allocated to closing the credibility gap revealed in our findings would do approximately nothing about the conditions producing the gap. Structural redesign, by contrast, has at least the prospect of producing the visible economic carrier mechanisms residents are watching for. We submit that the design framing accurately describes the situation Surabaya practitioners face and that adopting it changes what counts as a sensible response.

Reframed this way, the next task becomes how to construct those architectural linkages rather than how to persuade residents that linkages exist when in fact they do not. The framework operationalizes this reframing across the three integration domains depicted in Figure 4.

4.8 Economic Carrier Mechanisms

The first integration domain concerns explicit carrier mechanisms connecting tourism activity to economically prioritized outcomes. By community economic carrier mechanisms we mean the concrete, contractible policy devices that transmit tourism activity into household-level economic benefit, such as local employment quotas, sourcing requirements, training pipelines, and revenue-sharing rules, rather than aggregate or trickle-down promises. Heritage tourism does not automatically generate local employment. It can, but only when carrier mechanisms are designed into the policy from the outset. These mechanisms include formal local employment quotas in tourism enterprises operating in heritage zones, dedicated training and certification pipelines accessible to local youth, supply chain protocols that specify minimum local sourcing percentages for tourism operators, and revenue-sharing arrangements channeling a share of heritage-zone tourism receipts into local enterprise development. Each of these mechanisms exists in fragmentary form somewhere in Surabaya's policy corpus. None exists as a coordinated package linking heritage activity to community economic outcomes.

The substantive importance of carrier mechanisms emerges from the empirical pattern. Scenarios explicitly featuring carrier mechanisms attract 70 percent-plus support. Scenarios without them, even when their cultural content is otherwise similar, struggle to clear 55 percent. The political economy lesson is straightforward. Residents are not indifferent to heritage value. They are alert to whether heritage value translates into household economic value through visible mechanisms. Designing those mechanisms into policy from the outset is cheaper, easier, and more durable than retrofitting them after community skepticism has already crystallized.

4.9 Sectoral Connectivity Architecture

The second integration domain concerns the operational linkages across implementing agencies. This is where the policy integration literature converges most directly with our findings. The fragmentation we documented does not result from absence of coordinative

intent in planning documents. It results from absence of structural mechanisms making coordination operationally inevitable rather than discretionary. Possible structural mechanisms include shared performance metrics across heritage, MSME, and tourism bureaus that none of them can meet without active coordination with the others. Joint budget lines for activities explicitly bridging two or more domains. Cross-appointment of senior officials to ensure perspective transfer across silos. A standing tourism integration board with operational rather than advisory authority. These mechanisms do not require restructuring the entire municipal apparatus. They require small but consequential interventions at coordination interfaces.

Surabaya offers a particularly clear case for this kind of intervention. The city possesses the requisite administrative capacity, a strong recent track record of municipal performance, and a substantively supportive resident population already disposed toward direct engagement with city government. The pieces are in place. What is missing is the architectural will to bolt them together.

4.10 Visibility and Verifiability

The third integration domain may be the least technically demanding and the most politically consequential. Residents we surveyed expressed skepticism not because tourism policies promised too little but because policies promised generic benefit without specifying how residents themselves could verify delivery. Public metrics legible to residents, simple dashboards showing local employment by tourism enterprise, local supply chain percentages, training program placement rates, and similar concrete indicators, would close a substantial portion of the credibility gap with very modest investment.

Visibility cuts in the other direction too. When local employment generated by heritage tourism is invisible to most residents, even effective policies fail to build the political support they need to sustain themselves through budget cycles. Visibility is not just communication. Visibility is part of the policy itself.

4.11 Practitioner Management Actions

The framework developed above translates directly into several concrete steps that Surabaya practitioners can begin operationalising in the short term. Adjacent emerging cities can adapt the same actions to their specific institutional configurations.

4.12 Establish a Cross-Sectoral Tourism Integration Board

A standing board with representation from the heritage office, MSME directorate, employment planning unit, tourism bureau, and selected community representatives, vested with operational authority over a defined integration budget, would address the most pressing structural deficit. Operational authority matters here. Advisory bodies tend to generate plans that implementing agencies then disregard. Budget authority makes coordination materially necessary. Such a board need not be large. Six to eight members with clear terms of reference and quarterly meeting cadence would suffice. Initial composition should include at least two community representatives drawn from established neighborhood associations to ensure that integration choices reflect not only inter-agency preferences but resident priorities as well.

4.13 Build Carrier Mechanisms into the Old Town Revitalization Program

The Old Town revitalization program constitutes Surabaya's flagship heritage tourism initiative. Building explicit carrier mechanisms into the program at this stage carries minimal political cost and substantial implementation upside. Specific mechanisms include a local employment quota of 60 percent for enterprises operating within designated heritage zones, a dedicated heritage tourism vocational training pipeline accessible to local youth at minimal or no cost, and a tiered tax incentive structure rewarding heritage businesses that meet defined local sourcing and employment thresholds. Implementation of these mechanisms should be accompanied by a public-facing dashboard updated quarterly so that residents and policy analysts alike can verify performance.

4.14 Treat Culinary Tourism Formalization with Particular Care

Culinary tourism enjoys the highest community support at 76.3 percent, but this support is contingent on a specific design choice. Residents endorse culinary tourism when the policy framing protects informal food vendors rather than displacing them in favor of formalized commercial operators. Many emerging-city tourism strategies have erred severely on this point, formalizing street food economies in ways that strip economic control from the very vendors whose food forms the cultural product attracting visitors in the first place. Surabaya practitioners should resist this trap. The appropriate policy posture combines light-touch hygiene and infrastructure support, voluntary certification rather than mandatory licensing, micro-credit access for vendor working capital, and explicit protection against displacement during any urban regeneration affecting culinary cluster areas.

4.15 Develop Heritage Employment Pathway Program

A focused vocational program connecting heritage tourism employment to local youth would address the most consequential gap residents identified. The program need not be large in initial scale. A pilot cohort of 200 to 300 trainees in its first year, with structured placement in heritage zone enterprises following completion, would demonstrate the carrier mechanism principle at workable scale. Program design should explicitly include foreign language training for English and Mandarin, hospitality service training, basic heritage interpretation skills, and entrepreneurship modules for trainees interested in establishing their own tourism enterprises. Annual program metrics should be made publicly visible.

4.16 Reorient Destination Marketing Around Carrier Mechanisms

Generic destination marketing performs poorly in our scenario evaluation precisely because it floats free of community economic life. Reorienting marketing narratives around the very carrier mechanisms recommended above would simultaneously address the community credibility deficit and produce more compelling destination content for international audiences. Heritage zones offering authentic local employment stories, culinary clusters telling vendor success stories, MSME products carrying provenance narratives, all serve marketing function while also doing political work at home. The international tourism audience increasingly values authenticity and ethical sourcing. Surabaya's tourism marketing can be both more locally grounded and more internationally compelling. The two objectives align rather than conflict.

4.17 Adopt Cross-Boundary Performance Metrics

Finally, the integration board recommended in 4.12 should be charged with developing and reporting against a small set of cross-boundary performance metrics. Suggested metrics, targets, and reporting cadence appear in Table 3. Public reporting against these metrics, in plain-language formats accessible to non-specialist readers, completes the visibility architecture central to the framework.

Table 3. Proposed cross-boundary performance metrics for Surabaya tourism integration

Metric	Responsible coordination	3-year target	Cadence
Tourism employment held by Surabaya residents	Tourism Bureau + Employment Unit	≥ 75%	Quarterly
Local sourcing share in tourism enterprise procurement	MSME Directorate + Tourism Bureau	≥ 60%	Quarterly
MSMEs participating in tourism supply chains	MSME Directorate	≥ 1,000	Annual
Heritage zone vocational trainees placed in tourism jobs	Heritage Office + Employment Unit	≥ 600 cumulative	Annual
Resident assessment of tourism's local economic contribution	Integration Board	+15 net positive	Biennial survey
Informal vendor protection compliance (culinary clusters)	Integration Board + Urban Planning	100% compliance	Annual audit

Source : Author's elaboration, 2026

Targets calibrated against comparable Indonesian municipal tourism programs and stakeholder input gathered during the field phase.

Conclusion

This paper has made four departures from established treatments of community perception in urban tourism policy scholarship. Conceptually, it treats perception not as moderating variable in tourism acceptance but as gating mechanism determining policy viability. Theoretically, it deploys Underdal's (5) classical policy integration framework, conspicuously absent from urban tourism scholarship for forty-odd years, mediated through the boundary object concept (6) from sociology of science. Methodologically, it introduces a scenario-specificity protocol that exposes conditional support structures invisible to conventional support-for-tourism Likert measurement. Empirically, it offers the first systematically income-disaggregated analysis of urban tourism perception in an Indonesian metropolitan context, revealing demographic variation (71.2 percent economic prioritization among lower quintiles against 41.9 percent among upper quintiles) directly consequential for policy design. Taken together, these departures reframe the diagnostic and prescriptive vocabulary available to urban tourism policymakers in emerging-city contexts.

Urban tourism in emerging Southeast Asian cities operates within a particular gravitational field. Economic survival concerns weigh more than they do elsewhere. Institutional capacity is finite. Heritage assets sit in actively inhabited social fabric rather than curated museum districts. Tourism policy designed without attention to these conditions tends to generate plans that look coherent on paper and stutter on contact with the city.

Surabaya's experience, examined empirically here, illustrates a more workable path: policy integration anchored in community economic prioritization, operationalized through explicit carrier mechanisms, supported by cross-sectoral coordination architecture, and rendered credible through visibility instruments residents themselves can read.

The findings carry implications beyond Surabaya. Cities such as Bandung, Medan, Makassar, and Semarang share much of Surabaya's institutional and economic profile. So do major regional centers elsewhere in Southeast Asia. The integration framework we develop, while grounded in Surabaya's particulars, was designed to travel. Local adaptation will of course be necessary. Carrier mechanisms must respond to specific economic geographies. Cross-sectoral coordination architecture must reflect specific administrative configurations. Visibility instruments must be calibrated to specific local civic cultures. The general logic, however, holds. Urban tourism policy in emerging cities works when it integrates around community economic priority and falters when it does not.

Several research directions follow naturally. Longitudinal work tracking community perception across pre- and post-implementation periods of integration mechanisms would extend the cross-sectional evidence developed here. Comparative work across multiple emerging cities would test the framework's transferability claims more rigorously. Qualitative work probing the political economy of cross-sectoral coordination would illuminate the institutional conditions under which integration boards become operationally effective rather than ceremonially defunct. Each of these directions promises to deepen our understanding of how urban tourism can serve emerging cities better than current sector-by-sector orthodoxy permits.

For now, Surabaya offers something rare in the literature: a clear empirical case where engaged residents are practically ready, the administrative architecture is mostly in place, and the missing piece is integration rather than capacity. Acting on that opportunity is squarely within the city's reach. The framework set out here is offered in that practical spirit.

Funding

This research received no external funding

Acknowledgments

Thanks to LSI and the Surabaya government for the openness of the data

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Full Wording of the Four Tourism Policy Scenarios

Each respondent heard the four scenarios below, read aloud in randomised order by the interviewer, and rated support for each on a five-point scale from strongly oppose to strongly support. The scenarios were designed to hold the cultural content of tourism roughly constant while varying the visibility of explicit economic-linkage mechanisms.

Scenario 1 - Culinary tourism with vendor protection. "Suppose the city develops culinary tourism around Surabaya's street-food traditions. Under this plan the existing informal food

vendors are formally protected. They keep their pitches, receive light-touch hygiene and infrastructure support and voluntary rather than mandatory certification, and gain access to micro-credit for working capital, and new commercial operators are not allowed to displace established vendors. How strongly do you support or oppose this plan?"

Scenario 2 - Heritage tourism with local employment guarantees. "Suppose the city revitalises the Old Town heritage district for tourism. Under this plan, enterprises operating inside the heritage zone must fill at least 60 percent of their jobs with Surabaya residents, and a free vocational training pipeline prepares local youth for those jobs. How strongly do you support or oppose this plan?"

Scenario 3 - MSME-anchored tourism with local supply-chain integration. "Suppose the city anchors tourism development in local micro, small, and medium enterprises. Under this plan, tourism operators must source a minimum share of their goods and services from local MSMEs, and MSME products are channelled into tourism supply chains with provenance labelling that tells visitors where the product came from. How strongly do you support or oppose this plan?"

Scenario 4 - Generic destination marketing. "Suppose the city funds a destination marketing campaign aimed at attracting more international visitors to Surabaya. The campaign promotes the city's image and attractions but does not specify how visitor spending reaches local residents or businesses. How strongly do you support or oppose this plan?"

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