



Identifying the Attractions of Karanghawu Beach's Natural and Cultural Tourism as a Leading Destination in Sukabumi

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to identify the potential of natural and cultural attractions at Karanghawu Beach as a leading destination in Sukabumi Regency. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach through field observations and literature studies to examine the characteristics of tourist attractions in the area. The results of the study show that Karanghawu Beach has natural tourism potential in the form of a cliff landscape facing the Indian Ocean, an open sea panorama, and the dynamic waves typical of southern beaches. In addition, there are cultural attractions in the form of the Nyi Roro Kidul shrine at the top of Winarum, which is used by pilgrims, and the *Nyalawean* tradition. The combination of natural and cultural potential gives the destination its unique value. Therefore, the development of Karanghawu Beach needs to be directed towards sustainable tourism management by involving the local community and paying attention to coastal environmental sustainability

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector in Sukabumi Regency has now entered a new phase following the designation of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu area as a UNESCO Global Geopark. One of the central points that represents tourism on the southern coast of West Java is Karanghawu Beach in Cisolok District. This destination has a strong distinction through the harmonious blend of geological phenomena in the form of coral cliffs jutting out into the ocean with cultural and religious narratives that are closely attached to the collective memory of the local community (Wulung et al., 2020; Khasanah et al., 2023). The revitalization of infrastructure carried out by the local government in recent years has transformed Karanghawu into a more modern place, while still maintaining its iconic natural characteristics, namely the stove-like "hawu" coral formations that are the main visual attraction for tourists. (Maulana & Yulianto, 2024).

However, behind the massive physical transformation, the development of Karanghawu Beach still poses fundamental challenges related to integrated attraction mapping. So far, the focus of development has often been stuck on the aesthetic aspects of the beach landscape alone, while the potential geological value and depth of local cultural narratives have not been comprehensively identified as a unified tourism product (Ibrahim & Adiputra, 2023). The lack of a clear classification of these natural and cultural attractions has resulted in promotional strategies tending to be general in nature (Dewi et al., 2023). As a result, there is a risk of losing the authenticity of the destination if development only pursues the quantity of visits without considering the preservation of intangible values that are the spirit of Karanghawu itself (Setiawan et al., 2025).

The gap between enormous potential and a management model that is still partial is the main reason why this research is urgently needed. Precise identification of natural assets such as volcanic rock structures and sunset panoramas, as well as cultural assets such as the mythology of Nyi Roro Kidul and local traditions, is essential to strengthen Karanghawu's position as a competitive leading destination (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Damayanti & Taum, 2024). Without solid baseline data on these specific attractions, there are concerns that future tourism development policies will lack direction and fail to deliver sustainable economic impacts for the communities in Sukabumi Regency (Simorangkir et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth identification of the various natural and cultural attractions at Karanghawu Beach. Through a descriptive approach, this study will formulate hidden potentials that can be optimized to increase the selling value of the destination. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to coastal tourism studies and serve as a practical reference for stakeholders in developing marketing and conservation strategies for the area that are in line with the principles of international geopark development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Geopark-Based Tourism Development Concept

As part of the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark (CPUGGp), Karanghahu Beach cannot be managed solely as a conventional beach tourism destination. The geopark concept emphasizes three main pillars: conservation, education, and local community economic development through geotourism (Wulung et al., 2020). Identification of attractions in this area must include aspects of geodiversity (geological diversity) that have high scientific and aesthetic value (Harahap & Purnama, 2024). Maulana & Yulianto (2024) emphasizing that physical revitalization in geopark areas must continue to prioritize the integrity of the original geological structure so as not to degrade the value of the earth's heritage, which is the main attraction for educational tourists.

Geo-Cultural Heritage

Outstanding tourist attractions are born from a combination of physical landscapes (tangible) and cultural narratives (intangible) (Andalucia et al., 2023). At Karanghahu Beach, volcanic rock formations are not merely visual objects, but spaces for the development of local mythology, such as the story of Nyi Roro Kidul (Arwansyah et al., 2025). Taheri et al., (2026) believes that the cultural and religious narratives attached to geological objects create a "soul" for these destinations. Without comprehensive identification of these cultural aspects, destinations risk superficial commodification, where physical beauty is emphasized but the depth of historical meaning is forgotten (Ibrahim & Adiputra, 2023).

Authenticity and the Challenges of Modern Tourism

Massive infrastructure transformation in coastal destinations often poses challenges to maintaining authenticity. Ballesterro & Ramírez (2007); Dewi et al (2023), argue that development that only pursues the quantity of visits (mass tourism) without considering intangible values can lead to the loss of local identity. A clear classification of attraction elements is essential to avoid general promotional strategies. Menurut Mastika et al. (2022), Precise asset identification is the first step in building a strong tourism narrative that sets Karanghahu apart from other beaches on the southern coast of Java.

Economic Sustainability and Data-Based Policy

Partial tourism management models often fail to provide long-term economic benefits for local communities. Simorangkir et al. (2024), emphasizing the importance of "solid baseline data" in formulating tourism policies. Research focused on identifying attractions in depth serves as a mitigation tool so that future development policies do not lose direction. Strengthening Karanghahu's position as a leading destination requires synergy between mapping natural potential (such as sunset panoramas and rock formations) and community readiness in managing local traditions (Novianti et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to comprehensively describe the natural and cultural attractions of Karanghawu Beach as a leading destination in Sukabumi. This approach was chosen because it is able to capture the meaning of social phenomena and cultural experiences in context, especially in tourism destination research that involves physical and non-physical aspects such as local narratives, myths, and the aesthetic value of the landscape (Prasetyo & Nararais, 2023). Data collection techniques include direct field observation, semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (destination managers, local communities, and tourists), as well as visual and written documentation obtained from primary sources. Observations were conducted to identify physical elements such as geological structures, coastal characteristics, and natural panoramas, while interviews were intended to explore perceptions, cultural values, and narrative dimensions that were not immediately apparent in the observations (Faried et al., 2025).

Data analysis techniques are carried out systematically and interactively, including data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions based on the 4A tourism destination components (Attraction, Accessibility, Amenity, Ancillary) (Jumiati et al., 2025). The results of this identification were then synthesized using descriptive analysis to formulate a classification of attractions that have high competitiveness and authenticity as leading destinations in Sukabumi Regency.

RESEARCH RESULT

The results of direct identification show that Karanghawu Beach has a combination of natural and cultural attractions that complement each other. In terms of natural attractions, the main characteristics of this area are rocky beaches dominated by volcanic rock structures that form cliffs, reefs jutting out into the sea, and a coastal landscape that opens directly onto the Indian Ocean. The distinctive rock formations are the most prominent visual feature that sets this beach apart from the sandy beaches commonly found in the Sukabumi region. In addition, the relatively large waves, panoramic sunsets, and natural selfie spots on the coral cliffs are attractions for domestic tourists. The coastal environment still retains its natural character, although at some points there are indications of pressure from tourist activities, such as litter and poorly managed spatial planning. The visual appearance of Karang Hawu Beach can be seen in Figure 1.

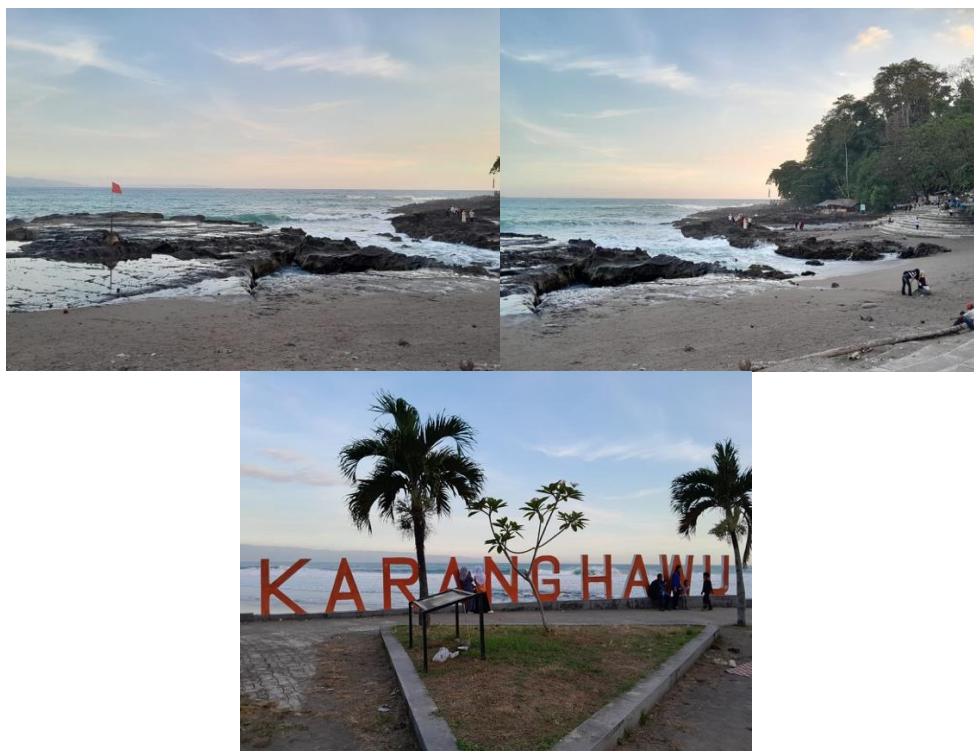


Figure 1. Visuals of Karanghawu Beach
Source: Documentation, 2025

From a cultural attraction perspective, Karanghawu Beach is inseparable from local myths that have developed in the community regarding the figure of Nyi Roro Kidul as the ruler of the southern sea. This belief is reflected in the behavior of tourists and the local community, such as the taboo of wearing certain colors (green) and rituals or prayers performed at certain times. This cultural narrative reinforces the symbolic identity of the beach and creates a tourist experience that is not only visual, but also emotional and spiritual. Information about historical value and local mythology is mostly obtained through oral accounts from the community, while the means of interpretation at the location are still limited. Field observations show that at the top of the cliff called "Puncak Winarum" there is a sacred site. This sacred site is a special room (chamber) believed to be the resting place of Nyi Roro Kidul, dominated by white mosquito nets, paintings of Nyi Roro Kidul, and the aroma of incense or seven kinds of flowers often brought by pilgrims. This place has cultural and spiritual value for the local coastal community. The existence of this shrine is utilized by some people as a pilgrimage site. Access to the tomb area is facilitated by stairs provided for visitors, making it easier for people to reach the location and carry out pilgrimage activities, as can be seen in Figure 2. making it easier for people to reach the location and carry out pilgrimage activities, as can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. (1) Stairs leading to the "Puncak Winarum" and (2) location of Nyi Roro Kidul's shrine

Source: Indrawanto, 2025

Based on the Attraction component, Karanghawu Beach has outstanding potential in terms of its geological uniqueness and inherent cultural narrative. In terms of Accessibility, the beach is relatively easy to reach via the main Palabuhanratu road, which is in good condition and has signposts to the area. However, direct public transportation to the beach is still limited, such as city transportation and motorcycle transportation. Therefore, if tourists want to enjoy a vacation at Karanghawu Beach, it is recommended that they have a private vehicle. In terms of Amenity, basic facilities such as parking areas, food stalls, and public toilets are available, although the quality and layout of the facilities are not yet uniform. Meanwhile, in terms of Ancillary, the management of the area involves the local government and the local community, but coordination of promotion and packaging of tourism products based on natural and cultural interpretation still needs to be strengthened.

Overall, the results of the study show that Karanghawu Beach has significant potential as a leading destination through the integration of its coastal geological landscape and strong local cultural narrative. This uniqueness sets it apart from other beach destinations in Sukabumi. This potential points to opportunities for further development based on integrated nature and cultural tourism, while maintaining the distinctive character of the area as the main identity of the destination.

DISCUSSION

The Palabuhanratu coast is an area rich in natural resources and abundant marine products due to its location directly facing the Indian Ocean. (Simanjuntak et al., 2021; Prabowo et al., 2022; Amaliah et al., 2023; Annida et al., 2023; Annida et al., 2024; Baihaqi & Annida, 2024; Annida & Baihaqi, 2025). In addition, the marine tourism potential along the coast of Palabuhantu is highly promising for development. Research shows that Karanghawu Beach has strong natural tourism appeal due to its coastal geomorphology, which features cliffs directly facing the Indian Ocean, open sea panoramas, and dynamic waves that are characteristic of the southern coast of Java. This unique coastal landscape provides aesthetic value and a visual experience that are key factors in attracting tourists. Karanghawu Beach has coastal landscape characteristics that are relatively similar to Madasari Beach in Pangandaran. The towering limestone cliffs and sunset panorama are the main visual attractions that enhance the aesthetic value of the area and have the potential to increase tourist interest. (Prihadi et al., 2024; Annida et al., 2026). Coastal natural resource-based attractions are an important element in the development of marine tourism destinations, as the beauty of coastal landscapes and ecosystems is often the main motivation for tourists to visit coastal areas (Baihaqi & Annida, 2024; Taofiqurohman et al., 2025; Annida et al., 2024; Annida et al., 2026).

In addition to natural potential, observations also identified the existence of cultural tourism attractions developing in the area, one of which is the existence of a sacred site at the top of a cliff or "Puncak Winarum" which is used by the community as a pilgrimage site. The existence of this cultural element shows that coastal areas not only function as recreational landscapes, but also have social and spiritual value for local communities. A similar phenomenon is also found in other coastal tourist areas in Indonesia, where tourism activities often interact with the social and cultural values of coastal communities (Ichsan & Yusuf, 2020). On the coast of Palabuhanrau, there is also a cultural tradition called *Nyalawean*, which is held every 25th day of the Hijri calendar. This tradition is carried out by fishermen and the local community as a form of gratitude to God for the sea's bounty and as a prayer for safety when going out to sea. The *Nyalawean* tradition is not only found in the Palabuhanratu area, but is also known by coastal and river communities in the Cikaso region of Sukabumi Regency, who have similar cultural practices as a form of spiritual expression among fishermen and coastal communities (Annida et al., 2021a; Annida et al., 2021b; Baihaqi & Annida, 2024; Baihaqi et al., 2025). *Nyalawean* activities usually consist of communal prayers, recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an, and gatherings of coastal communities. Thus, in addition to their spiritual value, these activities also serve to strengthen community bonds and preserve traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation (Annida & Baihaqi, 2024; Baihaqi & Annida, 2025). Ultimately, integrating the natural and cultural potential of Karanghawu Beach can create a more authentic tourist experience and strengthen the destination's identity.

The findings of this study are also in line with studies on coastal destination development in various regions that emphasize the importance of

synergy between natural and cultural potential, as well as community involvement in tourism management. Research in the Tapandullu coastal area of Mamuju shows that the development of beach tourism destinations requires the support of local communities, effective promotion, and environmentally-based management in order to increase the competitiveness of the destination. (Fitri et al., 2021). Therefore, the development of Karanghawu Beach as a leading destination in Sukabumi needs to consider the integration of coastal environmental conservation, preservation of local cultural values, and community participation in destination management to create sustainable tourism.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that Karanghawu Beach has strong potential as a leading tourist destination in Sukabumi Regency because it is supported by complementary natural and cultural attractions. Its natural attractions are reflected in the characteristics of the coastal landscape, which features cliffs facing the Indian Ocean, panoramic sea views, and dynamic waves that are characteristic of the southern coast. In addition, there are also cultural elements that have developed in the area, namely the presence of ancestral tombs on the cliffs, which are used by some communities as pilgrimage sites. The combination of natural and cultural potential provides unique value and a more diverse tourist experience for visitors. Therefore, the development of Karanghawu Beach needs to be directed towards sustainable tourism management through the improvement of supporting facilities, strengthening destination promotion, and involving the local community in the management of the area, so that the existing tourism potential can provide economic benefits while maintaining the preservation of the coastal environment and local cultural values.

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