



Starting Conditions of Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration in Developing the “Makassar Kota Makan Enak” City Branding

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Article Info

Article history:

Received 24 April 2026

Received in revised form 20

May 2026

Accepted 12 June 2026

Keywords:

Collaborative Governance

Culinary Tourism

Public Administration

Digital Platforms

MSMEs

JEL Classification:

Z32, Z38, H83, L83, M31

Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of collaborative governance in the development of culinary tourism in Makassar City, Indonesia, within the framework of public administration. Grounded in a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation involving key stakeholders, including government agencies, culinary MSMEs, communities, and digital platform partners. The findings reveal that the “Makassar, the City of Delicious Food” initiative emerged as a strategic response to post-pandemic economic recovery, leveraging local culinary potential as both a cultural asset and economic driver. Collaboration is characterized by strong interdependence among actors, where government functions as facilitator, MSMEs as economic drivers, and digital platforms as market enablers. Initial trust and social capital, built through prior informal collaborations, significantly support the governance process, although challenges such as resource inequality, inconsistent program implementation, and limited evaluation mechanisms persist. The study also highlights a transition from hierarchical governance toward network-based governance, emphasizing participatory decision-making and adaptive learning. Overall, Makassar’s experience reflects an emerging collaborative governance model that contributes to public value creation, while requiring further institutional strengthening to ensure sustainability and equity.

Introduction

Good governance is a crucial reference in the discipline of Public Administration to explain the quality of governance capable of delivering effective, transparent, and accountable public services (Birdayanthi et al., 2025; Sari, 2023; Herasymiuk et al., 2020). The concept of good governance refers to the principles of impartiality and orientation to the public interest, as emphasized by Rothstein & Teorell (2008), while Grindle (2004) emphasizes that effective governance requires clear priorities, role allocation, policy time horizons, and realistic limits on government capacity. A competent, ethical bureaucracy capable of effectively carrying out government functions is an operational requirement, as explained by Elahi (2009). In the Indonesian context, the principles of transparency, accountability, fairness, and sustainability further emphasize the essence of good governance, as stated by Arifin et al. (2022).

Good governance in the tourism sector demonstrates its complexity when the government is not positioned as the sole implementer, but as a strategic director in collaboration with the private sector, communities, academics, and digital platforms (Ansell & Gash, 2018; AlNajdawi et al., 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025). Dinh Thanh et al. (2020) emphasized that low extortion, pro-business policies, and transparency support investment growth in the tourism

sector, while Stoker (2011) emphasized the role of governance in increasing public participation and strengthening public trust.

Several other studies show that the tourism industry drives the modernization of infrastructure, transportation, and public services (Hole et al., 2019; Berdibekova et al., 2022; Lanori & Supriyanto, 2023), and the quality of collaboration between actors determines the strength of the tourism ecosystem (Achmad et al., 2023). Community income growth is positively influenced by targeted tourism policies, as explained (Balaguer & Cantavella-Jordá, 2002).

Landscape theory of collaboration clarifies this relationship through the Collaborative Governance (CG) framework. Ansell & Gash (2008) emphasize the importance of starting conditions, institutional design, facilitative leadership, and collaborative processes in producing outcomes of public value. This perspective is reinforced by Bryson et al. (2006), who emphasize the importance of face-to-face dialogue, trust-building, shared understanding, and commitment to the process. Various researchers, such as Bichler & Lösch (2019) and Mandell & Keast (2007), explain that the quality of the process determines the quality of the collaborative outcome.

Makassar is a city with a rich cultural, historical, and culinary ecosystem, as noted by Fadlin & Marfai (2016) and Widyaningsih et al. (2022). This vision is formally affirmed through the branding "Makassar, the City of Delicious Food" as stated in Mayoral Decree No. 1592/556/2023. Makassar's tourism sector development has a strong legal foundation through Law No. 10 of 2009, the 2015–2034 Spatial Plan (RTRW), and the RIPPARKOT document. This framework provides direction for planning, budgeting, and evaluation across regional government organizations and opens up opportunities for partnerships with state-owned enterprises (BUMN), the private sector, academics, and digital platforms (Tonggo, 2026; Setya et al., 2025; Ihsanda & Dhewanto, 2025).

Digitalization opens up important opportunities to address fragmentation and strengthen policy responses (Deane et al., 2024). Data integration systems, service dashboards, social listening, and digital payment mechanisms can accelerate cross-sector coordination. The existence of digital platforms can also increase transparency and accountability by displaying real-time data on service quality, customer satisfaction, and MSME performance. This digital integration aligns with Emerson et al.'s (2012) framework on adaptive governance.

This research falls within the Public Administration framework because it focuses on governance, not solely on culinary destinations. The analysis focuses on how public policy, bureaucratic capacity, and inter-actor dynamics shape collaborative processes that generate public value. The academic contribution of this research is the refinement of the Collaborative Governance model through contextual enrichment relevant to the dynamics of the creative and digital economy. Its practical contribution is policy recommendations regarding cross-sector coordination mechanisms, strengthening MSME capacity, designing collaborative monitoring, and institutionalizing digital integration.

Methods

Research Approach and Type

This study uses a qualitative research approach (Taylor & Bogdan 1998), which explains that qualitative methodology is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written, spoken, and observable words from people and behavior. The method emphasizes the process of exploring data/information until it is deemed sufficient to form an interpretation. (Ashworth et al., 2019) argue that the tradition in public administration research combines rigor

and enrichment, allowing a qualitative research approach to facilitate effective theorization. Similarly, (Ospina, et al., 2018) recommend that research in the field of public administration emphasize relevance and further develop approaches to contextual research quality. Qualitative research traditions include ethnography, case studies, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative research, feminist research, critical theory, action research, and participatory research (Lexy J. Moleong 2019; Sugiyono 2020). The type of research to be conducted is a case study of tourism development in Makassar City. A case study is an in-depth study of a specific case or phenomenon. Case study research focuses on a deep understanding of a specific situation or context (Lexy, 2019). Case studies are one of the most widely used qualitative social studies strategies in social science disciplines such as sociology, management, public administration, anthropology, psychology, and others (Priya 2021). Therefore, through a qualitative approach using case studies, it is hoped that issues related to collaborative governance in tourism development in Makassar City can be uncovered.

Informants

This study was conducted with several relevant key informants using semi-structured interviews, namely interviews with various actors to gather in-depth insights into the roles and responsibilities, as well as the existing state of collaborative governance in the tourism sector in Makassar City.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques, according to Sugiyono (2020), consist of limited research stages, information collection (structured and unstructured) through observation, interviews, and documentation.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used was model analysis (Miles et al. 2015). This qualitative analysis technique is carried out interactively and continuously, involving three interacting analysis processes: data reduction, data display, and data conclusion drawing/verification.

Result and Discussion

Historical Background and Motives for Collaboration

The idea of "Makassar, a City of Delicious Food" emerged as a strategic response to the need for regional economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic, when the tourism sector experienced a significant decline, while the culinary sector demonstrated resilience and high growth potential. The Makassar City Government recognized that local culinary riches, such as coto Makassar, pallubasa, and konro, had strong appeal and could be used as regional promotional instruments and as a means of community economic empowerment.

According to the Head of Marketing at the Makassar City Tourism Office, this initiative began with an effort to identify a unique and competitive tourist destination:

"After the pandemic, we saw that culinary was the fastest-growing sector. Many small businesses remained resilient because people were still looking for delicious food. From there, we thought, why not also make Makassar known as a city of delicious food, not just a stopover city?"

The post-pandemic socio-economic conditions also strengthened the motivation for cross-sector collaboration. Many culinary MSMEs lost customers due to mobility restrictions, while local communities showed high enthusiasm for local culinary products that were easily accessible online. The government then initiated a cross-agency coordination forum and

partnered with various parties, such as culinary communities, MSME associations, and digital partners, to strengthen the promotion and marketing ecosystem.

A representative of the Makassar Culinary Community explained that this collaboration did not emerge spontaneously, but rather stemmed from a shared awareness of the importance of cross-sector cooperation:

"Previously, we culinary entrepreneurs were working alone. But when the government invited us to collaborate, we realized that promotion and development cannot be done separately. We all need each other."

The local government's encouragement is also rooted in the vision of creative economic development, which places the culinary sector as a key pillar. Through this collaborative approach, the "Makassar City of Delicious Food" branding is not only interpreted as a promotional slogan but also as an economic development strategy based on local culture and identity.

Beyond economic motives, there are also social and cultural motivations underlying this collaboration. Traditional foods are considered part of the cultural heritage that needs to be preserved and introduced to the younger generation and tourists. The Makassar City Government strives to make local cuisine a symbol of regional pride that can strengthen social cohesion.

The historical background and motivations for collaboration in developing culinary tourism in Makassar City demonstrate the synergy between the needs of economic recovery, cultural preservation, and the creation of a city identity. This collaboration stems from a shared awareness that culinary tourism development does not depend solely on a single actor, but rather on the interconnectedness of parties with complementary interests and capacities.

Interdependence Between Actor Groups

The relationship between actors demonstrates a strong pattern of interdependence. Each party has different but complementary roles and interests in achieving the common goal of making Makassar a leading culinary destination in Eastern Indonesia.

The local government acts as a policy facilitator and primary driver through the Tourism Office and the Cooperatives and MSMEs Office. They provide regulations, training, and cross-platform promotional support. Meanwhile, culinary MSMEs spearhead the presentation of distinctive culinary products that are key tourist attractions. Culinary communities, creative associations, and influencers serve as bridges between businesses and consumers by strengthening narratives, product innovation, and publicity on social media. Private sector partners and digital platforms such as GoFood and GrabFood play a crucial role in expanding market reach and supporting the digitalization process of MSMEs.

This mutually beneficial relationship is reflected in the statement of one culinary MSME:

"We need training and promotional support from the government, but the government also needs us as drivers of the local economy. Digital platforms help us reach a wider audience, especially tourists from outside the city."

A similar statement was made by an official from the Makassar City Cooperatives and MSMEs Office, emphasizing the importance of cross-sector synergy in strengthening the creative economy ecosystem:

“Culinary MSMEs cannot stand alone. They need regulatory support, digitalization, and ongoing promotion. The government can only succeed if business actors are also active and the community helps create innovation.”

These findings demonstrate that collaboration is formed from an awareness of functional dependencies between actors. The government requires the involvement of MSMEs to drive the regional economy, while MSMEs rely on the government for guidance, legality, and promotion. Communities and influencers play a role in building the image of local culinary delights to increase awareness, while digital partners ensure efficient distribution and transaction processes.

This situation illustrates a complex collaborative ecosystem, yet it also has the potential to develop into shared governance. This pattern of interdependence serves as a key driving force for sustainable collaboration, as each actor feels they have a direct contribution to and benefit from the process. In other words, collaboration is driven not only by government administrative interests but also by the real needs of actors on the ground to support each other in facing the challenges of the increasingly competitive tourism and creative economy industries.

Initial Trust and Social Capital

The level of trust between actors is a crucial element in determining the success of collaboration from the initial stage. In the context of Makassar's culinary tourism development, trust between parties began to build before the "Makassar City of Delicious Food" branding initiative was officially launched. Previous collaborative experiences in culinary promotional activities such as the F8 Festival, Makassar Culinary Night, and various local tourism events laid the foundation for pre-existing trust between the government, community, and business actors.

The coordinator of the F8 Makassar event explained that these collaborative experiences were the beginning of a process of getting to know each other and building trust:

"Before the Makassar City of Delicious Food program, there had actually been informal collaboration between the government and business actors through the F8 event. From there, basic trust began to build, although it was not yet fully established."

The initially informal relationship then developed into a more structured social network through the establishment of a cross-sector forum. This forum serves as a communication space between the government, community, and MSMEs to express aspirations, share information, and plan joint activities. The survey results regarding levels of trust and readiness for collaboration are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Levels of Trust and Readiness for Collaboration

Indicator	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trust among actors	Yes	175	90.7
	No	15	7.8
	No response	3	1.5
Resource inequality affects effectiveness	Neutral	65	33.7
	Influential	64	33.2
	Highly influential	34	17.6
	Not influential	20	10.4
History of collaboration among actors	Sometimes	Majority	–

	Rarely	Significant	–
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Based on Table 1, the majority of respondents, 90.7%, stated that there was trust between actors, confirming that the initial social capital in Makassar's culinary tourism ecosystem was quite good. This indicates that actors, including the government, MSMEs, and the culinary community, have established a foundation of trust that enabled initial collaboration. However, resource inequality was still considered a factor by some respondents. This finding indicates that access to capital, promotional facilities, and other resources remains a challenge that needs to be addressed for collaboration between actors to be more effective and sustainable. Furthermore, the history of collaboration between actors shows that significant collaboration occurs sporadically. This pattern confirms that previous collaborative experiences provide a foundation for developing cooperation, but their implementation has been inconsistent and requires strengthening of institutional frameworks and coordination between actors.

Several MSMEs believe that the sustainability of collaboration depends heavily on the government's consistency in implementing the program. One culinary entrepreneur expressed his view:

"We're happy to be involved, but sometimes the program only works at the beginning. We hope the government can be more consistent so that this collaboration isn't merely ceremonial."

This statement illustrates the ongoing concern about the imbalance in roles and commitments between actors. While the government is perceived as having greater resources and authority, MSMEs often face limitations in terms of capital, promotion, and market access. This imbalance has the potential to impact trust levels if not balanced with open communication and equal participation.

Nevertheless, the existence of culinary communities and MSME associations plays a crucial role in maintaining social bridges between the government and businesses. Communities act as mediators, channeling members' aspirations while strengthening horizontal solidarity among culinary actors. This pattern of mutual cooperation demonstrates that local social capital remains a key force in supporting sustainable collaboration.

The initial level of trust in Makassar's culinary tourism ecosystem can be categorized as quite good, although it still requires strengthening in institutional aspects and consistent policy implementation. Pre-existing trust is crucial social capital for the formation of sustainable collaborative governance. However, to maintain this trust, facilitative leadership is needed that ensures each actor feels valued, heard, and receives equitable benefits from the collaborative process.

Academic Analysis

The collaborative process in culinary tourism development in Makassar City exhibits complex and multidimensional dynamics, encompassing aspects of social interaction, cross-sector communication, participatory decision-making, and adaptive learning among actors. Analysis of field findings shows that collaborative practices in Makassar generally reflect the main principles of Collaborative Governance as proposed by Emerson et al. (2012): namely multi-actor involvement, deliberative processes, and shared motivation built on interdependence and trust.

First, in terms of interaction and communication, relationships between actors have shifted from a hierarchical pattern to a networked interaction pattern. Local governments are no longer the sole source of policy, but rather act as facilitators orchestrating collaboration with

communities and businesses. This aligns with the concept of network governance, where power and responsibility in public governance are distributed among various social networks and non-governmental institutions. Informal communication processes, such as cross-sector forums and field discussions, have fostered mutual understanding and strengthened social bonds between actors, as explained by Ansell & Gash (2008), who argued that open and repeated communication is the foundation for successful cross-sector collaboration.

Second, in terms of decision-making mechanisms, the deliberative model implemented in Makassar reflects the practice of shared decision-making that involves all parties in formulating priority programs. Strategic decisions such as developing promotional agendas, culinary festivals, and digitalization training are made through joint forums between the government, MSME associations, communities, and digital partners. This mechanism demonstrates the application of the principle of joint ownership as proposed by Emerson et al. (2012), where each actor has equal responsibility and ownership for the outcomes of the collaboration. However, power imbalances remain evident in the government's dominance in determining program direction and resource distribution. Collaboration often occurs within a context of structural inequalities that must be consciously managed through interactive and dialogical mechanisms to avoid creating new dependencies.

Third, from the perspective of collaborative learning and policy adaptation, the culinary tourism ecosystem in Makassar has demonstrated collaborative learning capabilities. Actors are actively involved in reflection and innovation processes, such as the adoption of digital-based promotions and community participation in the development of local culinary content. The sustainability of collaboration is determined by the extent to which actors are able to build a social learning system that strengthens adaptive capacity and collective innovation. In the Makassar context, this learning is evident in the emergence of new partnerships between MSMEs, influencers, and digital service providers that expand the reach of culinary tourism.

Fourth, from the transparency and accountability dimension, the collaborative process still faces challenges related to the clarity of success indicators and cross-sector evaluation mechanisms. To date, assessments of collaborative success have focused more on short-term results (such as increased tourist visits) rather than the long-term impact on MSME economic empowerment. This gap indicates the need for a collaborative evaluation system, as suggested by Bryson et al. (2006), who emphasized the importance of integrating process accountability and outcome accountability in collaborative governance.

Furthermore, this analysis can be enriched with the Public Value Governance perspective, cross-sector collaboration aims not only to improve program efficiency but also to create public value through citizen participation and social sustainability. In the case of Makassar, this public value is reflected in joint efforts to promote the image of local culinary arts, strengthen the creative economy, and expand digital access for MSMEs.

Conceptually and empirically, the collaborative process in developing culinary tourism in Makassar City can be categorized as an emerging collaborative governance regime, where all actors have demonstrated a commitment to cooperation and innovation, but still require strengthening in the institutional dimension, transparency, and balanced distribution of power. This collaboration illustrates a paradigm shift in local public governance, which is increasingly open, adaptive, and based on social networks as a source of legitimacy and policy effectiveness.

Conclusion

Collaboration in developing culinary tourism in Makassar began with a collective awareness across sectors post-COVID-19 pandemic to restore the regional economy. The branding idea

of "Makassar, the City of Delicious Food" triggered a partnership between the local government, MSMEs, the culinary community, and digital partners. The relationship between these actors is interdependent: the government provides policies and facilitation, MSMEs drive the economic sector, and digital platforms expand the market. Pre-existing trust grew through previous collaborations in culinary events, albeit at a moderate level. This social capital serves as an important foundation for building more structured collaborations.

Suggestion

The government, MSMEs, communities, and digital partners need to continue fostering relationships of mutual trust through regular and ongoing joint activities. Pre-event programs or additional outreach activities can strengthen pre-existing trust, allowing for more stable and structured collaboration in the long term.

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