

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title of The Study

Designing English Tourist Navigation Website to Promote Bengkalis Tourism

1.2 Background of the Study

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of Indonesia's economy, contributing significantly to government revenue, employment, and economic growth. According to data from the BPS-Statistics Indonesia, foreign tourist visits to Indonesia in 2024 show promising growth. By May 2024, Indonesia had welcomed 1,145,499 international tourists, up from 927,746 in January, demonstrating a steady monthly increase. This shows that tourism in Indonesia is experiencing rapid development, as the sector continues to develop and utilize existing tourism resources as the main source of economic activity.

The growth of the tourism component is an important driving force for building the tourism sector, which can in turn promote the economic growth of the country. Tourism is not only a priority sector in Indonesia but also recognized internationally. Law No.10 of 2009 states that Indonesia's nature, flora and fauna, historical relics, art and culture are resources and capital for tourism development. Tourism is expected to improve the prosperity and welfare of the people in accordance with the values of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

One of the regions experiencing significant growth in tourism in Indonesia is Riau. This is evidenced by the province's recent achievement of winning 5 awards at the Indonesia's Charm Award 2023 event. Each region must have tourist attractions that have the potential to improve the local economy and the well-being of its residents. The recognition Riau has received highlights its success in developing and promoting its tourism sector, showcasing the province's commitment to leveraging its unique attractions and resources to boost local economic growth and enhance the quality of life for its residents. One of the regen-

cies that can be an example of how tourism can be a driving force for the welfare of the community is Bengkalis Regency.

Bengkalis Regency is located in a very strategic and attractive location. The area's geographical location on the Straits of Malacca adds to its charm. According to the Center for Tourism Research and Development (2021), Bengkalis' location between the growing Indonesia–Malaysia–Singapore and Indonesia–Malaysia–Thailand triangles add a strategic dimension to its tourism potential. The uniqueness of Bengkalis Regency lies in its rich and diverse tourism offerings. The area boasts stunning natural beauty, with several attractive beaches such as Lapin Beach in Tanjung Punak and Pesona Beach in Teluk Rhu. Based on data from Media Center Riau (2023), a key feature of the Bengkalis regency is Rupert Island, specifically North Rupert, which occupies a strategic position on the edge of the Malacca Strait. This area has been designated as both as National Tourism Strategic Area (KSPN) and Provincial Tourism Strategic Area (KSPP), underscoring its significance in the tourism landscape.

Beyond its coastal allure, Bengkalis Regency offers mangrove ecotourism, river tracing, and education tourism like tenun lejo Bukit Batu. The regency's historical significance is evident in sites related to the Siak Kingdom, including relics from Datuk Laksmana Raja di Laut in Bukit Batu village. This blend of natural scenery and cultural heritage creates a special stage for tourism development. Besides that, Bengkalis Regency also has begun to gain recognition for its tourism potential. Notably, Bukit Batu Tourism Village in Bengkalis won 4th place in the visitor attraction category at the Indonesia Tourism Village Award 2023 (ADWI) and received a certificate of appreciation from the Indonesian World Records Museum (MURI) in the category of tourism destination with the most extensive maritime glory history. This achievement highlights the region's commitment to developing and promoting its unique attractions.

Although the tourism potential of Bengkalis Regency is significant, the region continues to face several challenges in optimizing its appeal to international markets. One of the major issues is the fluctuation in foreign tourist arrivals. Data from BPS–Statistics Bengkalis (2019) reveals a stark contrast in foreign tourist

visits, with 4,373 arrivals recorded in 2019, which sharply declined to just 799 visitors in 2020—a drop of approximately 81.7%—primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and mobility restrictions. This dramatic decrease not only highlights the vulnerability of the local tourism sector to global disruptions but also underscores the need for digital resilience strategies, including the development of web-based promotional media. Addressing these fluctuations through effective, targeted digital tourism platforms, especially in English, is crucial to expanding the region’s reach and attracting more diverse international visitors in the post-pandemic recovery phase.

Despite these challenges, the region has set ambitious recovery goals. According to the 2023 annual work plan (RKT) of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports of Bengkalis Regency, the target for foreign tourist visits in 2023 is set at 2,559, while domestic tourist visits are targeted at 30,188. This demonstrates the local government's commitment to revitalizing the tourism sector. The recovery efforts show positive momentum as evidenced by 2024 data from the Bengkalis Regency Tourism Department. From January to June 2024, Bengkalis recorded 1,746 foreign tourist arrivals, with Malaysia being the dominant source market contributing 1,716 visitors (98.3% of total arrivals), followed by Singapore with 18 visitors, Thailand with 3 visitors, Brunei with 9 visitors, and Yemen with 1 visitor. This indicates a gradual but steady recovery in international tourism, though the numbers remain well below pre-pandemic levels, highlighting the ongoing need for sustained tourism promotion and infrastructure development efforts.

Table 1. 1 Foreign Tourist Arrivals in Bengkalis Regency

Year	Foreign Tourist Arrivals	Change from Previous Year	Notes
2019	4,373	-	Pre-pandemic baseline
2020	799	-81.7%	COVID-19 pandemic impact
2023	2,559	-	Target set by local government
2024	1,746	-	*January-June data only

In addition, one of the factors that prevents foreign tourists from visiting Bengkalis District is the lack of information in English. This is because most foreign tourists do not understand the Indonesian language, and also because of the lack of promotion of tourist attractions in Bengkalis, especially those located on the outskirts and outskirts of the city. Local residents often find it difficult to comprehensively promote these destinations. Tourists visiting a region often do not have sufficient information about the locations of the attractions they wish to visit. Tourist may have just heard that there are interesting places to visit, but the lack of guidance leaves tourist confused. Accessibility is also an issue, with some destinations difficult for locals to reach and few people aware of their attractions. In the efforts to develop the tourism sector, Bengkalis Regency plays a very important role in guiding and directing the implementation of policies.

The government seeks to strengthen tourism promotion through greater use of information technology. For this reason, the navigation website platform was chosen as the key technology to promote Bengkalis tourism. The website is one of the most well-known and widely used platforms around the world. Therefore, by creating a homepage, you can quickly convey information about tourist destinations to many people. Choosing a website platform as the foundation for your application development not only eases the distribution process, but also provides flexible access by allowing you to access it anywhere and from a variety of devices.

This research tries to promote Bengkalis tourism. Besides, the website can help tourists to obtain information for destinations in Bengkalis Regency that will aim to bridge the information gap, enhance accessibility, and significantly boost the promotion of Bengkalis tourism sector. By leveraging digital technology, it will seek to put Bengkalis on the map as a must-visit destination, contributing to the region's economic growth and the well-being of its local communities.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

Based on the background states, this study will address two formulations of the problem, there are:

1. How to design an effective navigation website platform for Bengkalis Regency's tourist destinations?
2. How are the user responses to the tourist navigation website?

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Doing study on the previously mentioned topics was very hard for the researcher. Because of time and knowledge constraints, this research only focused on the media promotion to promote Bengkalis tourism, especially in light of the lack of an English website that was accessible from anywhere in the world. At present, there was not a specific English platform that highlighted the attractions of Bengkalis Regency for visitors from other countries. Investigating the fundamental issues of unclear information, limited interaction, and lack of accessibility in contemporary media channels was necessary. The study investigated possible effects on job prospects, the expansion of the tourism sector, and the advantages to the local economy.

This study aimed to address the demand for an extensive website in the English language to promote the tourism spots in Bengkalis Regency globally. The website offered comprehensive details on a variety of tourist destinations, with an emphasis on the best routes for tourist. It provided thorough travel routes, information on the various transportation options, and projected arrival and departure times.

It was important to note that 25 distinct tourist destinations were the focus of the study. These destinations represented the diverse tourism potential of Bengkalis Regency, encompassing various categories of attractions that showcased the region's rich natural, cultural, and historical heritage. The coastal and marine attractions included Teluk Rhu Beach, Selatbaru Beach, Tanjung Lapin Beach, Beting Aceh Island, Raja Kecik Beach, and Madani Beach, which offered pristine

shorelines and marine experiences that attracted both domestic and international visitors.

The regency's historical and cultural heritage sites formed a significant portion of the study, featuring Huis Van Behauring Prison, House of Datuk Laksamana Raja di Laut, Captain's House, Zapin Village, Sultan Syarif Kasim Museum, Traditional House of Sakai Tribe Kesumbo Ampai, Tomb of Panglima Minal and Tomb of Dara Sembilan, Tomb of Laksamana Raja di Laut, and Traditional House of Orang Kaya Raja Negara. These sites preserved the rich cultural legacy and historical narratives that defined the identity of Bengkalis Regency.

Natural and recreational attractions provided diverse experiences for visitors seeking both relaxation and adventure, including Batang Mandau Riverbank, Selatbaru Wildlife Park, Harationica Water Park Duri, and Mentayan Agrotourism. The ecological significance of the region was represented through its mangrove conservation areas, namely Buruk Bakul Village Mangrove, Mangrove Selat Baru at Sungai Liong, and Kelapapati Paghet Segagah Mangrove, which served as vital ecosystems and educational tourism sites. Additionally, the religious and spiritual dimension of tourism was represented by Yellow Mosque and Istiqomah Mosque, which showcased the Islamic architectural heritage and served as centers of spiritual tourism.

By examining each destination's unique qualities and appeal, this thesis aimed to provide a comprehensive analysis of Bengkalis Regency's tourism potential, offering valuable insights for both the development of the local tourism industry and potential visitors. To provide a thorough evaluation of Bengkalis Regency's tourist potential, every destination was comprehensively examined. Furthermore, each tourist destination's distinctiveness and special qualities that made it appealing were analyzed, focusing on their unique characteristics, tourism appeal factors, development potential, accessibility and infrastructure, cultural significance, and environmental sustainability considerations. This comprehensive analysis aimed to support the strategic development of Bengkalis Regency's tourism sector while preserving its natural and cultural heritage.

By focusing on these 25 tourist destinations, this thesis sought to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of Bengkalis Regency's tourism potential. The study intended to have a beneficial effect on the expansion of the regional tourism industry.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

Based on the problem formulation above, the purpose of study is:

1. To design tourist navigation website to improve the tourism sector in Bengkalis Regency.
2. To find out the user's response to the tourist navigation website.

1.6 Significance of the Study

It had the potential to enhance tourism in Bengkalis Regency and address current issues; this study was significant to a variety of individuals and organizations as follows:

1. Strengthens Tourism

A good English website had the potential to significantly increase the influx of foreign tourists to Bengkalis Regency. This digital platform served as a virtual gateway, providing comprehensive information about the region's attractions, culture, and amenities. By breaking down language barriers, the website made tourism in Bengkalis more accessible to international visitors, potentially leading to a substantial boost in tourist arrivals. This increase in tourism had a ripple effect on the local economy, stimulating growth across various sectors and contributing to overall economic development.

2. Enhancing Tourist Experience

The website that was being developed completely changed how visitors organized and enjoyed their time in Bengkalis. The portal enabled tourists to design customized itineraries based on their interests and preferences by providing clear and extensive information about routes, sights, and local services. Tourist experiences became more fulfilling and enriching as a result of this improved planning capability. Tourists were more equipped to find hidden treasures, comprehend the local customs, and move around the area with more

peace of mind. Positive feedback and ideas from visitors probably arose from the enhanced tourism experience, further elevating Bengkalis' reputation as an attractive destination for tourists.

3. Encourages Local Business

The local business economy was significantly impacted by an increase in tourists. There was an equivalent rise in demand for accommodation, restaurants, transportation, and local products as more people found out Bengkalis. Several sectors, including hospitality and retail, saw an increase in employment prospects as a result of this boom in tourism-related activity. This economic growth raised living standards for locals and fostered a more dynamic, diverse local economy, all of which contributed to the economic growth.

4. Establishes Bengkalis Popularity

It was essential in raising the region's international visibility by promoting Bengkalis tourism in English using a website. The website functioned as a digital representative, presenting Bengkalis' distinctive features, cultural diversity, and visual attractiveness to a worldwide viewer.

5. Aids in Government Decision-Making

The government and Bengkalis tourism were provided with significant insights, empowering them to formulate tourism strategies with decisions based on data. Policymakers could identify important areas for tourism sector improvement by evaluating the website's performance and analyzing user behavior. Plans for the development of infrastructure, marketing tactics, and resource allocation could all be influenced by this data. In order, the government could address sustainable tourist development in Bengkalis comprehensively and the results of the research might also highlight the need for more community engagement programs, conservation activities, or training programs.

6. Enhanced Knowledge

This could make a significant contribution to the academic understanding of digital tourism promotion and its impact on regional development. By examining how tourists interacted with and responded to the website, the study provided valuable data on user behavior in the context of travel planning and destination

selection. This information was beneficial for researchers and students in fields such as tourism studies, digital marketing, and regional economics. The research might show the effectiveness of multilingual platforms in attracting international visitors, and the broader implications of digital strategies for regional economic development in the digital age.