

Cultural Tourism Development Strategy at The Siak Palace, Siak Sri Indrapura Regency

Mariaty Ibrahim^{1*}, Jeneva Augustin², Mashur Fadli³

^{1,2,3}Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, University of Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author:

Email: Mariatyibrahim@lecturer.unri.ac.id

Abstract.

Riau is a province rich in history. Many historical heritage buildings can be found in Riau, one of which is the Siak Sri Indrapura Palace. This palace is a historical legacy of the Siak Sultanate, once inhabited by the Sultan of Siak, and today serves as one of the tourism attractions in Siak Regency. The proper development of the tourism sector has the potential to attract both domestic and international tourists to visit and spend money during their travels. In this context, particularly concerning the development of the Siak Palace as a tourist attraction, internal and external environmental analyses are conducted to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through a SWOT analysis. Furthermore, this study also examines the long-term goals of the Tourism Office, particularly in achieving its mission over the next five years. The research evaluates whether the strategies implemented have been successful by reviewing the annual targets set by the Siak Regency Tourism Office and the policies employed to achieve them. These policies consist of guidelines, rules, and procedures established to support the intended objectives. The findings indicate that the Tourism Office of Siak Regency has carried out the strategic planning process effectively. Every aspect of strategic planning has been implemented optimally and in accordance with the established regulations. However, despite the successful implementation of the strategic plan, the process has not yet fully maximized the development of the Siak Palace as a tourism destination, as further actions beyond the current plans are still required. Tourism development in Siak Sri Indrapura is pursued through the development of tourism resources and the creative economy, enhancement of tourist attractions, and tourism marketing. Nevertheless, these efforts have not yet been fully optimized and therefore need improvement in order to better manage and advance tourism development in Siak Regency. The factors influencing tourism development strategies include budget, human resources, and community participation. Successful tourism development requires cooperation to achieve the desired outcomes, while the government is also expected to pay greater attention to the condition of tourism objects.

Keywords: Strategy; Development; Cultural Tourism Object; SWOT and Siak Palace.

I. INTRODUCTION

Riau Province is one of the wealthiest provinces in Indonesia and is recognized as the homeland of Malay culture. This statement is supported by various historical facts. To this day, Riau is still home to several indigenous tribes such as the Talang Mamak, Sakai, and Petalangan, among others. A number of historical relics, including artifacts and temples, have been discovered in the region, reflecting the existence of ancient cultures and civilizations in the area, ranging from prehistoric times to the Hindu-Buddhist period. Riau Province consists of several regencies, one of which with considerable tourism potential is Siak Regency. In this region, there is a prominent cultural and historical tourist attraction—the Siak Sri Indrapura Palace. One remarkable aspect of this palace lies in its unique architecture, which combines European, Arab, and Chinese influences. Moreover, the palace houses a rare musical instrument called the *Komet*, of which only two exist in the world—one in Siak Palace and the other in Germany. Culture is a representation of human thought, feeling, and will. It is formed from a complex diversity of elements, including religion or belief systems, political structures, customs, languages, tools, clothing, architecture, artworks, traditional cuisines, and other attributes that hold significant cultural value. These values must be preserved to prevent them from being eroded by time or claimed by other nations. Tourism is one of the country's main sources of foreign exchange, alongside the oil and gas sector. It holds enormous potential and plays a crucial role in strengthening the economy, which is still experiencing relatively slow growth.

The tourism sector in Indonesia can still be further developed to its full potential. Properly managed tourism development can attract both domestic and international tourists to visit and spend money during their travels. This economic activity not only improves the standard of living for local communities in tourist destinations but also generates foreign exchange for the nation, as international visitors exchange their currencies for rupiah. Tourism has thus become one of the key drivers of regional development, particularly in the era of regional autonomy, where decentralization should no longer be viewed as a challenge but rather as an opportunity. Local communities possess valuable resources that can be utilized for regional progress, particularly through tourism. Riau Province is rich in history. Many historical heritage sites and buildings are found here, one of the most notable being the Siak Sri Indrapura Palace, commonly known as the Siak Palace. This palace is a historical legacy of the Siak Sultanate, once inhabited by the Sultan of Siak, and is located in Siak Regency, Riau Province. Unfortunately, public interest in learning about the history and information surrounding the Siak Palace has declined. Today, the site is more often visited as a recreational destination for photography or family picnics rather than as a source of historical knowledge. To enhance the development of this cultural tourism destination in Siak Regency, the role of the Tourism Office is highly significant. Their efforts, such as organizing events and creating additional attractions, are guided by Regional Regulation No. 12, Article 7 of 2012. Siak Regency is widely known as the seat of the largest Malay kingdom, the Siak Sultanate, which flourished in 1723 CE.

This legacy is evidenced by the numerous historical sites that still exist in the regency, most notably the *Asserayah Al-Hasyimiah Palace*, more popularly referred to as the Siak Palace or the “Palace of the Eastern Sun,” which was built in 1889. Based on the Decree of the Minister of Culture and Tourism No. KM.13/PW/PW.007/MKP/2004, Siak Palace has been designated as a cultural heritage object and a protected site under Indonesian Law No. 5 of 1992. The tourism sector represents one of Siak Regency’s greatest assets for developing its local tourism industry. It has the potential to generate significant foreign exchange earnings for both the government and local communities. Among the various attractions available, the most popular and frequently visited destination by tourists is the Siak Palace. For the local government, tourism serves as an important aspect in increasing regional revenue. One of the challenges faced by the government in marketing the Siak Palace tourist attraction is the lack of effective and efficient dissemination of information to tourists. Although the Tourism Office does operate a website, it remains inadequate in providing comprehensive information about the Siak Palace. In addition, the Tourism Office still relies on conventional methods such as distributing brochures, leaflets, and booklets. Studies on the Siak Sultanate have been carried out extensively, not only for academic purposes but also in relation to the recognition of Sultan Syarif Kasim II as a national hero, as well as for tourism promotion, public icons, and other purposes.

These studies have examined the Siak Sultanate from various perspectives, including history, Islamic law and judiciary, education, politics and governance, biography, culture, patriotism, and more. Along with the growing awareness of history and the advancement of scientific knowledge—including the application of various social science theories in historical studies—re-examining historical narratives has become a necessity. This is because the discovery of new data and facts, when analyzed through appropriate approaches, can produce new understandings of history. While factual history occurs only once and cannot be repeated, making it unique, history as a narrative can be written repeatedly, thereby generating generalizations. In this sense, history as narrative or record becomes history as a science, from which educational, recreational, and inspirational values can be learned for the benefit of the present and future.

In connection with the above, this study entitled *The Role of the Tourism Office in Implementing Regional Regulation No. 12, Article 7 of 2012 on the Development of the Historical Tourism Object of Siak Sri Indrapura Palace* is conducted to examine how the Tourism Office plays its role in developing the Siak Palace historical attraction based on Regional Regulation No. 12, Article 7 of 2012, without neglecting the elements of Malay culture that have existed from the past until today. As a result, the Siak Sri Indrapura Palace is now recognized internationally as a historical tourist attraction and as an enduring legacy of the kingdom and its cultural heritage. The Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports is a regional government work unit (SKPD) responsible for managing, maintaining, and developing the physical condition of tourist attractions while also ensuring the preservation of the surrounding natural environment.

This is carried out through the development and enhancement of tourism activities, including the construction and promotion of tourism objects and attractions. Such efforts aim not only at tourism advancement but also at fostering human dignity, morality, and public order in order to strengthen the nation's identity. The main tasks of the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports include the development and management of tourism, arts, culture, youth, and sports affairs. In carrying out its governmental duties in the tourism sector, the Department inevitably faces considerable challenges. These challenges stem from the increasing complexity of issues within tourism and culture, which are closely intertwined with economic, social, cultural, and sometimes inconsistent political policies. Consequently, every policy and action must logically accommodate these intersecting aspects to ensure that the objectives and targets of the tourism sector can be achieved. The tourism sector represents one of the most promising areas for development in Siak Regency and serves as a key driver for regional growth. Tourism development has been positioned as a strategic sector capable of making a significant contribution to increasing regional income and stimulating the local economy. However, at present, the tourism sector has not yet become a primary asset nor has it been optimally developed to fully support economic growth. This situation is also evident in Siak Regency, where certain tourism objects have not received sufficient attention and therefore remain underdeveloped, despite having considerable potential—particularly as seen in the increasing number of both domestic and international tourist visits. The trend of tourist visits to Siak Sri Indrapura Regency's tourism sector can be illustrated as follows:

Table 1.1. Tourist Visits to Siak Palace: Domestic and International (2020–2024)

No	Tahun	Local	Mancanegara	Total
1	2020	39.216	2.393	41.609
2	2021	48.142	5.303	53.445
3	2022	70.317	8.907	79.224
4	2023	89.977	6.915	96.792
5	2024	99.178	5.379	104.557

Source: Siak Tourism Office, 2024

From the data above, it can be observed that from 2020 to 2024, domestic tourist visits have continued to increase, while international tourist visits have declined. This condition indicates that tourism in Siak Regency has not yet been running optimally. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Tourism Office of Siak Regency to design a strategy to further develop tourism objects that have potential value for the regency. The efforts made by the Tourism Office of Siak Sri Indrapura in developing tourist attractions are carried out through strategic planning, which is one of the programs outlined in the Office's Strategic Plan (*Renstra*).

The Siak Palace is one of the historical heritage tourism objects from the Siak Sultanate that is frequently visited by both domestic and international tourists in Siak Regency. The palace holds significant historical and cultural values, particularly in relation to Malay culture. As one of the Islamic kingdom's historical legacies, it has been carefully preserved up to the present day. The Siak Palace serves as a repository for the royal collections, including the golden throne, a replica of the royal crown, the royal safe, the royal umbrella, royal spears, and the *Komet*, a rare musical instrument that, according to the palace's management, exists in only two places in the world—one in Germany and the other at Siak Palace—alongside various other historical artifacts. To achieve its vision, mission, goals, and targets, the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports of Siak Regency has formulated several strategies, including:

1. Development of regional tourism,
2. Development of youth potential, and
3. Development of sports.

Its policies are:

1. Developing tourism based on values, ethics, morals, religion, and environmental sustainability,
2. Optimizing youth potential grounded in national cultural values, ethics, morals, religion, and environmental awareness.

To accomplish the established goals and targets, the Tourism Office of Siak Regency prepares programs and activities that align with the vision and mission of tourism, youth, and sports development within a five-year timeframe. The performance indicators of the Tourism Office are based on the objectives and targets of the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD) of Siak Regency for the period 2021–2023.

The evaluation of strategic performance targets by the Tourism Office of Siak Regency in 2015 included four strategic objectives that had been set in the 2015 performance plan, namely:

1. Establishment of new tourism objects to increase both domestic and international tourist visits,
2. Improvement of human resources by providing adequate facilities and infrastructure,
3. Implementation of cultural events to enhance tourism attractiveness, and
4. Creating a healthy, intelligent society with achievements in sports.

The strategic plan that can be implemented by the Tourism Office of Siak Regency is through the use of a SWOT analysis. The SWOT framework identifies opportunities, strengths, threats, and weaknesses. The **opportunities** of the Siak Palace as a tourist attraction include high tourist interest and the existence of partnerships with relevant stakeholders. The **weaknesses**, however, include the lack of professional human resources, particularly in the absence of trained and professional tour guides, as well as limited funding for the development of the Siak Palace tourism site. The threats faced in the strategic planning of Siak Palace tourism include the low awareness among local communities regarding cleanliness around the palace area, as many still dispose of waste carelessly. On the other hand, the strengths that support the strategic planning of Siak Palace tourism are its preserved historical and cultural values, beautiful natural scenery, a comfortable location, and the availability of facilities and infrastructure.

Based on the phenomena that emerge from various aspects of strategic planning, the process of developing a strategic plan for the Siak Palace tourist attraction can be facilitated. From the researcher's field observations, collected data, and an interview with Mr. Abdul Aziz, S.Pd, Head of Historical, Natural, and Artificial Tourism Object Management, several issues were identified regarding the development of Siak Palace tourism, as follows:

1. Facilities and infrastructure in the Siak Palace area are poorly maintained. This condition does not comply with Regional Regulation No. 12 of 2012, Article 8, concerning Tourism Development in Siak Regency, which stipulates that tourism facilities and infrastructure should be supported by qualified human resources. It can be said that the community has not fully complied with the regulation, as they do not maintain order, cleanliness, and the beauty of the Siak Palace tourism area. Therefore, the Tourism Office of Siak Regency, particularly the staff responsible, must be more assertive in conveying this information. Such conditions hinder the successful implementation of tasks and policies.
2. There is a lack of professional human resources and insufficient workforce for maintenance activities in the Siak Palace area. Based on the interview results, ideally, 10–15 staff members are required to properly manage the maintenance needs of Siak Palace. However, in reality, the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports only has 4 guards inside the palace, 4 operational staff, and 7 cleaning service workers. This limited workforce affects the mission of the Tourism Office of Siak Regency for 2020–2023, one of which is to enhance human resources development to achieve a more qualified and professional workforce.
3. The environmental conditions around the Siak Palace are not well maintained. Visitors and street vendors in the palace area often fail to comply with government regulations, neglecting order, cleanliness, and the beauty of the site. Many visitors continue to litter in the palace gardens, creating discomfort for others. This situation makes the Siak Palace area appear untidy and less appealing.
4. The vision, mission, objectives, and targets of the Tourism Office have not been fully achieved. For example, in terms of increasing tourist visits to Siak Palace, the annual targets have not been met. As previously explained, efforts to boost visitor numbers to Siak Palace have not yet been successful in reaching the expected outcomes

II. METHODS

Research Method

The method employed in this study is a survey method. The research location refers to the Office of Culture and Tourism of Siak Regency, supported by interviews and field data collection. The research was conducted at Siak Palace, located in Siak Sri Indrapura Regency. The selection of this location was based on the tourism business potential of Siak Palace, which serves as the cultural icon of Siak City. The analysis in this study applies the SWOT framework.

Data Collection Techniques

1. Literature Study

Literature review was conducted to collect supporting data in the form of scientific works, reports, laws and regulations, as well as writings relevant to the research. This method aims to obtain a general overview of tourism objects and attractions.

2. Field Observation

Direct field observation was carried out as a method of data collection. In addition to observing the conditions, coordinates of each tourism object and attraction were recorded.

3. Interviews

Interviews were conducted to gather primary field data with the objective of obtaining more detailed information for the research. The interviews involved local customary leaders as well as officials from the Tourism Office to acquire accurate information. Additional interviews with the managers of tourism objects and attractions were also conducted to complement data on their conditions.

4. Spatial Analysis

Spatial analysis was performed using the model builder to identify tourism objects with the highest scores and to evaluate community participation, as well as to formulate strategies for accelerating ecotourism in Sei Mempura through SWOT analysis. The determination of ecotourism acceleration strategies was conducted by building an overlay model with the model builder, applying arithmetic overlay functions, and weighting the results.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Subsection: Research Findings

The determination of priority strategies for community-based ecotourism development was carried out using the SWOT analysis approach (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) based on both internal and external factors. From the synthesis of these two factors, the most suitable strategies for tourism development were identified. The data and information obtained on each potential tourism object, along with the idea of managing them as a unified area, were analyzed using the SWOT framework as follows:

The Siak Sri Indrapura Royal Palace, located in the city of Siak Sri Indrapura, was the residence of Sultan Syarif Kassim II. The palace, known as *Astanah Asserayah Hasyimiyah*, is a well-preserved building that combines European, Arab, and Indian architectural styles. Its main attraction lies in the various historical relics of the twelve Siak sultans from over two centuries ago. Meanwhile, Sei Mempura village has been developed by the Siak Regency Government in recent years. Sei Mempura once served as the center of the Siak Sultanate under Sultan Abdul Djalil Muzaffar Syah, the second Sultan of Siak, who reigned from 1746 to 1765. He was buried in Mempura and is remembered with the title *Marhum Mempura*.

Table 1.2. SWOT Analysis of the Siak Palace Tourism Area

Internal / External	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	1. The ecotourism area is located only 5 minutes from the capital of Siak Regency with excellent road access and reachable by car. 2. Interesting historical stories about the Siak Palace	1. Lack of visitor facilities, including no pavilion/joglo for sitting and shelter. 2. Lack of recreational facilities for children and supporting infrastructure such as restaurants in strategic spots 3. The area feels hot during sunny weather and becomes very wet during rain 4. The local community is not yet fully prepared to support tourism

Opportunities (O) 1. Potential for further development. 2. A suitable tourist attraction for families and students, both local and from outside the region. 3. Potential to become part of the Sei Mempura tourism route in Siak Regency.	Strategies (S/O) 1. Disseminate information about the uniqueness and natural beauty of the Siak Palace area to the wider community, including students both within Sei Mempura and outside the region. 2. Support and encourage journalists to publish news coverage about the area	Strategies (W/O) 1. Encourage investment from both the private sector and the government to improve tourism facilities and infrastructure. 2. Develop recreational facilities for children as an essential component of tourism. 3. Increase efforts to raise public awareness that tourism activities provide benefits, both in terms of mindset interaction and economic growth.
Threats (T) 1. Siak Palace as a tourism destination requires stronger promotion to improve its popularity and image.	Strategies (S/T) 1. Develop human resources in the tourism sector. Efforts should be made to create tour packages through strong collaboration with tourism marketing institutions. 2. Ensure the availability and distribution of attractive brochures and leaflets.	Strategies (W/T) 1. Establish cooperation between Sei Mempura tourism and Siak Regency tourism. 2. Improve tourism facilities to meet proper standards

Source: Research Findings, 2025

Discussion

The Tourism Office plays a central role in making tourism a leading sector in Siak Regency without neglecting cultural values and established norms. Tourism functions not only as one of the region's primary sources of revenue but also as a means to promote and preserve the Siak Palace as a cultural heritage site. The role of the Tourism Office in maintaining the Siak Sri Indrapura Royal Palace has been carried out relatively well while respecting the local cultural heritage. Efforts have been made to maximize cultural potential with the support of natural tourism, agro-tourism, and special-interest tourism. In this regard, the central government, as the heritage authority, works hand in hand with the Tourism Office, which also organizes various events to increase visitors.

This further strengthens the potential of cultural, natural, and agro-tourism sectors. Promotional strategies for Siak Palace have been expanded through social media, print, and electronic channels to raise awareness and attract more visitors. However, the implementation of certain regional regulations has faced obstacles, as the development of the palace as a cultural heritage site requires approval from the central government, a process that takes considerable time. The Tourism Office also plays an important role in improving the welfare of local communities around the palace area. This includes granting limited permits for local residents to sell goods, which helps the community economically while maintaining rules to prevent activities that might threaten the preservation of the palace. While this community empowerment effort has been relatively successful, it remains under the supervision of the central government.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study regarding the Strategy of the Tourism Office in Developing Tourism in Siak Sri Indrapura Regency, it can be concluded that the strategies are carried out through the development of tourism resources and the creative economy, the enhancement of tourist attractions, and tourism marketing. However, their implementation has not yet been optimal and therefore needs to be further improved to effectively manage and advance tourism development in Siak Regency, as well as to attract both domestic and international tourists. In developing tourism, several influencing factors must be considered. Budget allocation is one of the main aspects in implementing any strategy.

With sufficient and available funding, development efforts can run smoothly and successfully, thereby increasing the number of tourists. In Siak Regency, budget availability is still not fully adequate, so development is carried out gradually. Human resources are another crucial aspect in executing any plan or program; when the quality of human resources is lacking, it will hinder the tourism development process. Community participation is also one of the most important factors in supporting tourism. In Siak Regency, community involvement remains relatively low, which hampers the overall implementation of tourism development.

REFERENCES

- [1] Agus Maulana. (2014). *Management Control System*. Jakarta: Salemba Empat.
- [2] Cindi Shandoval & Daud Aris Tanudirjo. (2018). *Management of Siak Palace as a Museum (Undergraduate Thesis in Archaeology, UGM)*. Focuses on the physical condition of the building and collection, as well as museum management proposals: vision–mission, collection governance, human resources, and partnerships.
- [3] Department of Culture and Tourism. (2008). *Final Report on the Follow-Up Study of Tourism Attraction Assessment*. Collaboration between the Directorate of Tourism Products, Directorate General of Tourism Destination Development, Department of Culture and Tourism and Innovative Development for Eco Awareness. Jakarta.
- [4] Fandeli, C. (2002). *Nature Tourism Planning*. Yogyakarta: Faculty of Forestry, Universitas Gadjah Mada.
- [5] Fandeli, C., & Mukhlisin. (2004). *Ecotourism Development Policy: Ecotourism Development with a New Paradigm of Conservation Area Management*. Faculty of Forestry, UGM. Yogyakarta: UKSDA Jogja and Pustaka Pelajar.
- [6] Ife, J., & Frank, T. (2008). *Community Development: An Alternative Approach to Community Development in the Era of Globalization* (3rd ed., Translated). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- [7] Indonesian Ecotourism Network (INDECON). (2008). *Draft Standardization of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBT) Development*. Paper presented at the Tourism Convention, in collaboration with ECEAT (European Centre for Ecotourism and Agricultural Tourism) and INDECON, Nusa Dua, Bali, March 13–16, 2008. “Creating a Community-Based Tourism Supply Chain in South and East Asia.”
- [8] Romani, S. (2006). *Assessment of Natural Tourism Objects and Attractions and Alternative Planning in Bukit Duabelas National Park, Jambi Province* (Undergraduate Thesis). Department of Forest Resource Conservation and Ecotourism, Faculty of Forestry, Bogor Agricultural University.
- [9] Suwanto, G. (2003). *Fundamentals of Tourism*. Yogyakarta: ANDI.
- [10] World Tourism Organization (WTO). (2004). *Indicators of Sustainable Development for Tourism Destinations: A Guidebook*.
- [11] Yoeti, O. A. (2008). *Tourism Economics: Introduction, Information, and Implementation*. Jakarta: Kompas.
- [12] Tobing, Luis Volmasi. (2020). *Tourism Office Strategy of Riau Province in Increasing Tourist Visits in Riau Province*. Undergraduate Thesis, State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau.
- [13] Wiyati, B. T. K. (2018). *Tourism Development Strategy in Lumajang Regency (Study on Puncak B29 Tourist Attraction in Argosari Village, Senduro District, Lumajang Regency)*.