

PENTAHHELIX MODEL FOR TOURISM COMMUNICATION BRANDING IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES RIAU PROVINCE, INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

Bengkalis has significant tourism potential, closely linked to its rich local culture and religious traditions; however, this potential is hampered by a lack of meaningful cooperation between the local government and the local community, exacerbated by the suboptimal use of digital media in marketing efforts. This study focuses on an in-depth examination of the government's discourse on tourism branding, which is primarily based on local cultural practices, religious beliefs and traditional knowledge, whilst identifying the factors that hinder or drive the success of these efforts, with the aim of creating a robust strategy for sustainable growth. Using a qualitative research approach centred on dynamic case studies, this research explores the complex relationships between government agencies, Pokdarwis, and tourists. Data has been carefully collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and detailed document analysis. The results show that government bodies have adopted an interactive two-way communication model, which includes direct interactions like focus group meetings and discussions, as well as indirect approaches such as social media and national tourism information systems. The SWOT analysis reveals that ecotourism and religious tourism have significant potential, while also highlighting that issues related to infrastructure and human resource capabilities are major weaknesses. Strategic suggestions recommend improving collaboration among stakeholders, making substantial investments in digital infrastructure, and integrating sustainable practices. The findings of this research offer a meaningful contribution by underscoring the importance of place branding and cross-border communication models in local settings, while also providing frameworks relevant to coastal areas across Indonesia.

Keywords: tourism branding; government communication; pentahelix model; local wisdom; Bengkalis Regency

MODEL PENTAHHELIX UNTUK BRANDING KOMUNIKASI PARIWISATA DI KOMUNITAS PESISIR PROPINSI RIAU, INDONESIA

ABSTRAK

Bengkalis menunjukkan potensi pariwisata yang signifikan, terkait erat dengan budaya lokal dinamis, adat istiadat keagamaan namun, realisasi potensi ini terhambat oleh kekurangan nyata dalam kolaborasi antara entitas pemerintah daerah dan pemangku kepentingan masyarakat, diperburuk oleh pemanfaatan media digital yang tidak memadai untuk tujuan branding. Upaya penelitian ini berfokus pada pemeriksaan mendalam wacana pemerintah yang berkaitan dengan branding pariwisata, yang berakar pada budaya lokal, agama, dan pengetahuan tradisional, sementara secara bersamaan mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang menghambat atau memfasilitasi kemandirian inisiatif ini, dengan tujuan merumuskan strategi yang kuat untuk pembangunan berkelanjutan. Menggunakan metodologi penelitian kualitatif yang berpusat pada studi kasus dinamis, penyelidikan ini mengeksplorasi interaksi rumit antara lembaga pemerintah, Pokdarwis, dan wisatawan. Data telah dikumpulkan dengan cermat melalui wawancara komprehensif, observasi peserta, dan analisis dokumen menyeluruh. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pemerintah telah mengadopsi kerangka komunikasi dua arah yang dinamis, yang mencakup keterlibatan langsung seperti pertemuan dan diskusi kelompok fokus, selain pendekatan tidak langsung seperti media sosial dan sistem informasi pariwisata nasional. Analisis SWOT mengungkapkan bahwa ekowisata dan pariwisata agama memiliki potensi besar, sementara secara bersamaan menyoroti tantangan terkait dengan infrastruktur dan kapasitas sumber daya manusia merupakan kelemahan signifikan. Rekomendasi strategis menganjurkan untuk meningkatkan kolaborasi di antara para pemangku kepentingan, melakukan investasi besar dalam infrastruktur digital, dan mengintegrasikan praktik berkelanjutan. Hasil penelitian ini menawarkan kontribusi yang berarti dengan menggarisbawahi pentingnya branding tempat dan model komunikasi lintas batas dalam konteks lokal, sementara juga menyajikan model yang berlaku untuk wilayah pesisir di seluruh Indonesia.

Kata kunci: branding pariwisata; komunikasi pemerintah; pentahelix model; kearifan lokal; Kabupaten Bengkalis

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly fierce global competition in the tourism industry has made the development of tourism destinations based on local identity an essential strategy for regions to achieve differentiation and sustainability (Erlandia et al., 2023; Zuhri et al., 2024; Susanti et al., 2023). Bengkalis Regency, with its rich cultural heritage, religious values and unique local wisdom, has significant potential to build a tourism identity. However, the realisation of this potential often faces obstacles due to a lack of collaborative efforts between local government bodies, the community, and relevant stakeholders in the formulation and execution of effective communication strategies.

In the context of sustainable tourism development, the Pentahelix model has emerged as a strategic collaborative framework. This model involves five key elements: government, academia, business, the community, and the media. Previous research indicates that multi-stakeholder collaboration through the Pentahelix model contributes significantly to innovation, capacity building, and the conservation of cultural and environmental resources, resulting in increased household income, employment opportunities, and the growth of micro and small enterprises (Muda, 2026). The implementation of the Pentahelix model in the development of sustainable tourism villages in Indonesia has revealed that the effectiveness of this model remains uneven across different contexts due to challenges such as power imbalances.

Studies on Pentahelix collaboration have shown that it makes a positive contribution to the promotion of tourism, the empowerment of local communities and the preservation of culture. However, challenges such as a lack of coordination between stakeholders and limited resources still need to be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness of such collaboration (Sugandi & Junaidi, 2025). Research into city branding in Pangkalpinang has also revealed that, although the city excels in terms of accessibility and cultural richness, it faces challenges in the form of low tourist engagement and brand loyalty, thereby requiring stronger collaboration between academics, the government, the business sector, the media and the community through the Pentahelix model (Fauzi & Kurniawan, 2025).

Meanwhile, destination branding has become a fundamental tool for regions and countries seeking to distinguish themselves in an increasingly saturated global tourism market. Research shows that effective destination branding not only boosts a place's visibility, but also acts as a catalyst for sus-

tainable tourism growth, enhances international competitiveness, and generates economic benefits, job creation and tourism-related revenue (Khayat & Karimova, 2025). The study also emphasises that the success of destination branding efforts depends not only on coherent visual and thematic messaging, but also on collaborative efforts between the government, the private sector and local stakeholders.

In the digital age, the use of social media and digital platforms plays a crucial role in building a destination's image. Research into cultural tourism branding communication strategies in Labuan Bajo shows that integrating local cultural elements into interactive media can create a more immersive branding communication strategy (Julianto et al., 2026). Similar findings have also been identified in research on place branding in traditional villages in China, where local authorities and stakeholders are increasingly focusing on the use of modern digital media as a marketing communication channel to build distinctive place branding (Ren et al., 2025).

One of the main obstacles to Bengkalis's tourism branding is the lack of coordination between local government bodies and community organisations, such as GenPi (Generation Pesona Indonesia), as well as other groups with an interest in tourism. Although the government has sought to utilise social media as a promotional tool, the content produced often fails to capture the unique cultural and religious values that are the region's main attractions. Furthermore, the lack of digital marketing training for local human resources results in content that is less interactive and unable to reach a wider audience.

Research into Pentahelix collaboration in the 'Taste of Padang' branding strategy in West Sumatra indicates that effective communication between stakeholders is crucial to creating a destination brand. The findings suggest that the Effective Intercultural Group Communicator Theory (EIWCT) can facilitate effective Pentahelix communication when combined with a design thinking approach (Ren et al., 2025). The destination branding strategy was decided by consensus to ensure equal participation among the Pentahelix stakeholders, although it did not achieve the ideal definition. As a key sector within the Pentahelix framework, the government needs to manage conflicts effectively by prioritising open dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders (Basuki & Yuliawati, 2025). Integrating promotion with nature and cultural conservation within the branding strategy effectively raises awareness and fosters a positive perception

of the Raja Ampat Geopark on a sustainable basis (Mawaddah et al., 2024).

The second factor hindering the efficacy of tourism branding in Bengkalis is the execution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies that are aligned with the Village Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which exhibit a lack of consistency from the governmental sector. Although there exist regulatory frameworks that endorse the empowerment of local communities through eco-tourism initiatives and the advancement of infrastructure, the actualization of these frameworks frequently diverges from the strategic priorities established in destination management. The enhancement of tourism-related infrastructure, exemplified by improved access to mangrove ecosystems or revered sites, has not adequately conformed to the principles of environmental sustainability and has similarly failed to sufficiently engage local communities throughout the development process. Research pertaining to tourism development via the Pentahelix model and geospatial planning indicates that such collaborative efforts have yielded a favorable influence on the enhancement of infrastructure, marketing strategies, and tourism management practices, thereby generating prospects for local economic advancement and the preservation of cultural heritage (Iriani et al., 2026).

Literature discussing sustainable place branding indicates that stakeholders in the tourism sector are increasingly aware of the negative impacts caused by tourism, and it is becoming increasingly crucial to brand and position destinations towards sustainability. (Garanti et al., 2024). Research underscores the imperative to delve deeper into the realm of sustainable place branding and its impacts on visitor perceptions within an increasingly dynamic global tourism framework. The relevance of the pentahelix model in augmenting the prospects of regional tourism has been accentuated in a plethora of scholarly investigations. Such research serves to amplify the potential of regional tourism. Within the specific context of Bengkalis, the integration of this model can ensure that branding initiatives not only emphasize promotional endeavors but also fortify infrastructural development, enhance human resource capabilities, and safeguard cultural heritage.

In light of the research deficiencies identified, prior scholarly investigations have indicated shortcomings in the amalgamation of tourism communication analysis with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) paradigm, particularly concerning the Village Sustainable Development Goals. Numerous studies predominantly focus on promotional or infrastructural aspects in isolation; however, scant

attention is directed towards examining how synergies among these components can be fostered through comprehensive communication frameworks. The scholarship pertaining to the impact of digital media on branding, particularly within the cultural and religious contexts of coastal regions in Indonesia, remains inadequately advanced. Robust destination branding can be cultivated through three fundamental pillars: the conservation of whale sharks, the fortification of local cultural identity, and the development of coastal micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) products (Suyanto et al., 2026).

The principal innovation of this research resides in the utilization of a two-way communication framework (boundary-spanning communication) that integrates traditional local cultural, religious, and wisdom values with contemporary digital technologies. Unlike prior studies that possess a sectoral focus, this research introduces a holistic model that examines the dynamics of power relations between governmental entities and local communities, as well as the ramifications of these dynamics for the promotion of sustainable tourism. The justification for this investigation is predicated upon the pressing necessity to enhance Bengkalis competitive standing in light of the intensifying competition among regional tourist destinations, in addition to the imperative to augment the academic literature with case studies derived from the coastal regions of Indonesia.

The present study endeavors to undertake a thorough examination of governmental communication frameworks pertinent to tourism branding in Bengkalis, with a particular emphasis on the integration strategies of indigenous cultural, religious, and wisdom components. The principal objectives encompass: (1) the identification of prevailing communicative patterns between local governmental bodies and community constituents, (2) the evaluation of factors that either promote or obstruct the execution of policies, and (3) the formulation of strategic recommendations designed to enhance the efficacy of branding initiatives through the implementation of the Pentahelix model.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach (Given, 2008; Guerra, 2022), using a dynamic case study design to analyse the government's communication framework for tourism marketing based on local culture, religious values and local wisdom in Bengkalis Regency. A total of 15 research informants were selected based on the need to under-

stand the complex dynamics of interaction between local government agencies and community organisations, specifically Pokdarwis, as well as tourists. This research was conducted in Bengkalis Regency, Riau Province, Indonesia, from January to October 2024, covering the preparation, data collection, analysis and final report stages.

on-probability sampling techniques, using purposive and snowball sampling strategies, were used to select informants (Akkaş & Meydan, 2024; Pace, 2021). presentatives from the Tourism Office, the Regional Planning Agency, members of GenPi, tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and tourists visiting priority destinations such as religious sites and mangrove ecotourism areas. Data collection was carried out using three main methodologies: (1) in-depth interviews to explore the roles and barriers to the implementation of branding policies; (2) participatory observation of destination promotion activities, including cultural festivals broadcast live on social media platforms; (3) secondary document analysis covering tourism strategic plans, visitor data from the National Tourism Information System, and evaluative reports on government programmes.

To improve the accuracy of the findings, primary and secondary data were verified using triangulation methods. The data analysis combined triangulation methodology with prospective evaluation to identify the key factors influencing policy implementation (Young, 2012). Researchers also used SWOT analysis in their data processing to generate strategic recommendations that could enhance synergy between government agencies, the community and digital technology in efforts to promote sustainable tourism (Asmit et al., 2020; Benzaghta et al., 2021; Puyt et al., 2023).

The SWOT categories were derived through a systematic and structured qualitative data analysis

process. The data analysis incorporates a prospective approach to identify the dominant factors influencing policy implementation. Based on these results, the researchers then categorised the findings into the four dimensions of the SWOT analysis: Strengths natural resources and local community support, which were consistently identified in interviews and observations; Weaknesses revealed by gaps in infrastructure and human resource capacity; opportunities (Opportunity) identified in the analysis of strategic documents; whilst threats (Threat) were inferred from the risks of environmental degradation and socio-cultural changes emerging from various data sources. Thus, the formulation of the SWOT matrix is not a subjective categorisation, but rather the result of an analytical process verified through the triangulation of multiple data sources.

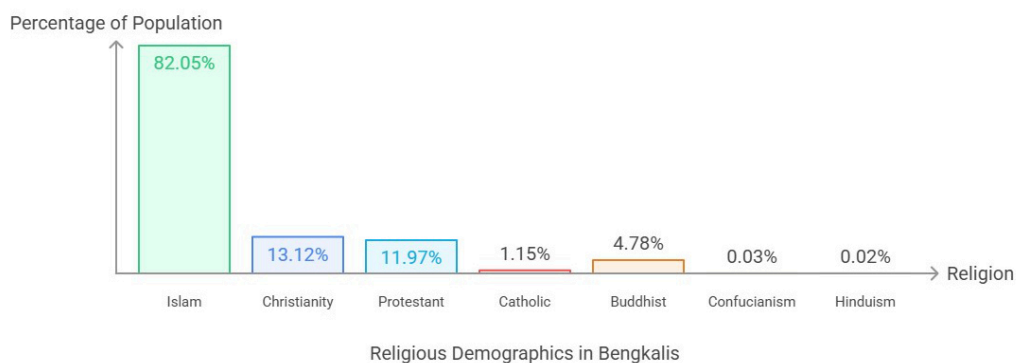
This study also adopts the pentahelix analytical framework (government, academia, business, the community and the media) to ensure that branding efforts focus not only on promotional activities, but also on strengthening infrastructure, enhancing human resource capacity and preserving cultural heritage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Tourism in Bengkalis, Indonesia

Bengkalis serving as the administrative center of Bengkalis Regency within Riau province, Indonesia, represents an emergent urban area. Throughout its progression, Bengkalis City has been populated by a diverse array of ethnic groups, predominantly including Malays, Chinese, Javanese, Minang, and Batak, alongside various minority ethnic communities. The Malay populace of Bengkalis predominantly adheres to Islam, and their quotidian practices

Figure 1. Population based on beliefs



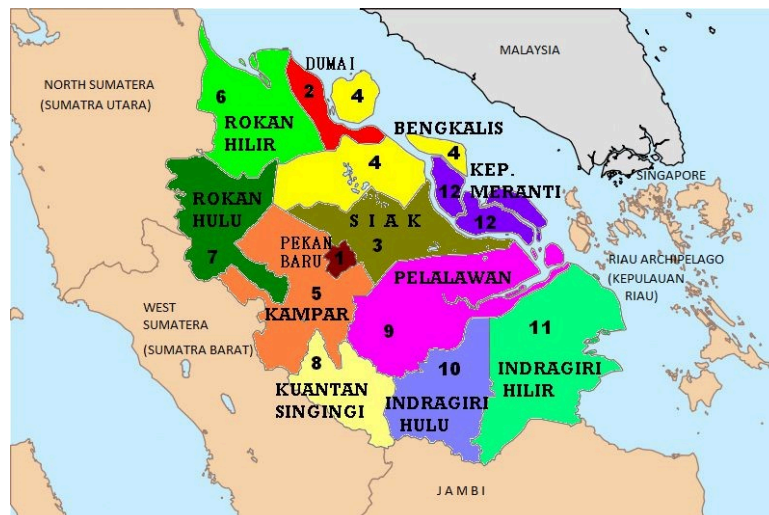
Source: Processed Research Data Results, 2025

are intrinsically linked to Islamic cultural norms. The traditional ceremonial practices associated with tourism are often imbued with Islamic traditions and reflect Islamic life principles. The local ethos, as articulated in Malay philosophical thought, asserts that "to be Malay is to be Islamic; if one is not Islamic, one cannot be deemed Malay."

In the year 2025, it is documented that a significant proportion of the population of Bengkalis identifies with the Islamic faith. In terms of religious affiliation, the Islamic community constitutes 82.05% of the populace, while Christianity accounts for 13.12%, with Protestantism representing 11.97% and Catholicism at 1.15%. The adherents of Buddhism comprise 4.78% of the population, followed by Confucianism at 0.03%, and both celebratory practices and Hinduism each at 0.02%.

Bengkalis regency encompasses the eastern coastal region of Sumatra Island, situated between 2°30' North Latitude and -0°17' North Latitude, as well as between 100°52' East Longitude and -102° East Longitude. The total area of Bengkalis Regency is approximately 30,646.83 km², which includes both terrestrial and marine environments. The administrative center of Bengkalis Regency, which serves as its capital, is Bengkalis City, located on Bengkalis Island. Additionally, its administrative jurisdiction extends to certain regions on Sumatra Island, specifically Duri and Dumai. The distance from Duri to Bengkalis is recorded at 106 kilometers, while the distance from Dumai to Bengkalis is noted as 78 kilometers; these two regions on Sumatra Island are delineated by a body of water.

Figure 2. Map of the Bengkalis region, part of Riau Province



Source: Bengkalis District Government, 2025

The geographical region of Bengkalis Regency to the north is adjacent to the Strait of Malacca, to the south it shares a boundary with Kampar Regency, to the west it abuts the Province of North Sumatra, and to the east it is bordered by the Riau Islands Regency. This geographical region of Bengkalis exhibits a tropical climatic condition characterized by annual precipitation ranging from 773 to 1734 mm, accompanied by air temperatures fluctuating between 26° and 32°C. The arid season in this region typically transpires from February to August, whereas the wet season occurs from September to January, with the maximum annual precipitation reaching approximately 1734 mm and the minimum annual precipitation recorded at 773 mm.

Bengkalis Tourism Development Strategy, Indonesia

The strategic framework for tourism development in Bengkalis encompasses four principal dimensions: Tourism Distribution, Cultural Conservation, Human Resource Development, and Civil Administration. Each dimension is supplemented with specific objectives, targets, and performance indicators, thereby rendering this framework a methodical and intentional policy formulation instrument. This organizational schema embodies a holistic methodology in the administration of tourist destinations, aimed not solely at augmenting tourist influx, but also at preserving cultural viability, enhancing human resource capabilities, and op-

timizing the efficacy of local governance (Rickly, 2022). Consequently, this strategic initiative possesses the capacity to serve as a robust basis for the metamorphosis of Bengkalis into an inclusive and sustainable tourism hub within the region of Sumatra.

The topographical characteristics of this region are distinctly exceptional; specifically, the coastal regions exhibit elevations that surpass those of the central areas. The soil composition along the coast predominantly consists of mud clay, whereas the

central terrain is characterized by its relatively low-lying marshlands. Throughout the wet season, the Bengkalis region experiences inundation due to the influx of water into the central areas. The island of Bengkalis is frequently analogized to a plate, wherein the peripheries are elevated while the central section is comparatively depressed. The central region of the island is enveloped in peat, with a thickness reaching up to 2 meters. Furthermore, there exists a swamp forest within this area, the expanse of which is progressively diminishing.

Figure 3. Bengkalis tourist destinations



Source: Processed Research Data Results, 2025

Figure 3. Illustrates potential beach tourism destinations within Bengkalis Regency, Riau, Indonesia, emphasizing twelve distinct beach locales, each characterized by unique attributes. Each beach locale is accompanied by a succinct description that encapsulates its distinctive traits, such as natural aesthetics, recreational activities, and the qualitative aspects of sand and water conditions. A comprehensive examination will be undertaken to elucidate the maritime tourism potential of Bengkalis, alongside its repercussions for the advancement of the local tourism sector. These locales are geographically dispersed throughout Bengkalis, with several beaches exhibiting analogous characteristics, including natural allure, serenity, and specific recreational pursuits, such as snorkeling and diving.

The concentric circle configuration conveys the notion that each locale possesses equivalent significance, notwithstanding the absence of definitive priority indicators within this visualization. Through the implementation of a judicious development strategy, Bengkalis has the capacity to capitalize on its natural resources to evolve into a sustainable and highly competitive tourist destination. Nevertheless, it is imperative to uphold a balance between economic advancement and environmental sustainability, as well as to enhance inter-sectoral coordination to ensure the effective realization of the proposed plan.

Figure 3. Bengkalis tourist destinations



Source: Processed Research Data Results, 2025

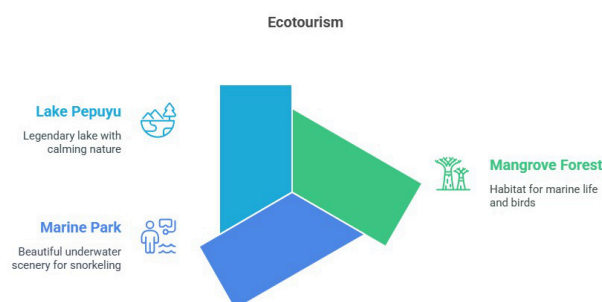
Figure 4. underscores the significance of diversifying types of tourism as a strategic measure to establish a robust and sustainable tourism sector. Destinations such as Telaga Suri Perdana and Park Andam Dewi present opportunities for relaxation and engagement with the natural environment, whereas Bukit Batu Tourist Village and Bukit Batu Protected Forest serve as attractions for visitors with an inclination towards historical exploration and ecotourism. Furthermore, Sand Field offers adaptable space for large-scale events, including art festivals, exhibitions, or community gatherings, thereby enhancing both local and international participation.

From a tourism management viewpoint, it is imperative to achieve an equilibrium between economic advancement and ecological conservation. For instance, the Bukit Batu Protected Forest ne-

cessitates safeguarding against adverse repercussions stemming from heightened tourist influx, through stringent regulatory measures and sustainable environmental management practices (Rickly, 2022).

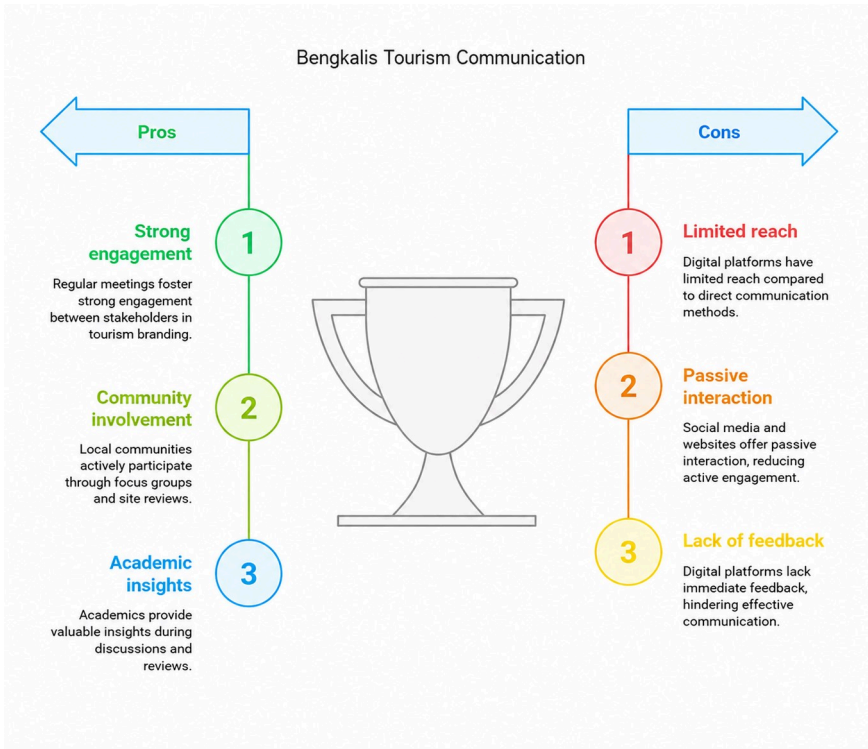
Cross-sector collaboration is essential to foster synergy across different locations. Local authorities must work together with local communities, private companies and academic institutions to formulate a comprehensive tourism development plan. In short, this vision establishes a strategic framework for advancing inclusive, sustainable, and highly competitive historical and cultural tourism. However, the implementation of this plan requires investment in infrastructure, human resource training, and the formulation of effective marketing strategies to attract more visitors from both domestic and international markets.

Figure 3. Bengkalis tourist destinations



Source: Bengkalis District Government, 2025

Figure 6. Tourism communication



Source: Processed Research Data Results, 2025

Figure 5. The analysis presented is a geometry-focused visualization that illustrates the potentiality of ecotourism destinations through three principal components: Lake Pepuyu, Marine Park, and Mangrove Forest. Each component is denoted by a distinct color and icon, further enhanced by a succinct description that encapsulates the defining characteristics of each. Collectively, these three destinations are instrumental in fostering environmental sustainability while affording visitors a deeply engaging travel experience. Nevertheless, the successful execution of this strategy necessitates robust coordination among local governmental entities, community stakeholders, business representatives, and academic institutions to guarantee that every facet of development is conducted in an inclusive manner and directed toward enduring sustainability.

Government Boundary Spanning Communication Model in Bengkalis Tourism Branding

The communication paradigm that transcends boundaries within the Bengkalis tourism sector pertains to the communicative function that links various tourism entities, such as hotels, travel agencies,

and tourist attractions, with external parties including tourists, the media, and other relevant stakeholders. The primary objective of this communication framework is to gather intelligence from the external milieu, analyze it, and relay the findings to the organization to facilitate informed decision-making and operational enhancement. The government of Bengkalis Regency adopts a bidirectional communication model in its tourism branding initiatives, which encompasses both direct and indirect forms of interaction. Direct engagement is manifested through regular assemblies, focus group discussions, and site evaluations involving the Tourism Department, local community organizations, and academic institutions. Conversely, indirect communication is executed via digital platforms, including social media accounts such as Instagram @disparbudporabengkalis, Facebook, and the official portal of the National Tourism Information System.

Figure 6. delineates the assessment of tourism communication within Bengkalis Regency, Riau, Indonesia, while considering the advantageous and disadvantageous aspects. On the affirmative side, three principal components emerge as significant assets: robust engagement, community participation, and scholarly contributions. Systematic as-

semblies among stakeholders cultivate substantial collaboration and synergies in the advancement of regional tourism initiatives. The vigorous involvement of local communities through focus groups and empirical assessments not only enhances public engagement but also safeguards the authenticity and cultural pertinence of the constructed tourism narrative. Furthermore, contributions from academia provide a rigorous scientific foundation for strategic planning, thereby guaranteeing that tourism policies and promotional campaigns are grounded in empirical evidence and systematic trend analysis. Collectively, these three elements constitute the bedrock of inclusive, participatory, and sustainable communication practices.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of deficiencies, the existing digital communication framework exhibits notable constraints. Digital platforms, including social media and websites, are perceived to possess restricted outreach, particularly among demographic cohorts that experience a deficiency in access or technological literacy. The engagement facilitated by these platforms predominantly manifests as passive interaction, consequently diminishing the capacity for vigorous audience involvement. Furthermore, the absence of immediate feedback complicates the assessment of message efficacy in real-time and hinders the ability to implement strategic modifications expeditiously. This limitation may obstruct the establishment of emotional connections with tourists and curtail responsiveness to evolving market preferences.

In order to enhance the efficacy of tourism communication within the region of Bengkalis, it is imperative to adopt a multichannel strategy that synergizes the capabilities of digital communication with traditional methods, including face-to-face interactions, offline promotional campaigns, and the direct engagement of prominent public figures. The augmentation of interactivity via survey, polling, and live session functionalities on social media platforms is also crucial for fostering a reciprocal relationship with the audience. Moreover, the implementation of a digital-based feedback management system can significantly expedite the responsiveness to public demands and aspirations. In summary, proficient tourism communication must successfully engage diverse audience segments, cultivate active participation, and ensure alignment among governmental visions, community expectations, and empirical recommendations to thrive in an increasingly competitive tourism sector. Collaborative efforts are essential in broadening the scope of promotional activities, such as live-streaming Cultural Festivals that appeal to both domestic and

international tourists. Nevertheless, the potential for synergies between governmental institutions and local communities continues to be obstructed by power dynamics and the scarcity of local resources in the realm of digital marketing. Bengkalis showcases various destinations that reflect its rich local culture, religious heritage, and traditional wisdom.

SWOT Analysis of Bengkalis Tourism, Indonesia

This indicates that the strategic positioning of the northern coastal ecotourism sector can be advanced with vigor, specifically by harnessing its inherent strengths to seize the potential opportunities presented by both domestic and international tourists. The subsequent section delineates the SWOT matrix formulated for the enhancement of Bengkali tourism.

The SWOT (table 1) matrix illustrates that Bengkalis possesses significant potential within the tourism sector, particularly through its abundant natural resources and the backing of the local community. (Benzaghta et al., 2021; Herlin & Yati, 2019; Puyt et al., 2023). Through the execution of a well-structured strategy, Bengkalis has the potential to leverage international market prospects while concurrently preserving the ecological integrity and cultural heritage of the region. An integrative methodology that encompasses governmental bodies, local communities, and additional stakeholders will be essential for the successful metamorphosis of Bengkalis into a highly competitive tourism hub.

First, the power. Bengkalis possesses a multitude of advantages that can serve as a robust foundation for the advancement of a sustainable tourism industry. The region's potential for natural tourism, which encompasses unique mangrove ecosystems, rivers, and coastlines, positions this area as a promising destination for the tourism sector in Bengkalis. Furthermore, the proactive support from local communities constitutes a strategic asset in cultivating an authentic and inclusive tourism image. Community engagement not only enhances public participation but also fortifies the social sustainability of tourism initiatives (Kiss et al., 2022; Sánchez-Hernández, 2024). Conversely, the abundance of natural resources, such as seafood and organic agricultural products, presents opportunities for diversification in tourism types, including agro-tourism and culinary tourism, which can appeal to specific market segments. The interplay among these three elements the potential of nature, community involvement, and local resources constitutes a significant capital for establishing Bengkalis'

unique and distinguished tourism identity in contrast to other destinations within Sumatra.

Secondly, notwithstanding the considerable potential inherent in Bengkalis, the region continues to contend with various structural deficiencies that may impede the expeditious advancement of tourism development. Fundamental infrastructure, encompassing transportation networks, lodging facilities, and public amenities, remains insufficiently developed to effectively facilitate optimal tourist engagement. The accessibility of tourist destinations presents a formidable challenge, largely attributable to the dearth of adequate terrestrial, maritime, and aerial transportation options.

Third, opportunities. The global tourism sector is experiencing a significant transformation characterized by an escalating demand for natural destinations, authentic cultural experiences, and sustainable tourism practices elements that are intrinsically linked to the potential of Bengkalis. The domain of natural tourism, including ecotourism and

water tourism, presents opportunities for further development through an environmentally-conscious approach aimed at attracting millennials and Generation Z tourists who demonstrate a heightened awareness of sustainability concerns. Furthermore, local cultural events, such as traditional festivals or rowing boat races, can serve as annual attractions, effectively drawing tourists while simultaneously fostering the preservation of Bengkalis' cultural heritage.

Fourthly, threats. Whilst there are many opportunities, Bengkalis must simultaneously contend with a range of serious threats which, if not properly addressed, could significantly hamper the long-term development of tourism. The main threats stem from potential environmental damage caused by the overexploitation of natural resources, pollution, and the impact of unregulated infrastructure development.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Bengkalis Tourism

EFAS	IFAS	OPPORTUNITY (O) 1. Natural and cultural attractions 2. Event	THREAT (T) 1. Environmental damage 2. Socio-cultural change 3. Ecosystem sustainability
STRENGTH (S) 1. Tourism potential 2. Community support 3. Natural resource potentia	SO STRATEGY 1. Making the existing tourism potential an effort to attract tourists 2. Make community support in providing tourism events 3. Making use of existing natural resources to develop regional tourism		ST STRATEGY 1. Utilizing existing tourism potential to reduce environmental damage 2. Leveraging community support in maintaining local social and cultural conditions 3. Utilizing the potential of natural resources to maintain sustainable tourism
	WEAKNESS (W) 1. Infrastructure improvement 2. Availability of human resources 3. Means of transportation		WT STRATEGY 1. Improve the quality of infrastructure to maintain environmental damage monitoring. 2. Improving the quality of human resources to maintain local social and cultural conditions 3. Providing transportation facilities to maintain ecosystem sustainability

Source: Processed data by researchers, 2025

Implementation of Bengkalis Tourism Sustainable Approach

The strategic framework for tourism development within Bengkalis Regency is delineated. The

emphasis on the dissemination of tourism, the preservation of cultural heritage, the enhancement of human capital, and the augmentation of civil service capabilities exemplifies a comprehensive methodology that integrates economic, social, and

cultural dimensions. Nevertheless, to attain optimal outcomes, it is imperative to implement modifications targeting more specific objectives, enhance intersectoral coordination, and adopt a sustainable

operational paradigm. With an appropriately formulated strategy, Bengkalis possesses significant potential to evolve into a highly competitive and sustainable tourism.

Table 2. Development of Bengkalis Tourism Destinations

Characteristic	Objective	Target	Target Indicator
Tourism Speed	Speed Tourism	Increase the development of tourist destinations	Foreign tourist visits
Cultural Preservation	Increase cultural preservation	Increase the preservation of cultural values	Preserved cultural heritage objects, sites and areas
Human resources	Improve the quality and power of human resources	None	Art and culture festivals
Civil Service	Improve the capacity of civil service	Increase the capacity of civil service	Accountability of regional apparatus performance

Source: Processed Research Data Results, 2025

The table 2., illustrates the strategic framework for the advancement of tourism in Bengkalis Regency, Riau, Indonesia, which encompasses four principal dimensions: Tourism Dissemination, Cultural Conservation, Human Capital Development, and Civil Administration. Each of these dimensions is accompanied by specific objectives, targets, and performance indicators, thereby rendering this table a methodical and intentional instrument for policy formulation. This framework embodies a holistic methodology in the administration of tourist destinations, aimed not solely at augmenting tourist influx, but also at preserving cultural integrity, enhancing human resource capabilities, and optimizing the efficiency of local governance. Consequently, this strategic framework possesses the capacity to serve as a robust basis for the metamorphosis of Bengkalis into an inclusive and sustainable tourism hub within the region of Sumatra.

In the context of the Tourism Spread dimension, the primary aim is to disseminate and broaden the scope of tourism via the establishment of novel tourist destinations. Metrics such as "foreign tourist visits" reflect Bengkalis' ambition to penetrate the global market; however, this endeavor must be counterbalanced with meticulous planning to mitigate the risks of overtourism and the degradation of the environment (Orindaru et al., 2021). Conversely, the dimension of Cultural Preservation un-

derscores the significance of safeguarding indigenous cultural values as integral components of Bengkalis' tourism identity. Cultural and artistic festivals, alongside the conservation of heritage sites, serve as fundamental constituents in the establishment of a genuine and culturally enriched representation of destinations, aligning with the increasing global trend toward culturally oriented tourism and ecotourism (Sari & Kulualp, 2020). Nevertheless, it is imperative to establish a synthesis between cultural policy and environmental governance to mitigate the distortions of cultural significance that may arise from an overwhelming trend of commercialization.

The Human Resources dimension underscores initiatives aimed at enhancing both the quality and capacity of human resources within the tourism sector, albeit it has yet to delineate specific targets amenable to quantitative assessment. The employment of cultural festivals as metrics implies that human resource development is oriented towards bolstering community-centric tourism endeavors. Nevertheless, it is preferable that this dimension be augmented by vocational training, competency certification, or an internship program tailored for stakeholders within the tourism industry to ensure the provision of high-quality services that align with both national and international standards. (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2023). In the absence of sub-

stantial investment directed towards the enhancement of workforce capacity, the full realization of the economic growth potential inherent within the tourism sector will prove to be markedly challenging. Ultimately, the aspect related to the Civil Service underscores the necessity of augmenting the capabilities of regional apparatuses to foster transparent and accountable tourism governance (Riski, 2025; Sadat & Nastia, 2023; Xu & Dai, 2024). The metric referred to as “accountability of the performance of the regional apparatus” signifies a dedication to enhancing bureaucratic governance; however, the implementation of more concrete evaluative frameworks, such as public service satisfaction indices or administrative response times, is imperative to ensure the efficacy of policy execution (Hien et al., 2024)

The presented table elucidates the overarching trajectory of the tourism policy in Bengkulu, which is characterized by a holistic and sustainability-focused approach; however, it necessitates enhancement regarding the specification of targets, the coordination across various sectors, and the incorporation of information technology to augment the real-time monitoring and evaluation of strategic initiatives. Subsequent recommendations encompass the fortification of community engagement in the decision making processes, the implementation of principles rooted in digital based smart tourism, and the enhancement of the capabilities of local government agencies to formulate adaptive policies in response to the continuously evolving dynamics of the global tourism sector (Hall, 2010; Hussain & Haley, 2022). The findings of this investigation substantiate the significance of place branding theory and a bilateral communication framework, boundary-spanning (Andriany & Andini, 2019) in the specific geographical context of Bengkulu. In pragmatic terms, this paradigm can be emulated in coastal regions of Indonesia exhibiting analogous potential, with modifications tailored to local cultural and religious attributes. Policy suggestions encompass the incorporation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) within sustainable infrastructure initiatives and the enhancement of collaborative relationships among the Tourism Department, local communities, and academic institutions.

Furthermore, a significant constraint of the research is its dependence on qualitative data, which is inherently less capable of statistically quantifying economic impacts. Subsequent investigations must integrate quantitative methodologies to assess branding efficacy and to explore the preferences of domestic versus international travelers. Moreover,

inquiries into the enduring effects of digital communications on the conservation of local cultures are essential to guarantee the sustainability of the initiative.

Pentahelix Tourism Bengkulu

The Pentahelix model is a collaborative framework comprising five key components essential to the advancement of sustainable tourism, namely: government bodies, academic institutions, private companies, community groups and the media (Dananjaya, 2025; Ismandianto et al., 2023). In the context of tourism brand development in Bengkulu, the application of this model ensures that development does not focus solely on promotional efforts, infrastructure strengthening, human resource capacity building, and the preservation of cultural heritage. The Pentahelix model is regarded as an appropriate collaborative framework for facilitating the creation of synergies in the development of sustainable tourism destinations (Ramadhan et al., 2025). This framework examines economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions in a holistic manner. Empirical studies show that cross-sector collaboration plays a vital role in developing the identity of a tourism destination, preserving local values and implementing sustainable innovations.

In the context of its implementation in Bengkulu Regency, stakeholder participation includes representatives from local government agencies, organisations active in the tourism sector (Pokdarwis), as well as frequent visitors to priority tourist attractions such as sacred sites and mangrove ecotourism areas.

The Bengkulu Regency Government has adopted a two-way communication model for its tourism branding initiative. Direct communication is facilitated through regular meetings, focus group discussions (FGDs) and field evaluations involving the Tourism Office, local community organisations and academic institutions. Indirect communication is facilitated via digital platforms, including social media such as Instagram @disparbudporabengkalis, Facebook, and the official portal of the National Tourism Information System. The contribution of the Pentahelix model to the branding outcomes is demonstrated by an increase in tourist visits and visitor satisfaction following the events.

Coordination between local government bodies, community stakeholders, business representatives and educational institutions is essential to ensure that all aspects of development are sustainable

(Pudjono et al., 2026). The Bengkalis Regency Government has adopted a two-way communication model in its tourism branding initiative, which encompasses both direct and indirect forms of interaction. Direct engagement takes the form of systematic meetings, focus group discussions and site evaluations involving the Tourism Office, local community organisations and academic institutions. Indirect communication is facilitated through digital platforms, including social media accounts such as Instagram @disparbudporabengkalis, Facebook, and the official portal of the National Tourism Information System. A cross-divisional communication framework provides the theoretical foundation necessary to understand the complex interactions between government entities, private sector actors, and public organisations in the development of promotional strategies.

Although the government has utilised social media as a promotional tool, the content produced often fails to reflect the unique cultural and religious values that are the region's main attractions. A lack of digital marketing training for local staff results in content that is unengaging and fails to reach a wider audience. To enhance collaborative efforts, this study recommends the establishment of a communication forum involving various stakeholders, the improvement of tourism literacy among the local community, and the application of digital technology and media to strengthen destination branding initiatives.

The effectiveness of Bengkalis tourism branding is influenced by the quality of relationships and coordination among stakeholders within the Pentahelix framework. However, this collaborative process faces several significant challenges, including disparities in power among stakeholders and capacity. Research indicates that when relationships among stakeholders are harmonious, such collaboration has a positive impact. Conversely, a lack of coordination and conflicts of interest can hinder the effectiveness of branding efforts.

The strong Malay cultural values and Islamic religious traditions in Bengkalis are strategic assets that have been transformed into the foundation of a tourism branding communication strategy. This philosophy reflects the deep integration of cultural and religious identity, which is the main attraction of this destination. The transformation of these values into a branding strategy combines traditional local culture, religion and local wisdom with contemporary digital technology.

The research findings reinforce the significance of place branding theory and the framework for cross-border communication within the specific ge-

ographical context of Bengkalis, providing a replicable model for coastal regions in Indonesia with similar potential, albeit with modifications tailored to local cultural and religious attributes.

From a conceptual contribution perspective, the Bengkalis case study yields several important theoretical insights that enrich the academic literature on tourism branding based on local identity. Firstly, this study demonstrates that the Pentahelix model in the context of tourism branding does not merely emphasise promotional efforts, but also encompasses the strengthening of infrastructure, the enhancement of human resource capabilities, and the preservation of cultural heritage in an integrated manner. These findings theoretically validate the applicability of place branding theory and cross-border communication frameworks within the local Indonesian context, whilst also providing an empirical contribution in the form of a case study from a coastal region that has hitherto been under-represented in the literature on the impact of digital media on tourism branding within cultural and religious contexts.

CONCLUSION

This research elucidated that the governmental communication paradigm employed in the promotion of tourism, predicated on indigenous culture, religious values, and local wisdom within Bengkalis Regency, has embraced a bilateral communication approach, which encompasses both direct engagement (such as meetings and group discussions) and indirect interactions facilitated by digital mediums, including social media platforms and the official website of the National Tourism Information System. The collaboration with local communities, particularly entities such as GenPi and Pokdarwis, has proven instrumental in augmenting the breadth of promotional activities, notably through the live streaming of cultural festivals that effectively captivate both domestic and international tourists. Nonetheless, the execution of this model continues to encounter considerable challenges, including power dynamics between governmental authorities and community stakeholders, a deficiency in digital marketing training for local human resources, and the inconsistency in the allocation of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives aligned with Village Sustainable Development Goals. A SWOT analysis indicates that while the prospects for tourism and religious tourism exhibit substantial opportunities, deficiencies in access infrastructure and the capability of human resources represent significant weaknesses that war-

rant attention. Theoretically, these findings substantiate the applicability of place branding theories and boundary-spanning communication frameworks within the localized context of Bengkalis. Practically, this model provides a replicable framework for Indonesian coastal areas exhibiting analogous potential, necessitating modifications that reflect local cultural and religious distinctiveness. Evaluations conducted post-event demonstrate an enhancement in tourist arrivals and visitor satisfaction; however, the economic benefits for the local community remain constrained, underscoring the imperative for the integration of corporate social responsibility with sustainable infrastructure initiatives and the fortification of human resource capabilities through training in digital marketing.

Future research should incorporate statistical measures of the economic impact of tourism branding. It is also necessary to explore the preferences of domestic versus international tourists in order to develop more segmented marketing strategies. Investigations into the long-term impact of digital communication are required. Furthermore, comparative research exploring the application of the Pentahelix model in other coastal regions of Indonesia with different cultural and religious characteristics could enrich both theoretical and practical understanding.

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