

## The Strategy for the Development of the Sungai Bakau Beach Tourism Object in Seruyan Regency

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### Abstract

The Republic of Indonesia is a country rich in natural resources, biodiversity, and historical/cultural heritage. The abundance of natural resources can drive economic growth if managed properly according to public interests, ensuring that their utilization does not result in wasted time or resources due to mismanagement. Tourism is one of the sectors that can maximize the economic value of natural resources by transforming them into attractive tourist destinations for both domestic and international visitors. Besides its high economic value, tourism also fosters national pride, encouraging a sense of responsibility and care for the nation. Tourism is widely enjoyed by individuals as it helps relieve fatigue, enhance creativity, and support productivity. In today's era of globalization, the tourism industry has experienced rapid growth and is recognized as one of the largest industries of the century. Based on various global development indicators, the role of tourism is expected to continue expanding in the coming years. Therefore, significant efforts are needed to develop tourism potential, particularly in Indonesia. The tourism sector is crucial because it drives regional development, especially in areas with significant tourism potential, while also generating substantial foreign exchange revenue for both the region and the country. Tourism management plays an essential role in regional development under the current regional autonomy framework. It helps create job opportunities, improve income distribution, and introduce local arts, culture, and handicrafts to tourists – both domestic and international – boosting the local economy. Several factors motivate people to travel for tourism, including exploring new places, gaining knowledge, escaping unpleasant weather or seasonal conditions, engaging in activities unavailable at home, and simply seeking relaxation or recreation. Natural elements such as climate, scenic landscapes, flora and fauna, and natural mineral springs also play a crucial role in attracting tourists. Additionally, man-made attractions such as cultural heritage, local traditions, historical sites, traditional dances, and ceremonies further enhance the appeal of a destination. Therefore, the government must actively develop tourist attractions as key drivers to attract more visitors and strengthen Indonesia's position as a leading tourism destination.



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### INTRODUCTION

Seruyan Regency, located in Central Kalimantan Province, is one of the most attractive destinations for domestic and international tourists due to its abundant natural resources and diverse cultural heritage. The region is famously known for Pantai Sungai Bakau (Bakau River Beach), a scenic coastal area with lush Casuarina trees and breathtaking views, making it an ideal spot for family vacations and relaxation. With a geographical landscape comprising coastal areas and rich biodiversity, Seruyan offers a unique blend of ethnic diversity, cultural traditions, and natural attractions, making it a promising destination for tourism development. The natural beauty and tranquility of Pantai Sungai Bakau provide an opportunity to enhance the tourism sector and attract more visitors to the region.

Recognizing the significant potential of the tourism sector, the regional government of Seruyan has made tourism development a priority program in its economic agenda. A well-managed and sustainably developed tourism industry can

serve as a key driver for economic growth, contributing to an increase in Regional Original Revenue (PAD) and generating new employment opportunities. The expansion of tourism also supports the growth of local businesses, including accommodations, restaurants, and souvenir shops, further strengthening the economic welfare of the local community. By optimizing these economic opportunities, tourism can become a pillar of regional development that ensures long-term prosperity for Seruyan Regency.

Beyond its economic benefits, tourism development also plays a crucial role in preserving the local culture and environment. Sustainable tourism allows the region to protect its rich biodiversity, historical sites, and indigenous traditions while promoting awareness and appreciation among both locals and visitors. This ensures that future generations can continue to experience and benefit from the natural and cultural treasures of Seruyan. However, for tourism to thrive in the long run, it is necessary to address challenges such as infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and effective tourism management policies. Without proper planning and development, the full potential of Seruyan's tourism sector may remain untapped.

In light of these factors, this research seeks to explore key issues related to the development of Pantai Sungai Bakau, focusing on two fundamental questions: (1) What are the opportunities for the development of Pantai Sungai Bakau as a leading tourist destination? (2) What strategies can the government implement to enhance tourism at Pantai Sungai Bakau in Seruyan Regency? These research questions aim to provide valuable insights into the region's tourism potential and policy recommendations for sustainable growth. By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the current tourism landscape, stakeholders can devise more effective strategies to optimize the region's tourism sector.

The main objectives of this study are (1) to assess the potential for expanding tourism at Pantai Sungai Bakau in Seruyan Regency and (2) to identify strategic initiatives that the government can implement to further enhance tourism development. By addressing these objectives, this research aims to offer practical recommendations for local policymakers and tourism stakeholders. Through effective planning, investment, and collaboration, Seruyan Regency has the opportunity to establish itself as a premier tourism destination in Central Kalimantan, ensuring that economic, cultural, and environmental benefits are maximized for both the local community and future generations.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, which focuses on problem-solving through descriptive analysis without numerical representation. The research was conducted at the Department of Youth, Sports, Tourism, and Culture of Seruyan Regency over one month, from August 16 to September 16, 2024. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of tourism development strategies through direct interaction with key stakeholders and an in-depth examination of relevant documentation.

The data collection process incorporates four primary methods. First, interviews were conducted with selected informants using structured interview guidelines designed to address the core research issues (Siswanto, 2011:58). Second, observations were carried out to directly examine the management of Pantai Sungai Bakau by the local tourism department and to identify existing development strategies. Third, literature review (library research) was utilized to gather secondary data from books, reports, and relevant documents. Fourth, documentation analysis was employed to extract information from records such as theses, books, newspapers, and other sources, providing a broader perspective on the research subject.

The study relies on two primary data sources. Primary data is obtained directly from the Department of Youth, Sports, Tourism, and Culture of Seruyan Regency, while secondary data comes from related documentation on Pantai Sungai Bakau in Seruyan Hilir Timur District. Research informants include key individuals with extensive knowledge of tourism management and development in the region, ensuring a well-rounded and accurate representation of the challenges and opportunities faced.

For data analysis, the study employs the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) method to evaluate the potential and challenges in the development of Pantai Sungai Bakau. The findings from interviews, observations, and

literature studies are analyzed to construct a strategic framework for enhancing the tourism appeal of the area and increasing visitor numbers. This comprehensive analysis aims to provide practical recommendations for optimizing tourism management and maximizing the economic and cultural benefits of tourism in Seruyan Regency..

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Challenges in Tourism Infrastructure Development

This study employed direct interview methods to collect data. The interview was conducted with Mr. Sales Jani, SS, the Technical Activity Manager for the Tourism Sector, in his office on Monday, September 16, 2024. The key issue identified during the interview was the lack of adequate tourism facilities, which requires greater attention from the government to improve the structuring and maintenance of Pantai Sungai Bakau. The absence of essential facilities such as lodging, toilets, and diving equipment rentals remains a significant obstacle in developing Pantai Sungai Bakau as a prime tourist attraction. To enhance tourism experiences, the Department of Youth, Sports, Tourism, and Culture of Seruyan Regency requires stronger government support in terms of infrastructure development and environmental management.

### 2. Promotion Efforts by the Tourism Department

The Tourism Department has been actively working to improve tourism promotion and increase visitor interest. According to Mr. Sales Jani, SS, one of the main promotional strategies is strengthening public relations by collaborating with various stakeholders, participating in tourism events, and organizing official visits to promote Pantai Sungai Bakau. Additionally, the department focuses on expanding and diversifying tourism products, including conducting visitor surveys and auditing the potential of Pantai Sungai Bakau. These efforts aim to better understand tourist expectations and implement targeted marketing strategies to increase the beach's appeal. By integrating local and national tourism networks, the Seruyan government hopes to enhance visibility and attract more visitors to the region.

### 3. Utilization of Technology and Digital Communication

Despite the increasing role of technology in tourism, the use of digital tools in Seruyan Regency remains limited. The Tourism Department has utilized the internet mainly for promotional purposes, but a comprehensive technology-based tourism development plan is not yet in place. Currently, tourists cannot access online information regarding transportation, tour packages, costs, routes, or distances for Pantai Sungai Bakau. Moving forward, the department aims to integrate technology into tourism management, enabling digital access to tourism-related services. The implementation of e-tourism platforms and online review systems is expected to improve accessibility and visitor engagement, making Pantai Sungai Bakau more attractive to digital-savvy travelers.

### 4. Competitive Strategies in Tourism Development

To remain competitive, the Tourism Department has adopted a "Maintain and Preserve" strategy, ensuring that existing tourism potentials are sustained and optimized. The department focuses on three key strategic initiatives. First, *Sapta Pesona* awareness campaigns are conducted to educate the public on the benefits of tourism, fostering a positive perception of Pantai Sungai Bakau. Second, the community-based tourism approach is emphasized to ensure that tourism remains affordable and accessible to local residents and families. Lastly, human resource development in tourism is prioritized, with a focus on certification programs for tourism personnel. These strategies aim to enhance service quality, maintain cultural authenticity, and ensure the long-term sustainability of Pantai Sungai Bakau.

## 5. Competing Tourism Destinations in Seruyan Regency

Pantai Sungai Bakau holds a unique competitive advantage compared to other tourist destinations in Seruyan Regency. Unlike other attractions, Pantai Sungai Bakau is located at a river estuary, offering a blend of fresh and saltwater ecosystems, lush Casuarina forests, and expansive land areas suitable for group activities such as outdoor dining and fish grilling. Despite competition from Sepanjang Tourism Area in Seruyan and Ujung Pandaran in Kotawaringin Timur, Pantai Sungai Bakau remains a leading tourist destination due to its natural uniqueness and serene atmosphere. The combination of scenic beauty, environmental diversity, and recreational facilities makes it an attractive choice for visitors seeking a distinctive beach experience.

By addressing infrastructure challenges, enhancing promotional efforts, integrating technology, and implementing strategic tourism policies, Seruyan Regency has the potential to strengthen its position as a premier tourism destination in Central Kalimantan.

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