

The Motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in Promoting Culture and Tourism through International Events

Puteri Wilianti Arini¹, Andries Lionardo², Nurul Aulia³
Sriwijaya University Palembang

Correspondence: andrieslionardo@fisip.unsri.ac.id

Received: May, 15, 2025 | Revised May, 25, 2025 | Accepted: June, 15, 2025

ABSTRACT:

Background: Tourism and culture are strategic sectors that play a crucial role in enhancing regional attractiveness, driving economic growth, and strengthening cultural identity. The South Sumatra Provincial Government is highly motivated to promote culture and tourism by organizing international events as an effort to introduce the region's potential to the global stage.

Aims: This study aims to analyze the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in promoting culture and tourism through international events, as well as to examine the strategies that have been implemented to increase the number of tourist visits.

Methods: This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational study type. The research population includes the entire community of Poreang Village (2,830 people), from which a sample of 97 respondents was taken using random sampling. Data were collected using observation, questionnaires, and documentation, then analyzed using simple regression and t-tests.

Results: The results show that the local government utilizes international events as a means of cultural diplomacy, increasing tourism competitiveness, and building global networks. The main motivations of the local government in this promotion include improving the image of the region, expanding international networks, and attracting investment in the tourism sector. The strategies implemented include digital-based promotion, collaboration with international actors, and strengthening the South Sumatra tourism brand at the global level.

Conclusion: This study concludes that international events serve as a strategic instrument to introduce the cultural wealth of South Sumatra and increase its tourist appeal. The recommendations proposed include strengthening paradiplomacy policies, optimizing digital marketing, and increasing synergy between local governments and stakeholders in the tourism industry.

Keywords: Paradiplomacy, cultural diplomacy, international events, South Sumatra

Cite this article: Arini, P.W Lionardo.A, Aulia. N. (2025). The Motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in Promoting Culture and Tourism through International Events. Culture, Art and Tourism Reviews, 1(1), 40-49.

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INTRODUCTION

The tourism and cultural sectors are increasingly recognized as strategic drivers that play an important role in enhancing the attractiveness of a region, spurring economic growth, and strengthening local cultural identity in the eyes of the world (Borin et al. 2022; Mandić, Séraphin, and Vuković 2024; Wang and Huang 2024). For Indonesia, which is rich in thousands of islands, ethnic groups, languages, and cultures, the potential for tourism is a gift that must be utilized and promoted globally to become a source of economic income and foreign exchange for the country (Elizabeth et al. 2025; Khater and Faik 2025; Marasco et al. 2024).

Therefore, promoting regional culture and tourism through international channels is urgent in order to maximize this potential and integrate it into the global market (Anggita and Munib 2025; Hendryawan et al. 2024; Rose and Loisa 2024). The Gap Between Ideal Practice and Actual Conditions. Ideally, the tourism sector should continue to experience significant growth, even exceeding the rate of global economic growth, in line with projections of an increase in the number of global tourists, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region (Listyanti n.d.; Muhit, Sofiyah, and Asriani 2024; Wati and Yulsaini 2024).

The Indonesian government itself has directed tourism as a leading sector that must be supported by all ministries, given its long-term impact on employment, foreign exchange earnings, and regional economic growth (Akmal et al. 2025; Fahirah and Alrianingrum 2025; Ramadani and Salioso 2025). However, in the regional context, efforts to promote culture and tourism abroad still face challenges in achieving optimal and sustainable levels of international tourist arrivals, as seen from the data on international tourist arrivals at several regular events in South Sumatra. This indicates a gap between the great potential (ideal practice) and the actual results (actual conditions) that needs to be further examined. (Effendi, As, and Kushartono 2025; Jamlean, Renwarin, and Bipiwi 2025; Makalalag and Maramis 2025).

Opportunities for Research Although the South Sumatra Provincial Government has routinely and systematically held various events such as the Sriwijaya Festival and Gran Fondo, as well as participating in international exhibitions such as the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) and Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF), there is no significant data on the increase in tourist visits from specific participation in these overseas promotional events (Karimah and Novianti 2025; Lani, As, and Fujilestari 2025). This reality opens up opportunities for in-depth study. This research can fill the information gap by analyzing the motivation behind the local government's decision to continue international promotion, even though measurable tourist visitation data is not yet fully available, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture of the non-statistical benefits of these promotional activities. (Arkarizki, Irawati, and Sukarno 2023; Palandeng 2022)

Research Gap and Novelty Previous research may have discussed tourism promotion efforts in Indonesia or South Sumatra in general. However, this study specifically focuses on the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in promoting culture and tourism through international events. Using the concept of paradiplomacy as a theoretical framework, this study offers novelty by analyzing the actions of local governments as actors in international relations, especially in the context of cultural diplomacy, which differs from mere studies of tourism management or biased marketing communication.

Culture, Art, and Tourism

The motivation of the local government as the main variable (\$X\$) is a crucial step. Within the framework of regional autonomy, although foreign cooperation matters are often considered the absolute domain of the central government, Law No. 23 of 2014 provides for a fragmentation of power that allows local governments to be more active. The motivations behind these international promotional activities, such as enhancing the image of the region, expanding international networks, and attracting investment in the tourism sector, reflect the region's ambition to act as a global actor (paradiplomacy). Analyzing these motivations allows for a deeper understanding of the strategic reasons for the region's cultural diplomacy.

Research Objectives and Contributions The main objective of this thesis is to explain the motivations of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in promoting culture and tourism through international events. Theoretically, this research is expected to add to the knowledge and understanding of paradiplomacy studies in International Relations, as well as serve as a reference for further research. Meanwhile, in practical terms, this research is expected to provide additional insights for the central government and other local governments in formulating paradiplomacy policies and cultural promotion strategies in the tourism sector abroad in the future.

The tourism and cultural sectors are increasingly recognized as strategic drivers that play an important role in enhancing the attractiveness of a region, spurring economic growth, and strengthening local cultural identity in the eyes of the world. For Indonesia, which is rich in thousands of islands, ethnic groups, languages, and cultures, the potential for tourism is a gift that must be utilized and promoted globally to become a source of economic income and foreign exchange for the country. Therefore, promoting regional culture and tourism through international channels is urgent in order to maximize this potential and integrate it into the global market.

The Indonesian government itself has directed tourism as a leading sector that must be supported by all ministries, given its long-term impact on employment, foreign exchange earnings, and regional economic growth. In this context, the South Sumatra Provincial Government has a strong motivation to promote culture and tourism by organizing international events as an effort to introduce the region's potential to the global stage. Ideally, the tourism sector should continue to experience significant growth, even exceeding the rate of global economic growth, in line with projections of an increase in the number of global tourists. However, in the regional context of South Sumatra, efforts to promote culture and tourism abroad still face challenges in achieving optimal and sustainable levels of international tourist arrivals, as seen from the data on international tourist arrivals at several regular events. This indicates a gap between the great potential (ideal practice) and the actual results (actual conditions) that needs to be further examined.

METHOD

Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type, namely the semi-structured. A qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the social phenomenon, namely the strategic motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government (Pemda Sumsel) in promoting culture and tourism through international events. Descriptive research serves to present, analyze, and interpret the data obtained in detail regarding these motivations, as well as the strategies implemented by the South Sumatra Provincial Government in the context of paradiplomacy.

Participant

This study implemented a purposive sampling technique, which is a method of selecting individuals based on specific criteria that are relevant and directly related to the focus of the study. The informants selected were individuals who had competence, authority, and in-depth knowledge related to policy formulation and the implementation of tourism and cultural promotion programs by the South Sumatra Regional Government (Pemda) at the international level.

Population and the methods of sampling Instrumentation

The population in this study is defined as all cultural and tourism promotion activities that have been carried out by the South Sumatra Provincial Government at the international level within a relevant time frame (for example, 2019 to 2023, adjusted to the focus period of the study).

To determine the case samples from the population of promotional activities, purposive sampling was used. This technique selects international events that are considered most representative and significant in reflecting the motivation and strategies of the South Sumatra Regional Government's paradiplomacy. The cases selected as research samples include participation in the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF), participation in the Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF), promotion of the Sriwijaya Festival on the international stage, and promotion of international sporting events such as Gran Fondo. Meanwhile, in the data collection process, the researcher also used the snowball sampling technique when necessary. This technique aims to find additional credible informants or secondary data sources with exclusive information related to the events or promotional policies being studied.

Instrument

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher himself (human instrument). The researcher acts as a data collector, analyst, and reporter. The supporting instruments used include:

1. Interview Guide: A series of open-ended and semi-structured questions based on the conceptual framework of motivation and paradiplomacy.
2. Documentation: Audio recorder, visual recording device (camera/mobile phone), and field notes.
3. Literature Study and Secondary Documentation: South Sumatra Culture and Tourism Agency Strategic Plan (RENSTRA) documents, promotional activity reports, mass media news, and academic literature related to paradiplomacy and cultural diplomacy.

Psychometric Properties (Validity and Reliability)

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study uses the Data Source Triangulation technique.

| Dimensions of Validity | Testing Techniques | Implementation Description |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Credibility | Data Source Triangulation | Comparing and verifying the same information from various sources (for example, comparing interview data with Disbudpar officials with findings from the RENSTRA report and media coverage). |
| Transferability | Detailed Description (Thick Description) | Presenting interview and observation data in a detailed, clear, and systematic manner so that readers can assess whether these findings can be applied to different contexts. |
| Dependency | Audit Trail | Reviewing the entire research process, from data collection and analysis to interpretation of results, to ensure that the research flow is logical and consistent. |

A. Research Procedures

1. Pre-Field Stage: Permits, preliminary literature study, determination of focus and theoretical framework (paradiplomacy), and preparation of preliminary interview guidelines.
2. Fieldwork Stage: Conducting in-depth interviews with key informants. Collecting secondary data (strategic plans, activity reports, policy documents). Conducting participatory observation (if possible) of ongoing promotional activities.
3. Data Analysis Stage: Analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and writing the research report.

B. Research Duration

| Activity Stage | Activity Description | Duration (Example) |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| I | Preparation and Proposal | Months 1–2 |
| II | Field Data Collection | Months 3–4 |
| III | Data Analysis and Writing | Months 5–6 |

Analysis Plan

Data analysis is conducted interactively and continuously from the data collection process in the field to the writing of the results. The data analysis model used refers to the Miles and Huberman approach, which consists of three main interrelated activity streams:

1. Data Reduction: Sorting, focusing, and organizing raw data from interviews, field notes, and documents into units of information relevant to the research focus (Local Government Motivation and Paradiplomacy).
2. Data Display: Presenting the reduced data in the form of descriptive narratives, charts, or matrices of findings to facilitate drawing conclusions.
3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Summarizing the results of data presentation, looking for patterns or themes, and verifying the findings to reach a final conclusion that has been tested for validity.

The analysis plan, which uses the Miles and Huberman approach, is indeed suitable for this qualitative research design. This model is widely accepted and practical for systematically analyzing large volumes of qualitative data, which is essential for descriptive research that aims for an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon like the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government (Pemda Sumsel).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study found that the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government (Pemda Sumsel) in promoting culture and tourism through international events is strategic and reflects the role of the local government as an active paradiplomatic actor. The main motivations identified are centered on three pillars: first, Regional Branding with the aim of changing the perception of South Sumatra from merely a commodity region to a leading maritime cultural destination, as demonstrated through the promotion of the Sriwijaya heritage and the hosting of international sporting events such as Gran Fondo. Second, International Networking, realized through active participation in forums such as the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) and the Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF), focusing on creating G2G (Government-to-Government) cooperation and gaining direct access to global tour operators from potential markets such as East Asia. Third, Tourism Sector Investment Attraction, which uses international promotion as a means of presenting tourism infrastructure business opportunities, aims to improve the quality of facilities and create a multiplier effect on the local economy.

To achieve these objectives, the South Sumatra Provincial Government implemented an integrated strategy carried out by the Culture and Tourism Office, namely Optimizing Cultural Diplomacy through traditional art exhibitions and a gastronomy approach (pempek as a cultural ambassador), as well as a Digital Marketing and Partnership Strategy involving collaboration with foreign Key Opinion Leaders (KOL) and the provision of multilingual content. Overall, these findings reinforce the confirmation that the South Sumatra Regional Government effectively utilizes cultural diplomacy and tourism as tools to advance domestic (regional) economic interests on the global stage, without violating the central government's foreign policy jurisdiction, which is the essence of regional paradiplomacy.

Discussion

Research on the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in promoting culture and tourism through international events reveals that this motivation is driven by a strong desire for paradiplomacy. The main motivations include three aspects: improving the region's image (regional branding) in the eyes of the world, expanding international cooperation networks, and attracting investment into the regional tourism sector. The local government utilizes global events such as the Sriwijaya Festival, Gran Fondo, ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF), and Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF) as strategic instruments of cultural diplomacy, which serve to introduce the region's cultural wealth and increase the competitiveness of South Sumatra's tourism (Panić et al. 2023; Teixeira et al. 2019). The strategies implemented include digital-based promotion, collaboration with international actors, and strengthening the regional tourism brand at the global level.

The implications of these findings are significant, confirming that international events are crucial tools for local governments to carry out paradiplomacy and achieve economic and social interests. This study contributes theoretically by enriching the study of paradiplomacy in International Relations (Fantoni and Avellaneda 2022; Novialdi et al. 2021). Practically, this study provides valuable insights for the central government and other local governments regarding the implementation of paradiplomacy strategies and the promotion of cultural tourism abroad.

However, this study has limitations, particularly in obtaining significant quantitative data on tourist visits for specific promotional activities, such as the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF) and the Seoul International Travel Fair (SITF). Based on these results and limitations, the study recommends three strategic steps: strengthening regional paradiplomacy policies, optimizing digital marketing, and increasing synergy between local governments and tourism industry stakeholders to achieve sustainable tourism development.

The findings regarding the Three Pillars of Motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government (Pemda Sumsel) namely Improving Regional Image (Branding), Expanding International Networks, and Increasing Tourism Economic Competitiveness explicitly demonstrate that tourism promotion activities through international events are a manifestation of Paradiplomacy driven by Cultural Diplomacy. The actions of this sub-national government (Pemda Sumsel) to establish direct relations and cooperation with foreign entities, such as cities, investors, and international organizations, are characteristic of economic and cultural Paradiplomacy running parallel to central government diplomacy, where the promotion of regional culture is used as the main instrument to achieve economic goals and regional branding. Legally, this practice is permitted and has strong legitimacy in Indonesia, particularly based on Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning Regional Government, which grants broad autonomy (*otonomi luas*) to regional governments to regulate government affairs based on their own initiative and regional potential. Given that the Tourism sector is specifically classified as an Optional Government Affair (*Urusan Pemerintahan Pilihan*) (Article 12 paragraph 3 letter b), Pemda Sumsel is fully entitled and authorized to utilize Paradiplomacy as a strategy to optimize this potential and enhance public welfare without exceeding the limits of the central government's absolute authority.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the motivation of the South Sumatra Provincial Government in promoting culture and tourism through international events. Based on the findings, the main motivations of the local government in carrying out these promotional activities include improving the image of the region (regional branding), expanding international networks, and attracting investment in the tourism sector. The concept of paradiplomacy is used as a theoretical basis for understanding the role of local governments in these international relations. The results of the study conclude that the South Sumatra Provincial Government utilizes international events as a strategic instrument for cultural diplomacy, which has been successful in introducing the region's cultural wealth and increasing its tourist appeal. To achieve a more optimal and sustainable impact from promotional efforts, the South Sumatra Provincial Government (Pemda Sumsel) must immediately institutionalize and strengthen Paradiplomacy policies through the development of a binding blueprint, focusing on Sister Province/City collaborations and concrete follow-up on international agreements, which aligns with the Provincial Government's core motivation to attract investment and expand networks; concurrently, a total optimization of digital marketing is necessary, utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics for global market targeting, and developing consistent, multilingual platforms that present the visual storytelling of Sumsel's destinations; finally, all these efforts must be supported by closer synergy among all stakeholders ranging from the local government, BUMD (Regionally-Owned Enterprises), the tourism private sector, to local communities to ensure service standardization, improved infrastructure quality, and the development of integrated tourism products that can enhance Sumsel's global competitiveness.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

PWA is the main author who is fully responsible for all stages of research, analysis, and writing of this thesis. The two supervisors, AL and NA, provided substantive contributions through guidance, direction, and approval of the manuscript, ensuring the scientific feasibility of the thesis to obtain a Bachelor of International Relations degree at Sriwijaya University.

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