

Pacu Sampan as a Cultural Tourism Attraction: A Study on Tourism Development Potential at The Taman Bunga Impian Okura Pekanbaru

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Abstract.

The research was conducted at one of Pekanbaru's tourist attractions, Taman Bunga Impian Okura, which served as the study location and research object for tourism development. Tourism development plays a crucial role today in preventing visitor fatigue caused by repetitive offerings. Therefore, destination managers must actively explore development opportunities to encourage repeat visits and create renewed tourist experiences. Pacu Jalur, a water-based traditional rowing festival held in Kuansing Regency, is one example of a cultural tourism attraction featured on the international tourism calendar. Inspired by Pacu Jalur's success in utilizing cultural uniqueness, Taman Bunga Impian Okura also promotes pacu sampan culture as a potential tourism attraction. In addition to functioning as a recreational paddle sport, this activity supports natural and man-made educational tourism as well as sports tourism. Taman Bunga Impian Okura features a diverse collection of ornamental flowers, numerous handmade creative products, and performances showcasing local arts, culture, and culinary traditions. Its development has contributed to economic revitalization and generated new employment opportunities for the surrounding community. Continuous innovation and diversification of attractions have helped position Taman Bunga Impian Okura as a floral tourism destination in Pekanbaru. Strategically located along the banks of the Siak River, the site offers environmental, cultural, and recreational potential capable of enhancing the visitor experience. Research findings suggest that Taman Bunga Impian Okura, with its riverfront location, is being developed as a sports-based tourism destination to strengthen visitor engagement and increase tourist interest.

Keywords: Attraction; Flower Garden Tourism; Okura and Pacu Sampan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing well-being of modern society has led to a growing need for recreational activities that provide respite from daily routines. Tourism has become a fundamental lifestyle component, encouraging people to engage with natural and cultural environments. Tourism development is grounded in the principles of sustainability, promoting self-reliance, independence, and community empowerment. Pekanbaru City, the capital of Riau Province, comprises 83 villages and 15 districts and represents one of the province's fastest-growing tourism destinations. Throughout the year, the city attracts numerous visitors to enjoy various forms of tourism, including cultural tourism, sports tourism, cultural heritage tourism, and event-based tourism. The tourism sector is strongly supported by MICE activities (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions), shopping, and gastronomy. However, cultural and historical tourism potential particularly related to the Siak River, the historical heart of Riau remains underexplored and insufficiently developed. The Taman Bunga Impian Okura was established through a concept of returning to nature, emphasizing its diverse floral attractions. Initiated by local youth, the garden was developed as a means to enhance tourism and generate community income by transforming vacant land on the village outskirts into an appealing visitor destination.

To distinguish itself from other attractions in Pekanbaru, stakeholders including village authorities, the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), and local residents continue to improve facilities and infrastructure to enhance visitor comfort. Situated along the banks of the Siak River, the garden offers a tranquil environment where domestic and international tourists can enjoy lush floral scenery and the sounds of nature. To optimize tourism potential and river-based resources, the garden's management collaborates

with village administrations and the city tourism office to strengthen support for destination development. The surrounding area possesses cultural significance shaped by complex community practices. Historically, its strategic location along the Siak River served as an observation post and meeting point; however, the area's cultural and environmental values are now at risk due to erosion and limited public awareness. Developing attractions that integrate economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions is therefore essential to achieving sustainable tourism. The term culture derives from the Sanskrit word *buddhayah*, meaning intellect or reason, reflecting its inseparable relationship with human life. As Mutakin (2004:125) argues, culture and social structures play an important role in fostering innovation, creativity, and community activities.

Sumaatmaja (2000:20) further notes that culture comprises a set of components that shape behavior and collective practices. Previous research on tourism in Pekanbaru has predominantly focused on established destinations or public infrastructure concerns. Consequently, an in-depth investigation is needed to uncover the intrinsic value and innovative development strategies of the Taman Bunga Impian Okura, transforming this hidden asset into a competitive and leading cultural tourism destination. This study contributes a new perspective by emphasizing asset-based development and community-driven optimism. Local community participation is a central element of the Community-Based Tourism approach. Developing the tourism potential of Pacu Sampan as a cultural attraction at the Taman Bunga Impian Okura should be viewed not only as a source of regional revenue but also as an effort to enhance community welfare. Additionally, Pacu Sampan holds potential as a sports tourism activity due to the site's strategic location along the Siak River. Among numerous cultural traditions in Pekanbaru, Pacu Sampan, once a defining practice of Okura Village, is gradually disappearing from the lives of riverine communities. Revitalizing this tradition is therefore essential to strengthening local identity and enriching tourism offerings.

Tourism development aims to utilize the potential and resources of a destination to generate positive benefits and provide optimal satisfaction for visitors. Pekanbaru City possesses abundant tourism potential that supports the development of cultural tourism.

1. To address these concerns, the following research questions were formulated:
2. How can the development potential and strengths of Taman Bunga Impian Okura be identified and analyzed?
3. How can Pacu Sampan, as a cultural tourism attraction, be leveraged to enhance tourism potential in Pekanbaru City?
4. How can innovative and sustainable development strategies be formulated for Taman Bunga Impian Okura as a tourist attraction?

To answer these research questions, a quantitative approach was employed. The use of quantitative methods enables a comprehensive and systematic presentation of the research problem, allowing the study to bridge theoretical frameworks with practical applications.

The final objectives of this research are to:

1. Identify and analyze the developmental strengths and potential of Taman Bunga Impian Okura as a tourist attraction.
2. Determine how Pacu Sampan, as a cultural tourism attraction, can be developed to enhance tourism potential in Pekanbaru City.
3. Formulate an innovative and sustainable development plan for Taman Bunga Impian Okura as a tourist attraction.

The expected benefits of this research include:

1. Contributing positively to the development of tourism studies, particularly in the area of tourism potential development.
2. Providing information regarding the development of sustainable tourism potential at Taman Bunga Impian Okura.
3. Serving as a practical reference for stakeholders involved in tourism development and expansion in Riau Province, particularly in Pekanbaru City.

This study forms part of a series of research activities to be conducted over the next four years. The focus of the current research is the development potential of Pacu Sampan as a cultural tourism attraction at Taman Bunga Impian Okura.

Literature Review

Traditional canoe racing represents a cultural asset that can be developed to increase visitor numbers and preserve the legacy of past communities. As a practical implementation of the Community-Based Tourism (CBT) concept, it is essential to develop tourism potential rooted in the distinctive characteristics of Malay cultural life. According to Sunaryo (2012:1), tourism attractions are classified into several themes, including natural tourism, cultural tourism, and special interest tourism.

Several studies related to traditional canoe racing, cultural tourism attractions, and tourism development potential include the following:

1. Research conducted by Edi Susrianto Indra Putra from Indragiri Islamic University, entitled “Malay Cultural Values in the Leper Sampan Racing Tradition in Indragiri Hilir Regency.” The findings indicate that culture can be utilized to foster innovation, creativity, and community activities. The Leper Sampan Racing tradition has long been preserved by the people of Indragiri Hilir and is not merely a boat racing competition, but a deeply rooted tradition within the community. As a cultural legacy, it requires continuous preservation and development, particularly through the support of the Indragiri Hilir Regency government, so that it may continue to grow and contribute to national cultural heritage.
2. Research by Nurida Finahari and Gatut Rubiono from PGRI Banyuwangi University, entitled “Analysis of the Potential of the Banyuwangi Gandrung Dance as a Sports Tourism Dance,” highlights that cultural heritage is a crucial component of tourism products and a key factor in enhancing destination competitiveness. Cultural heritage tourism has become one of the largest and fastest-growing sectors in global tourism, offering visitors opportunities to learn about the culture and lifestyles of different regions. Their study discusses issues related to cultural attraction programs and festivals, which provide avenues for learning and experiencing local culture. Therefore, festivals must be effectively organized to respond to tourist motivations and maximize the socio-economic benefits of tourism.

Tourism, culture, and community are inherently interconnected. Culture provides identity and continuity to communities, while communities sustain and regenerate culture. Tourism, in turn, offers economic support for cultural preservation, and culture provides essential content that attracts visitors. Community participation is fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of tourism, as locally embedded practices and activities maintain cultural relevance and authenticity.

Pacu Sampan

Pacu Sampan (traditional canoe racing) is a cultural tradition that utilizes river currents for navigation. Historically, boats served as a primary mode of transportation; however, today they are used mainly for fishing and tourism-related events. In Kuantan Singingi Regency, Riau Province, traditional ceremonies often include Pacu Jalur as a major cultural event. This river-based rowing competition features long wooden boats carved from a single tree trunk and rowed by approximately forty participants. Pacu Jalur is held only once a year and has become a distinctive cultural attraction that preserves local heritage (Ariastini, 2018:28).

Tourism

Tourism involves travel from one’s place of origin to another destination (Hall, 2008; Inskip, 1991; Leiper, 1979), encompassing movements across local, regional, national, and international boundaries and enabling intercultural interaction. Consequently, understanding tourists’ characteristics and behavior during travel is essential. Culture is a crucial factor in explaining tourist behavior (Özdemir & Yolal, 2017). According to Master and Prideaux (2000), two dimensions of tourist culture should be considered: first, non-material elements such as values, norms, and practices; and second, material components including destination choices, food, purchased goods, modes of transportation, accommodations, and behavior during the trip (Kim et al., 2002). Han et al. (2014) emphasize that factors such as age, gender, nationality, occupation, psychological interests, income, education, social status, family structure, and living conditions can influence and constrain tourist behavior. When traveling, tourists generally consider the experiences they

hope to gain and their motivations (Coghlan & Pearce, 2010; Wu et al., 2017), which ultimately shape their preferences. These preferences are often used by authorities and destination managers to analyze and predict tourist behavior (Kuo et al., 2012). Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) state that tourist preferences are influenced by factors such as travel distance, interaction opportunities, family facilities, safety, and family-oriented tourism programs. Meanwhile, Chen et al. (2016) highlight additional factors including travel companions, planned activities, and holiday seasons. Tourist preferences can also be reflected in interest in destinations, intended activities, length of stay, and time allocation for tourism activities (Rodríguez et al., 2012).

Cultural Tourism

Tourism, culture, and society are interconnected, as culture provides support for communities and enables the revitalization and reproduction of cultural practices. Tourism contributes to sustaining culture, while culture offers essential content and meaning for tourists. Local communities play a crucial role in ensuring the sustainability of tourism by providing locally embedded activities (UNWTO, 2016). Sustainable tourism development refers to the process of developing a place or region without diminishing the usefulness or value of existing resources. One form of alternative tourism development involves utilizing distinctive cultural and environmental characteristics to create sustainable tourism products. According to Ariastini (2018), sports tourism is a form of recreational activity practiced by communities with the willingness and capacity to grow in accordance with local conditions and cultural values, contributing to health, fitness, and enjoyment.

Cultural Tourism Attraction

Tourist attractions are developed primarily through human creativity, either in the form of cultural heritage or cultural values that continue to exist within a community, such as rituals, customs, performing arts, visual arts, or distinctive aspects of daily life. Special-interest tourist attractions, meanwhile, are developed to fulfill specific tourist motivations through activities such as fishing, shopping, whitewater rafting, golf, agro-tourism, and participation in meetings, travel programs, and exhibitions collectively known as MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) (Damanik, 2018).

II. METHODS

This research was conducted in Tebing Tinggi Okura Village, Rumbai Timur District, Pekanbaru City. Okura Dream Flower Garden was selected as the research site due to its strong tourist appeal, drawing visitors to experience its diverse collection of flowers and fruit trees, as well as its strategic location along the Siak River. Its accessibility and proximity to the Pekanbaru city center further reinforced its selection. Additionally, the site serves as an attractive destination for nature and plant enthusiasts.

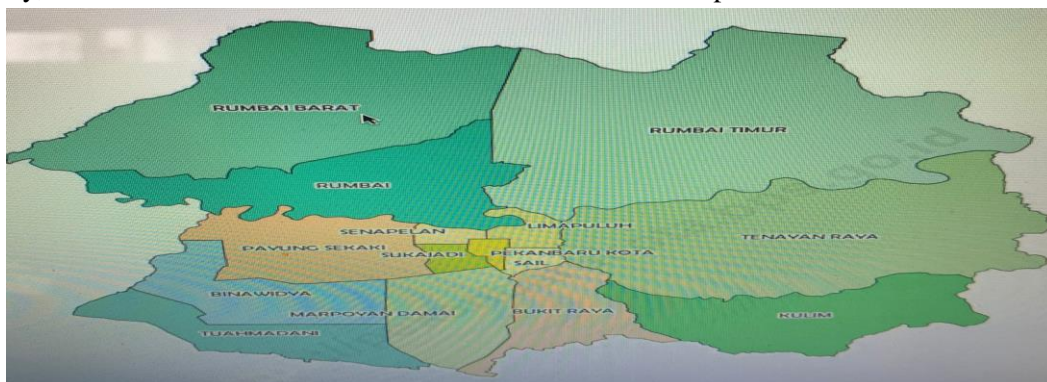


Fig. 1. Map

Source: BPS Pekanbaru City (2025)

Types and Sources of Research Data

The primary data in this study consist of respondents' answers collected through participant observation and in-depth interviews with various informants. Primary data also include field observations, research notes, and visual documentation such as photographs recorded during the research process. Secondary data are required to support and validate the primary data for subsequent analysis. Examples of secondary data include statistical records related to objects of interest in Rumbai Timur District, as well as

relevant policies and regulations obtained from the Tourism Office. Additional secondary sources comprise reports, magazines, newspapers, and other documents pertinent to the research topic. Further supporting information is drawn from literature sources related to the research problem, including historical archives, spatial planning maps, government reports on urban development, and relevant previous studies.

Data Collection Techniques

Participatory Observation

Data were collected through direct observation of the physical conditions of Okura Flower Park, cultural tourism activities, and the social potential of Pacu sampan as an attraction.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), as well as managers and owners of Okura Flower Park. Additional interviews were held with local residents involved in managing the park to gather perspectives, expectations, and detailed information from key informants. The purpose of these interviews was to identify strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in developing Pacu sampan as a cultural tourism attraction at Okura Flower Park.

Documentation

According to Arikunto (2006), “documentation is the process of searching for and collecting data in the form of notes, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, minutes, report cards, agendas, and other written sources.” Documentation in this study consisted of various publications, photographs, videos, reports, literature, journals, and conference papers relevant to the research. It also included policy documents obtained from the Pekanbaru City Tourism Office.

Research Population

The population in this study consisted of informants with diverse backgrounds residing around Okura Flower Park in Pekanbaru City. The population criteria were determined as follows: (1) individuals aged 15 years and over, (2) those who regularly engage in canoeing activities, and (3) individuals or members of canoe racing communities. Studying the entire population was not feasible due to several considerations: (1) it would require excessive time, financial resources, and labor; (2) complete population data were not fully accessible to the researcher; and (3) the population was assumed to have relatively similar characteristics. Therefore, a non-probability sampling technique was employed to select a sample representing the research population. This study used a haphazard non-probability sampling technique, which allows sampling of population members encountered in the field and administering the research questionnaire accordingly (Sugiyono, 2012).

Sampling Techniques

To date, there is no universally accepted rule that prescribes or requires a minimum sample size for research (Guest et al., 2006). Generally, researchers agree that a larger sample size tends to reduce sampling error and increase the accuracy of research findings. Conversely, a smaller sample size increases the likelihood of error, thereby reducing research accuracy. While a sample that is too small may be inadequate to represent the population, an excessively large sample can also be inefficient, placing unnecessary demands on time, costs, and human resources. Therefore, determining an appropriate sample size requires careful consideration of representativeness, resource availability, and research objectives.

Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, the information obtained was processed using a qualitative descriptive approach. This method links the collected data with actual field conditions and integrates them with relevant theoretical perspectives from scholarly literature, allowing comparisons between theory and practice. The data analysis process involved reducing data to identify key information, categorizing findings based on the SOAR framework (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results), and conducting triangulation across methods and sources to ensure validity and reliability. The results were then synthesized into an interpretive narrative that describes the research findings and provides recommendations. Although the analytical foundation refers to SWOT analysis, this study applies the SOAR framework, which is grounded in Appreciative Inquiry and emphasizes strengths and future potential rather than weaknesses and threats, thereby offering a constructive and forward-looking evaluation of tourism development possibilities.

Table 1. SOAR Framework

Phase	Description
Strengths	Identify the internal resources and uniqueness of flower garden tourism (for example: location, history, culture).
Opportunities	Identify external conditions that can be utilized for development (e.g., policy support, market demand for nostalgia/river tourism).
Aspirations	Exploring the shared vision, dreams and ideal hopes of stakeholders regarding the future of canoe racing.
Results	Define measurable performance indicators and concrete results that must be achieved to realize aspirations.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Description of Research Area

History of Pekanbaru City and the Okura Dream Flower Garden

Pekanbaru City covers an area of 632.26 square kilometers and has undergone several administrative expansions. Initially spanning 62.96 square kilometers, it was expanded to 446.50 square kilometers through Government Regulation No. 19 of 1987, comprising 8 districts and 45 urban villages. Subsequently, Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2020 further reorganized the city into 25 districts and 83 urban villages. Geographically, Pekanbaru is bordered by Siak Regency and Pelalawan Regency to the north; Kampar Regency and Pelalawan Regency to the south; Siak Regency and Pelalawan Regency to the east; and Kampar Regency to the west. The city is traversed by the Siak River, flowing from west to east, with several tributaries including the Umban Sari, Air Hitam, Sibam, Setukul, Pengambang, Ukai, Sago, Senapelan, Mintan, and Tampangan rivers. Historically, the Siak River has played a vital role as a transportation route supporting economic mobility and trade for inland communities.

Geographical Aspects

Geographically, Rumbai Timur District (21.91%), Rumbai Barat District (13.63%), and Tenayan Raya District (18.12%) are the three largest districts in Pekanbaru City in terms of land area. Rumbai Timur District, with its administrative center in Limbungan, covers a total area of 138.31 square kilometers, making it the largest district in the city.

Climate Aspects

The climate of Pekanbaru City is characterized by relatively high temperatures and significant rainfall throughout the year. The maximum recorded temperature reaches 33.6°C in October, while the minimum temperature of 23.8°C is typically recorded in January, June, July, September, November, and December. Annual rainfall in Pekanbaru varies substantially, with monthly precipitation ranging from approximately 50.7 mm to 476.4 mm.

Table 2. List of Sub-district Names and Areas in Pekanbaru City

No.	Subdistrict	Area (Km ²)	Sub-district capital
1	Paying Sekaki	35,55	Labuh Baru brt
2	Tuahmadani	29,84	tuahmadani
3	Binawidya	36,59	Simpang Baru
4	Bukit Raya	22,05	Simpang Tiga
5	Marpoyan Damai	29,74	Sidomulyo Timur
6	Tenayan Raya	114,4	Sialang Sakti
7	Kulim	56,87	Mentangor
8	Limapuluh	4,04	Rintis
9	Sail	3,26	Cinta Raja
10	Pekanbaru Kota	2,26	Kota Tinggi
11	Sukajadi	3,76	Pulau Karam
12	Senapelan	6,65	Kampung Bandar
13	Rumbai	61,86	Meranti pandak
14	Rumbai Barat	86,01	Maharani
15	Rumbai Timur	138,31	Limbungan
Total		632,26	

Source: BPS Pekanbaru City (2024)

Okura Flower Garden

Located in the Rumbai Timur District, Taman Bunga Impian Okura has become an increasingly popular tourist destination, offering natural scenic beauty complemented by diverse floral collections that attract nature lovers and photography enthusiasts. Its strategic position along the banks of the Siak River provides visitors with impressive panoramic views, where the river's flowing currents form a distinctive natural landscape. Although situated on the outskirts of the city, Taman Bunga Impian Okura remains easily accessible by private transportation. The site is managed collaboratively by local youth and the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), reflecting strong community involvement in the development of local tourism.



Fig 2. Taman Bunga Impian Okura

The main attraction is the collection of tropical and ornamental flowers. The colors, shapes, and arrangements of the flowers are a major draw for visitors. There's also a dovecote, adding to the cheerfulness and natural beauty of this destination. As seen in the following image:



Fig 3. Taman Bunga Impian Okura



Fig. 4. Taman Bunga Impian Okura



Fig 5. Taman Bunga Impian Okura

Developing the Tourism Potential of Taman Bunga Impian Okura into an Innovative and Sustainable Tourist Attraction

Taman Bunga Impian Okura, located at coordinates 00°34'38.1"N 101°31'48.3"E, lies along the banks of the Siak River, making it a strategic site for the development of cultural and nature-based tourism. With its rich natural landscape and scenic river setting, the garden holds strong potential to be developed into an innovative and sustainable tourist attraction. To explore this potential, the research engaged respondents through structured interviews. Interviews with local traditional leaders and community members involved in managing the garden focused on identifying Strengths (S) and Aspirations (A), while interviews with representatives from the Pekanbaru City Tourism Office concentrated on Opportunities (O) and Results (R). This approach allowed the study to capture diverse perspectives and align local cultural values with broader tourism development strategies.

Strengths

1. Iconic location and accessibility: Located on the banks of the Siak River, it is easily accessible from downtown Pekanbaru.
2. Historical value: Linked to trade routes during the heyday of the Siak Malay Sultanate and to folklore that can be used for storytelling.
3. Exotic river scenery: A landscape that differs from land destinations in Pekanbaru.

Opportunities

1. Enhancement of historical destinations: This is currently a global and national trend, as evidenced by the increasing number of visitors interested in authentic historical and cultural destinations, particularly Malay culture.
2. Local Government Support: The Pekanbaru City Government, particularly the Pekanbaru City Tourism Office, is committed to revitalizing the area along the Siak River to develop a potential visitor attraction.
3. Creative Community Collaboration: The potential for developing performance-based cultural attractions and creating handicrafts from materials found around tourist attractions.

Aspirations

An aspiration that emphasizes the balance between natural and cultural sustainability. Stakeholders have established the flower garden as a center for cultural conservation in the Siak River and as a destination for ecotourism and sports tourism, a leading cultural asset that positively impacts the surrounding community.

Results

1. Increase in cultural tourism visits by 43% within 3 years.
2. Increase in income of the community around Taman Bunga Impian Okura by 68% per year.
3. Establishment of a management unit/community.
4. Design of a conservation zone for the Siak River.

Pacu Sampan as a Cultural Attraction that is Being Developed as a Potential Tourism Destination in Pekanbaru City

Cultural heritage is a crucial component of a tourism product, enhancing its competitiveness as a destination and providing opportunities for visitors to enjoy the performances. The local community, along with the management and tourism group (Pokdarwis), have begun to explore the traditional canoe culture, which was once used as a means of transportation for crossing the river. Today, some still use canoes, but primarily for fishing in the Siak River. The management of Taman Bunga Impian Okura utilizes the cultural traditions of the people who once lived along the Siak River's shores. Based on research conducted through interviews with several visitors who attended the canoe racing event, several analyses were obtained:

1. Pacu sampan held at Taman Bunga Impian Okura are a truly enjoyable attraction.
2. Make Pacu sampan an annual event.
3. Visitors who come outside of event hours can experience the thrill of riding a boat.
4. The management, along with the tourism group (Pokdarwis), will create a training program for youth and the community so visitors can participate.
5. Increase the number of boats available so that participants can also participate during events.



Fig 6. Pacu Sampan

The results of interviews conducted with the Pekanbaru City Tourism Office provided guidance, motivation, and training for several young people so that tourists would feel protected if a disaster occurred with their boats. The tourism office also provided support by finding sponsors who wanted to participate in cultivating the culture that sampan racing has the potential to develop Malay culture that is rarely used by young people. With the event being held twice in Okura, many people are interested in participating in the competition and the number of visitors has also increased, even though the hot tropical climate remains enthusiastic visitors enjoy the event held.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on research, Taman Bunga Impian Okura has the potential for additional tourism development by utilizing the natural resources of the flower garden, emphasizing Malay cultural aspects, supported by local youth as initiators and the Pekanbaru City Government as stakeholders. Pacu sampan, as a cultural tourism attraction, influences the development of natural resources, which are utilized to generate foreign exchange and local economic prosperity. More attention should be paid to Pacu sampan tradition, which is almost no longer used for transportation in the areas along the Siak River surrounding this tourist attraction. The Pekanbaru City Government, particularly the City Tourism Office, is working with the community to promote this rarely encountered cultural potential. Developing this cultural potential requires close collaboration with the local tourism group (Pokdarwis). The suggestion that can be given in this research is to maximize the implementation of the boat racing event by involving the community around Taman Bunga Impian Okura tourist attraction, and can provide a lot of boat rowing skills training to the community by making a practice schedule every weekend so that tourists can also participate in practicing using boats.

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