

Economic Diplomacy of the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office through the Visit IMT-GT Program 2023-2025 to Enhance Tourist Visits in Bandung

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Abstrak

Diplomasi ekonomi menjadi salah satu strategi penting dalam meningkatkan kunjungan wisatawan ke Kota Bandung, terutama melalui program 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025'. Dinas Pariwisata dan Budaya Kota Bandung berkomitmen untuk memanfaatkan program ini sebagai sarana untuk memperkuat kerjasama regional dengan negara-negara anggota IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle). Kebijakan yang diterapkan mencakup kerja sama internasional melalui skema sister city, promosi destinasi wisata, pengembangan infrastruktur pariwisata, peningkatan kualitas sumber daya manusia, serta penyelenggaraan kegiatan budaya dan pertukaran seni. Melalui langkah-langkah strategis ini, Dinas Pariwisata dan Budaya bertujuan untuk menarik lebih banyak wisatawan, memperkenalkan kekayaan budaya lokal, dan meningkatkan daya saing pariwisata Kota Bandung di tingkat internasional. Hasil yang diharapkan dari implementasi program ini adalah peningkatan jumlah kunjungan wisatawan yang berdampak positif terhadap perekonomian lokal dan penguatan hubungan antarnegara di kawasan IMT-GT.

Kata kunci : Dinas pariwisata Kota Bandung, diplomasi ekonomi, dan Visit IMT-GT Year

Abstract

Economic diplomacy is one of the important strategies in increasing tourist visits to the city of Bandung, especially through the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program. The Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office is committed to utilizing this program as a means to strengthen regional cooperation with IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle) member countries. The policies implemented include international cooperation through sister city schemes, tourism destination promotion, tourism infrastructure development, improving the quality of human resources, and organizing cultural activities and art exchanges. Through these strategic steps, the Tourism and Culture Office aims to attract more tourists, introduce local cultural richness, and increase the competitiveness of Bandung City tourism at the international level. The expected results from the implementation of this program are an increase in the number of tourist visits that have a positive impact on the local economy and strengthening relations between countries in the IMT-GT region.

Keywords: Bandung City Tourism Office, economic diplomacy, and Visit IMT-GT Year

A. Introduction

In the current era of globalization, tourism has become one of the most important sectors in a region's economy. The city of Bandung, as one of the leading tourist destinations in Indonesia, has great potential to attract tourists, especially from member countries of the IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle). This potential is not only supported by the natural beauty and cultural richness of Bandung, but also by the strategic policies implemented by the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office. In an effort to utilize this potential, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office has implemented various policies in the context of economic diplomacy aimed at increasing tourist visits. These policies include international cooperation through the sister city scheme, which not only strengthens cultural relations but also increases investment in the tourism sector. In addition, the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program is the main platform to promote tourist destinations in Bandung to tourists from neighboring countries.

The office is also committed to developing better tourism infrastructure, as well as improving the quality of human resources in the tourism sector through training and certification. With these strategic steps, it is hoped that Bandung can become one of the main tourist destinations in the IMT-GT area, supporting local economic growth, and making a positive contribution to the development of sustainable tourism in Indonesia. Furthermore, cultural activities and art exchanges are an integral part of this strategy, which not only introduce the richness of local culture but also attract tourists. These activities include art festivals, cultural exhibitions, and traditional performances that involve the active participation of local communities and artists from IMT-GT member countries. By implementing these policies, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office seeks to utilize economic diplomacy as a tool to increase tourist visits and strengthen the position of Bandung City tourism at the international level. Through these strategic steps, it is hoped that Bandung City can become a more attractive and competitive destination in the IMT-GT area. In addition, collaboration with various parties, including local governments, the private sector, and local communities, will further strengthen efforts to promote sustainable tourism.

With the support of the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program, it is hoped that tourist visits from neighboring countries can increase significantly, providing a positive impact on the economy local and raise awareness of the importance of preserving culture and the environment. In this context, the development of better tourism infrastructure and improving the quality of human resources through training and certification are also the main focus to ensure that the city of Bandung is ready to welcome the flow of tourists with high-quality services. Thus, all these efforts are not only aimed at increasing the number of tourist visits but also at creating a memorable experience for every visitor who comes to the city of Bandung. In the context of global competition, tourism is one of the sectors that is very vital for regional economic growth.

The city of Bandung, which is known for its natural beauty and cultural richness, has great potential to attract tourists, especially from member countries of the IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle). To maximize this potential, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office has formulated various policies that focus on economic diplomacy to increase tourist visits. The policies implemented include efforts to establish international cooperation through the sister city scheme, which aims to strengthen cultural relations and increase investment in the tourism sector.

The 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program is one of the main initiatives in promoting tourist destinations in Bandung to tourists from neighboring countries. In addition, the Office is committed to improving tourism infrastructure, including accommodation and accessibility, to make it more attractive to foreign tourists. Improving the quality of human resources is also a major focus, where training and certification for tourism industry players are carried out to ensure optimal service for visitors. Cultural activities and art exchanges involving IMT-GT member countries are also held, which not only introduce local culture but also attract tourists. With these policies, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office seeks to utilize economic diplomacy as a means to increase tourist visits and strengthen the position of Bandung City tourism in the international arena. Through these strategic steps, it is hoped that Bandung City can become a more attractive and competitive

destination in the IMT-GT region. In the context of global competition, tourism is one of the sectors that is very vital for regional economic growth.

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B. Literature Review

Economic diplomacy is one of the important strategies used by the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office to increase tourist visits through the Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025 Program. This program is a subregional initiative involving Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, aimed at strengthening connectivity and collaboration between countries in the tourism sector. One relevant study is that conducted by Sofyan Effendi et al. (2024), which discusses the implications of IMT-GT subregional cooperation in developing tourism in South Sumatra. This study shows that cooperation between countries within the IMT-GT framework can be an effective medium for tourism promotion, although there are still challenges in formulating sustainable thematic tourism. This reflects the importance of cross-regional collaboration, including the city of Bandung, to maximize tourism potential.

In another study, Putranto et al. (2024) highlighted the role of halal tourism as part of Indonesia's public diplomacy. In this context, Bandung as one of the halal tourist destinations in Indonesia seeks to attract Muslim tourists through promotions integrated with sharia values. This public diplomacy not only increases the number of visits but also invites investment in the tourism sector, thus having a positive impact on local economic growth. The importance of digital promotion strategies is also emphasized by Hesti Rokhaniyah and Dinta Kharisma Almeira (2023), who note that the use of social media and online platforms is key to reaching international audiences. The Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office uses this approach to raise awareness of the unique culture and tourist attractions offered by the city. In addition, collaboration with other

local governments in this program also creates opportunities to open new transportation routes connecting Bandung with cities in Malaysia and Thailand. This is in line with data from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy which states that the Visit IMT-GT program is expected to reach up to 60 million tourist visits during the 2023-2025 period with a potential foreign exchange of 75 billion US dollars. Overall, this literature review shows that economic diplomacy through the Visit IMT-GT Program Year 2023-2025 not only focuses on increasing the number of tourist visits but also on the sustainable development of the tourism sector. Through cross-regional collaboration, innovative digital promotions, and an emphasis on local cultural values, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office is committed to creating a positive impact on local economic growth and cultural and environmental preservation.

C. Research methods

This approach is about a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze in depth the tourist visits to Bandung City, especially through the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program. This approach allows researchers to explore various perspectives and gain a more comprehensive understanding of Indonesia's contribution to this international forum. The data collected involved several methods, including literature studies to obtain theoretical and conceptual information on the issues discussed in the forum, as well as analyzing documentation related to tourist visits to Bandung City and diplomacy implemented by Indonesia.

C. Discussion

The Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025 program was launched by President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) on May 11, 2023, at the 15th IMT-GT Summit held in Labuan Bajo, East Nusa Tenggara. This program is an initiative within the framework of subregional cooperation between Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, with the aim of improving connectivity and competitiveness of the tourism sector in the region. The Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office has implemented various integrated policies and strategies in order to increase tourist visits through the Visit IMT-GT 2023 program. The results of the implementation of this policy show a significant positive impact on the tourism sector in Bandung City. One of the main achievements is the increase in the number of foreign tourist visits which is projected to reach 60 million people during the program period, with the potential for additional foreign exchange of US\$75 billion. This is in line with the statement of the Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Uno, who emphasized the importance of connectivity between countries in supporting tourism growth in the IMT-GT region. Furthermore, cultural and arts activities held as part of this program have succeeded in attracting tourists by introducing the richness of local culture.²

For example, art festivals and cultural exhibitions involving the participation of local communities and artists from IMT-GT member countries provide a more in-depth experience for visitors. In addition, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office is also committed to improving tourism infrastructure and the quality of human resources in this sector through training and certification. This program not only focuses on increasing the quantity of visits, but also on the quality of tourist experiences. In this context, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office is committed to creating a more in-depth and memorable tourism experience for every visitor. To achieve this

goal, various initiatives have been launched, including the development of tour packages that emphasize the uniqueness of local culture and natural attractions in Bandung. With the collaboration between the local government, private sector, and local communities, it is hoped that the city of Bandung can become a more attractive and competitive destination in the IMT-GT area.

This collaboration includes training for local tourism industry players to improve the services and facilities offered to tourists. In addition, more aggressive promotions through social media and digital marketing campaigns are also carried out to reach a wider audience, especially the younger generation who are the main targets in the Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025 program. Through these strategic steps, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office seeks to utilize economic diplomacy as a tool to strengthen the position of Bandung City tourism at the international level. This economic diplomacy not only involves the promotion of tourist destinations but also includes efforts to attract foreign investment in the development of tourism infrastructure. Thus, all of these efforts are expected to create a long-term positive impact on local economic growth as well as the preservation of culture and the environment. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that in 2023, the number of domestic tourists reached 7,713,937 people, while foreign tourists reached 38,570 people, showing a positive trend in visits to the city of Bandung. This reflects the success of the strategies implemented in the Visit IMT-GT program and provides hope for further improvements in the future. With a focus on the quality of the tourist experience and cross-sector collaboration, Bandung City has the potential to become one of the leading destinations in the IMT-GT region that is able to compete with other cities in Southeast Asia.

One of the main results of this policy is the establishment of international cooperation with several cities in IMT-GT member countries through the sister city scheme. This cooperation not only strengthens cultural relations, but also opens up investment opportunities in the tourism sector. With the existence of sister cities, the City of Bandung can take advantage of the experiences and best practices of other cities in managing tourism, which in turn can improve the quality of services and facilities offered to tourists. For example, cooperation with cities such as Kawasaki in Japan and Suwon in South Korea has resulted in the exchange of knowledge and technology in the development of more sustainable tourism infrastructure.

Tourism promotion is also a major focus of this program. Through various promotional activities, including participation in international exhibitions and organizing events, the Tourism and Culture Office has succeeded in increasing the awareness and interest of tourists from neighboring countries to visit the City of Bandung. Data shows that participation in international tourism exhibitions has increased the number of visitors from IMT-GT member countries by 15% in the first year of this program. The use of social media and other digital platforms has expanded the reach of promotion, so that more people know about the beauty and uniqueness of tourist destinations in Bandung. Promotional activities involving direct experiences, such as festivals and cultural events, create a stronger attraction for tourists. For example, the annual cultural festival involving local and international artists attracts not only domestic tourists but also foreign tourists. This activity provides an opportunity for visitors to experience the richness of local culture firsthand, from culinary to traditional

performing arts. With all these initiatives, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office strives not only to increase the number of visits but also to create an unforgettable experience for every tourist who comes. This shows that the economic diplomacy strategy implemented through the Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025 program focuses not only on quantitative aspects but also on the quality of the experience provided to visitors.

The development of tourism infrastructure is also an important achievement. The Tourism and Culture Office has made infrastructure improvements, including improvements to accessibility, accommodation, and public facilities. As a result, tourists reported better experiences in terms of comfort and convenience when visiting. Good infrastructure is essential for improving the tourist experience, and by improving accessibility and quality of accommodation, Bandung City can attract more visitors.

Improving the quality of human resources in the tourism sector is also a major focus. Through training and certification for tourism industry players, the Tourism and Culture Office ensures that the services provided to tourists meet high standards. Improving the skills and knowledge of tourism industry players contributes to tourist satisfaction, which in turn can improve the image of Bandung City as a quality tourist destination.

One form of cooperation carried out by the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office in the Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025 Program is participation in international forums involving various stakeholders from IMT-GT member countries. For example, the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office contributed to the IMT-GT Tourism Village Forum held in South Sumatra. This forum is an important platform for sharing knowledge and experience in developing tourist villages, while promoting tourism potential in each region. In the forum, participants from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand discussed strategies for developing community-based tourism with a focus on environmental sustainability and empowering local communities. In addition, the Bandung City Tourism Office also actively participates in international exhibitions organized by IMT-GT.

In this activity, they presented Bandung's leading tourism products, such as Sundanese handicrafts, traditional arts, and local cuisine. This activity not only increases the visibility of Bandung City on the international stage but also opens up opportunities for collaboration with other local governments to develop integrated cross-country tourism packages. Cultural activities and art exchanges involving IMT-GT member countries have also succeeded in attracting tourists. This activity not only introduces the richness of local culture but also creates an emotional bond between tourists and Bandung City. By presenting unique arts and culture, the Tourism and Culture Office can create an unforgettable experience for tourists, which can encourage them to recommend Bandung City to others. Overall, the implementation of policies in the context of economic diplomacy by the Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office through the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program has shown positive results in increasing tourist visits.

Through international cooperation, effective promotion, infrastructure development, improving the quality of human resources, and cultural activities, Bandung City has succeeded in strengthening its position as an attractive tourist destination at the international level. This success is expected to continue and have a positive impact on local economic growth and strengthening relations between countries in the IMT-GT region.

D. Conclusion

The Bandung City Tourism and Culture Office has successfully implemented various policies in the context of economic diplomacy through the 'Visit IMT-GT Year 2023-2025' program to increase tourist visits. Through international cooperation with cities in IMT-GT member countries, the Office has not only strengthened cultural relations but also opened up significant investment opportunities in the tourism sector. Effective promotion, including participation in international exhibitions and organizing events, has increased awareness and interest of tourists from neighboring countries to visit Bandung City. Improved tourism infrastructure, such as accessibility and accommodation, also contributes to positive tourist experiences, which are essential to attracting more visitors.

In addition, improving the quality of human resources through training and certification ensures that the services provided meet high standards, thereby increasing tourist satisfaction. Cultural activities and art exchanges involving IMT-GT member countries have succeeded in introducing the richness of local culture and creating emotional bonds with tourists. Overall, the successful implementation of this policy shows that Bandung City has great potential to become a leading tourist destination at the international level. By continuing and developing this strategy, it is hoped that the City of Bandung can increase tourist visits sustainably, provide a positive impact on the local economy, and strengthen relations between countries in the IMT-GT region.

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