

## PESTEL Analysis of the Integration of Tourist Visa Policies in the Kepulauan Riau

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### ABSTRACT

Tourism is a key economic sector in Indonesia, with the Kepulauan Riau being a major destination due to its proximity to Singapore and Malaysia. However, its tourism growth is hindered by restrictive visa policies, including high Visa on Arrival (VoA) fees and frequent regulatory changes, making it less competitive than neighboring countries. This study analyzes the impact of visa policies on Kepulauan Riau tourism using the PESTEL framework (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal). A qualitative descriptive method was applied, utilizing secondary data from government reports, academic studies, and case analyses. The findings indicate that frequent visa policy shifts create uncertainty for tourists and businesses. Economically, high VoA fees deter short-term visitors, particularly from Singapore and Malaysia. Socially, travelers prefer destinations with simpler visa procedures, while cases of visa misuse highlight the need for stricter controls. Technological limitations in e-Visa processing and border control contribute to inefficiencies. Environmentally, rising tourist numbers risk over-tourism and ecological degradation. Legally, inconsistent enforcement across entry points causes confusion. To improve competitiveness, this study recommends lowering VoA costs, expanding visa exemptions, enhancing digital visa services, and integrating sustainability into visa policies. While this study offers valuable insights, it lacks quantitative data and direct stakeholder input. Future research should incorporate statistical models to measure visa policy impacts and compare Indonesia's policies with regional competitors. A balanced, technology-driven, and well-regulated visa policy can position the Kepulauan Riau as a leading sustainable tourism destination in Southeast Asia.

Keyword: Visa Policy Integration, Tourism Competitiveness, Sustainable Travel Regulations



### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector in Indonesia's economic development, especially for regions with prominent destination potential such as the Kepulauan Riau (Kepri). As one of the priority sectors, tourism significantly contributes to national and regional economic growth. The government continues to promote tourism development as a driver of economic growth (Indonesia, 2025). In the Kepulauan Riau, the development of the tourism sector is a primary focus for advancing the regional economy (Tempo, 2022). SAs a province that directly borders Singapore and Malaysia, the Kepulauan Riau (Kepri) have a geographical advantage that makes it one of the main entry points for international tourists to Indonesia. Its strategic

location has proven to be a key factor in influencing tourists' decisions to visit (Winny et al., 2024), due to easy access, transportation connectivity, and proximity to other attractive destinations, a region's appeal as a tourist destination can increase. However, despite its highly strategic location, the number of tourist visits to the Kepulauan Riau (Kepri) does not always experience a significant increase every year. One of the major factors influencing the dynamics of tourist numbers is the visa policy implemented by the government. The level of tourist interest in visiting the Kepulauan Riau can be seen in the image below.

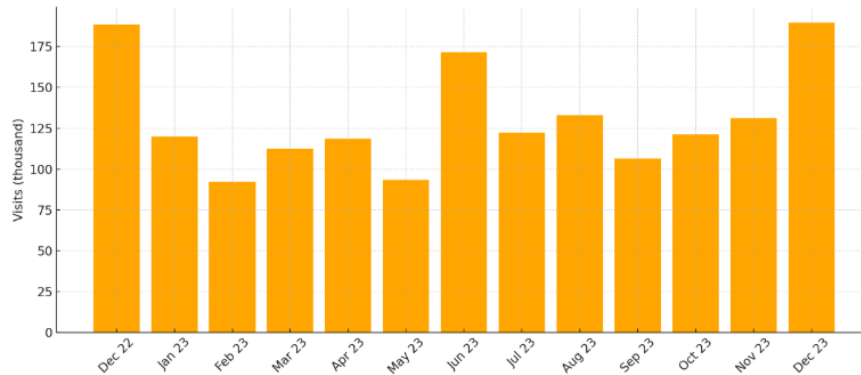


Figure 1. International Tourist Visits (in thousand visits) December 2022 – December 2023  
Source: BPS, 2023

Based on the image above, it is evident that an appropriate visa policy can accelerate the recovery and growth of the tourism sector, particularly in the Kepulauan Riau. The dominance of Singaporean and Malaysian tourists indicates that their travel patterns tend to be short-term. The relatively short average length of stay suggests that visa policies should be directed toward increasing repeat visits and extending tourists' duration of stay. The rise in the Room Occupancy Rate (TPK) demonstrates that tourism in the Kepulauan Riau has strong appeal. This appeal encompasses various key aspects, including adequate facilities (Sariani & Lubis, 2024), comfortable amenities (Morysa & Lubis, 2023), attractive attractions (Setiawan, Lubis, & Supardi, 2023), and excellent service quality for visitors (Giovani, Wibowo, & Lubis, 2023), all of which contribute to creating memorable tourism experiences (Jeniffer, Fatimah, & Lubis, 2024) and enhancing tourist satisfaction (Sipahutar, Fatimah, & Lubis, 2024). However, if visa policies do not facilitate easy entry for foreign tourists, the growth of this sector could slow down.

An inflexible visa policy that is not well-integrated with tourism development strategies often becomes a barrier for potential tourists who wish to visit. Some of the challenges include the limited number of countries eligible for visa-free entry, the high cost of the Visa on Arrival (VoA) for short-term travelers, and the lack of technology utilization in the electronic visa system. Additionally, Indonesia's visa policy frequently changes without long-term, data-driven evaluations, which ultimately reduces the country's tourism competitiveness compared to neighboring countries with more open visa policies, such as Thailand and Malaysia.

The urgency of this research is based on several key reasons. The tourism sector makes a significant contribution to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of the Kepulauan Riau. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the tourism sector is one of the main foreign exchange earners for the province, particularly through visits from tourists from Singapore, Malaysia, and China. However, the number of tourist visits remains fluctuating and is vulnerable to various external factors, including visa policies. Therefore, a more adaptive and competitive visa policy strategy is needed to ensure the sustainable growth of this sector.

Indonesia, particularly the Kepulauan Riau, must compete with neighboring countries in attracting tourists (Poti & Hendrayady, 2020). Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam have implemented more tourist-friendly visa policies, such as visa exemptions for more countries,

lower visa fees, and a simpler and faster electronic visa application process. If Indonesia, especially the Kepulauan Riau, does not promptly adopt more flexible policies, it will be difficult to compete and attract more foreign tourists.

Moreover, in recent years, Indonesia's visa policy has frequently undergone changes, including adjustments to the list of visa-free countries, Visa on Arrival (VoA) fees, and the implementation of e-Visas. Currently, the VoA fee for tourists staying up to 30 days is set at Rp500,000, which is considered relatively high compared to visa policies in some neighboring countries (Direktorat Jenderal Imigrasi Republik Indonesia, 2022). These inconsistent policy changes can create uncertainty for tourists and stakeholders in the tourism industry. Therefore, an academic study is needed to provide data-driven recommendations for a more effective, stable, and competitive visa policy formulation to enhance Indonesia's tourism appeal.

To analyze this issue, this study employs the PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) analysis approach to evaluate various external factors influencing visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. The political approach will explore how national political stability and diplomatic relations with tourist-sending countries affect visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. Bilateral and multilateral immigration policies, as well as ASEAN economic cooperation, will also be analyzed. From an economic perspective, this study will assess how visa policies impact the number of tourist arrivals and the tourism sector's contribution to the regional economy. The cost of Visa on Arrival (VoA), visa-free policies, and tourists' purchasing power will be the focus of analysis in this category.

Social factors include tourists' preferences and behaviors regarding visa policies, as well as their perceptions of the ease of access to the Kepulauan Riau compared to other destinations. In the technological aspect, this study will examine the implementation of technology in immigration and border control systems, such as e-Visa, automation of immigration services, and digitalization of border control systems, which can enhance efficiency in visa policy implementation. From an environmental perspective, the impact of visa policies on the sustainability of tourist destinations, such as an increase in tourist numbers that may lead to over-tourism or environmental degradation, will be further analyzed. Meanwhile, from a legal standpoint, this study will evaluate how Indonesia's immigration regulations align with international standards and how compliance with the law can affect the competitiveness of the Kepulauan Riau as a tourist destination.

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data will be obtained through a literature review of Indonesia's visa policies, government tourism policy reports, and case studies of visa policies in other countries. Additionally, secondary data analysis from BPS (Statistics Indonesia), the Ministry of Tourism, and relevant sources will be used to evaluate the number of tourists and the economic impact of tourism. Interviews with stakeholders, including local government officials, tourism industry players, and academics with insights into visa and tourism policies, will also be part of the data collection process.

This research is expected to provide both academic and practical contributions to the development of more effective visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. From an academic perspective, this study will enrich the literature on the relationship between visa policies and tourism competitiveness at the regional level. From a practical standpoint, the research findings can serve as recommendations for local and central governments in formulating more flexible and competitive visa strategies to attract more international tourists.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. This method was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of various external factors influencing tourist visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau, using the PESTEL analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) as the main

analytical framework. The descriptive-analytical approach is used to systematically describe and analyze visa policies based on the various external factors that affect them. The analysis is conducted by exploring secondary data, relevant policy regulations, and insights from stakeholders involved in the implementation of visa policies.

The PESTEL analysis will be used as a framework to examine six key aspects influencing visa policy. The political aspect will cover political stability, government policies, diplomatic relations with tourists' home countries, and international cooperation on immigration policies. The economic aspect will be analyzed to assess the impact of visa policies on the economy of the Kepulauan Riau, tourists' purchasing power, the tourism sector's contribution to GDP, and competition with neighboring countries.

The social aspect includes tourists' preferences regarding visa policies, travel trends, and the social impact of changes in immigration policies. The technological aspect will discuss the role of technology in visa policy management, such as e-Visa, automated border control, and digital innovations in the immigration process. The environmental aspect will address the impact of visa policies on environmental sustainability, such as the effects of increased tourist numbers on ecosystems and tourist destinations. The legal aspect will evaluate immigration regulations, compliance with international standards, and legal challenges in implementing visa policies.

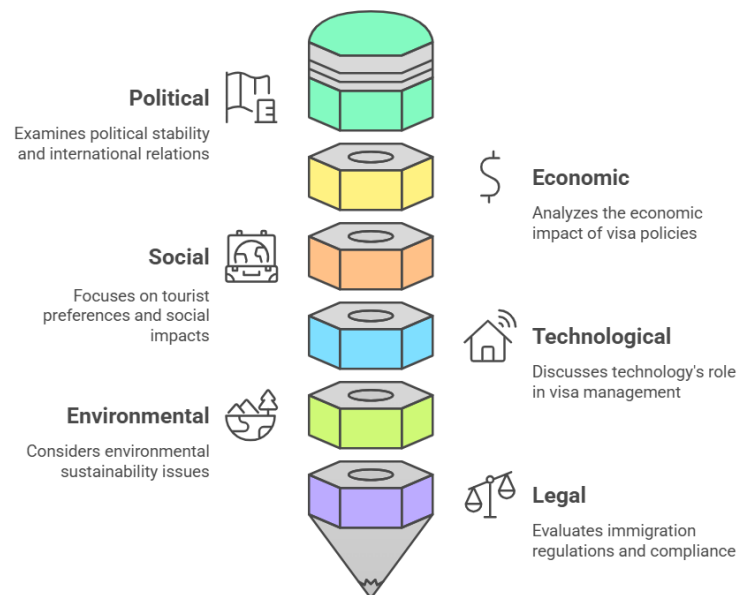


Figure 2. PESTEL Analysis of Visa Policies  
Source: (Researchers, 2025)

This study utilizes qualitative data obtained from various sources, including both secondary data and interviews with relevant stakeholders. Secondary data includes government policy documents such as Presidential Regulations, Ministerial Regulations from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, and regulations from the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy related to visa and immigration policies. Statistical reports from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and related organizations that publish data on the number of tourists, international tourist movements, and the contribution of tourism to the regional economy will also be part of the analysis. Additionally, case studies from other countries, such as visa policies in Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam, will be used for comparison with visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. Studies from academic journals, research reports, and scientific articles discussing visa policies and their impact on tourism will also serve as references for this research.

In addition to secondary data, this study will also rely on primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with stakeholders related to visa policies. Interviews will be conducted with the local government of the Kepulauan Riau to understand the implementation of visa policies at the local level, as well as with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy regarding the government's strategies to enhance tourism competitiveness through visa policies. Immigration officials and border authorities will also be interviewed to gather information on the mechanisms of the implementation of Visa on Arrival (VoA), Visa-Free Visit (BVK), and e-Visa in the Kepulauan Riau. Tourism industry players, such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators, will be asked for their opinions on how visa policies affect their businesses. Additionally, interviews will also be conducted with international tourists who have visited the Kepulauan Riau to explore their experiences with Indonesia's visa policies compared to other countries.

The data obtained from various sources will be analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying patterns and key themes in the collected data. The analysis will be conducted through several stages, starting with data reduction, where data obtained from interviews, policy documents, and academic literature will be selected and categorized based on the PESTEL aspects. Irrelevant data will be eliminated to ensure that the analysis remains focused on the integration of visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau.

After data reduction, the findings will be presented in a narrative description that illustrates the relationship between visa policies and the external factors influencing them. A comparison with visa policies in other countries will be provided to offer a broader perspective. The results of this analysis will then be used to draw conclusions regarding the key challenges in visa policy integration and the opportunities that can be leveraged to enhance the tourism competitiveness of the Kepulauan Riau. Policy recommendations will be formulated based on the analysis to assist the government in designing more effective and competitive visa policies. To ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings, several data validation strategies will be implemented. Source triangulation will be conducted by comparing information from various sources, such as government data, interview results, and academic literature. The member-checking technique will be applied by confirming interview findings with informants to ensure the accuracy of the obtained information. An audit trail will also be used to systematically document the data collection and analysis process, allowing it to be traced by other researchers.

The method used in this research is expected to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how external factors influence visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. By employing the PESTEL approach, this study provides a broader analysis compared to previous research, which may have focused on only one or two aspects of visa policy. Additionally, this research offers a more in-depth perspective by integrating both secondary and primary data from various stakeholders. This allows the study to go beyond a purely descriptive approach and provide evidence-based recommendations that can be implemented by the government and the tourism industry. Through the designed methodology, this research aims to offer solutions for the government and stakeholders to optimize visa policies in order to enhance the Kepulauan Riau's competitiveness as a premier tourism destination. Consequently, the findings of this study can contribute to the formulation of more flexible, efficient, and sustainable policies to support Indonesia's tourism growth.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. PESTEL Analysis

This research reveals various external factors influencing the integration of tourist visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. Through a PESTEL analysis, it was found that visa policies in this region still face several challenges related to political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal aspects.

a. Political Aspects

Based on the analysis, visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau are significantly influenced by national political stability and Indonesia's diplomatic relations with tourists' countries of origin. The Indonesian government has established various bilateral and multilateral agreements related to immigration and tourism; however, their implementation in the Kepulauan Riau has not yet been fully optimized. Frequent policy changes, such as visa-free restrictions for certain countries and revisions to the Visa on Arrival (VoA) regulations, create uncertainty for tourists and the local tourism industry. Additionally, differences in policies between the central and regional governments regarding tourism promotion and visa facilities result in less effective policy integration.

Table 1. Comparison of Visa on Arrival (VoA) in ASEAN Countries

Country	Number of Visa-Free Countries	Length of Stay	VoA Fee	Source
Indonesia	0	30 days	Rp 500.000	(Dirjen Imigrasi, 2024)
Thailand	64	30 days	-	(Rama, 2024b)
Malaysia	162	90 days	-	(Devid, 2024)
Singapore	162	30 days	-	(Rama, 2024a)

Source: Author, 2025

The data in Table 1 highlights the disparity in visa policies among ASEAN countries, which may affect the competitiveness of Indonesia, particularly the Kepulauan Riau, as a tourist destination. While neighboring countries like Malaysia and Singapore offer visa-free access to citizens from 162 countries, Indonesia still imposes a Visa on Arrival (VoA) fee, which could be seen as a deterrent for potential tourists. Moreover, the shorter permitted length of stay in Indonesia compared to Malaysia further limits the appeal for long-term visitors. These differences underscore the need for Indonesia to reassess and align its visa policies with regional standards to enhance its attractiveness and facilitate easier access for international tourists.

b. Economic Aspect

The visa policy in the Kepulauan Riau has a significant economic impact on the tourism sector and regional revenue. Tourists from neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia are the main contributors to tourism foreign exchange earnings. However, the less competitive visa policy compared to other countries like Thailand and Malaysia has prevented the full maximization of economic potential. This study found that the Visa on Arrival (VoA) fee of USD 35 is considered relatively high for tourists making short visits to the Kepulauan Riau, especially when compared to visa-free policies implemented by competing countries.

Moreover, the lack of flexibility in visa policies also affects other economic sectors, including hospitality, restaurants, and transportation. Respondents from the hotel and travel agency sectors reported that changes in visa policies often lead to a decline in tourist numbers, particularly when stricter entry regulations are imposed on certain countries. In the long run, a more flexible and integrated visa policy is expected to enhance the tourism sector's contribution to the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP) of the Kepulauan Riau.

c. Social Aspects

From a social perspective, this study finds that visa policies influence tourists' travel patterns to the Kepulauan Riau. Tourists tend to choose destinations with easier and less complicated entry processes. Several interviewed tourists stated that they prefer visiting other countries that offer visa-free policies or faster electronic visa processing. This aligns with findings that indicate visa policies can increase the number of tourists but also have the

potential to cause social friction due to increased interactions between foreign tourists and local communities (Nurfara, Setiawan, Putra, Radyahadi, & Izzati J, 2024). Furthermore, the article highlights that although the Visa on Arrival (VoA) and BVK (Visa-Free Visit) policies facilitate international tourists, they are not always aligned with socio-cultural security principles, as they may create opportunities for violations of local norms and transnational crimes. In the context of the Kepulauan Riau, more flexible visa policies can indeed attract more tourists. However, they must be balanced with strict regulations and more effective monitoring systems to prevent negative impacts on local social and cultural stability.

Additionally, cultural factors and tourist preferences also play a role in visa policy considerations. Some countries not included in the visa-free list feel that the policy is less inclusive and may discourage tourists from visiting the Kepulauan Riau. On the other hand, some tourism industry players believe that more relaxed visa policies could attract a broader range of tourists, including those with specific interests such as ecotourism, cultural tourism, and medical tourism.

d. Technology Aspect

The utilization of technology in visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau is still not optimal compared to other countries (Asrianingsih, Hendrayady, & Okparizan, 2023). The implemented e-Visa system still has limitations in terms of processing speed and accessibility for travelers from certain countries. Some interviewed tourists revealed that Indonesia's electronic visa application system remains more complicated compared to similar systems in other ASEAN countries. In interviews with immigration officials, it was found that the border control system in the Kepulauan Riau still requires modernization to become more efficient. The implementation of automated immigration services, such as the use of e-Gates at major entry points like Batam Port and Hang Nadim Airport, remains limited and needs to be expanded to enhance traveler convenience. Countries like Singapore and Malaysia have already implemented such automation systems, making the entry process smoother and more efficient for travelers.

e. Environmental Aspects

The impact of visa policies on the environment is also one of the findings in this study. An increase in the number of tourists without accompanying sustainability policies can put pressure on natural resources and the environment in the Riau Archipelago. Some tourist destinations, such as Bintan Island and Batam Island, have experienced environmental degradation due to the growing number of visitors without strict regulations on waste management and environmental carrying capacity. Local tourism managers state that a more open visa policy should be accompanied by sustainable tourism policies, such as visitor limits at certain destinations, regulations on eco-tourism, and incentives for tourism businesses that implement environmentally friendly practices. Without clear regulations, the increase in tourists due to more relaxed visa policies could negatively impact the local environment and ecosystem.

f. Legal Aspects

Legal analysis indicates that Indonesia's visa policy still faces challenges in harmonizing regulations at both national and regional levels. The Immigration Law and its derivative regulations are frequently revised, leading to uncertainty for tourists and players in the tourism industry. Several travel agencies interviewed stated that sudden regulatory changes without adequate socialization often make it difficult for them to provide accurate information to prospective tourists. Additionally, this study found that compliance with international standards related to immigration and visa policies still needs improvement. Some tourists have complained about inconsistencies in procedures and treatment at various entry points, indicating that the implementation of visa policies is not yet uniform across the Kepulauan

Riau. Strengthening coordination between the central government, local governments, and immigration authorities is urgently needed to ensure that visa policies operate more effectively and do not create legal uncertainty for tourists.

## 2. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau. The government should adopt more flexible and competitive visa policies, such as expanding the list of countries eligible for visa-free entry or reducing the cost of Visa on Arrival to make it more attractive to international tourists. Additionally, optimizing technology in the e-Visa system and border control should be a priority to improve efficiency and enhance the traveler experience. The utilization of technology has been proven to play a crucial role in increasing tourist convenience (Junita et al., 2024), whether through easy access to information, more efficient immigration services, or the digitalization of payment and reservation systems, making travel experiences more practical and comfortable.

In terms of environmental aspects, a more open visa policy should be accompanied by sustainability strategies to prevent negative impacts on ecosystems. Sustainable tourism regulations need to be implemented, including limiting the number of tourists in certain destinations and providing incentives for businesses that adopt eco-tourism principles. Regarding legal aspects, the government must ensure that regulations related to visa policies remain stable and do not undergo frequent changes without proper coordination with relevant stakeholders. A clearer understanding of how the PESTEL analysis was conducted for this research problem can be seen in the summary table below.

Table 2. PESTEL Analysis Framework

Aspect	Factors Analyzed	Analysis Results	Improvement Solutions
Political	Political stability, diplomatic relations, bilateral policies, regulatory consistency.	Visa policies frequently change and are not well-integrated between central and regional authorities, hindering the effectiveness of tourism promotion.	Synchronizing central and regional policies, stabilizing regulations, and enhancing bilateral cooperation to facilitate tourist access.
Economic	The impact of visas on the number of tourists, Visa on Arrival (VoA) costs, competition with ASEAN countries, and contribution to the regional GDP.	High VoA costs, inflexible visa policies, and tourists preferring destinations like Thailand and Malaysia.	Lowering VoA costs, expanding the list of visa-free countries, and implementing multi-entry visas for tourists from neighboring countries.
Social	Tourists' perception, travel preferences, comparison with other countries.	The visa process is considered more difficult and expensive compared to other countries, reducing tourists' interest.	Implementing a free visa for short visits (1-3 days) for Singaporean and Malaysian tourists and enhancing digital promotion about visa policies.

Aspect	Factors Analyzed	Analysis Results	Improvement Solutions
Technological	Implementation of e-Visa, border control, immigration automation.	The e-Visa system is still slow, border control is inefficient, and long queues occur at entry points.	Simplification and acceleration of e-Visa, implementation of e-Gate and smart border control at major ports and airports.
Environmental	The impact of tourism on environmental sustainability, eco-tourism regulations.	The increase in the number of tourists leads to over-tourism, and environmental degradation is not yet well regulated.	Linking visa policies with eco-tourism regulations, implementing visitor limits in vulnerable tourist areas.
Legal	Harmonization of national and local regulations, immigration service standards.	Inconsistent visa regulation changes, non-uniform immigration service standards, creating confusion for tourists.	Stabilization of visa regulations, standardization of immigration services at all entry points, and increased policy socialization for tourists and businesses.

Source: (Researchers, 2025)

The findings of this study are consistent with several previous studies that indicate visa policies have a significant impact on the number of tourists and the competitiveness of tourist destinations. A study by (Neumayer, 2006) revealed that countries with more relaxed visa policies experience a significant increase in tourist visits. The results of this study support these findings, as the less competitive visa policy in the Kepulauan Riau compared to Thailand and Malaysia has led tourists to prefer destinations that offer easier entry access. Moreover, this study also indicates that inconsistent and frequently changing visa policies can create uncertainty for tourists and tourism industry players. This aligns with the findings of (Czaika & Neumayer, 2017), who stated that uncertainty in visa regulations can negatively impact tourists' interest in visiting a country. Therefore, stabilizing and harmonizing visa policies is a crucial step in enhancing the competitiveness of the Kepulauan Riau.

In the context of technology implementation in visa policies, this study also supports the research of (Buhalis & Law, 2008) which emphasizes that digitalization in the tourism industry, including e-Visas and automated immigration systems, plays a significant role in improving efficiency and traveler convenience. However, the findings of this study reveal that Indonesia, particularly the Kepulauan Riau, is still lagging behind in the implementation of e-Visa systems and automated border control compared to neighboring countries.

One of the unexpected findings of this study is the impact of visa policies on environmental sustainability. Most previous research has focused more on the effects of visa policies on tourist numbers and the economy. However, the findings of this study indicate that a surge in tourists due to more relaxed visa policies can also lead to environmental issues. Popular destinations such as Bintan and Batam have experienced environmental degradation due to an influx of tourists without adequate ecotourism management policies. The pollution caused by black oil waste in Bintan's waters, which has occurred almost every year since the 1970s, has damaged marine ecosystems and threatened the local tourism sector (Wiyoga, 2020). Furthermore, the increase in tourism activities without proper environmental

management can lead to coastal ecosystem damage and a decline in environmental quality (Ramadhani, Rosmawati, Alisya, Anisa, & Novita, 2025). Therefore, the implementation of comprehensive and sustainable ecotourism policies is necessary to preserve the environment while supporting the growth of the tourism sector in the region.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicate that tourists from Singapore and Malaysia, which are the primary markets for the Kepulauan Riau, perceive the cost of the Visa on Arrival (VoA) as too expensive for short visits. This contrasts with the assumption of some previous studies, which suggested that tourists from neighboring countries tend to be more flexible regarding visa policies compared to those from more distant countries. These results highlight the need for more specific visa policies tailored to tourists with different travel patterns, such as offering free visas for short visits (1-3 days) for tourists from Singapore and Malaysia.

This research contributes to tourism policy studies by emphasizing the importance of integrating visa policies in the context of destination competitiveness. One of the key contributions of this study is linking visa policies with environmental sustainability, a topic that has been rarely discussed in previous research. From a policy perspective, this study recommends that governments consider more flexible visa policies, such as expanding the list of visa-free countries, reducing the cost of Visa on Arrival, and expediting the e-Visa process.

Additionally, the integration of digital systems in visa management and border control should be enhanced to improve tourist convenience and accelerate immigration procedures. Governments should also implement visa policies tailored to different tourist segments. For example, business and eco-tourism travelers could be granted special, more flexible visa facilities, while tourists from high-potential countries could be offered multi-entry visa policies to encourage repeat visits. Moreover, regulations concerning visitor numbers in eco-tourism destinations should be tightened to prevent negative environmental impacts.

Although this study provides valuable insights into visa policies in the Kepulauan Riau, there are several limitations that need to be considered. First, this research primarily relies on secondary data and interviews with stakeholders, thus lacking quantitative data on the direct impact of visa policies on tourist numbers. Further studies using a quantitative approach are needed to measure the specific impact of visa policy changes on tourism growth. Second, this study focuses on the Kepulauan Riau, so its findings may not be fully generalizable to other regions in Indonesia. Further research comparing provinces with similar visa policies could provide broader insights. Third, the psychological factors influencing tourists' choice of destination based on visa policies have not been explored in depth in this study. Future research using a survey approach targeting tourists could provide a better understanding of how visa policies influence their travel decisions.

## CONCLUSION

This study asserts that visa policies play a crucial role in the development of tourism in the Riau Islands. The analysis results indicate that regulatory instability, high Visa on Arrival (VoA) fees, and an inefficient immigration system hinder the growth of tourist arrivals and the competitiveness of the Riau Islands compared to neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. From a social perspective, tourists prefer destinations with more flexible visa policies and simpler entry procedures, while from a legal standpoint, cases of visa misuse highlight the need for stricter supervision of foreign visitors. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of visa policy reforms through the reduction of VoA fees, the expansion of visa-free country lists, the optimization of e-Visa and e-Gate systems, and the integration of policies with sustainable tourism principles.

Although this research provides in-depth insights, its limitations lie in the lack of a quantitative approach and the absence of direct exploration of tourist perspectives and tourism industry stakeholders. For future research, it is recommended to conduct further studies that statistically measure the impact of visa policies on tourist numbers and compare the Riau Islands' visa policies with those of other destinations in Indonesia. With a more

competitive, technology-driven, and strictly monitored visa policy, the Riau Islands have the potential to become a leading and more sustainable tourism destination in Southeast Asia, attracting more international visitors.

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