

Research Article

Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batubara Regency Using the Simple Additive Weighting

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ABSTRACT

Batu Bara Regency has significant culinary tourism potential, featuring a variety of traditional dishes such as gulai asam ikan and cumi isi pulut. However, culinary data management by the Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism Office (DISPORABUDPAR) is still manual and relies solely on visitor numbers. This study develops a web-based Decision Support System (DSS) using the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) method to provide more objective culinary recommendations based on six criteria: food price, facilities, cleanliness, service, menu variety, and location accessibility. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires from 47 tourists. The system identified the top three culinary destinations: RM 100 (0.92), Buffet Mangga (0.838), and Kuta Koffee (0.768). Developed using PHP and MySQL, the system has proven to improve the efficiency of culinary data management and assist tourists in making more accurate choices, while also promoting and supporting the equitable development of local culinary tourism.

Keywords: Disporabudpar; DSS; SAW; Batu Bara; Culinary Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Batu Bara Regency is one of the regencies in North Sumatra Province, consisting of 12 districts and 151 villages. Located on the eastern coast of Sumatra Island, this regency has abundant natural potential and resources that support various tourism sectors, including culinary tourism. Recognizing the importance of the culinary tourism sector, the local government is committed to continuously developing and promoting existing tourism potential, with the hope of making a positive contribution to the regional economy (Adolph, 2021)

In addition to being renowned for its natural beauty and cultural diversity, Batu Bara Regency also offers an enticing culinary tourism experience for visitors. Culinary tourism is a type of tourism aimed at enjoying and exploring the diversity of food and beverages unique to a particular region. Local specialties serve as a unique attraction for tourists, such as Batu Bara's famous traditional dishes, including gulai asam ikan (sour fish curry), gulai kepala ikan (fish head curry), cumi isi pulut (glutinous rice-stuffed squid), sop kepiting (crab soup), soto udang (shrimp soup), sate kerang (scallop satay), rendang kepah (mussel rendang), mie rebus melayu (Malay-style boiled noodles), and bubur pedas melayu (spicy Malay porridge). Meanwhile, Batu Bara's traditional snacks include kue karas, kue dangai, anyang pakis, bongko, and lemang (Ames and W. Maximilian, 2023).

Several culinary spots are strategically located in various areas, such as along the main roads of Tanjung Tiram, Lima Puluh, Indrapura, Sei Suka, and Air Putih, as well as in major tourist attractions. Culinary tourism in Batu Bara Regency not only introduces visitors to the region's local flavors but also provides a unique experience of enjoying dishes in a culturally immersive setting. The Department of Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism (DISPORABUDPAR) is responsible for managing the tourism sector, particularly culinary tourism. The DISPORABUDPAR office is located on Jalan Besar Dusun III, Perupuk Village, Lima Puluh Pesisir District, Batu Bara Regency. Within the organizational structure of DISPORABUDPAR, the Tourism Division is responsible for managing, promoting, and developing various tourism sectors. This aligns with Regional Regulation of Batu Bara Regency No. 9 of 2014 on the Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARDA), which serves as the foundation for tourism development in Batu Bara Regency. The regulation aims to significantly contribute to the region's economic growth and community welfare while enhancing its attractiveness to both local and international tourists. The revenue from the culinary tourism sector in Batu Bara Regency can be seen in the [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Culinary Tourism Sector Revenue in Batu Bara Regency

Year	Revenue (billion rupiah)	Revenue Growth (%)
2021	267,17	0,03
2022	278,89	4,39
2023	299,67	7,45

Source: (DISPORABUDPAR, 2024)

On the other hand, tourists tend to choose culinary destinations based on visual information, such as photos of culinary spots and reviews from other visitors who have dined in Batu Bara Regency. This information is typically obtained through online searches, such as Google and social media. This search pattern indicates that tourists in the digital era highly depend on technology to find relevant and attractive recommendations. The large number of culinary tourism spots in Batu Bara Regency makes it difficult for DISPORABUDPAR to provide culinary recommendations that align with tourist preferences. This challenge arises due to the absence of a Decision Support System (DSS) capable of providing objective recommendations based on various criteria (Rusmawan, 2022), such as food prices, menu variety, available facilities, and other relevant factors (Elfi, 2021). As a result, most tourists tend to visit culinary spots that are already popular on social media or the internet, while many other interesting culinary destinations remain unknown to visitors, both from within and outside the region (Adi, 2022).

To address this issue, a system is needed to help select culinary destinations based on relevant criteria and provide accurate and easily accessible information (Berna, 2022). Therefore, a Decision Support System (DSS) is required to recommend culinary tourism in Batu Bara Regency based on various criteria, such as food prices, facilities, cleanliness, service quality, menu variety, and location accessibility (Dwi, 2024). In this study, the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) method was chosen as the tool for providing culinary tourism recommendations due to its simplicity and ability to rank options based on predefined criteria. This method assigns weights to each relevant criterion, ensuring that the selected culinary destinations align with tourist preferences. By using the SAW method, more objective culinary recommendations can be obtained, reducing subjectivity in decision-making and enhancing the tourist experience. A relevant study was conducted by J. E. Hutagalung and A. Amalia (2024), titled "Implementation of a Decision Support System for Selecting Tourist Attractions in Batu Bara Regency Using the SAW Method." The findings of this study indicate that the SAW method effectively ranks tourist attractions in Batu Bara Regency based on predefined criteria. The results showed that Pantai Bunga Laut ranked the highest with a score of 1.5241.

Another related study was conducted by R. Fransiska et al. (2024), titled "Implementation of a Decision Support System for Selecting Culinary Tourism Destinations in Sambas City Using the SAW Method." The conclusion of this study indicated that the SAW-based decision support system was effective in determining culinary tourism destinations in Sambas City. The highest-ranked culinary destination was Warung Bakso Mbak Nur, with a preference score of 0.8. Both studies serve as important references for this research, as they adopt the same method to recommend culinary tourism destinations in Batu Bara Regency. Designing a decision support system to recommend culinary tourism destinations in Batu Bara Regency based on relevant criteria using the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) method (Antares, 2020). Developing a decision support system using the SAW method to improve the efficiency of culinary tourism management by DISPORABUDPAR Batu Bara Regency. Assisting tourists in selecting culinary destinations in Batu Bara Regency based on their preferences and relevant criteria. Helping DISPORABUDPAR enhance the efficiency of tourism management by improving the selection process for culinary recommendations in Batu Bara Regency. Serving as a reference for culinary tourism promotion, especially for lesser-known but high-potential destinations, thereby encouraging more balanced tourist visits across all culinary spots in Batu Bara Regency.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research framework consists of the steps that will be taken to address the problem being discussed. The research framework conducted by the author can be seen in the image below (Ilmi, 2024). The process of selecting culinary tourism recommendations in Batu Bara Regency is still conducted using Microsoft Excel and relies solely on the number of visitors as the primary criterion, making the assessment less accurate in reflecting tourists' preferences. DISPORABUDPAR still faces difficulties in providing culinary tourism recommendations to visitors due to the absence of a decision support system that can offer recommendations based on relevant criteria. Although Batu Bara Regency has a diverse range of interesting culinary tourism destinations, many of them remain relatively unknown to tourists, both locally and from outside the region. Most tourists tend to visit well-known culinary spots promoted through social media or the internet. This leads to other equally interesting culinary destinations being underexposed.

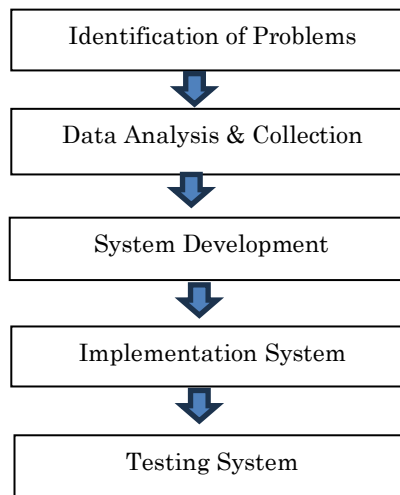


Figure 1. Research Frameworks

2.1 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are systematic and objective methods aimed at obtaining, gathering, and accurately analyzing data and information in detail. In this study, the author employs four data collection techniques, (Asmarani , 2024) interview, observation, questionnaire, and library research. These techniques are explained as follows:

1. Field Research

The research conducted for data collection related to culinary tourism recommendations in Batu Bara Regency is as follows:

 - a. Interview

An interview is an interaction between two individuals involving the exchange of information and ideas through a question-and-answer process on a specific topic, with the aim of developing a deeper understanding of the subject.
 - b. Observation

Observation is a data collection technique conducted by directly observing objects or phenomena occurring in the field. This technique is useful for obtaining objective and in-depth data regarding a specific situation or event (Raju, 2023).
2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a data collection technique in which a set of structured questions is distributed to respondents for them to answer. It can take the form of a systematically designed form consisting of several questions aimed at gathering information relevant to the research topic (Putratama, 2023).
3. Library Research

Library research, or literature study, is a data collection method that utilizes sources available in libraries or other written materials, such as books, journals, magazines, scientific articles, research reports, theses, and other documents relevant to the research topic (Darpi , 2022).

2.2 Research Time and Location

The research duration refers to the length of the research process. This study is conducted within the predetermined timeframe, from November 2024 to March 2025.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 System Analysis

System analysis is a technique used to break down the problems within the existing system at the Department of Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism of Batu Bara Regency by identifying its weaknesses, allowing researchers to propose appropriate solutions (Sufaidah, 2024). The previous system for determining culinary tourism recommendations in Batu Bara Regency was still conducted using Microsoft Excel, relying solely on the number of tourist visits as the main evaluation criterion. This approach was considered less objective in reflecting tourists' preferences (Nur, 2021).

A questionnaire is a process of collecting and recording data from respondents using a questionnaire as a research instrument. The questionnaire data acquisition for culinary tourism recommendations includes 18 alternative data

samples and 6 criteria, which have been approved by the Head of the Tourism Division. The data analysis was conducted by distributing an online questionnaire via Google Forms to 47 tourists (respondents) who had previously visited culinary destinations in Batu Bara Regency. The questionnaire contained questions related to culinary tourism evaluations. The criteria and sample data used in this study can be seen in the **Table 1**.

Table 1. Criteria Data

No	Code	Criteria
1	C1	Food price
2	C2	Facility
3	C3	Cleanliness
4	C4	Service
5	C5	Menu variant
6	C6	Accessibility

Table 1. Alternatiive Data

No	Code	Alternative
1	A1	Buffet Mangga
2	A2	Kuta Koffee
3	A3	Pecotot Reborn
4	A4	RM 100
5	A5	RM Apung
6	A6	RM Aulia
7	A7	RM Bale Resto
8	A8	RM Bina Ria
9	A9	RM Cahaya Aby
10	A10	RM Karya
11	A11	RM Murni Sari
12	A12	RM Restu Bunda
13	A13	RM Sederhana
14	A14	RM Selendang Sari
15	A15	RM Sempurna
16	A16	RM Sop Buntut
17	A17	RM Uni Tanjung
18	A18	RM. PMH

3.1 Calculation Using the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) Method

The system process analysis using the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) method (Al Jufri, 2022), it is necessary to determine the criteria values, criteria weights, number of criteria, alternative preferences, and calculate the preference value for each alternative. After that, a total value calculation ((Hendri, 2023), will be performed to recommend culinary tourism destinations in Batu Bara Regency. Applying the Simple Additive Weighting method, specific criteria are required to provide culinary tourism recommendations. The criteria used in this study are as follows.

Table 3. Criteria

No	Code	Criteria in Used
1	C1	Food Rice
2	C2	Facilities
3	C3	Cleanliness
4	C4	Service
5	C5	Menu Variety
6	C6	Location Accessibility

The weight values were proposed by the Head of the Tourism Division. These weight values are ranked based on the importance scale of the predetermined criteria, ranging from scale 1 (not important) to scale 5 (very important). The importance weight values for the criteria are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Criteria Importance Weight Value

Code	Criteria	Attribute	Importance Value	Weight
C1	Food Rice	Cost	5	0,25
C2	Facilities	Benefit	4	0,20
C3	Cleanliness	Benefit	3	0,15
C4	Service	Benefit	3	0,15
C5	Menu Variety	Benefit	3	0,15
C6	Location Accessibility	Benefit	2	0,10
Total			20	1

Next, weighting is applied to each criterion, starting from food price, facilities, cleanliness, service, menu variety, and accessibility. Then, the data for each alternative is adjusted to the criteria (Pramezwarly, 2021), and the transformation values into matrix X are determined, representing the compatibility rating results converted into a matrix (Musfekar, 2023). The results of the preference value (V) calculations for each alternative can be seen in the following **Table 5**.

Table 5. Calculation Results of Preference Value (V)

Code	Alternative	Preference Value (V)	Ranking
A1	Buffet Mangga	0,768	3
A2	Kuta Koffee	0,838	2
A3	Pecotot Reborn	0,713	6
A4	RM 100	0,980	1
A5	RM Apung	0,555	18
A6	RM Aulia	0,628	11
A7	RM Bale Resto	0,745	5
A8	RM Bina Ria	0,616	12
A9	RM Cahaya Aby	0,675	8
A10	RM Karya	0,665	10
A11	RM Murni Sari	0,588	16
A12	RM Restu Bunda	0,753	4
A13	RM Sederhana	0,673	9
A14	RM Selendang Sari	0,596	14
A15	RM Sempurna	0,615	13
A16	RM Sop Buntut	0,583	17
A17	RM Uni Tanjung	0,698	7
A18	RM. PMH	0,590	15

After calculating the preference value (V), the three highest-rated culinary tourism destinations were identified: A4 with a preference value of 0.980, followed by A2 with 0.838, and A1 with 0.768. Therefore, these places are the most recommended culinary tourism destinations for visitors.

3.2 System Implementation

System implementation is a procedure that must be carried out to complete the system design outlined in the approved system design document, as well as to test, install, and initiate the use of the new system. The general goal of this implementation is to conduct a trial of the developed system concept (Devi, 2020). In this regard, the focus is on researching whether the designed concept can be executed correctly or not. The output of this stage is a trial recommendation based on the research findings during the testing phase over a specific period. Database implementation is the process of applying data and managing the data storage system designed to support system operations. The main functions of the database are to store data in a structured manner, ensure information integrity and security, and provide fast and accurate access for users. The purpose of this implementation is to ensure that the developed program runs properly and accurately represents the key aspects of specification, analysis, design, and coding. The main page of the administrator for the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency is the initial display after the admin successfully logs into the system. This page contains eight main menus: Home, Alternatives, Criteria, Assessment, Calculation, Results, Change Password, and Logout. Each menu has its respective function to process data and generate information. Below is the display of the main page of the administrator for the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency.



Figure 2. Main Page Display of the Culinary Tourism Recommendation Decision Support System in Batu Bara Regency

The login form in the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency consists of two text fields: Username and Password, and one button: Login. Below is the display of the login form for the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency.

Figure 3. Login form display

The Alternative Form in the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency consists of four columns: Number, Alternative Code, Alternative Name, and Options to edit or delete the entered alternative data. Below is the display of the Alternative Form in the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency.

NO	KODE ALTERNATIF	NAMA ALTERNATIF	OPSI
1	A1	Buffet Mangga	UBAH HAPUS
2	A2	Kuta Koffee	UBAH HAPUS
3	A3	Pecotot Reborn	UBAH HAPUS
4	A4	RM 100	UBAH HAPUS
5	A5	RM Apung	UBAH HAPUS
6	A6	RM Aulia	UBAH HAPUS
7	A7	RM Bate Resto	UBAH HAPUS
8	A8	RM Dina Ria	UBAH HAPUS
9	A9	RM Cahaya Abay	UBAH HAPUS
10	A10	RM Karya	UBAH HAPUS
11	A11	RM Mumi Sari	UBAH HAPUS
12	A12	RM Restu Bunda	UBAH HAPUS
13	A13	RM Sederhana	UBAH HAPUS
14	A14	RM Selendang Sari	UBAH HAPUS
15	A15	RM Sempurna	UBAH HAPUS
16	A16	RM Sop Buntut	UBAH HAPUS
17	A17	RM Uni Tanjung	UBAH HAPUS
18	A18	RM PMH	UBAH HAPUS

Figure 4. Alternative Form display

The criteria form in the decision support system for culinary tourism recommendations in batu bara regency consists of seven columns: number, criteria code, criteria name, attribute, weight, sub-criteria, and options to edit or delete the entered criteria data. below is the display of the criteria form in the decision support system for culinary tourism recommendations in batu bara regency.

NO	Kode Kriteria	Nama Kriteria	Atribut	Bobot	Sub Kriteria	Opsi
1	C1	Harga Makanan	cost	0.25	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS
2	C2	Fasilitas	benefit	0.2	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS
3	C3	Kebersihan	benefit	0.15	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS
4	C4	Pelayanan	benefit	0.15	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS
5	C5	Varian Menu	benefit	0.15	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS
6	C6	Aksesibilitas Lokasi	benefit	0.1	SubKriteria	UBAH HAPUS

Figure 5. Criteria form display

The SAW Method Calculation Result Form in the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency displays the final ranking results of culinary tourism destinations. These ranking results can be printed for user needs. Additionally, the final results will also be displayed on the tourist page. Below is the display of the SAW method calculation result form in the decision support system for culinary tourism recommendations in Batu Bara Regency.

KODE ALTERNATIF	NAMA ALTERNATIF	NILAI	RANK
A4	RM 100	0.980	1
A2	Kuta Koffee	0.838	2
A1	Buffet Mangga	0.768	3
A12	RM Restu Bunda	0.753	4
A7	RM Bale Resto	0.745	5
A3	Pecotot Reborn	0.713	6
A17	RM Uni Tanjung	0.696	7
A9	RM Cahaya Aby	0.675	8
A13	RM Sederhana	0.673	9
A10	RM Karya	0.665	10
A6	RM Aulia	0.628	11
A8	RM Bina Ria	0.616	12
A15	RM Sempurna	0.615	13
A14	RM Selendang Sari	0.596	14
A18	RM PMH	0.590	15
A11	RM Murni Sari	0.588	16
A16	RM Sop Buntut	0.583	17
A5	RM Apung	0.555	18

Figure 6. Result of form display

The printout display of this application is a recommendation report generated by the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency. This report includes a summary of alternatives as culinary destinations and the ranking of alternatives.

Figure 7. Result of print display

3.3. System Testing

Black box testing is a software testing method that evaluates system functionality based on specifications without considering the internal structure or source code. Testing is conducted by providing various inputs to observe the output and ensure alignment with the predefined requirements. The primary focus of this method is on functional aspects, allowing testers to assess whether the system operates as expected without understanding its technical implementation. In software testing strategies, black box testing does not replace white box testing; rather, it serves as a complementary method to identify functional errors that may not be detected through code-based testing. This method is particularly useful for evaluating how the system responds to various usage scenarios, including input validation and output verification.

Based on the testing results of the Decision Support System for Culinary Tourism Recommendations in Batu Bara Regency, the system has proven to simplify the process of determining suitable culinary destinations to recommend to tourists. This, in turn, contributes to boosting the local economy and makes it easier for tourists to choose destinations. These findings are consistent with research by Sari et al. (2021), which demonstrated the effectiveness of black box testing in verifying the functionality of web-based tourism recommendation systems. However, this contrasts with the study by Wijaya and Ramadhan (2020), which emphasized the importance of white box testing in detecting program logic errors. This difference highlights that both methods have their own strengths and complement each other. Therefore, black box testing is highly effective in ensuring that a system functions as expected by users, particularly in the context of recommendation systems that prioritize ease of use and reliability

4. CONCLUSION

The decision support system developed uses the Simple Additive Weighting (SAW) method, enabling it to provide objective culinary tourism recommendations in Batu Bara Regency. This system considers six main criteria: food price, facilities, cleanliness, service, menu variety, and location accessibility. The calculation results show that RM 100 achieved the highest preference score of 0.98, making it the most recommended culinary destination for tourists. With this system, the Department of Youth, Sports, Culture, and Tourism of Batu Bara Regency, particularly the Tourism Division, can manage culinary tourism data more efficiently, reduce reliance on Microsoft Excel-based systems, and provide recommendations that better align with tourists' preferences. The developed system assists tourists in selecting culinary destinations that meet their needs and preferences. Additionally, it promotes lesser-known culinary spots with great potential to attract visitors.

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