

# Building Smart Tourism: Exploring the Potential of Tourism Apps for Branding

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**Abstract:** This research comprehensively studies the impact of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" app on smart branding in Sinjai Regency. Using a qualitative research approach, this study conducted an in-depth analysis through literature reviews, online media portals, and rarely explored journals. The resulting findings demonstrate the tremendous tourism potential inherent in Sinjai Regency. As a strategic move to showcase this potential, the Sinjai Regency government launched the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application to ease tourists' access to information regarding various exciting tourist attractions. Despite the promising potential of this application, its implementation faces challenges, especially in terms of user accessibility due to persistent technical errors. This interferes with the smooth dissemination of vital information to potential tourists, thereby reducing the expected benefits of the app. This study highlights the many tourism riches waiting to be explored in Sinjai Regency and underscores the importance of resolving technical issues for the "Ayo ke Sinjai" app. A functional and easy-to-use platform is essential to drive smart branding effectively so that tourists can easily explore and appreciate the various tourist attractions in the area.

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## INTRODUCTION

Smart cities are innovative efforts made by the city ecosystem in overcoming various problems and improving the quality of life of humans and local communities (Costales, 2022; Mora et al., 2021; Pasquinelli & Trunfio, 2020; D. Zhang, Pee, et al., 2022). Smart cities are also the result of intensive knowledge development and creative strategies in improving the socio-economic, ecological, competitive qualities of cities (Vanli & Akan, 2023). The emergence of smart cities is the result of a combination of human capital (e.g. educated workforce), infrastructure capital (e.g. high-tech communication facilities), social capital (e.g. open community networks) and entrepreneurial capital (e.g. creative business activities). A strong and trustworthy government accompanied by creative and open-minded people will increase local productivity and accelerate the economic growth of a city (Kourtiti, Karima & Nijkamp, 2012).

One of the Smart city indicators is Smart branding (Buyanova et al., 2021; Christensen et al., 2022; Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2021; Huertas et al., 2021). Smart branding is one of the dimensions of smart city, because in the current information age, cities no

longer have to be able to meet their needs only by utilizing their local potential, but also able to win community participation, from inside and outside the region, as well as entrepreneurs and investors to participate in accelerating regional development. Basically, the concept of regional branding is similar to the concept of corporate branding, the difference is only in corporate branding the goal is to increase the company's brand value which leads to an increase in company revenue and profits, in regional branding The goal is to increase brand value in areas that promote economic activities and the development of local social and cultural life, thus improving people's welfare. As well as aiming to increase regional competitiveness by renewing the city and marketing regional potential locally, nationally and internationally (Basbeth et al., 2018; Kolotouchkina & Seisdodos, 2018; Nugraha et al., 2019; Parks & Rohracher, 2019).

With the smart city implemented in the city, this can attract many visitors and become a special attraction for tourists (Dul, 2022; Ridderstaat et al., 2022; D. Zhang, Yan, et al., 2022). The Indonesian government, in this case, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) encourages the community to actively participate in established programs, including the digital Tourism Village Scheme to realize a smart city. Thus, the merger of programmed tourism villages can implement smart branding, namely building business competitiveness, reorganizing business security, tourism economy and urban face (Pemerintah Kota Depok, 2019).

In Sinjai Regency, one of the smart branding supporting applications is the "Ayo Ke Sinjai" application. Released in 2020, the app aims to introduce and promote tourist attractions in Sinjai Regency. The purpose of this application is to make it easier for tourists to get information about places of interest as well as contain information about other supporting services such as hotel locations, culinary places, trips, and other supporting services. Through this application, it invites all parties to develop Sinjai tourism by utilizing the existing potential for the development of Sinjai tourism in the future (Hasanuddin, 2022).

However, there is a problem in the "Ayo Ke Sinjai" application. This application is available on the playstore but in case of its use the application is not accessible because the system on this application is "erorr". Even though Sinjai is one of the areas in South Sulawesi that has tourism potential recommended for tourists. In addition, Sinjai, in this case, Barannia Village, West Sinjai District, with the name of the tourist destination Kampung Galung is included in the top 50 nominations for the best tourist village award in Indonesia. And recently the tourism village of Kampung Galung won 1st place in Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Evironment Sustainability (CHSE) Anugrah Desa Wisata (ADWI). CHSE is one of the seven ADWI 2022 assessment categories assessed in terms of cleanliness, health, safety, and environmental sustainability (Hasanuddin, 2022)

Furthermore, there are several studies on the development of tourism villages through applications. (Muhamad As'adi, et al 2020) "Mobile" application, this application helps between visitors and village stakeholders (tourism managers, MSMEs, villagers, Kelurahan) to explore and strengthen village potential (Atika et al., 2018). ToGo Application (Online Tour Guide) where this application offers tour guide services for tourists. (Hadi et al., 2022), This application about Lantan Village's web-based travel ticket

management focuses on ticket information sold so that it can make it easier for Tourism Awareness Groups to summarize each tourist location. (Budiarti et al., 2019) Researchers developed a product in the form of an application that can later be used to connect tourism village managers and prospective visitors with the combination of the use of the Codeigniter Framework and Google Maps API able to give a strong and integrated impression on the application. (Mahendra, 2020) based on the latest technology, this Android-based tourism village application aims to overcome the internal problems of tourism villages in Indonesia, especially in terms of external marketing, and become a platform that aims to grow the income of people living in tourist villages. Quoting from (Prasetyo & Maulindar, 2022) the application used is a mobile-based application to provide tourism village information to help users get information on village locations in Sragen (Mount Kemungkus).

While previous research has underscored the advantages of travel applications, a gap persists in the comprehensive understanding of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application. This study uniquely directs its attention to unraveling the intricacies of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" app's implementation, aiming to illuminate its role in achieving smart branding in Sinjai Regency's tourism sector. In doing so, it seeks to bring a novel perspective to the discourse on travel applications, particularly in promoting and enhancing tourism experiences in the vibrant Sinjai region.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research adopts a qualitative method (Brennen, 2018; Miles & Saldana, 2014), which bases itself on inductive thinking patterns by making participatory objective observations of social phenomena in Sinjai Regency. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand aspects related to the implementation of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application in achieving smart tourism branding in the region.

Data collection was conducted through a literature study (Creswell, 2009; Njie & Asimiran, 2014), utilizing information sources from credible national and local online news portals, such as government news portals, Kemenparekraf portals, Sinjai Info, and relevant journal articles. The data analysis process uses a descriptive approach, involving the stages of data collection, data selection, analysis between variables, data verification, and interpretation and conclusion drawing.

By exploring information through this qualitative method, the research aims to present an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application and its impact in realizing smart tourism branding in Sinjai Regency. Descriptive data analysis will provide a comprehensive picture of how this application is used and identify potential improvements that can strengthen the concept of smart branding in the context of Sinjai tourism.

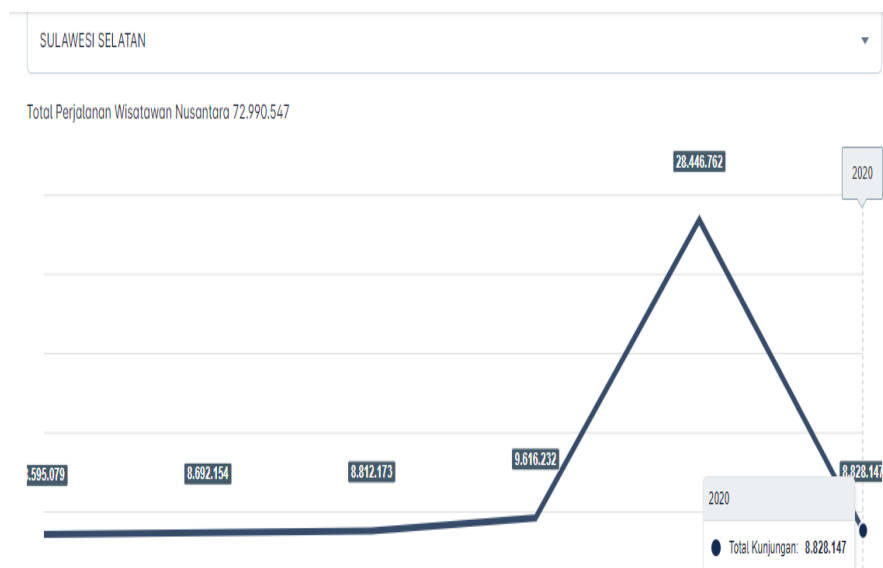
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Tourism Potential Towards Smart Branding***

Desa Wisata is one of the national programs supported by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and is largely aligned with programs at the regional level. In

accordance with the objectives of tourism development, the government develops tourism villages whose goals are to increase economic growth, people's welfare, eliminate poverty, overcome unemployment, protect nature, the environment and natural resources, and promote culture (Limanseto, 2021)

Based on the portal page of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of the Republic of Indonesia. In 2020 there was a decrease in tourist visits in all regions of South Sulawesi, with a total of around 8,828,147 visitors (Kemenparekraf, 2022). The previous one in 2019 was around 28,446,762 tourist visitors. This is because globally affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a decrease in the number of tourists.



**Figure 1.** South Sulawesi Tourist Visits

Based on Figure 1, Indonesia will rise again. The government through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy continues to encourage local governments to develop tourism potential, especially for village potential so that it can cause sustainable economic impact. In supporting the program, the government seeks innovation in the form of infrastructure, culture, culinary, to fashion, as well as all matters related to tourism and the economy (Anggarini, 2021) Like one of the Kemenparekraf programs, namely the 2022 Tourism Village Award Event (ADWI) which carries the theme "From Village to Indonesia Rise" Giving awards to tourism villages throughout Indonesia, there are 3,419 tourist villages participating in the event. However, only 50 tourist villages were selected for ADWI nominations.

Sinjai Regency itself through Bannia Village "Kampung Galung" became one of the winners in the award, namely as the first winner in the Cleanliness, Health, Safety, and Environment Sustainability (CHSE) category (Setkab RI, 2022). Based on the portal page (Aditya, 2021) The application of this program is to carry out CHSE Certificates for business actors in the tourism industry and the creative economy, among which are First, tourism businesses include tourist transportation services, hotels / homestays, restaurants / restaurants, to Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing, Exhibitions (MICE). Second, other related businesses/facilities include tourist information centers, places to sell souvenirs and souvenirs, public toilets, and other tourism-related businesses or

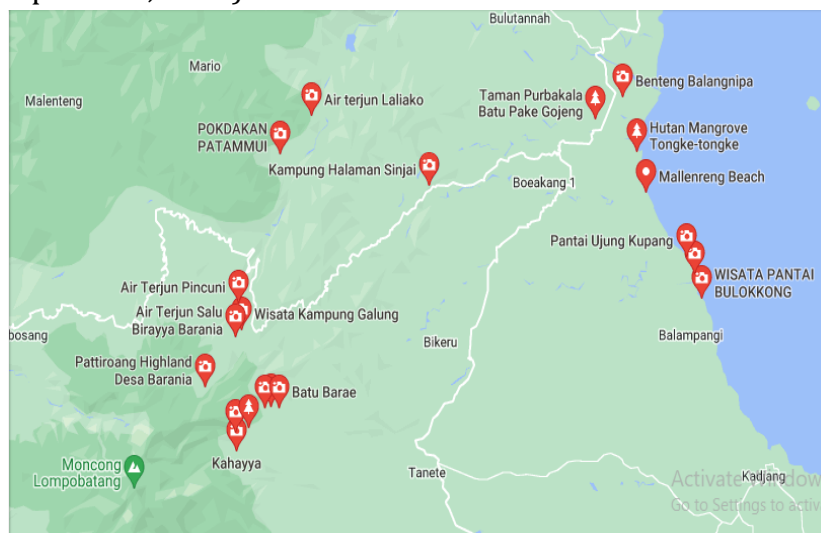


facilities. The community environment includes administrative scopes such as community pillars, villages, or hamlets that are part of tourist areas or adjacent to tourist sites. And Third, tourist destinations include all destinations within the scope of the province: city / regency or village / kelurahan.



**Figure 2.** Galung Village Tourism, Barannia Village, Sinjai Regency

The picture above shows that by becoming one of the winners of ADWI, it can have a positive impact on Sinjai Regency, especially the people of Barannia village. Apart from that, there are many tourist villages scattered in various villages in Sinjai Regency and are interesting to visit and have their own potential. This tourist village area is filled with rice fields, and there are various types of food provided for visitors, but what is more interesting is that there is a historical tomb (tomb of Puang Barannia) someone who contributed to local residents. This is what characterizes the Barannia tourist village (Jadesta Kemenparekraf, 2022).



**Figure 3.** Data map 2022 location of tourist villages Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi Province

Based on the map above is the location of tourist villages in Sinjai Regency. Based on web searches through google applications, there are 20 tourist villages recorded in

Sinjai Regency. The following is a list of tourist village places in Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi province:

**Table 1.** Tourist village places in Sinjai Regency

<b>Tourist Village Places</b>	<b>Description</b>
Barambang Waterfall	Barambang Twin Waterfall is a waterfall located in an area where in this area there are 2 waterfalls that are similar and next to each other because the distance between these two waterfalls is only 60 meters. With an altitude of 800 meters above sea level. It is located in Sesa Batu Belerang, Sinjai Borong District, Sinjai Regency.
Bulukmong Beach	Bulukmong Beach is located in Bua Village, Tellulimpoe District, Sinjai Regency. This beach is a tourist destination developed and innovated by residents and village officials themselves. The distance to this place is about 23 kilometers from the city center.
Salo Birayya Waterfall	Birayya waterfall tourist spot is located in Barannia Village, West Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. This place is the newest tourist attraction. The thunderous panorama of the waterfall with a height of about 20 meters.
Tongke-Tongke Mangrove Forest	Tongke-Tongke Mangrove Forest tourism village is located in Tongke-Tongke Village, East Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. This tourist spot is well known to foreign countries.
Pattiroang Highland	Pattiroang Highland is one of the new tourist village objects managed by the Barannia Village government for camping sites for tourists or visitors.
Batu Pake Gojeng Ancient Garden	Batupake Gojeng Antiquities Park Tourism located in Biringere sub-district, North Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. This tourist spot is the location of the Batu Pake Gojeng site which is located on top of a hilltop. This location is the burial location of the Kings of Batu Pake Gojeng and their families. And it has been designated as a cultural heritage based on the decree. Site Determination: Number: 240/M/1999, dated October 4, 1999 Minister of Education and Culture, Prof. Dr. Juwono Sudarsono, M.A.
Hubat Beach	The location of Hubat Beach tourism is located in Sanjai Village, East Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. This tourist village in addition to swimming places for visitors is also a place of mangrove forests known as Takalala Mangrove forests.
Fort Balangnipa	Balangnipa Fort is a relic of the past of Sinjai Regency located in Balangnipa Village, North Sinjai District. This tourist spot is one of the largest forts in South Sulawesi. In the past, apart from being a defensive fortress, this place was also used as the administrative center of the three kingdoms and is now one of the historical educational tourist attractions in Sinjai Regency.
Pattiroang Hill	Pattiroang Hill is one of the tourist attractions located in Bontotengnga village, Sinjai Borong District, Sinjai Regency. This tourist spot is also managed by the village government itself providing places to take selfies on the hill.
Ujung Kupang Beach	Ujung Kupang Beach Tourism is located in Sanjai Village, East Sinjai District. The Sinjai Regency Government continues to strive for the development of this tourist spot so that it can increase the attractiveness of tourists / visitors. This is because the beach has a beautiful view.
Tahura Abdul Latief	One of the tourist destinations in Sinjai that likes to be visited by local tourists both from inside and outside Sinjai Regency is <u>Tahura</u> (Abdul Latif Forest Park) located in Ma'ra, Batu Belerang, Sinjai Borong District, Sinjai Regency, South Sulawesi.

Pincuni Waterfall	Pincuni Waterfall is located in Kindang-Kindang, Tasililu Village, West Sinai Region, about 800 meters from the West Sinai Toll axis. This waterfall has two levels and is decorated with vibrant trees that offer a panoramic view of the beauty inside.
Jodoh Bridge	Jodoh Bridge is one of the tourist attractions located in Batu Belerang Village, Sinjai Borong District, Sinjai Regency. This tourist attraction was created by Ahmad P on his private land. There are two swimming pools and a bamboo bridge of about 15 meters that divides the creek named after the matchmaking bridge.
Batu Barae Waterfall	Batu Barae Waterfall has the potential to attract tourists, but its utilization is still not optimal so that this waterfall is not too many visitors. It is located in Barambang Village, Sinjai Borong District, Sinjai Regency.
Mallenreng Beach	Malenreng Beach is one of the tourist attractions in Panaikang Village, East Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. What is interesting about this tourist spot is that the development of the tourist village is carried out by the youth and the village government. This is done to see the progress of Panaikang Village.
Pokdakan Patammui	Pokdakan Patammui is one of the tourist attractions initiated by the Sinjai Regency government by providing fish seed assistance to the Fish Farming Group (pokdakan) in Terasa Village, West Sinjai District, Sinjai Regency. This is not only as an economic forum for the people of Terasa Village, but also as a tourist spot.
Lalikao Waterfall	Lalikao Waterfall is the result of community development and the government of Terasa Village. The Terasa Village Government empowers the local community in preserving these attractions so that they can have a positive impact on improving the standard of living of their people. The location is located in Terasa Village, Sinjai District, West Sinjai Regency.
Sapana Tourism	Sapana Tourism is located in Bonto Salama Village, West Sinjai District. This tourist spot is managed by BUMDes. With these tourist attractions, visitors can feel the sensation of tilapia fishing in several ponds between rice fields.
Panrita Hill	Panrita Hill is one of the tourist attractions on the hill. The location is located in Alehanuae Village, North Sinjai District. Panrita Hill is managed by a lecturer at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Sinjai (UMSi), Mr. Erwin Syukri. This is a special attraction for the community because the musholah contained in it is in the form of Kabbah and visitors usually know it as "Kabbah Sinjai".
Marannu Beach	Marannu Beach is located in Pasimarannu Village, East Sinjai District. This beach is visited by many people because it has a large location and this place is usually used for camping.
Larea-Rea Island	Larea-Rea Island is one of the attractions of Pulau Sembilan Sinjai which is famous for its clear water and white sand. This place used to be just like an ordinary island. Then it was developed by the Tourism and Culture Office (Disparbud) of Sinjai Regency as a tourist attraction.

From table 1, there are several tourist destinations in Sinjai Regency that have attractive tourism potential in each village. This is in line with the program initiated by the Regent of Sinjai during his leadership to make tourism and culture one of the flagship programs (Sinjai Regency Government, 2021). With the tourism program, it can drive the community's economy and increase local income, for example with tourism, the community can take advantage of it as MSME actors (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) or in the form of BUMDes (Village-Owned Enterprises).

In accordance with Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism explains the role of local governments in increasing tourism potential, namely facilitating, encouraging, investing, developing tourism, managing tourism, and allocating budgets for increasing tourism potential. Furthermore, the Sinjai Regency Government in realizing its program is by developing physical infrastructure at tourist attractions, such as increasing visitor tracking, building hawker or culinary centers, building visitor gazebos and building viewing towers (Sinjai Regency Government, 2020). This is proven by tourism, Sinjai Regency has succeeded in realizing more than the target of local original income (PAD), which is IDR 565,311,000 million / December 31, 2021. The largest PAD comes from the Tongke-Tongke Mangrove Forest tourist attraction of IDR 420,032,000, - followed by the Batu Pake Gojeng Ancient Park of IDR 45,872,000, - then the Abdul Latief Forest Park (Tahura) of IDR 43,390,000, - then the Coal Twin Waterfall of IDR 11,375,000 (Sinjai Regency Government, 2022).

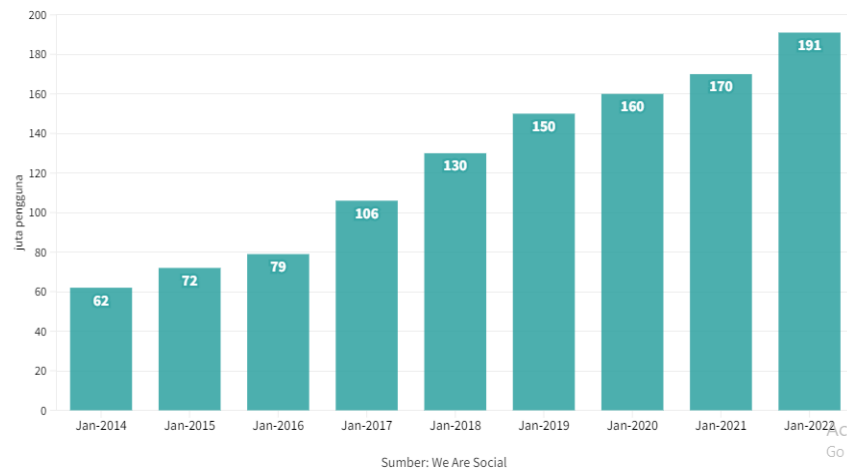
### ***Implementation Tourism Apps for Branding***

The rapid growth of technology is not only caused by the growth of ideas, but also due to the rapid exchange of information through search engines for the realization of technology, namely with various applications as an effort to facilitate the welfare of human life (Chowdhury, 2022; Koretsky, Stegmaier, et al., 2022; Koretsky, van Lente, et al., 2022; S. Zhang, Zhan, et al., 2022). Apart from that, the application can also make it easier for someone to get the information needed in global knowledge or information and many more benefits that can be obtained. Applications can be obtained for free or paid, both from the playstore, App Store, and so on.

In terms of promoting the tourism sector, the Sinjai Regency government launched an application known as the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application in November 2022 which is based on Android and can be downloaded for free through the play store. This application is made to make it easier for tourists to know in detail the attractions in Sinjai and the various facilities of its features. The concept of the name "Ayo ke Sinjai" was taken, because Sinjai also has tourist destinations that are no less interesting, this is a means of promoting tourist villages (Sinjai Regency Government, 2020).

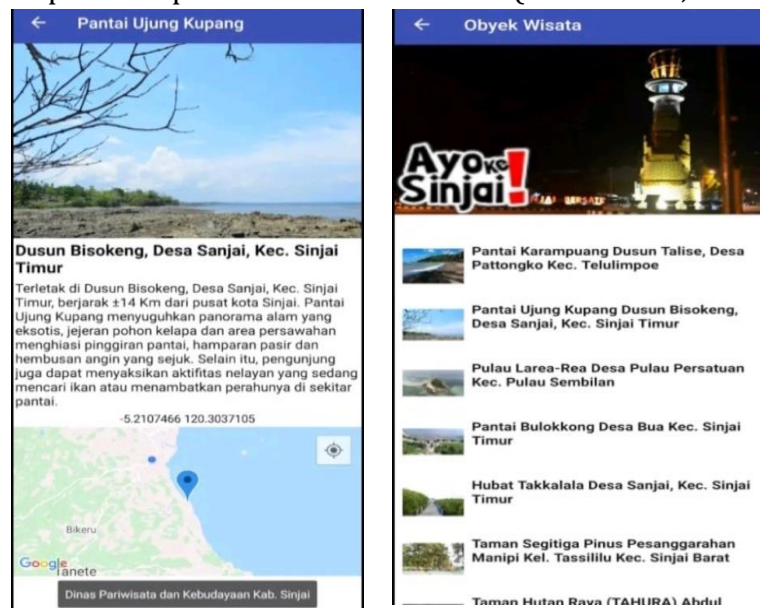
Furthermore, one way to realize smart branding is through the use of social media. Social media is a place to disseminate tourism information. Judging from the Twitter platform, #AyokeSinjai hashtag is a media / means that rolls out tourism discourse in the general public. Not only twitter but various platforms such as Instagram, facebook, tiktok, and whatsapp are also a form of dissemination. This is in line with the increase in social media users in Indonesia in 2022 to reach 191 million users.





**Figure 4.** Active Social Media Users in Indonesia

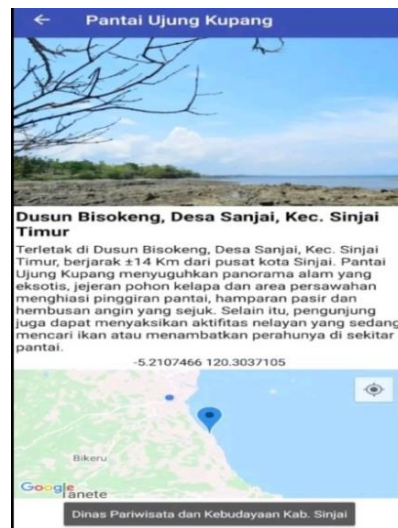
Based on the We Are Social report above, the number of active social media users in Indonesia is 191 million people in January 2022. The number has increased by around 12.35% compared to the previous year which was 170 million users, Meanwhile, Whatsapp became the most widely used social media in Indonesia. The percentage was recorded at 88.7%. After that, there are Instagram and Facebook with percentages of 84.8% and 81.3% respectively. Meanwhile, the proportion of TikTok and Telegram users is 63.1% and 62.8% (Mahdi, 2022). From this information, it becomes clear how much potential can be obtained from social media. The more people use social media, the greater the opportunity to promote products for users to see (Eticon.co.id, 2021).



**Figure 5.** Features of "Ayo Ke Sinjai" App

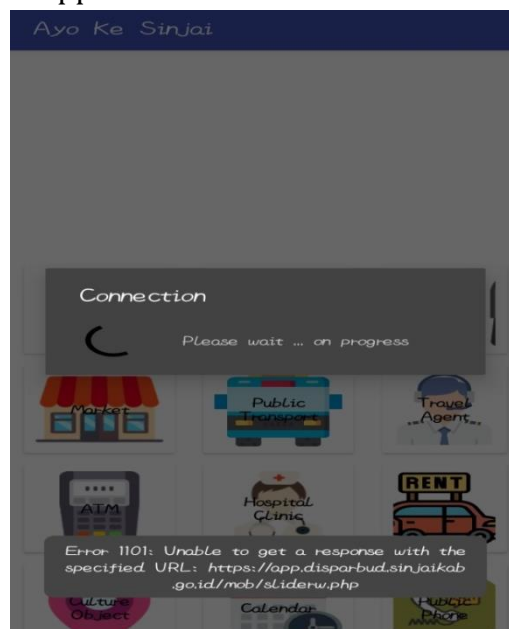
From the application "Ayo ke Sinjai" there is access to facilities including hotels, markets, Culture objects, Tourism objects, public transportation, hospital clinics, calendars, restaurants (places to eat), travel agents, car renters, and public phones. This is very helpful for local and foreign tourists in finding needs when they want to visit the tourist attractions they want. From research conducted by (Rahayu et al., 2020) there is a tourism application in Jember Regency, namely launching the ToGo application (Tour

Guide) several features provided including Tour guide, tourist attraction info, typical culinary, dates of events organized by Jember Regency Local wisdom info (history, place, held, date implemented) (Atika et al., 2018).



**Figure 6.** Description "Ayo ke Sinjai" App

The application "Ayo ke Sinjai" provides an explanation of several tourist destinations in Sinjai Regency in the form of place names, pictures / photos, tour descriptions, and the location of the place through google maps search. Furthermore, tourists can choose which tourist destination they want. Of all the conveniences offered by the "Ayo ke Sinjai" Application, its application in Sinjai Regency has not been said to be good because the use of the application has not been accessible.



**Figure 7.** Access "Ayo ke Sinjai" App

Based on the picture above, users of the "Ayo ke Sinjai" application have not been able to access the application. This application has not been brought to the attention of the Sinjai Regency government. So far, the system is on the application "erorr" and there is

still no improvement until now. Given that this application was launched by the government in the hope that it can make it easier for the Sinjai Regency government to introduce tourism places in Sinjai Regency (Zainal Abidin, 2022). In fact, if the application is implemented to the general public, many benefits can be obtained, such as being able to improve smart branding and can also increase economic opportunities for business actors, village governments and Sinjai Regency governments.

## **CONCLUSION**

Village Tourism, a national program initiated by the government through the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, aims to drive economic growth, improve community welfare, alleviate poverty, address unemployment, protect the environment and natural resources, and promote culture. In line with this initiative, the Sinjai Regency Government has positioned tourism as a flagship program, seeing its potential to contribute significantly to the local economy. An internet search shows 20 potential Tourism Villages in Sinjai Regency, each poised to play an essential role in realizing smart branding.

The Sinjai Regency Government launched the "Ayo ke Sinjai" tourism application to realise smart branding. Equipped with various features, the app is designed to assist tourists in exploring the diverse tourist villages. Unfortunately, the implementation of this app experienced a significant bottleneck as the app was inaccessible to users due to persistent errors in the system. Surprisingly, this issue has yet to receive the attention it deserves from the Sinjai Regency Government, even though the app can potentially be a powerful tool in promoting tourist destinations in the region.

The unresolved technical challenges on the "Ayo ke Sinjai" app hinder the government's efforts to showcase and introduce Sinjai's tourism wealth. Addressing these issues is critical to unlocking the full potential of this app and ensuring that it fulfils its intended purpose of simplifying the promotion of Sinjai's tourism destinations. As the government seeks to leverage tourism as a key economic driver, resolving these implementation issues becomes critical to successfully realising smart branding initiatives in Sinjai Regency.

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