



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DESTINATION MARKETING STRATEGY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Tourism destination marketing plays a very crucial role in increasing the number of tourist visits. In this fast-paced digital era, effective promotion is the key to attracting domestic and international tourists. Thus, every tourist destination needs the right marketing strategy to compete in the increasingly competitive global market. The development of digital technology has had a significant impact on tourism destination marketing strategies, especially in the context of sustainable tourism. This research aims to identify effective marketing strategies in promoting tourist destinations as sustainable tourism destinations in the digital era. This research uses a descriptive quantitative approach by utilizing data from interviews and various sources. The research results show that digital marketing is essential in tourism marketing. Social media, websites, and other digital platforms are critical in increasing tourist attraction. Besides that, collaborating with various parties, including the government, local communities, and business actors, supports tourism sustainability. Hopefully, these findings can provide a clearer picture of marketing strategies that can be implemented in developing sustainable tourism destinations in digital era.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism focuses not only on economic benefits but also on environmental conservation and the involvement of local communities. By integrating these aspects, tourism destinations support economic development while preserving natural and cultural heritage. An integrated strategic approach is essential in maximizing tourism potential. An effective marketing strategy includes comprehensive planning, from analyzing market needs to implementing appropriate promotional programs. In Indonesia's tourism context, collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities is required to create an ecosystem supporting tourist destinations' sustainability. This approach is relevant for increasing destination competitiveness and ensuring that tourism becomes an effective tool in promoting cultural identity and inclusive economic development (Annamalah et al., 2023).

The importance of tourism marketing strategies in this increasingly modern era is vital to be carried out because of the large amount of competition in the tourism business sector (Hasanli & Mehrabova, 2024). Marketing strategies can be implemented by implementing a marketing mix on tourist attractions, one of which is promoting and increasing the attractiveness of its products to tourists. Marketing strategies will provide more detailed information about emerging and popular tourist attractions, and the promoted tourist attractions will develop better. Tourism marketing strategies will also greatly assist tourist attractions in managing and servicing a tourist attraction. This shows the importance of tourism marketing strategies in developing tourist attractions and the existing tourism business sector (Goeltom & Hurriyati, 2024).

Indonesia is one of the countries with a reasonably large tourism sector. This makes the tourism sector in Indonesia widely visited by local and foreign tourists. The tourism sector is developing rapidly in the increasingly modern era of globalization (Fauzi & Sumirat, 2023). Developing a tourism sector depends on the appropriateness of the tourism marketing strategy applied. Inappropriate tourism marketing strategies cause many tourism sectors to succeed or fail in their development. The right marketing strategy in the existing tourism sector will be beneficial economically, socially, and culturally. A well-developed tourism industry will open up opportunities for creating business and entrepreneurial opportunities, as well as extensive employment opportunities for residents, even people from outside the region (Wisnawa et al., 2023).

Tourism marketing is a series of strategic activities to promote and market tourism destinations to target audiences (Devkota et al., 2023). It involves using various techniques and strategies to attract tourists' attention, influence their travel decisions, and promote a destination's unique experiences. Tourism marketing includes identifying target markets, developing destination brands, promoting through various communication channels, and managing customer relationships. Tourism marketing has significant benefits for tourism destinations and surrounding communities. First, tourism marketing can increase tourist visits and expenditures (Kumar & Barua, 2024).

Through effective marketing strategies, tourism destinations can attract and encourage tourists to visit and spend time at that destination (Zhao, 2023). This positively impacts the local economy and the growth of the tourism sector. Second, tourism marketing can increase brand awareness and destination image. Through targeted promotional efforts, tourism destinations can build a strong image and communicate the uniqueness, beauty, and values offered, increasing the destination's attractiveness in the global market. Third, tourism marketing can advance local community development. With increasing tourist visits, local communities can exploit economic opportunities (Raji, et al., 2024).

In facing advances in information and communication technology, tourism destination marketing strategies must continue to develop (Thomas, 2024). The digital era opens up various new opportunities, including using digital media such as websites, social media, and mobile applications. This platform can strengthen the attractiveness of tourist destinations while supporting the creation of sustainable tourism (Afren, 2024). However, these efforts also face significant challenges, such as ensuring environmental preservation, empowering local communities, and improving the quality of tourism services. In the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0, technology and the internet have become an inseparable part of everyday life.

Digital connectivity allows information to spread quickly and efficiently, making social media a simple but highly effective tool for promoting tourism (Mallick, 2023). The use of social media in promoting tourist destinations is now a key element in developing this sector, offering an innovative way to expand the reach of promotions and attract tourists from various groups. The tourism sector itself makes a strategic and significant contribution to economic progress at both regional and national levels. Every tourist destination generally has a tour guide who guides and introduces tourist locations to visitors (Zaharia & Georgescu, 2024).

This study aims to analyze the role of digital technology in supporting the sustainable marketing of tourism destinations. Apart from that, this discussion seeks to identify various marketing strategies that effectively promote sustainable tourism destinations in the digital era, considering technological trends and changes in tourist behavior, and this research also aims to assess the impact of implementing digital marketing strategies on increasing awareness and tourist visits to destinations that prioritize sustainability principles. Through this research, it is hoped that challenges and opportunities faced by stakeholders in implementing sustainable tourism destination marketing in the digital world can be discovered. Finally, this research aims to provide recommendations for tourism destination managers in designing and implementing digital-based marketing strategies that align with sustainability principles and can increase the attractiveness and sustainability of the destination.

The reason for conducting this research is very relevant considering the ever-changing dynamics of technological development and its impact on consumer behavior, especially tourists. This research is also necessary because it can provide scientific contributions to tourism marketing. By examining the role of digital marketing in depth, it is hoped that this research can fill the gaps in existing literature and become a reference for further study. Ultimately, this research is expected to have a broad positive impact on sustainable tourism development.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative, with a research focus on tourism marketing in the digital era. The types of data used in this research are primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with previously prepared questions. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from relevant sources in documents, reports, or data, as well as other supporting materials and information in research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with tourism stakeholders regarding digital tourism marketing. The data



obtained is then analyzed comprehensively, with stages of data analysis, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One striking phenomenon is using digital platforms as the primary tool for promoting and selling tourist destinations. Websites, mobile applications, and social media have become essential channels through which tourism actors can introduce their destinations to potential tourists. Through this platform, they can share up-to-date information about travel restrictions, health policies, and safety protocols that visitors must follow. Tourism actors also use digital platforms to promote special tour packages, discounts, and attractive offers to attract tourist interest despite the difficult pandemic. The following are stakeholders' excerpts about technology's role in tourism marketing.

"Digital technologies, particularly social media, play a significant role in helping me promote ecotourism and local culture without substantial expenses." (Owner of a local homestay)

"Using digital platforms enables me to connect with travelers who are environmentally conscious and desire to travel responsibly." (Eco-friendly tour guide)

"Digital marketing allows us to highlight how our hotel supports the local community, drawing in tourists looking for genuine experiences." (Manager of a community-based hotel)

"Thanks to digital technology, I can inform clients about the importance of sustainable tourism and provide environmentally-friendly package options." (Manager of a green tourism-based travel agency)

"We utilize online platforms to promote organic local products to travelers while advocating for sustainable farming methods." (Local culinary entrepreneur)

"Digital data helps tourism stakeholders study traveler trends and develop strategies that promote environmental conservation and cultural preservation." (Tourism Consultant)

"Through vlogs and social media, I can inspire viewers to select destinations that prioritize nature and cultural conservation." (Tourism content creator)

"Digital technology offers us a way to display our village's potential globally without depending on intermediaries." (Manager of a tourism village)

"The process of digitization fosters collaboration between academics and business operators to craft effective, sustainable marketing strategies." (Tourism lecturer)

"I am convinced that digital technology can be an essential resource in guiding travelers towards more sustainable and environmentally aware choices." (Developer of local tourism apps)

The strategy to promote sustainable tourism destinations in the digital era involves various practical approaches to increase the attractiveness and sustainability of the area. Social media is one of the main strategies implemented, and platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube promote natural and cultural beauty. Engaging visual content, such as photos and videos, and collaborations with influencers or travelers can attract tourists' attention and strengthen emotional connections with the destination. In addition, content-based marketing, which includes articles, blogs, and educational videos, also plays a vital role in providing information about environmental and cultural sustainability and unique tourism experiences.

Using digital platforms for reservations and tickets also supports easy access for tourists, so they can easily plan their trips. No less critical, collaboration between the government, tourism industry players, and local communities further strengthens this digital marketing strategy, creating an ecosystem that supports sustainable management of natural and cultural resources. However, several challenges are faced in marketing tourism destinations through digital technology. Limited digital infrastructure in some regions, such as unstable internet access, hinders online marketing optimization in these regions.

Apart from that, dependence on the use of technology by tourism industry players who are still unfamiliar with digital marketing is an obstacle in itself. Many business actors, especially those in rural areas, do not yet have the skills to use digital platforms and social media to promote their tourism products. In addition, increasingly fierce competition with other tourist destinations utilizing digital technology requires them to be more creative in differentiating themselves with quality content and tourism experiences that highlight sustainable values. Apart from that, changes in tourist behavior patterns, which are increasingly critical of environmental and social issues, also influence the marketing methods that must be implemented to match market expectations (Mantra et al., 2023).

Digital technology's role in increasing tourism's sustainability and attractiveness is very significant. Through digital technology, information about nature and cultural conservation can be quickly spread to the broader community. Educational campaigns through social media and other digital platforms can increase tourist awareness regarding the importance of preserving the environment. In addition, technology such as geographic information

systems and sensors for monitoring environmental conditions can help destination managers monitor and manage natural resources more effectively.

Virtual experiences offered through augmented reality and virtual reality technology can also increase attraction. This allows tourists to experience tourism digitally before making a physical visit. Digital technology enables more targeted and personalized marketing through data analysis so that tourism promotion can be more targeted. In addition, digital applications and platforms make it easier to manage tourist destinations, from booking accommodation to tourist tickets, creating a more organized and sustainable experience. By optimizing technology, it can continue strengthening its appeal as a sustainable tourism destination increasingly popular in the digital era (Mantra, 2024).

However, another obstacle found in this research is the problem of connectivity and internet access, which is still limited in several tourist locations. This limitation can prevent tourists from accessing information online or even ordering tickets digitally. Therefore, as a solution, tourism managers need to collaborate with internet service providers to improve digital infrastructure in key tourist areas. This is important to ensure that all visitors can access the information they need easily and quickly. In addition, the results of this research also show that the content presented through digital marketing must continue to be updated so that it remains relevant to developing trends and tourist interests (Widiastuti et al., 2021).

Digital technology can help tourists when traveling before, while traveling, and after returning. The strategy implemented by the Regional Government regarding the use of digital technology in tourist destinations is to provide training on product development and online product marketing. This needs to be improved so that business actors' understanding and abilities regarding digital technology will improve. Apart from that, the Regional Government continues to optimize the use of technology in the tourism sector (Astawa et al., 2017).

Digital tourism must be integrated into the physical infrastructure in tourist destinations. The main goal of digital tourism is to enhance the tourist experience, increase efficiency, and maximize the competitive value of tourist destinations, influencing tourist satisfaction. Through the use of technology, we will be able to provide confidence to tourists, especially during the current pandemic conditions. By implementing health protocols, tourists will ensure that their destination is safe for traveling. Tourists do this by accessing all information about tourist destinations online (Mantra et al., 2020).

Digital marketing has proven significant in encouraging increased tourist visits, mainly due to the high dependence on digital content or sites that provide information related to the destination. Most tourists search for information through digital marketing platforms before deciding to visit. Therefore, digital marketing platform managers need to pay attention to the quality of the content presented. One effort that can be made is to increase the attractiveness of the content display and add language options on each platform. This step aims to make the information provided accessible to tourists from various backgrounds and countries to widen its reach.

Marketing tourism requires a good marketing strategy and is oriented towards sustainable tourism development. Planning and management play a vital role in realizing sustainable tourism development. Innovation needs to be done to develop tourism, considering that the tourism sector has an enormous potential to improve the regional economy and foreign exchange earnings. In addition to improving the country's economic sector, tourism also increases employment opportunities, income, and the community's standard of living (Mantra et al., 2019).

Tourism development planning provides excellent benefits for tourist destinations while trying to minimize the negative impacts of the tourism industry. Sustainable tourism sector development concerns all parties amidst competition challenges in the tourism industry. In tourism development, there are many threats and challenges from outside and within the country. Threats can be environmental damage due to excessive exploitation of natural resources, health threats, and security threats. Sustainable tourism development is essential to maintain the sustainability of tourism today and in the future by ensuring that natural, social, and cultural resources are utilized optimally for today and future generations.

4. CONCLUSION

Tourism destination marketing plays a vital role in increasing tourist visits. With the right marketing strategies, such as building a strong identity, utilizing digital marketing, and focusing on sustainability, tourist destinations can attract more visitors and increase competitiveness in the global market. Social media and digital applications have proven effective in introducing tourist destinations and interacting directly with tourists. However, the main challenge faced is the limited skills of managers in utilizing digital technology optimally. Therefore, increasing human resource capacity and collaborating with various parties is necessary to support better digital infrastructure. Overall, implementing appropriate digital marketing can increase the attractiveness of tourist destinations. Therefore, every destination must design an effective marketing strategy to maximize its potential and succeed.



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