

Exploring Social Media Marketing for Promoting Tourism Villages: A Qualitative Approach

*Social Media for
Tourism Village
Promotion*

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ABSTRACT

Tourism villages, such as those in Bangkalan Regency, hold significant potential to boost local economies, but their success depends on effective promotional strategies. This study aims to examine the use of social media marketing as a promotional tool for developing tourism villages, focusing on Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, using field observations, in-depth interviews with one manager and four visitors, and documentation of social media content. The findings reveal that the tourism village uses Facebook and Instagram for promotion, but the efforts are suboptimal due to infrequent posts, limited engagement, and reliance on word-of-mouth as the primary information source for visitors. Financial constraints and a lack of skilled personnel further hinder effective marketing. To improve, managers should enhance content quality, increase posting frequency, and establish partnerships with travel agencies or local institutions. This study concludes that social media marketing can significantly enhance tourism village promotion if implemented consistently and strategically. It contributes to understanding how resource-constrained destinations can leverage digital platforms and offers practical insights for managers to increase visitor numbers through targeted, cost-effective strategies.

Keywords: *Destination Promotion, Digital Marketing, Qualitative Research, Social Media Marketing, Tourism Village, Visitor Engagement.*

ABSTRAK

Desa wisata, seperti yang ada di Kabupaten Bangkalan, memiliki potensi signifikan untuk meningkatkan perekonomian lokal, tetapi keberhasilannya bergantung pada strategi promosi yang efektif. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pemanfaatan pemasaran media sosial sebagai alat promosi untuk mengembangkan desa wisata, dengan fokus pada Desa Wisata Pantai Tlangoh. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan, menggunakan observasi lapangan, wawancara mendalam dengan satu pengelola dan empat pengunjung, serta dokumentasi konten media sosial. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa desa wisata tersebut menggunakan Facebook dan Instagram untuk promosi, tetapi upaya tersebut belum optimal karena jarang unggahan, terbatasnya interaksi, dan ketergantungan pada informasi dari mulut ke mulut sebagai sumber

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informasi utama bagi pengunjung. Keterbatasan finansial dan kurangnya tenaga terampil semakin menghambat efektivitas pemasaran. Untuk meningkatkannya, pengelola harus meningkatkan kualitas konten, meningkatkan frekuensi unggahan, dan menjalin kemitraan dengan agen perjalanan atau lembaga lokal. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pemasaran media sosial dapat meningkatkan promosi desa wisata secara signifikan jika diterapkan secara konsisten dan strategis. Hal ini berkontribusi untuk memahami bagaimana destinasi wisata dengan sumber daya terbatas dapat memanfaatkan platform digital dan menawarkan wawasan praktis bagi pengelola untuk meningkatkan jumlah pengunjung melalui strategi yang tepat sasaran dan hemat biaya.

Keywords: Promosi Destinasi, Pemasaran Digital, Riset Kualitatif, Pemasaran Media Sosial, Desa Wisata, Keterlibatan Pengunjung.

INTRODUCTION

Bangkalan is a regency in the province of East Java, Indonesia, consisting of 18 districts and known for its focus on tourism development. It has significant potential in agrotourism, cultural tourism, natural attractions, beaches, and artificial tourism. This is supported by abundant natural resources that can be explored and developed as tourist attractions. Additionally, Bangkalan is home to various regional arts, cultural traditions, historical sites, and stunning natural landscapes, all of which hold great potential for development. The local community still maintains a rich cultural heritage, as Madura Island is renowned for its natural scenery and tourism (Arief et al., 2022). One popular natural attraction in Bangkalan is Tlangoh Beach, located in Tlangoh Village, Tanjung Bumi district. This destination is ideal for family outings or gatherings with friends, making it a suitable spot for long holidays or weekend getaways.

Tourism is a promising sector that can drive economic growth (Arief et al., 2022). When managed effectively by tourism operators, village tourism destinations have the potential to become a highly lucrative business, contributing to both village and community income. The primary goal of tourism businesses, particularly in village settings, is to ensure customer satisfaction. Long-term customer satisfaction can increase interest in village tourism destinations, enhancing their competitiveness. However, many tourism villages, including Tlangoh Beach, face challenges in maximizing their potential due to limited promotional strategies. As shown in Table 1, the number of tourist visits to Tlangoh Beach in 2024 fluctuated significantly, indicating inconsistent progress in leveraging its potential.

Table 1. Number of Visitors 2024

Month	Number of Tourists
January	6.136
February	2.479
March	1.598
April	211
May	1.724
June-August	-
September	230
October	360
November	511
December	1.597
Total	14.846

Sources: Tlangoh Tourist Village Manager (2024)

The fluctuating visitor numbers, as shown in Table 1, suggest that Tlangoh Beach has not fully optimized its promotional efforts. According to Arifah et al. (2024), effective social media marketing significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit destinations by enhancing destination image and awareness. However, studies like Hasanah et al. (2015) indicate that the impact of social media marketing is not always significant, particularly when strategies are inconsistent or poorly implemented. This discrepancy highlights a

research gap in understanding how small-scale tourism villages, such as those in Bangkalan, can effectively utilize social media marketing to overcome promotional limitations and increase visitor numbers. Existing studies often focus on urban or well-established tourism destinations, leaving a gap in exploring social media marketing strategies for rural tourism villages with limited resources.

Several factors contribute to the unstable visitor numbers at Tlangoh Beach, including suboptimal facilities, limited human resources, and insufficient promotional activities. Among these, promotion is a critical factor due to the lack of awareness among the Bangkalan community. Digital marketing, particularly through social media, plays a vital role in the success of tourism businesses (Artanti et al., 2019; AS et al., 2023; AS et al., 2024). Social media platforms can create a positive image and boost visitor numbers (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015; Groothuis & Effing, 2020; Dewi et al., 2022; Prayogo et al., 2023). Scholars like Mulyansyah (2021) and Rahmawati and Aguilika (2024) emphasize that effective social media marketing strategies can enhance public interest, competitiveness, and marketing performance. However, the application of social media marketing in small tourism villages like Tlangoh remains underexplored, necessitating further investigation (Junaedi et al., 2022).

The purpose of this research is to examine how social media marketing can be utilized as an effective promotional tool to develop tourism villages in Bangkalan Regency, with a focus on Tlangoh Beach. By addressing the identified research gap, this study aims to provide practical insights for tourism village managers to enhance their promotional strategies and increase visitor numbers through social media platforms. This aligns with recommendations from researchers like Oktavia and Mariam (2024), who highlight the role of social media in building destination awareness and competitiveness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Village Development

According to Zebua (2016), a tourism village is a rural area with unique physical, socio-cultural, and environmental characteristics that are developed as tourist attractions. These villages offer authentic experiences through their natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community activities, making them appealing to tourists seeking unique destinations. Tourism villages require key components such as accommodation, attractions, activities, facilities, and accessibility to ensure visitor satisfaction (Kabu & Lau, 2022). The development of tourism villages can significantly contribute to economic growth, community income, and rural transformation (Setyaningsih & Murwatiningsih, 2017; Syarif & AS, 2023). For instance, Ramadhani et al. (2021) highlight that well-managed tourism villages can reduce urban-rural development gaps by creating employment opportunities and improving local economies. This economic boost often leads to infrastructure improvements and increased community pride in their cultural heritage.

However, many tourism villages face challenges in promotion and resource management, which limit their ability to attract consistent visitors. Fafurida et al. (2023) emphasize that leveraging unique village potentials, such as natural scenery or cultural events, is critical for attracting tourists and sustaining economic benefits. Utami et al. (2019) argue that successful tourism villages require strategic planning to balance cultural preservation with economic development. Without proper management, tourism villages may struggle to compete with more established destinations. The success of tourism villages depends on effective management and marketing strategies to highlight their unique offerings and ensure long-term viability, particularly in rural areas with limited resources.

Promotional Strategies in Tourism

Alma (2011) defines promotion as a communication process that informs and persuades potential consumers about goods or services. The goal of promotion is to capture attention, educate, remind, and convince tourists to visit a destination. Traditional promotional elements include advertising, sales promotion, public relations,

and personal selling, but modern strategies have expanded to include digital approaches (Morrison, 2015). Digital marketing, particularly through social media, has become a vital tool for tourism promotion due to its wide reach and cost-effectiveness (Nguyen & Wang, 2011; Mitova et al., 2021; Mayangsari & Firdaus, 2023). AS et al. (2021) note that digital platforms allow tourism managers to engage with broader audiences compared to traditional media, fostering direct interaction with potential visitors. This shift has made promotion more accessible for small-scale tourism businesses, including rural tourism villages.

However, ineffective promotional strategies can lead to low visitor numbers, especially in rural tourism settings. According to Indriastuti and Wahyuni (2022), promoting tourism villages via social media requires consistent content creation and strategic planning to build destination awareness. The challenge lies in aligning promotional strategies with the specific needs and goals of the tourism village to maximize impact. For example, poorly designed campaigns or irregular updates can reduce the effectiveness of promotional efforts. Effective promotion not only increases visitor numbers but also enhances the destination's competitiveness in the tourism market, making it essential for tourism village managers to adopt strategic and targeted approaches.

Social Media Marketing in Tourism

Adhawiyah et al. (2019) emphasize that social media marketing revolutionizes tourism promotion by empowering consumers to access and share information. Unlike traditional media, such as television or newspapers, social media operates on a many-to-many communication model, enabling businesses to engage directly with audiences (Zarella, 2010; Nurmalasari, 2017; Pranata et al., 2023). Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are cost-effective tools for promoting tourism destinations, particularly for small-scale businesses like tourism villages (Amaral, 2015). Priatmoko (2017) and Hossain et al. (2024) found that social media significantly influences tourists' decisions by enhancing destination image and awareness. These platforms allow businesses to share visual content, such as photos and videos, which are highly effective in attracting visitors (Puspawati & Ristanto, 2018; Putu & Mahendra, 2019; Apriani et al., 2023). For tourism villages, this visual appeal can showcase unique cultural or natural features to a global audience.

However, the effectiveness of social media marketing depends on strategic implementation, including consistent posting and audience engagement. Kotler et al. (2016) highlight the 4Cs of social media marketing, Context, Communication, Collaboration, and Connection, as key factors for success. In tourism villages, where resources are often limited, managers must understand how to leverage these platforms to create compelling content and build community engagement. Challenges such as limited technical expertise or financial constraints can hinder optimal use of social media. By addressing these challenges, tourism villages can use social media to build stronger connections with potential visitors and enhance their market presence.

Research Gaps in Social Media Marketing for Tourism Villages

According to Hasanah et al. (2015) and Rizki (2017), the impact of social media marketing on tourism is not always significant, particularly when strategies are inconsistent or lack clear objectives. While studies like Rahmawati and Aguilika (2024) and Romadhon and Suyono (2024) demonstrate that social media can enhance destination appeal and competitiveness, there is limited research on its application in small-scale, resource-constrained tourism villages. Most studies focus on urban or established tourism destinations, leaving a gap in understanding how rural tourism villages can effectively use social media marketing (Semuel & Setiawan, 2018; Saliman et al., 2021). For example, Prayogo et al. (2023) highlight the success of social media in urban tourism contexts but do not address the unique challenges faced by rural areas, such as limited human resources or financial constraints. This research gap underscores the need to explore how tourism villages, like those in Bangkalan, can optimize social media

platforms to overcome promotional barriers and increase visitor numbers. Additionally, there is a lack of studies examining the long-term impact of social media marketing on rural tourism sustainability, as noted by Firyal et al. (2024). Addressing these gaps can provide valuable insights for tourism village managers to develop effective, low-cost promotional strategies tailored to their unique contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach with descriptive characteristics to examine the use of social media marketing in Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village. Qualitative research is suitable for describing real-world events and analyzing phenomena from the perspectives of participants (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019; Sugiyono, 2018). The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to capture detailed narratives and contextual insights from the field, particularly through the experiences of tourism village managers and visitors. This method focuses on presenting findings in written form, emphasizing the lived experiences of participants to provide a comprehensive understanding of the promotional strategies used.

The study adopts a narrative qualitative method to explore the events and phenomena surrounding social media marketing in Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village. Narrative research involves investigating individual or group experiences and retelling them in a descriptive chronology (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019). The rationale for this approach is its ability to uncover in-depth stories from participants, which is essential for understanding the challenges and opportunities in social media marketing for a small-scale tourism village. The researcher selected five informants: four visitors and one manager from the Tlangoh Beach Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS). Informants were chosen purposively based on their direct involvement with the tourism village, either as visitors who experienced the destination or as managers responsible for promotional activities. This purposive sampling ensured that the data collected relevant and rich in context.

Data collection techniques included field observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2018). Field observations were conducted over two weeks to observe promotional activities and visitor interactions at Tlangoh Beach. In-depth interviews were held with each informant, lasting approximately 30–45 minutes, to gather detailed insights into their experiences with social media marketing. Documentation involved analyzing social media posts from the village's Facebook and Instagram accounts. To ensure data validity, the researcher used triangulation by cross-checking interview responses with observations and social media content. The data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2018). Data reduction involved selecting relevant information from interviews and observations, while data display organized findings into thematic categories, such as promotional challenges and social media usage patterns. This process continued iteratively until data saturation was achieved, ensuring robust and reliable findings.

RESULTS

Social Media Usage by Managers

The management of Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village has implemented social media marketing as part of their promotional strategy, primarily utilizing Facebook and Instagram. Based on data collected from the village's social media accounts, the Facebook account (@TlangohBeach) had 773 followers in 2024, with only 2 videos and 7 photos posted over the past five years (Manager, 2024a). This indicates an average of approximately one post per year, suggesting minimal activity on the platform. Similarly, the Instagram account (@TlangohBeachOfficial) had 400 followers in 2024, with 93 pieces of content, including videos and photos, uploaded over the same period (Manager, 2024b). This equates to roughly one post per month, which reflects limited engagement compared to the potential of social media for tourism promotion. Observations conducted

over two weeks at Tlangoh Beach revealed that promotional content primarily consisted of scenic photos of the beach, but updates were irregular, and there was no evidence of strategic campaigns or interactive posts to engage followers.

The manager reported using additional promotional methods beyond social media, such as billboards and banners placed on roads leading to Tlangoh Beach, as well as sharing information through WhatsApp groups. However, these efforts were described as ad hoc, with no dedicated team or individual responsible for managing promotions. The manager noted, "We promote Tlangoh Beach in any way we can because no one specifically handles promotions here." This lack of specialization was evident in the inconsistent quality and frequency of social media posts. For instance, during the observation period, no new posts were uploaded, and existing content lacked captions or hashtags to increase visibility. The manager also mentioned that promotional activities were constrained by limited funding, which was primarily allocated to employee wages rather than marketing initiatives.

The limited use of social media was further highlighted by the absence of partnerships with external entities, such as influencers or tourism agencies, to boost online presence. The manager acknowledged that the tourism village had not yet explored collaborations with travel agencies or educational institutions, which could amplify promotional reach. This finding aligns with the observation that the social media accounts lacked engagement features, such as responding to comments or running promotional campaigns, which are critical for building an online community. The data suggests that while social media platforms are used, their implementation is not optimal, resulting in low visibility and engagement with potential visitors.

Sources of Information for Visitors

Visitors to Tlangoh Beach learned about the destination through a combination of word-of-mouth and social media, based on in-depth interviews conducted with four visitors. One visitor, a 19-year-old woman from Sampang Regency, reported that she discovered Tlangoh Beach through friends who had previously visited, sparking her curiosity about the white sand beach. She stated, "I came to this beach because I heard from my sister who visited first." This reliance on personal recommendations indicates that word-of-mouth remains a significant source of information for potential visitors. Another visitor, a 20-year-old man from Pamekasan Regency, mentioned that he learned about Tlangoh Beach through a Facebook post but visited by chance while on a religious tour group returning from Surabaya. He noted, "I had seen Tlangoh Beach on Facebook before, but I came here by accident."

A third visitor, a 22-year-old man from Bangkalan Regency, was unaware of Tlangoh Beach as a tourist attraction until his girlfriend invited him. He explained, "I found out about this beach because my girlfriend invited me after seeing a friend's WhatsApp status and then checking it on Instagram." This suggests that social media, particularly Instagram, serves as a secondary source of information after initial exposure through personal networks. Similarly, a 42-year-old man from Surabaya City reported that he learned about Tlangoh Beach from a friend and later searched for information online, particularly on social media platforms. He said, "I heard about Tlangoh Beach from a friend and looked it up online because I wanted to take my family on a holiday." These accounts highlight that social media plays a role in providing information, but is often supplemented by personal recommendations.

Observations at the site corroborated these findings, as many visitors appeared to be locals or from nearby regencies, suggesting that awareness of Tlangoh Beach is limited to regional networks. The social media accounts, while referenced by some visitors, did not appear to be the primary driver of visits, as most informants cited personal connections as their initial source of awareness. This indicates that the tourism village's social media presence has not yet reached a broad audience or effectively converted online engagement into actual visits. The reliance on word-of-mouth underscores the need for more robust digital marketing strategies to expand the destination's reach beyond local networks.

Promotional Challenges

The management of Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village faces significant challenges in implementing effective promotional strategies, as revealed through interviews and observations. The primary constraint is financial, with limited funds available for marketing activities. The manager stated, “We can’t afford promotions that cost a lot of money, and for now, we only carry out promotions with sufficient funds because our income is also used to pay employees.” This financial limitation restricts the ability to invest in professional marketing campaigns or hire dedicated staff to manage social media platforms. Observations confirmed that promotional materials, such as billboards, were basic and lacked professional design, further limiting their impact.

Another challenge is the lack of qualified human resources to manage social media marketing effectively. The manager, who serves as the treasurer of the Tlangoh Beach Tourism Awareness Group (POKDARWIS), admitted to having limited expertise in digital marketing. She noted, “We don’t have anyone who really knows how to use social media like Instagram or Facebook for promotion.” This lack of expertise is reflected in the low frequency and quality of social media posts, as well as the absence of engagement strategies, such as responding to follower comments or using hashtags to increase visibility. During the two-week observation period, no interactions were observed between the social media accounts and their followers, indicating a missed opportunity to build an online community.

Additionally, the tourism village lacks partnerships with external stakeholders, such as travel agencies, educational institutions, or electronic media, which could enhance promotional efforts. The manager acknowledged that no formal collaborations had been established, limiting the destination’s exposure to wider audiences. This finding is consistent with the low follower counts and minimal engagement on social media platforms, suggesting that promotional efforts are not reaching potential tourists beyond the local area. The combination of financial constraints, limited human resources, and a lack of partnerships highlights the need for targeted interventions, such as training programs or low-cost digital marketing strategies, to improve promotional effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

Promotions play a critical role in attracting visitors to tourism destinations, and social media platforms offer accessible and cost-effective tools for this purpose. As noted by Adhawiyah et al. (2019), social media marketing enables direct engagement with potential customers, revolutionizing traditional promotional approaches. At Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village, managers have utilized Facebook and Instagram for promotion, but the results indicate suboptimal implementation. As presented in the Results section, the low frequency of posts, one per year on Facebook and one per month on Instagram, suggests a lack of consistent engagement. This irregularity limits the platforms’ ability to build a strong online presence and attract a wider audience. Velentza and Metaxas (2023) and Hossain et al. (2024) emphasize that consistent and strategic social media use is essential for enhancing destination awareness and influencing tourist decisions. The limited activity on Tlangoh’s social media accounts aligns with findings that inconsistent strategies reduce the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts (Gumilang et al., 2024).

The reliance on word-of-mouth as a primary information source for visitors, as shown in the Results, further highlights the underutilization of social media marketing. While some visitors discovered Tlangoh Beach through Instagram or Facebook, most were initially informed by friends or relatives, indicating that social media serves as a secondary rather than primary promotional tool. According to Arifah et al. (2024), effective social media marketing can significantly enhance destination image and drive visitation decisions when implemented with clear objectives and engaging content. The current approach at Tlangoh Beach lacks these elements, as evidenced by the absence of interactive features like responding to comments or using hashtags to increase visibility. Kotler et al. (2016) suggest that the 4Cs of social media marketing, Context,

Communication, Collaboration, and Connection, are crucial for success. At Tlangoh, the context of posts is visually appealing but lacks strategic planning, communication with followers is minimal, and there is no evidence of collaboration, such as partnerships with influencers or tourism agencies, to enhance connectivity.

Financial and human resource constraints further exacerbate these challenges. The manager's statement in the Results section about limited funds and lack of specialized marketing staff aligns with broader issues faced by rural tourism villages. Firyal et al. (2024) note that resource limitations, particularly in expertise and funding, are common barriers to effective social media marketing in small-scale tourism destinations. The absence of dedicated personnel to manage social media accounts results in sporadic updates and missed opportunities to engage with potential visitors. Additionally, the lack of partnerships with external stakeholders, such as travel agencies or educational institutions, limits the destination's exposure. Zhang et al. (2021) highlight that collaborations with external entities can amplify social media reach, particularly for destinations with limited resources. Implementing such strategies could help Tlangoh Beach overcome its current promotional limitations.

Despite these challenges, the use of Facebook and Instagram has contributed to an increase in visitor numbers, though fluctuations persist. The scenic photos shared on these platforms have attracted some attention, as noted by visitors who referenced social media as a source of information. This aligns with Crespo-Almendros et al. (2023), who found that visually appealing content on social media positively influences tourist interest. However, to maximize impact, managers need to optimize content quality and frequency, ensuring regular updates and interactive communication. Harahap and Wahyuni (2024) argue that increased exposure to promotional content on social media correlates with higher visitor interest, emphasizing the need for consistent and engaging posts. Training programs for staff on social media management could address the lack of expertise, enabling more effective use of these platforms.

The findings have several implications for tourism village managers and policymakers. First, investing in low-cost training programs for social media marketing can empower managers to create compelling content and engage with audiences effectively, addressing the human resource gap. Second, forming partnerships with travel agencies, influencers, or local institutions can enhance promotional reach without significant financial investment. Third, adopting a structured social media strategy, guided by the 4Cs framework, can improve consistency and engagement, ultimately increasing visitor numbers. These implications suggest that small-scale tourism villages like Tlangoh Beach can overcome resource constraints by leveraging cost-effective digital tools and strategic collaborations, contributing to sustainable tourism development.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings reveal that Tlangoh Beach Tourism Village has adopted social media marketing through platforms like Facebook and Instagram to promote its destination, but these efforts remain suboptimal. The limited number of posts, with only one per year on Facebook and one per month on Instagram, reflects a lack of consistent engagement with potential visitors. Visitors primarily learn about Tlangoh Beach through word-of-mouth, with social media serving as a secondary information source, indicating that the current promotional strategy has not fully leveraged the potential of digital platforms. The management's reliance on basic promotional methods, such as billboards and WhatsApp groups, further highlights the need for a more strategic approach to digital marketing. These findings underscore that while social media is a cost-effective tool, its effectiveness depends on regular updates, engaging content, and active interaction with followers.

The implications of this study suggest that tourism village managers should prioritize training in social media marketing to enhance content quality and engagement, thereby increasing visitor numbers. Partnerships with travel agencies or local institutions could also expand promotional reach without significant costs. However, this study has limitations, including its focus on a single tourism village and a small sample of

informants, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The reliance on qualitative data also means that quantitative impacts, such as exact visitor increases due to social media, were not measured. Future research could explore the long-term impact of social media strategies across multiple tourism villages or use quantitative methods to assess the direct effect of digital marketing on visitor numbers. Investigating collaborations with influencers or tourism associations could also provide insights into cost-effective promotional strategies for resource-constrained destinations.

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