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Social Media Marketing To Improve Awareness Of The Buper Segorogunung Ecotourism Location Owned By Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta

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Abstract

Buper Segorogunung Ecotourism is located in the protected forest area of Mount Lawu Utara, Karanganyar, Central Java. This ecotourism offers various outdoor activities, such as camping, jeep tours, and outbound. Despite having great natural potential, this ecotourism is still classified as a pioneering destination with a relatively low level of visits. One of the main causes is the less than optimal use of social media marketing. This study adopted a qualitative approach to obtain data directly from sources related to the use of social media marketing to increase awareness of the Segorogunung Camping Ground ecotourism location owned by Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta. Based on observations and interviews, it is known that the Segorogunung Camping Ground manager has implemented a promotional strategy by utilizing social media that is active on the Tiktok and Instagram platforms. However, the Segorogunung Camping Ground manager has not been able to maximize this promotional strategy in building awareness of the ecotourism location. In addition to using social media, the manager collaborates with travel agents and communities to expand its target market.

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Social Media Marketing, Buper Segorogunung, Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a form of nature-based tourism that aims to preserve the local environment and culture while providing a tourism experience to visitors. This type of tourism was born out of concern for increasingly pressing environmental, economic, and

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social issues (Hanum et al., 2021). Ecotourism development not only serves to preserve nature but also provides significant economic benefits to the local community. With ecotourism, the local economy can develop through increased employment opportunities, reduced unemployment rates, and improved infrastructure. The development of facilities and infrastructure such as roads, public facilities, and other tourism services is getting better, so that it indirectly encourages regional development. Therefore, ecotourism is often considered a solution that can answer various challenges of sustainable development that integrates environmental, economic, and social aspects.

One example of the implementation of ecotourism can be found at Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta which manages the tourist area around Mount Lawu, especially in the Tawangmangu area and its surroundings. In the Karanganyar area, there are more than 5,000 hectares of land, most of which are protected forest areas that are specifically designated for ecotourism development. This development is carried out with the main objective of preserving the environment while complying with applicable regulations. This strategy not only aims to utilize natural potential but also to provide a positive economic impact for the surrounding community. In this context, ecotourism development is expected to be able to become a driving force for the local economy without sacrificing environmental sustainability, thus creating a balance between resource utilization and conservation.

One of the mainstay ecotourism destinations in the Mount Lawu area is the Segorogunung Camping Ground (Buper), which is managed by the Argo Kuncoro Segorogunung Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis). This ecotourism is located in the North Lawu Protected Forest Area, precisely in Sedonorejo Hamlet, Segorogunung Village, Ngargoyoso District, Karanganyar Regency, Central Java. Buper Segorogunung offers an open nature tourism experience such as camping, jeep tours, and various other outdoor activities that attract nature lovers. Despite having great tourism potential, the management of this destination still faces a number of challenges. Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta classifies Buper Segorogunung as a pioneering tourism with quite good prospects thanks to its natural beauty, cool air, and pristine environment. However, accessibility constraints and lack of promotion are the main obstacles in attracting wider visitor interest.

The main problem faced by Buper Segorogunung is the low level of public awareness of the existence of this destination. According to the results of interviews with visitors, many tourists, both from regional and national circles, do not yet know about Buper Segorogunung. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of information

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disseminated through social media and other digital platforms. Comparison with similar destinations shows that Buper Segorogunung's social media only has 1,780 followers, much less than its competitors which reach 4,546 followers. Inactivity in updating information on tourism activities is also a factor that causes the lack of attractiveness of this destination. Referring to the opinion of Keller & Swaminta (2019, p. 79), brand awareness is the ability of consumers to remember and recognize a brand in various situations, and this is very important in promoting tourist destinations. Therefore, the researcher plans to examine more effective marketing strategies to increase awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location, so that it can attract more visitors and maximize its economic potential.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyze and understand the impacts caused by the implementation of marketing strategies through social media in an effort to increase public awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location, which is one of the assets owned by Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta. By delving deeper into the effectiveness of using social media platforms, it is hoped that better ways can be found to promote this ecotourism and attract more visitors.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Branding

Branding is a fundamental strategy implemented by organizations to strengthen their marketing efforts. The branding process includes managing the image or identity of a product and organization with the aim of creating a deep positive impression of the product, service, and company as a whole. According to Sulistio (2021:1), branding consists of a series of activities designed to build and develop a broad brand identity, including product name, logo, character, and consumer perception of the brand. Through branding, organizations not only provide identity to products or services, but also convey certain values and establish effective communication with consumers.

Furthermore, Oktaviani et al. (2018:349) emphasize that one of the main functions of branding is to foster a positive image in consumers' memories. They also note that branding has several important functions, such as differentiating from competitors, facilitating promotion and increasing appeal, and building image and quality assurance. A strong brand will be easier to dominate in the market, serving as a signal for competitors to consider their strategies. Keller et al. (2015:109) put forward a brand resonance model

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that explains the stages in building a strong brand, starting from the right brand identity to forming a good relationship with consumers. Overall, it can be concluded that branding is a crucial element in strengthening marketing, building a solid identity, and creating a positive image for a product or company..

Brand Awareness

Keller & Swaminta (2019:41) explain that brand awareness is a measure of how strong the imprint or impression a brand leaves in the consumer's memory. This can be measured through the consumer's ability to recognize the brand in various contexts. Increasing brand awareness often occurs through repeated exposure, which usually focuses more on brand recognition than brand recall. The more often consumers see, hear, and interact with a brand, the more likely they are to remember it. This repetition process not only increases awareness, but also requires associations in memory related to product categories or relevant cues when making purchases or consumption (Keller & Swaminta, 2019:44).

According to Keller & Swaminta (2019:42), brand awareness consists of two main elements, namely brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition is the ability of consumers to confirm their knowledge of a brand when they are given the brand name as a cue. In other words, it shows whether consumers can recognize a familiar brand when in a store or in another context. On the other hand, brand recall reflects the ability of consumers to recall a brand from their memory when given a product category or relevant situation as a cue. Understanding these two elements is essential in creating an effective marketing strategy.

Deka et al. (2019) stated that brand awareness is also an individual's ability to distinguish a brand from other brands. They identified four levels of brand awareness: first, top of mind, which occurs when someone can name a brand without assistance; second, brand recall, which relates to the request to name a particular brand in a product category; third, brand recognition, which is the minimum level of brand awareness that is important when consumers make purchasing decisions; and fourth, unaware of brand, which is the lowest level, where consumers have no knowledge of a particular brand. In the context of branding management, there are brand elements that reflect brand identity and help differentiate it from competitors, including name, logo, and slogan, all of which can increase brand awareness (Keller et al., 2015:118).

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Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA)

Social media is one of the most obvious manifestations of the advancement of digital technology, which allows its users to communicate with others without distance limitations (Putra et al., 2019: p. 1). With the existence of this platform, the interactions that occur are not only limited to written forms, but also include visuals and videos. This makes social media increasingly attractive to many people, both as a means of daily communication and as an effective promotional tool (Putra et al., 2019: p. 2). According to Pujiono (2021: 6), social media currently plays a role as a communication tool that is influential in social processes, influencing individual attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions. Therefore, social media is not only a space for social interaction, but also a space rich in information and influence.

Anwar (2017: 137) states that social media is an online platform that allows interaction between users through the exchange of information, opinions, and diverse interests. In this digital era, some of the most popular social media platforms among the public include TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Each platform is equipped with business features specifically designed to make it easier for business people to promote their products. These features make it easier for marketers to reach a wider audience, as well as to increase the visibility and appeal of their products in a competitive market.

Furthermore, social media provides an opportunity to interact globally without geographical limitations. This allows users from all over the world to share information and experiences. Therefore, more and more business people are using social media as a promotional channel, aiming to convey information about their products to other users around the world. Marketing through social media is considered effective in reaching a wider market, due to the variety of platforms available such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. According to Kusuma & Sugandi (2018), the high number of social media users promoting various products and services shows that this marketing strategy has become the main choice for many business people. By utilizing the various features provided by each platform, marketers can easily manage their accounts to achieve the desired results.

Research Framework

The research framework is the relationship between various concepts to be researched and measured in a study, with its main function being to provide a comprehensive overview of the research (Siregar et al., 2022: p. 34). In the context of this

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research, the research framework will be described to describe the problems faced by Buper Segorogunung Ecotourism, KPH Surakarta, in accordance with the explanation that has been presented in the background.



Figure 1. Research Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach to describe and understand a particular social phenomenon, namely the branding strategy of Buper Segorogunung in increasing awareness of ecotourism locations. Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews with informants, and documentation, which were then analyzed inductively. This method allows researchers to explore information from direct experiences and perspectives of informants, and utilize various data sources such as field notes, interview recordings, and related documents to obtain a comprehensive picture of the research object.

The unit of analysis of this study is Buper Segorogunung, which is the main focus in collecting data on branding strategies and awareness of ecotourism locations. Data collected through observation include analysis of cooperation agreements and interviews with managers and tourists. This study aims to identify how managers increase awareness of locations through marketing strategies and explore the role of social media in promoting ecotourism. Data analysis was carried out by reducing and presenting information systematically, and drawing conclusions based on existing findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will thoroughly describe the use of social media in raising awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location. The discussion will include the strategies implemented as well as the results of in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data obtained. Data analysis was conducted to answer the research questions that had been formulated previously.

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Result

During a 4-month internship at Perum Perhutani KPH Surakarta, the researcher was placed in the business development division. The main task in this division is to analyze the development of business units owned by KPH Surakarta. As an intern, the author was given the responsibility by the Head of the Business Development Subsection (KSS) to analyze cooperation proposals from prospective partners who will manage land or assets owned by KPH. In addition, the author was also given the task of analyzing the development of tourism managed by KPH partners, including Bumi Perkemahan Segorogunung. In the analysis process, it was found that ecotourism awareness in the location was still low due to the lack of information and promotion. Social media marketing activities on Instagram and TikTok were also still limited, with inconsistent content due to limited human resources.

During the internship, the author faced several obstacles. The first challenge was adjusting the assignment given to the focus of the research. In addition, the considerable distance between the KPH Surakarta office and the research location, Buper Segorogunung, was an obstacle in itself. Incomplete documents also slowed down the analysis process. However, the author gained many benefits, such as experience working in a state-owned company, knowledge of the KPH managerial system, and improved communication skills, especially through involvement in cooperation negotiations with partners.

From the results of field observations, researchers managed to collect visitor data at Buper Segorogunung and divide it into several segments. These visitors can be grouped into three main categories, namely tourists who come in groups, family tourists, and individual tourists.

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Figure 2. Buper Segorogunung visitor segmentation graph

Data shows that the majority of visitors to Buper Segorogunung are large group tourists, such as agencies or communities holding events there. In contrast, individual tourists have the smallest percentage. The details are 55% large group tourists, 25% small groups such as youth camping, 15% family tourists, and 5% individual tourists. Understanding this composition is important for designing appropriate facilities and activities, as well as developing effective marketing strategies for each visitor segment.

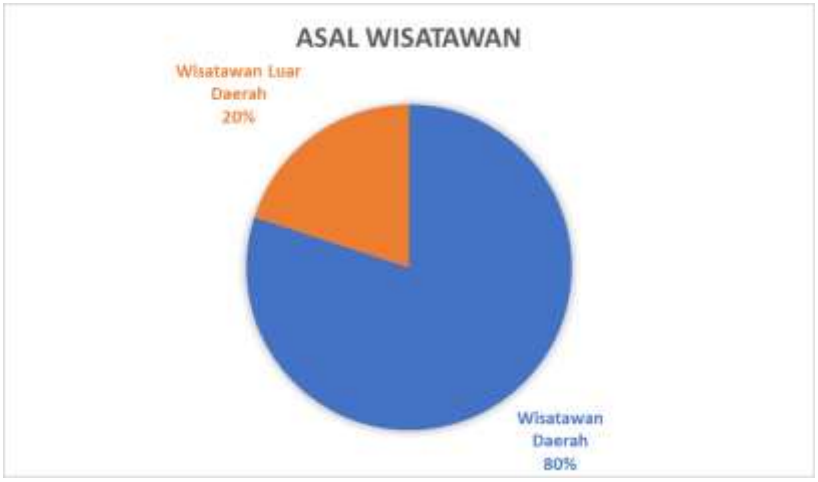


Figure 3. Graphic of the origin of tourists from Buper Segorogunung

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Based on the data, it can be seen that tourists from Surakarta and its surroundings are greater in number compared to tourists from outside the area or can be said to be not from the Surakarta area. This shows that awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location is not yet strong.

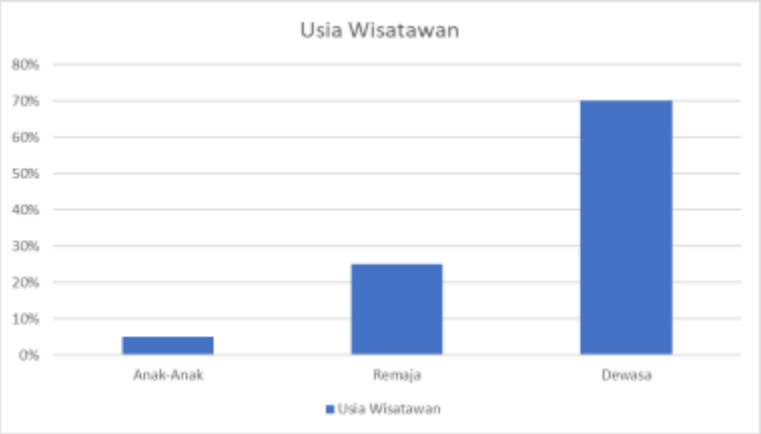


Figure 4. Age Chart of Tourists at Buper Segorogunung

From the graph, it can be seen that visitors to Buper Segorogunung are dominated by adults. As much as 70% of tourists visiting Buper Segorogunung are adults. Tourists who are classified as adults usually come for various purposes, such as refreshing to adventure. The second largest percentage after adults are visitors from among teenagers, which is 25%. They are interested in challenging outdoor activities and often come in groups to participate in activities such as camping or jeep tours. While children only cover 5% of the total visitors. This age group usually comes with family and participates in more relaxed children's activities. By grouping by age, it can help managers in designing programs and facilities that are appropriate for each age group.

The results of interviews conducted with various sources will be described in several sections to provide a more comprehensive picture of the awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location and the marketing strategies carried out by the manager. There are four main focuses that will be explained, namely interviews with managers regarding ecotourism awareness, interviews with managers regarding the use of social media, and interviews with two visitors regarding their views and experiences at the location.

The manager said that the majority of visitors to Buper Segorogunung come from large groups, such as organizations, schools, or communities, especially on weekdays.

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On weekends, visitors who come are dominated by communities holding special events, as well as family tourists who want to enjoy the atmosphere while culinary or renting a camper van. The manager also admitted that the use of social media, especially Instagram and TikTok, is the main strategy for promotion, although consistency and resources for managing social media are still limited.

Interviews with two visitors provide different perspectives. One visitor stated that they had never heard of Segorogunung before seeing the post on Instagram, while another visitor considered that the branding and promotion of this tourism was still weak, especially on social media. However, both agreed that recommendations from others and reviews on social media played an important role in their decision to visit Segorogunung.

DISCUSSION

In an effort to raise awareness of Buper Segorogunung ecotourism, managers face several obstacles that affect the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. One of the main challenges is the lack of skilled human resources in digital marketing management. Although platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have been used as promotional media, observations show that the potential of both platforms has not been optimized to its full potential. This has an impact on the limited reach of information about Buper Segorogunung, especially among potential tourists.

Based on the results of interviews with several visitors, the majority of them had never heard of Buper Segorogunung before their visit. A small number of visitors learned about this ecotourism through social media, but the information available is still limited. The lack of innovation in promotional strategies results in a gap in the dissemination of information. This is a challenge for managers in attracting more tourists, especially from outside the area who are still not familiar with this ecotourism location.

In terms of demographics, visitors to Buper Segorogunung are mostly large groups consisting of communities, organizations, or certain agencies that reach 55% of the total visitors. In addition, 80% of tourists come from the Tawangmangu area and its surroundings, while the other 20% come from outside the area. This condition shows that the ecotourism is quite popular among locals, but still has great potential to be expanded to the out-of-town tourist market. Strengthening promotional strategies through social media, as well as collaboration with influencers and travel agents, are important steps to increase the appeal for non-local tourists.

In addition, the management of Buper Segorogunung plans to develop facilities by adding rides such as glamping and a children's play area. They also plan to expand their

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network of cooperation with other tours and travel agents to further maximize the appeal of this location. However, for now, the main focus of the management remains on optimizing existing promotional strategies, especially on social media. This effort is expected to strengthen interaction with tourists and increase public awareness of Buper Segorogunung ecotourism in the future.

CONCLUSION

The Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location awareness strategy through social media, although it has been implemented, has not been fully effective. The main obstacles faced are the lack of human resources focused on marketing and the limited innovative content strategy. Currently, promotions are mostly carried out through Instagram and TikTok with a strategy that is still simple. To increase location awareness, the management plans to add new rides such as glamping and a children's playground, as well as expand the network of cooperation with other tourist attractions, travel agents, and educational institutions. However, there has been no significant breakthrough in the marketing strategy, so it is necessary to increase innovation and management of social media and better interaction with tourists to build stronger awareness of this ecotourism..

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the existing problems, the author recommends several strategies to increase awareness of the Buper Segorogunung ecotourism location through social media. First, increase the consistency and frequency of posts so that information about this ecotourism appears more often on followers' timelines, thereby increasing the chances of engagement. Second, strengthen interactions with followers, such as replying to comments, creating interactive content, and holding Q&A sessions, in order to build closer relationships and increase visitor loyalty. Third, collaborate with influencers who have a relevant follower base, and maximize the use of user-generated content, such as reviews or photos from visitors, to increase the authenticity and appeal of promotions. Fourth, utilize paid advertising, such as Facebook Ads or Instagram Ads, to target a more specific audience based on demographics and interests, so that the reach of promotions is more effective. Finally, conduct regular evaluations and adjustments to the strategies used, by monitoring social media metrics such as reach, engagement, and conversions, so that marketing strategies can continue to be improved according to audience needs and responses.

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