

Tourism Marketing Communication Strategy to Increase Tourist Interest in Visiting Pananjung Nature Tourism Park, Pangandaran

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Abstract

Marketing communication strategies are a factor that greatly influences the number of visitors to tourist attractions because they are designed to influence the public to become aware, interested, ultimately visit, and even return for tourists who have already visited. This study aims to identify and formulate tourism marketing strategies at Pananjung Nature Park, Pangandaran. The research method used is descriptive with a qualitative research type and secondary data, particularly from previous literature reviews. The data obtained are explained qualitatively in the form of a detailed and systematic analysis. The research results show that the Pangandaran Regency Youth, Sports, and Tourism Office has implemented integrated tourism marketing communication to promote Pananjung Nature Tourism Park. However, several aspects such as promotion, community-based tourism development, and media are still not optimal. Further development, evaluation, and monitoring are needed in these areas. One aspect that needs to be developed in the long term is the creation of a regional tourism destination brand to enhance the appeal of tourist visits.

Keyword: *Marketing Communication Strategy; Tourism; Visitor Interest.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia possesses immense wealth in its natural diversity and uniqueness, where flora, fauna, and various habitats thrive, making it highly potential for ecotourism development. According to Damanik J & Weber HF (2006) in (Ayu, 2010; Defhany & Helmi, 2018), ecotourism is a tourism concept that reflects environmental awareness and sustainability. In general, ecotourism development should enhance the quality of human relationships, improve the quality of life of local communities, and preserve environmental quality. Ecotourism activities encourage communities to support and develop conservation efforts. Therefore, the development of ecotourism can have a positive impact on the preservation of the environment and local cultural heritage, which is ultimately expected to foster a sense of identity and pride among local residents as a result of the growth of ecotourism (Ajake, 2016; Dahana et al., 2023; Ghaisani & Afifi, 2022; Niziaieva et al., 2022).



Figure 1. Pangandaran Nature Tourism Park Map

The success of ecotourism in a region largely depends on the extent and intensity of marketing communication efforts carried out by local governments and other related stakeholders. One tourist destination that emphasizes environmental education and boasts high biodiversity is the Pananjung Nature Park, located in Pangandaran, West Java.

According to the Pangandaran Tourism Office (as cited in Istiana F, 2018), Pangandaran has great potential in the tourism sector. Therefore, the mission of Pangandaran Regency is:

"By 2025, Pangandaran Regency will become a world-class tourism destination and a safe, comfortable place to live based on religious values."

Generally, the five favorite tourist attractions in Pangandaran, for both domestic and international visitors, include: the beach, Cukang Taneuh (Green Canyon), Pananjung Nature and Wildlife Reserve, and the local villages.

Administratively, Pananjung Nature and Wildlife Reserve is located in Pangandaran Village, Pangandaran District, Pangandaran Regency, West Java Province. The park is rich in biodiversity, with a variety of flora and fauna, as well as natural beauty. In addition to its plant and animal life, the park also offers other attractions such as historical cave structures, white sandy beaches, and beautiful marine parks located within the marine conservation area.

Pananjung Nature Park has implemented various marketing communication activities, including brochures, social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, an official website, promotional banners, word-of-mouth marketing, and other forms of communication. Visitor numbers fluctuate monthly. In January 2018, there were 3,479 visitors; in February 2018, there were 1,761 visitors; and in March 2018, there were 2,042 visitors (Istiana F, 2018).

Therefore, to increase the number of visitors and maintain its relevance, Pananjung Nature Park requires effective marketing communication strategies. To promote environmental education tourism that highlights local culture in utilizing and preserving biodiversity and natural resources—ideally in alignment with the area’s natural ecosystem—the use of effective marketing communication strategies, particularly the application of an integrated marketing communication mix, becomes essential. The

objective is to effectively convey the presence, uniqueness, and competitive advantages of the ecotourism site to the public (Kennedy et al., 2022; Labanauskaitė et al., 2020; Lihu, 2023).

The marketing communication strategies used in ecotourism are highly relevant to be examined in this study. Moreover, fluctuations in visitor numbers to Pananjung Nature Park are believed to be influenced by the strength of the marketing messages delivered. Hence, it is important to investigate how the marketing communication mix strategy can influence tourist interest. Based on the above background, the research problem in this study can be formulated as follows: “How can tourism marketing communication strategies increase tourist interest in visiting Pananjung Nature Park, Pangandaran?”

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Tourism Marketing Communication

The marketing product in this context is the nature reserve tourist attraction, namely the Pananjung Nature Park in Pangandaran. Referring to key concepts of marketing communication as explained by several experts, this falls under tourism marketing communication—a specialized form of communication targeted at tourism-related activities. According to Shannon and Weaver, as cited in Saraswati H.D (2022), communication is a form of interaction between two or more individuals who influence each other, whether intentionally or unintentionally. This process is not limited to verbal communication but also includes non-verbal communication, with mutual influence occurring between the parties involved. In the tourism sector, communication plays a vital role in connecting various components such as marketing, accessibility, destinations, human resources, and tourism institutions (Susanto et al., 2023).

Communication activities in tourism involve both current and potential tourists. The interaction between tourism business actors and tourists is referred to as tourism communication. According to (Rambe & Lestari, 2017), tourism communication is the exchange of messages related to ideas, concepts, information, feedback, and criticism—delivered either personally or impersonally through symbols—with the purpose of advancing tourism development. Communication serves several strategic functions, including information dissemination, socialization, motivation, cultural transmission, entertainment, integration, and innovation. Each of these functions contributes to how tourism business actors engage with tourists and prospective visitors.

(Kurniawati, 2023) further emphasizes that marketing communication plays a critical role for marketers. Without communication, neither consumers nor the general public would be aware of the existence of a product in the market. Thus, the design of marketing communication must be carefully crafted. To establish effective and efficient communication in tourism, tourism practitioners must observe several fundamental principles. Widokarti J & Donni P (2019) propose the REACH principles—Respect, Empathy, Audible, Clarity, and Humble—as essential communication guidelines. These principles are important because communication activities in tourism are essentially an effort by tourism business actors—as communicators—to capture attention, elicit

responses, generate interest, build empathy, and foster care from tourists toward various components of tourism, particularly those related to marketing.

2. Marketing Communications Mix

Marketing Communication Strategy The policies outlined in a program do not always run as intended. Many programs fail because they are not well-targeted, or due to a lack of effective communication. Therefore, good communication planning and strategy are needed to achieve the desired goals. In terms of communication, strategy is closely related to the communication resources available to achieve the desired goals. Meanwhile, the marketing communication strategy approach is through a marketing communication mix, known as marketing communication. The marketing communication mix is a set of practical and controlled marketing tools combined by a company to produce the desired response from the target market (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Andika et al., 2021). (Gorlevskaya, 2016; Mairita et al., 2023) use the term marketing communication mix for marketing activities related to promotion. The elements of the marketing communication mix include selling, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, publicity and public relations, sponsorship, packaging, exhibitions, point of sale and merchandise, word of mouth, e-marketing, and corporate identity.

3. Effectiveness of Marketing Communication with Consumer Behavior

(Stăncioiu et al., 2013) stated that marketing communications are effective when the signs that have meaning for consumers are well understood by consumers. Indicators of communication effectiveness can be determined through cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitude), and conative (behavior) aspects. (1) The cognitive aspect refers to a person's beliefs (knowledge and thoughts) regarding a product. (2) The affective aspect refers to a person's attitude that influences them to act on the product. (3) The conative aspect refers to the tendency to take action on the product.

Consumer behavior greatly determines the decision-making process for buying, consuming, or taking something. Consumers will use various criteria in purchasing a particular product or service, consumers will buy products that suit their needs, tastes, and purchasing ability. Consumers have characteristics that can influence behavior in the purchasing decision-making process (Mayangsari & Firdaus, 2023; Simabur et al., 2023; Švajdová, 2019). A consumer's behavior is a reflection of their attitude. The cognitive component of attitude describes knowledge and perceptions of an object, the affective component describes a person's feelings and emotions toward a particular product or brand, and the conative component describes a person's tendency to take certain actions related to a particular object (Bob et al., 2020; Lubis, 2022; Sari & Anshori, 2022). The three components, cognitive, affective and conative, can be dimensions of measurement in tourist visit behavior.

C. METHOD

This research uses a library research method, which is a data collection method that involves understanding and studying theories from various literature related to the

research. According to Zed in Fadli M (2021), there are four stages of library research: preparing the necessary equipment, preparing a working bibliography, organizing time, and reading and recording research materials. Data collection involves searching for and constructing sources from various sources, such as books, journals, and existing research.

The approach used in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach. This research approach aims to systematically, factually, and accurately describe the facts and characteristics of a specific population, or attempt to depict a phenomenon in detail (Yusuf, 2021). Literature reviews obtained from various references were analyzed critically and in-depth to support propositions and ideas.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The general concept of marketing has evolved from the 4Ps (product, price, place, promotion) to the 7Ps (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence). This concept is known as the marketing mix (Sumiati, 2018). This shows that marketing activities increasingly involve many aspects, both physical and non-physical. The 7Ps, which are the core concept of tourism destination marketing in Pangandaran Regency, are:

1. Product

The product is the most important thing to be sold, so in addition to quality, packaging and branding must be packaged and designed as attractively as possible to attract buyers. The product referred to in this context is a tourism product, namely the Pananjung Nature Tourism Park (TWA) tourist attraction and all components in the Pananjung TWA area, including: the beauty of the marine nature reserve, supporting facilities and infrastructure, culinary, merchandise, accommodation, and so on. Products in tourism will be more attractive if accompanied by information about something unique that differentiates them from other products such as food, souvenirs, and others.

2. Price

Price is a factor that can influence the sales of a product. Price suitability is often a consideration for consumers in choosing a product. The entrance ticket price (HTM) for Pananjung National Park is IDR 17,000 (seventeen thousand rupiah). This HTM is considered very affordable, so it is hoped that local residents will visit Pananjung National Park frequently. Likewise, the prices of various tourist attractions in the Pananjung National Park area, including White Sand Beach, Teak and Mahogany Plantation Forests, Coastal Forests, Lowland Forests, and Natural Caves and Japanese Caves, can be categorized as low-priced (Anggraeni, 2023).

3. Place

Ease of access to a location is crucial because it impacts transportation and accommodation costs for tourists. Pananjung National Park (TWA) is strategically located, allowing easy access by small vehicles such as private cars, public transportation, and even tour buses. Furthermore, the paved roads are generally in good condition, and the beach is relatively short, only about 10 minutes from the center of Pangandaran, making it convenient for tourists from outside Pangandaran

Regency. However, Sumiyati (2018) observed that there is a lack of billboards indicating the location of the tourist attraction. To attract the attention of road users, ideally, billboards should be installed several kilometers before the entrance to the location. This not only attracts attention but also facilitates access for tourists.

4. Promotion

Promotional activities are the most common program-related activities related to tourism, as they play a crucial role in providing detailed and clear information about Pananjung National Park (TWA). Promotion of a tourist attraction must be widely disseminated to reach all levels of society. In this technological era, promotions utilize both print and online media. To be targeted and effective, they should be tailored to the target audience, ensuring both communication effectiveness and promotional media costs. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation of the promotional media used are ideal. Promotional activities carried out by the Pangandaran Regency Government involve stakeholders such as business owners, hotels, travel agencies, and restaurants, as well as direct sales to schools, other tourist attractions in Pangandaran, and even special department staff, packaged in various events/exhibitions. Promotional activities are carried out through media channels, both print and electronic. Currently, online-based promotions are being intensified through booming social media platforms, such as WhatsApp Groups, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the like. The mass media channels used should be programmable and not limited to local media, so they can reach a wider audience of tourists (Chamidah et al., 2020; Purwaningrum et al., 2024; Sukma, 2024).

5. People

Human resources are the most important factor in all marketing elements, as they are the driving force, not only designing and formulating programs but also implementing and operating the system. Core competencies and high performance are essential to optimize a program. To improve human resource capabilities, training is conducted in areas of responsibility and through comparative studies. These trainings relate to the management of target markets.

6. Process

Service and product quality are highly dependent on the service delivery process to consumers or customers. All types of services must be carried out in accordance with established and standardized systems and procedures. These provisions must be adhered to by all stakeholders who possess high competence and loyalty to the institution. Existing regulations are adhered to in carrying out tasks. This process activity still lacks synergy in planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the use of promotional media, which has not been clearly programmed, and engagement with business actors (Fadli M, 2021).

7. Physical Evidence of the Company

Physical evidence of the company is a physical building that has added value and can represent the character of the product/institution. All facilities and infrastructure, including those around the Pananjung National Park (TWA) area, can be of significant value to visitors.

Spatial planning, building design, facilities, and artworks that reflect local uniqueness are elements that leave a distinct impression on visitors. Currently, improvements are being made to the physical resources of the tourist attraction as products to be marketed. Marketing activities ultimately aim to achieve specific goals.

Marketing is a force to sell products; however, to reach consumers, a product must be communicated. Clear information about product details, the entire production process until it reaches the consumer, requires a communication touch. Through communication, consumer information and understanding about the product can be conveyed through various information channels that suit their needs. Thus, communication plays a role as a function of providing information and understanding to consumers about the products being sold.

According to Bungin (2015), the communication mix is capable of transforming consumers or potential consumers into "knowledge agents" who will inform others. Therefore, marketing through communication is a synergy that cannot be separated (marketing communication mix). The elements of the communication mix in marketing communication, according to Smith, include: selling, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, publicity and public relations, sponsorship, packaging, exhibitions, point of sale and merchandising, word of mouth, and e-marketing.

In a study conducted by Istiana F (2018), the marketing communication mix identity carried out by the Department of Youth, Sports, and Culture in formulating tourism marketing communication strategies, particularly at TWA Pananjung, is as follows:

Personal selling: According to (Daia, 2024; Štefko et al., 2015), personal selling is the process of delivering information to consumers to persuade them to buy products through personal interaction. With personal selling, marketers or salespeople have the flexibility to tailor messages to meet consumer needs for information. In this context, sales are implemented through activities such as sales presentations, sales meetings, fairs and trade shows, incentive programs, and samples. At this stage, staff appointed specifically by the Pangandaran government act as "sales agents" whose task is to directly present tourist attractions in the Pangandaran area, including TWA Pananjung. This activity is packaged as a "travel dialog".

The Travel Dialog Includes Visits to Other Districts and Schools

Advertising: According to (Purworini et al., 2023; Rohim, 2025), advertising is a mass communication process involving a specific sponsor, i.e., the advertiser (for example, through TV broadcast programs). Advertising itself is defined by (Amin & Priansah, 2019) as "any paid form of nonpersonal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by an identified sponsor." Information about Pangandaran's tourist destinations is conveyed through various media, both print and electronic. Through print media, information is distributed via catalogs, brochures, and tourism maps placed in hotels, on billboards, or on posters along main roads. Electronic media advertising is also conducted through local TV and radio, and occasionally through national television. More recently, there has been an emphasis on online advertising via tourism websites, social media, and YouTube.

Promotion: Promotion is one of the spearheads in marketing a product, whether goods or services. William P. Dommermuth in Machdoedz and Mahmud (2010) argues that sales promotion is an activity and/or material that, in its application, uses techniques under the control of the seller/producer that can communicate persuasive and attractive information about the product offered by the seller/producer, either directly or through parties that can influence purchasing decisions. Promotional activities to attract tourists have been widely carried out through various events, such as kite festivals, boat races, surfing competitions, fishing contests, art and music performances, and more. In addition, discounts and special offers have also been implemented, such as 50% discounts for school students within Pangandaran Regency, or percentage-based discounts for tourist groups of a certain size. Although these events are not yet held regularly (Andriany & Andini, 2019; Damayanti & Rasyid, 2022), the TWA Pananjung management and Pangandaran Regency government continue efforts to promote TWA Pananjung through trending media, such as creating film teasers and posting them on social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) and YouTube.

Such promotional activities are still not regularly scheduled or structured. A scheduled and well-informed events calendar could influence tourist visits, especially among those with strong interest in the hosted events. The effectiveness of promotion through social media also requires monitoring—particularly in terms of how many tourists follow the used social media accounts—so that the content can be optimized accordingly.

Publicity and public relations: According to the British Institute of Public Relations (IPR), public relations is a comprehensive effort that is planned and continuous to build and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organization and its publics (Amin & Priansah, 2019). Building good relationships with stakeholders is crucial because they are the ones who directly interact with visitors and serve as the front line of tourism. The Pangandaran government has collaborated with and provided guidance to various stakeholders, including local traders in TWA Pananjung—through training and coaching in hospitality (*sapta pesona*), hotel parties—by providing space for brochures and maps, training and developing hotel staff competencies, travel dialogs, community-based tourism groups (*pokdarwis*)—through training for MSME communities, travel agencies, tour guides, and local TV and radio.

Exhibitions: Exhibitions are important in providing tourists with information, as they offer a clear overview of the tourist attractions along with related elements such as culinary, transportation, accommodation, etc.

E-marketing: According to (Daia, 2024), e-marketing refers to conducting business online, most clearly manifested as selling products to consumers via the internet. Simply put, it involves creating, managing, and expanding commercial relationships online. In the era of information and communication technology—and the rise of social media in tourism marketing—TWA Pananjung is also adapting by promoting itself through e-marketing using websites and platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.

According to research findings by Istiana F (2018), the most prominent form of marketing communication used is e-marketing via social media. However, weaknesses remain in program planning using the marketing communication mix, particularly due to

the lack of involvement from business stakeholders. Activities are not yet conducted periodically, especially in advertising and promotion, and there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of past activities. As a result, the effectiveness of these efforts in increasing tourist visits is unclear. Moreover, there is still limited budget support from the local government, which hinders promotional program development. No strong branding yet exists for the tourism site that could attract more tourists.

Target segmentation in media promotion—whether aimed at the general public, students, or specific communities—is still lacking, leading to ineffective marketing communication strategies. The targeted communicants in this case—i.e., tourists—are critical, as both the messages and the media used must be effective in reaching them.

Monitoring and evaluation of tourism marketing communication strategies also receive little attention, such as in brochure distribution at hotels and restaurants, or measuring tourist satisfaction with the attractions. Market research into the sources of tourist information is also missing—though this is essential for assessing the effectiveness of tourism marketing strategies. Based on discussions with informants from the Youth and Sports Department of Pangandaran Regency, there are plans to improve coordination among all stakeholders, develop a strong brand, and enhance the core product itself—namely the tourism object—along with all related infrastructure and facilities to increase its market value.

E. CONCLUSION

The implementation of marketing communications to increase the number of tourist visits, marketing communications strategies have been used, both from the marketing mix and communications mix perspectives, but have not been carried out optimally, there are still several activities that have not been programmed well. Target targets in the use of promotional media are still less considered so that the effectiveness of the media used cannot be measured. Monitoring and evaluation of the marketing communications strategies carried out so that the effectiveness of each activity carried out and its influence on the number of tourist visits is unknown. Recommendations to the Pangandaran Regency government to further increase tourist visits to TWA Pananjung and other tourist attractions in the Pangandaran Regency area include the need to improve and strengthen aspects of tourism marketing communications, especially in terms of promotion and resources that are in accordance with tourism competencies. The need to improve and strengthen the expansion of partnership networks with various related parties so that they are right on target according to the desired audience segment. The need to build branding that is a characteristic of an area and becomes a tourist attraction destination. Revive tourism awareness groups (pokdarwis) because the group members include traders in tourist attractions so that they can provide better service and provide clear and attractive information.

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