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Marketing Communication Strategy in Developing Ecotourism Bukit Kendeng (Camping Ground) Village Sumber Jaya Sub-district Way Ratai Pesawaran District Lampung Province

Immawati Asniar^{*1}, Warsiyah², Andhika Eka Pratama³, Khaisya Aura Ismanda⁴, Ahmad Pitra⁵

1,2,3,4. Muhammadiyah University of Lampung, Indonesia

5. Management and Science University, Malaysia

* Correspondence: immawatiasniar15@gmail.com

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to analyse the strategy of marketing communication in the development of the ecotourism Bukit Kendeng (Camping Ground) in Sumber Jaya Village, Way Ratai District, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung province. With beautiful panoramas, cool air and the attractions of Ciupang waterfall, Kendeng Hill has potential to become a nature based tourist destination. The descriptive qualitative research approach is used in this research with data collection through observation, interviews and document analysis. It found that on effective marketing communication strategies, information technology based promotions, through social media, website, billboards, promote the area visibility and attractiveness. Infrastructure and accessibility improvement, such as road improvement, public facility and thematic park arrangement offer a comfortable tourist experience for visitors. Presence of local community involvement in the management of the area under training and empowerment such as homestays, tour guides and production of local handicraft helps to improve economic welfare of the community. It provides a concept of conservation based ecotourism so that we can preserve environment and local culture. By integrating management of the area, collaboration with government, NGOs, and communities simultaneously augments multi stakeholder collaboration. Therefore, this research concludes that balance with the integration of approach of integrated marketing communication supported by community involvement and sustainable management is able to improve competitiveness Kendeng Hill as an ecotourism destination that is leader.

Keywords: Communication, Marketing, Ecotourism

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1. Introduction

One of the strategic sectors for national economic development is tourism. Tourism has served as not only a source of foreign exchange, but also serves to multiply other economic sectors [1]. Historically, the trend for tourism has been changing towards ecotourism because it is about environmental conservation and local community empowerment. Ecotourism not only as a form of environmental tourist traveling with the beauty of nature, but has the components of learning, understanding, and support for environmental conservation efforts and improvement in the welfare of the local community [2]. This is in accord with sustainable tourism development which takes into account the possible impact on the balance of the economic, social and environmental factors.

Lampung Province has large natural potential to be developed as ecotourism area, this is one of the tourist destinations in Indonesia. Among these potentials is Kendeng Hill in the village of Sumber Jaya, in Way Ratai District, in Pesawaran Regency, Lampung. This area is unique in the form of a camping ground area with stunning natural scenery, including a stretch of green hills and panoramic views of Lampung Bay. With an altitude of ± 900 meters above sea level, this area offers a stunning natural panorama, including spectacular sunset views and cool temperatures ranging from $18-22^{\circ}\text{C}$. The 1 Ha camping ground area in the Register 21 protected forest area is a special attraction for nature lovers and camping enthusiasts [3]. The existence of Ciupang Waterfall with a height of ± 80 meters around the location adds to the tourism value of this area. According to Sunaryo [4], the integration of various tourist attractions in one area can increase the attractiveness and length of stay of tourists, which in turn has a positive impact on the local economy [5]. According to Fakhrurozi [6], that every village has the potential of a village that is still natural and needs to be maintained so that it can have added value. Natural potential, human resource potential and cultural potential require exploration so that excellence or uniqueness of the village can be found. For example, uniqueness in environmental arrangements, cleanliness of a village, special food, art or others. However, ecotourism development requires an appropriate marketing communication strategy to ensure its sustainability.

The development of Kendeng Hill ecotourism is in line with the concept of sustainable tourism development that prioritizes economic, social, and environmental aspects. As stated by Mardani [7], ecotourism can be an effective instrument in empowering local communities while preserving the environment. This is reinforced by research by Yusnikusumah [8] which shows that the development of ecotourism destinations can increase the income of local communities by up to 45% through various economic activities that are created. As stated by Purwani [9], active community participation in the management of tourist destinations not only ensures the sustainability of the program, but also ensures that economic benefits can be felt directly by the local community Saputeri [10]. Support to capacity building and principle of the ecotourism for the empowerment of local communities in the development of Kendeng Hill.

Nevertheless, the ecotourism potential of Kendeng Hill develops with difficulty due to challenges in the aspect of marketing communication. Hutagalung [11] explains that the right marketing communication strategy is necessary in developing new tourist destinations. Since the present era is the digital era, old marketing communication strategies should be amalgamated with the digital marketing techniques. As stated by Darnita [12]; 75% of millennial tourists try information search of tourist destination by digital platform before visiting. This clearly indicates value proneness of adapting the marketing communication strategy to technological development. In the case of Kendeng Hill Ecotourism, an effective marketing communication strategy is not only to increase the amount of tour visitors but for economic, social and environmental sustainability. Dewangga et al. [13] explained that marketing communications of ecotourism destinations should output promotional aspects as well as displaying environmental conservation education and empowering communities.

This background guides this study to analyze the role of marketing communication strategies in building Kendeng Hill ecotourism, and identify the supporting and constraining factors in the development process. Expected outcome of this study are contributions for developing similar ecotourism destinations in Indonesia both theoretically and practically.

Literature Review

A. Marketing Communications

Marketing communication is an important aspect of the overall marketing mission and determines the success of marketing. According to Kotler and Keller [14], marketing communication is a means by which companies try to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the products and brands being sold. Prisgunanto [15] adds that integrated marketing communication includes coordinating efforts from various promotional elements and other marketing activities warsiyah [16]. In the digital era, marketing communication strategies have evolved with the presence of digital platforms. Hermawan [17] states that digital marketing has become a vital component in modern marketing communication strategies, allowing real-time interaction and personalization of messages to target audiences. Meanwhile, in the context of tourist destinations, Morgan et al. [18] emphasized the importance of strong destination branding to create a unique identity and attract tourists. According to Fakhrurozi [19], states that in business development, social media is a medium for promoting cheaply and according to current market tastes where internet and social media users are dominated by young people.

In its development, marketing communication has undergone a significant transformation along with advances in digital technology. Research conducted by Ramadini, shows that the integration of digital media in marketing communication strategies can increase the effectiveness of message delivery by 65% compared to conventional methods [20]. The implementation of marketing communications in the tourism industry has special characteristics due to the intangible and experiential nature of the product. According to Suryani & Priansa [21], the effectiveness of marketing communications for tourist destinations is highly dependent on the ability to build an image and create positive expectations in the minds of potential tourists.

B. Ecotourism

Sustainable or ecotourism is a form of tourism that combines conservation of the environment and the empowerment of local communities. Damanik and Weber [22] define ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas for the purpose of conserving the natural environment and enhancing the human welfare of local communities. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) cited by Nugroho [23] identified five main principles of ecotourism: (1) nature conservation, (2) local community empowerment, (3) environmental education, (4) tourist responsibility, and (5) sustainable management. For these principles, community based ecotourism concept of active participation of local communities in the management of tourist destinations is well in line.

The development of ecotourism has both a social, economic and environmental impact. Putri [24] conducted longitudinal research through various ecotourism destinations in Indonesia and found that planned development of ecotourism can result in the local community's income increasing twofold (up to 55%) and encourage biodiversity conservation. As a form of tourism, ecotourism corresponds to a model different from conventional tourism in the management context. Astuti & Rahman [25] argue that ecotourism destinations need to uphold zoning principles and carrying capacity to ensure that tourism activities as well as environmental conservation stay on the right side. Apart from that, the success of ecotourism destinations is very dependent on the role the local people are playing in it, as well as with the sustainable development concepts being applied, which was explained by Gunawan et al. [26].

C. Tourism Area Development Strategy

Tourist areas development should not be approached in a scattered way, but integrated. Sunaryo (2018) stated that zoning is very important in tourist area development

so the function can be maximized and negative impact for the environment can be minimized. Under this zoning system, we have core zones, buffer zones and development zones. According to Hadiwijoyo [27] the key for successful sustainable ecotourism development is conservation based management. Pitana [28] Fakhrurozi [29] concurs with the need for local community empowerment and environmentally friendly infrastructure in the sustainability of the tourist destination.

2. Materials and Methods

Research approach the type of research is descriptive qualitative to explain deeply in marketing communication strategies to develop Kendeng Hill ecotourism. Creswell [30] says a descriptive qualitative approach allows researchers to delve deeper into understanding the meanings given to social or humanitarian problems. The reason for this choice of method is to capture a holistic view of Marketing Communication strategies in relation to community based ecotourism development. The research was performed at the Bukit Kendeng Camping Ground area, district of Way Ratai, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung province. This location was selected on the basis of considerable ecotourism potential, since at an altitude of ± 900 meters above the sea level, there is a 1 hectare camping ground and other supporting tourist attractions. This research was done over a 6 (six) month period beginning July 2024 to December 2024.

Research Informants The selection of informants was carried out by purposive sampling by considering competence and involvement in the development of Kendeng Hill ecotourism. The research informants consisted of:

- a. Management of the Bukit Kendeng Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) (5 people)
- b. Sumber Jaya village officials (3 people)
- c. Representative of KPH Pesawaran (2 people)
- d. Local community leaders (3 people)
- e. Visiting tourists (10 people)

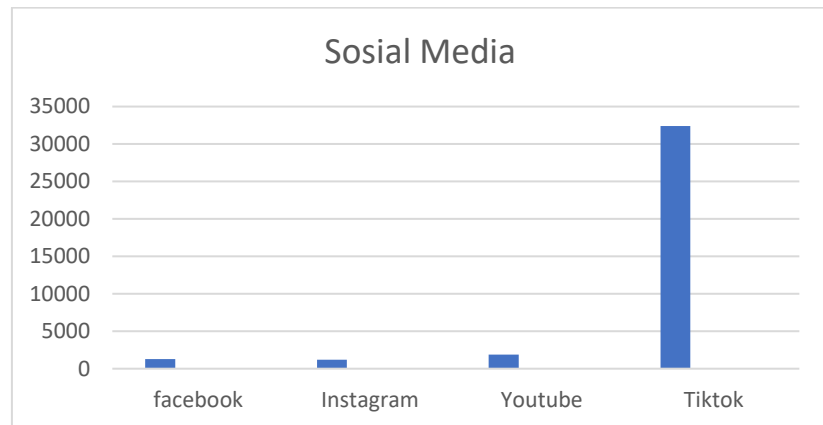
Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through several techniques to ensure the depth and validity of information, namely in-depth interviews with key informants to dig up detailed information about the marketing communication strategy applied, participatory observation of ecotourism development and management activities, and documentation in the form of photos, videos, policy documents, and related archives and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders to discuss strategic issues. Data Analysis Techniques Data analysis uses the interactive model of Miles and Huberman [31] which consists of data reduction, namely the selection and simplification of raw data from field notes, data presentation is the systematic organization of information to allow drawing conclusions and conclusion drawing: verification of research findings through triangulation of sources and methods. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used source and method triangulation techniques, as well as member checking with key informants. The analysis process was iterative and continuous throughout the research processes.

3. Results

This research reveals that marketing communication strategies play an important role in the development of ecotourism Bukit Kendeng (Camping Ground) in Sumber Jaya Village, Way Ratai District, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung Province. Based on the results of the analysis, information technology-based promotion, infrastructure improvement, and local community involvement are the three main pillars in the development of this area. Digital promotion through social media, websites, and billboard installation in strategic locations has increased the visibility of Kendeng Hill as a leading tourist

destination. This strategy enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, thus attracting domestic and foreign tourists. Promotional content that emphasizes natural beauty, unique tourism experiences, and available facilities, such as the camping ground and Ciupang waterfall, has proven effective in building the attractiveness of this area. In addition, cooperation with educational institutions and nature-loving communities in digital campaigns strengthens the area's branding as a conservation-based ecotourism destination.



Source: Social media bukit kendang

Figure 1. Social media viewers with search for bukit kendang.

Kendeng Hill's successful development too depends greatly on better accessibility and infrastructure. Improving the road to the location, the making of mental friendly sanitary and prayer rooms and rest areas, and developing attractive thematic parks give a more comfortable touristic experience to the guests. Managing this area has also played a significant positive part in the local community's active participation in this area's management. It is through community training and empowerment in the area of ecotourism – including tour guides, homestay management, and local handicraft manufacturing – that the community grows economically and that the culture and nature remain preserved. Through this, the idea of community based ecotourism will generate the feeling of responsibility and ownership in managing of tourist areas.

4. Discussion

The position of Kendeng Hill als o a unique and sustainable ecotourism destination strongly supported by the development concept oriented towards environmental preservation. Strategic steps to maintain the authenticity of this area are responsible tourism management, environmental education for the tourists, and restrictions to activities which can damage the ecosystem. Creating synergy to support inclusive tourism development is also contributed to by multi stakeholder collaboration such as government, NGOs and local community. In general, this study indicates that an integrated and locally concerned marketing communication strategy allow producing tourist attraction, maintaining community welfare, and conserving environment. Therefore, a practice that carried out with the involvement of local communities as involving a process of social learning for sustainability is the way forward to building competitive and sustainable tourism and for successful development of Kendeng height as an ecotourism destination leader.

5. Conclusion

In the context of its relevance to researcher interest and its importance in the field of communication marketing, it is important for the results of research on marketing communication strategy in the developing Bukit Kendeng ecotourism in the Sumber Jaya Village, Way Ratai District, Pesawaran Regency, to reflect the study's findings so as to determine the following important conclusions.

- a. The Kendeng Hill ecotourism marketing communication strategy has experienced development, namely in the use of digital media as the main communication channel. TikTok is by far the best way. And it's been discovered that having collaboration strategies with local influencers and content creators can boost tourist visits. It proves that the right digital marketing approach to sell ecotourism destinations is a catalyst of community empowerment to benefit the surrounding community. This program illustrates to us just how an ecotourism program need not sacrifice an organizing effective marketing communication strategy which also includes local community empowerment and environmental preservation.
- b. Several factors also support the successful development of Bukit Kendeng ecotourism, namely uniqueness of the destination with camping ground experiences, sun rise and sun set, support from the stakeholders (Pokdarwis, Village Government, and KPH Pesawaran), and the participating nature lovers and photography communities creating user generated content. The management ecosystem for destination sustainability is created through this multi stakeholder collaboration.
- c. Even though the situation is looking positive, there are still major challenges to the development of Kendeng Hill ecotourism. One of the challenges there is limited human resources in digital marketing management, inconsistent content production and lack of digital infrastructure.
- d. This research resulted in an integrated marketing communication development model that highlights the significance of a cross platform and a blend of traditional and digital methods. This model emphasizes on three main pillars: content marketing strategy, community engagement, and digital infrastructure development. It is expected that the implementation of this model will enhance marketing communications in an economic, social and environmental balancing fashion.

These findings show that not only does marketing communication strategies for ecotourism destinations need to be right, but also that they have to be harmonized with other factors, such as the involvement of the community, the support of stakeholders and sustainable management. The experience of Kendeng Hill may be valuable as a lesson for development of similar ecotourism destinations in Indonesia.

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