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STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING TONGGING TOURISM VILLAGE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA IN SUPPORT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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Abstract

This study examines the promotional strategies of Tongging Tourism Village through social media as an effort to support sustainable tourism development. This study uses a participatory action approach methodology by directly conducting field studies and comprehensively reviewing the promotional strategies of Tongging Tourism Village through social media in the context of sustainable tourism development to explore the marketing position and promotional practices implemented by village managers, particularly through Instagram and digital platforms. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, documentation, and literature review. The participatory action approach was chosen because it is able to produce a comprehensive understanding that can be directly seen and felt by the author about the objects, phenomena, and social contexts studied, where the authors describe their findings systematically through narrative presentations. The findings reveal that the promotional activities align with two main strategies in the Ansoff Matrix, namely market penetration through the reactivation of the @desawisatatongging Instagram account, consistent reels publication, and collaboration with local tourism managers and market development, realized through the creation of an integrated village website, English-subtitled content, and information boards equipped with QR codes. These strategies resulted in a significant increase in digital visibility, indicated by the rise in average reel views from 1,702 to 3,902, with one reel reaching 9,558 views. The integration of the Marketing Mix (4P) further strengthened promotional effectiveness by enhancing information accessibility, price transparency, and destination image. Overall, the study concludes that social media-based promotion effectively supports sustainable tourism by improving information digitization, empowering local stakeholders, and expanding market reach. Recommendations are provided for tourism managers, local governments, and future research to enhance digital marketing and long-term sustainable tourism development.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism today has become a necessity for people from all walks of life. Law No. 10 of 2009 defines tourism as various tourist activities supported by facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, the government, and local governments. This definition indicates that tourism development must be managed seriously through multi-stakeholder collaboration so that its benefits can be felt widely. In addition to encouraging an increase in tourist visits, tourism also plays a role in strengthening the economy, fostering a spirit of nationalism, and increasing public appreciation for the nation's rich arts and culture. This is in line with the opinion of Luturlean et al. in Tourism Business Strategy, which emphasizes that the objectives of national tourism development include improving the quality and quantity of destinations, strengthening marketing communications, developing a tourism industry that can drive the economy, and establishing effective tourism institutions and governance. To achieve these objectives, a strong promotional strategy is essential, one of which is through the use of social media, which is considered interactive, cost-effective, and has a wide reach (Widayati & Augustinah, 2019).

Social media such as Instagram and have proven to be effective tools in promoting the visual beauty of tourist destinations. A report by We Are Social and Hootsuite states that the number of TikTok users worldwide reached 1.05 billion in January 2023, with Indonesia as the second-largest user, at around 99 million. Instagram also has more than 50 million users in Indonesia (Ara et al., 2014). Meanwhile, the internet penetration rate, which is expected to reach 79.5% in 2024 (APJII), further strengthens the potential for digital promotion. This situation indicates that social media plays an important role in introducing tourist destinations to local and foreign tourists through informative and engaging content.

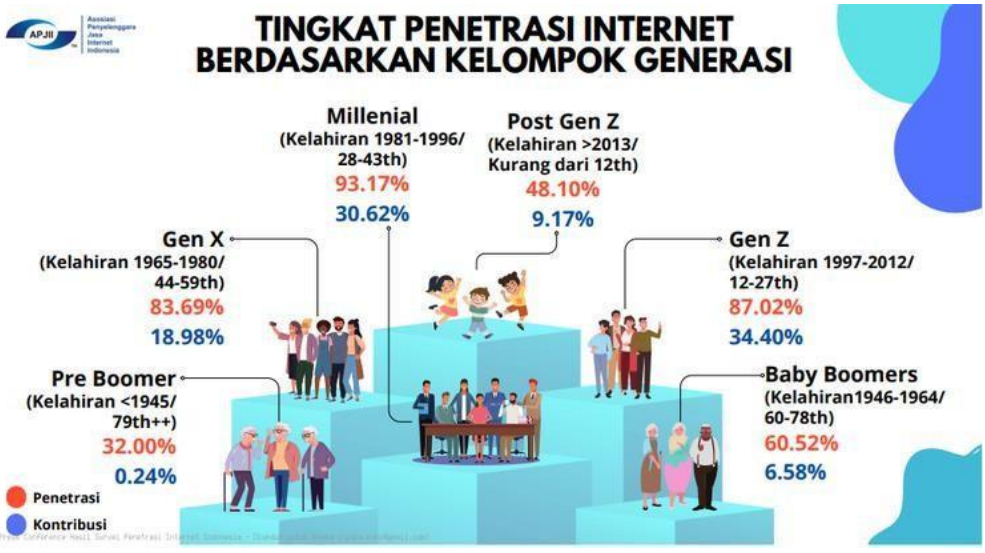

Figure 1.1 Internet user data in Indonesia in 2024
(Source: Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association/APJII Survey 2024)

North Sumatra Province is one of the regions with great tourism potential, mainly due to the existence of Lake Toba, mountains, and the cultural and social richness of its people.

One of its leading destinations is Tongging Tourism Village in Merek District, Karo Regency, with an area of 8.73 km² (Karo Regency BPS, 2024). This village is known for the natural charm of the 120-meter-high Sipiso-piso Waterfall—one of the highest in Indonesia (North Sumatra Provincial Government)—the panorama of Lake Toba, and paragliding attractions. The cultural diversity of the Batak Toba, Karo, and Simalungun tribes also adds to the uniqueness of this village's appeal.

However, the great potential of Tongging Tourism Village has not been fully matched by an optimal promotional strategy. Most of the community still depends on the agricultural sector, whose main commodities are shallots and shrimp mangoes, so tourism development has not become a top priority in the local economy. On the other hand, many young people have migrated, causing the management of promotional content—especially on the Tourism Village's Instagram account—to be inconsistent and tend to decline. In fact, in today's digital era, active publication through social media is an important aspect in increasing the visibility of tourist destinations and attracting tourists.

Based on these conditions, this study was conducted to identify and analyze the marketing position and products of Tongging Tourism Village based on four main strategies in the Ansoff Matrix. In addition, this study also aims to formulate a more optimal social media marketing strategy in accordance with the Ansoff Matrix framework, so as to strengthen market and product development in the promotion of Tongging Tourism Village. Through the integration of analysis and strategy, social media-based promotion development is expected to increase the appeal of Tongging Tourism Village as a leading sustainable destination, while promoting community welfare without compromising cultural values and environmental authenticity.

METHODS

This study uses a participatory action approach methodology by directly conducting field studies and comprehensively reviewing the promotional strategies of Tongging Tourism Village through social media in the context of sustainable tourism development. The participatory action approach was chosen because it is able to produce a comprehensive understanding that can be directly seen and felt by the author about the objects, phenomena, and social contexts studied, where the authors describe their findings systematically through narrative presentations (Hasanah et al., 2024). Research data were obtained through interviews with informants who were selected purposively based on their relevance and competence in providing information, namely village officials and members of the Tongging Tourism Village Pokdarwis. From the results of the data obtained, the authors then created content according to the needs required to activate the Instagram account and in promoting Tongging Tourism Village.

The data collection process was carried out using three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews with informants to obtain information about the practice of promotional strategies through social media in supporting sustainable tourism. Second, documentation techniques were used as a supplement to collect various supporting data in the form of archives, photos, and documents related to tourism village promotion activities. Third, a literature review was

conducted, which included searching for books, scientific articles, journals, and relevant previous research results to strengthen the theoretical basis and context of the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To examine the promotional strategies implemented by the Tongging Tourism Village managers through social media, this study utilizes the Ansoff Matrix as a strategic analysis framework. This framework is used to map the marketing position and formulate the direction of strategy development in line with the dynamics and opportunities for tourism destination development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study employs an action research approach, characterized by the active involvement of researchers in diagnosing existing problems, implementing strategic actions, and evaluating the outcomes of digital promotion interventions in Tongging Tourism Village. The action research framework applied in this study follows a cyclical process consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection, allowing the research to function not only as an analytical activity but also as an instrument for practical improvement in destination management.

During the planning stage, an initial assessment of the Instagram account @desawisatatongging revealed that the account had not been actively managed prior to the intervention. The posting frequency was minimal, and the published content did not consistently represent the village's tourism potential. This condition resulted in limited digital visibility, thereby constraining the effective dissemination of information related to tourist attractions, available facilities, and supporting tourism services to prospective visitors.

The action stage focused on implementing a series of digital promotion interventions aimed at revitalizing the village's online presence. These interventions included strengthening Instagram-based promotion through the systematic production and dissemination of targeted promotional content, developing the official village website, and installing tourism information boards to enhance information accessibility. Promotional content was primarily produced in the form of Instagram Reels, which featured short interviews with tourism attraction managers and accommodation providers, as well as visual representations of Tongging Tourism Village's natural landscapes, cultural assets, tourism activities, accommodation facilities, community-based initiatives, and local MSME products. The selection of the Reels format was based on its high dissemination potential and its effectiveness in attracting user attention on social media platforms.

The observation stage demonstrated measurable improvements in the performance of digital promotion activities following the intervention. After the Instagram account was reactivated and promotional content was uploaded consistently for approximately one month, a significant increase in audience reach was observed. Prior to the intervention, the average number of views per Reel was recorded at 1,702 views. Post-intervention, the average view count increased to 3,902 views, with one promotional video achieving 9,558 views. In addition to increased viewership, growth was also evident in the number of comments and the

intensity of user interactions, indicating enhanced audience engagement with the published content. In the reflection stage, the overall effectiveness of the implemented promotional strategies was evaluated. The findings indicate that optimizing social media utilization, particularly through the Instagram Reels format, constitutes an effective strategy for strengthening digital promotion and improving destination visibility. Furthermore, the promotional activities were analyzed using the Ansoff Matrix and Marketing Mix 4P frameworks to assess the strategic positioning of the interventions and their contribution to inclusive and sustainable tourism development in Tongging Tourism Village. These analytical frameworks support the conclusion that integrated digital promotion strategies can play a significant role in enhancing the competitiveness and long-term sustainability of rural tourism destinations.

Connection with Ansoff Matrix analysis

Market Penetration

This strategy is reflected in the reactivation of instagram by creating reels content, short interviews, and collaborations with local tourism managers. These activities are aimed at the existing market, namely tourists who are already familiar with Tongging. By increasing the intensity of digital promotion, the village has succeeded in strengthening interaction and interest in repeat visits by tourists. Implementation:

- Reels with information on ticket prices, activities, and facilities.
- Collaboration with Wisma Sibayak, Sinalsal Beach, and Paralayang.
- Educational content about culture to strengthen the appeal of old tourist attractions.

Market Development

The creation of a tourism village website and the use of English subtitles in reels make it easier for the village to reach new market segments, including tourists from outside the region and foreign tourists. The website provides more complete information access to audiences who were previously not reached by offline promotions. Information boards equipped with barcodes and placed at the Tongging viewpoint location, which is one of the strategic locations with the potential to reach new tourists who are passing by or do not yet have information about the village. Implementation:

- A website with direct booking features via WhatsApp and map links for each accommodation and attraction, directly directing visitors to their destinations.
- English subtitles to attract foreign tourists.
- Information boards guiding tourists to the website and other tourist spots.

Connection with the Marketing Mix (4P)

a. Product

Tongging Village tourism products are promoted through reels and websites that showcase:

- the panorama of Lake Toba,
- Sipiso-piso Waterfall,
- paragliding,
- accommodation,
- Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs),

- cultural education.

Information boards also reinforce tourists' perceptions of the village's tourism products.

b. Price

Short interviews and reels convey information about entrance ticket prices, tourist activity costs, and accommodation costs. Price transparency is an important value for increasing tourist confidence and facilitating travel planning.

c. Place (Location/Information Distribution)

Instagram and websites are effective digital distribution channels for disseminating tourism information. Websites linked to Google Maps strengthen the distribution function by providing accurate location access.

d. Promotion

Instagram activation, reel creation, collaboration with tourism management accounts, information boards with barcodes, and websites are integrated promotional efforts that strengthen the image of Tongging Tourism Village as a sustainable destination. This digital promotion can reach both local and global markets at an efficient cost.

Table 1. Actual Integration between promotional activities, the Ansoff Matrix, and the 4Ps marketing mix:

Activities/Interventions	Ansoff	Related 4P	Impact on Sustainable Tourism
Reactivation of Instagram + reels	Market Penetration	Promotion, Product	Increasing awareness and engagement among existing tourists
English subtitles in reels	Market Development	Promotion	Reaching international tourists
Collaboration with local tourism managers	Market Penetration	Product, Promotion	Increasing exposure of local products
Website information board and barcode development	Market Development	Promotion, Product, Place	making it easier for tourists to understand the facilities, while expanding the reach of information dissemination and facilitating the process of booking tourism services.
Inclusion of ticket prices in content	—	Price, Promotion	Price transparency increases tourist confidence

Source: Author, 2025

The results of the study indicate that promotional strategies through social and digital media have successfully increased the visibility of Tongging Tourism Village. The activities

carried out are in line with the Ansoff Matrix and 4P Marketing Mix strategies, which simultaneously strengthen promotion, expand the market, and support sustainable tourism through:

1. Digitization of information
2. Preservation of Cultural Heritage
3. Local Economic Empowerment
4. Community Empowerment

Thus, the promotional strategy implemented not only strengthens the image of Tongging Tourism Village but also supports the principles of community-based sustainable tourism: Therefore, the adopted promotional approach not only enhances the reputation of Tongging Tourism Village but also upholds the tenets of community-driven sustainable tourism

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that Tongging Tourism Village's social media promotion strategy has significantly increased visibility and aligns with the Ansoff Matrix and Marketing Mix (4P) frameworks, while also supporting sustainable tourism principles. Optimization of the strategy was primarily carried out through market penetration by reactivating the Instagram account with intensive reel content, collaborating with local tourism managers, and presenting educational content that strengthens the interest of existing tourists. Furthermore, the market development strategy is evident through efforts to reach new segments, such as tourists from outside the region and abroad, through an integrated village website, providing English subtitles for content, and installing barcode-based information boards. The goal of this development is to develop the Tongging community's economy by expanding the tourist market reach. These interventions have resulted in significant increases, as evidenced by an increase in average reel views from 1,702 to 3,902, with one piece of content reaching 9,558 views. Overall, this strategy has contributed to strengthening tourism sustainability through information digitization, empowering local managers, and increasing tourist accessibility to information about the tourism village.

Based on these findings, several suggestions can be considered for future development. Tourism Village managers, especially Pokdarwis, need to improve the consistency and quality of content publication on Instagram well as begin to diversify content based on new products such as thematic tour packages or local cuisine to expand the tourist segment. Optimizing the village website is also important to ensure easy access to information and tourist transactions. For local governments, support is needed in the form of policies that encourage digital marketing of tourism villages and the provision of relevant infrastructure and training. Meanwhile, further research can focus on measuring the quantitative impact of increased digital visibility on tourist visits and community income, as well as a more in-depth study of the potential application of diversification strategies in the development of Tongging Tourism Village.

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