



# Bangka District Tourism Communication Strategy in Increasing Tourist Visits Through the Sungailiat Triathlon Event

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## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**  
Communication Strategy  
Triathlon  
Tourism

This study examines the tourism communication strategy the Bangka Regency Government employs to enhance tourist arrivals through the international event "Sungailiat Triathlon." The research adopts a qualitative descriptive approach, gathering data through stakeholder interviews, field observations, and direct documentation in the field. Research results show that promotional strategies through social media like Instagram, YouTube, and Official websites and collaboration with influencers are effective in attracting audience attention. Apart from that, the participation of the community and residents in organizing the event further strengthens the sense of ownership and support for the event. Supporting activities such as cultural and culinary festivals also succeeded in adding to the attraction of the event. Post-event evaluations provide valuable feedback for improvement in the coming year. Researchers can conclude that planned and collaborative tourism and marketing communications can encourage increased tourist visits, as well as support sustainable tourism and economic development, especially in Bangka Regency. The results of this study can be concluded that the Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office uses verbal, nonverbal and visual communication strategies to promote the Sungailiat Triathlon event, with a focus on determining the target audience, developing event identity, using several social media and involving local sports communities, local communities, and working with experienced professional partners in the triathlon field such as IndoRace. As well as working with professional partners who are experienced in triathlon, such as IndoRace. Through the theory of tourism visual communication, tourism marketing communication, and attractive destination brands, they convey messages that arouse the interest of tourists, using promotional materials that highlight the beauty of nature and local culture. With this approach, the Sungailiat Triathlon serves not only as a sporting event but also as an effective tool to build the destination brand each year and increase the attractiveness of Sungailiat City as a safe and comfortable sports tourism destination.

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## 1. Introduction

The tourism sector in each region in Indonesia has a strategy for managing unique and different tourist attractions. One of the mainstay tourist destinations in Indonesia is the Tanjung Pesona beach attraction in Bangka. Bangka Island can be a thriving tourism destination in Indonesia in the future. Tourism in Bangka is managed quite well with services and facilities that involve the wisdom of the local community and international events that make Bangka a favorite tourist spot, making it a comfortable and safe tourist destination (Selviana, 2019).

Indonesia has considerable tourism potential due to its natural beauty and regional cultural diversity, as well as its geographical location, the development of the tourism sector, foreign exchange earnings, and community income. The development and development of the tourism sector must be further enhanced, primarily to expand employment opportunities and introduce national culture (Ahda & Rozi, 2022).

Based on data from the Central of Statistics (BPS) of Bangka Belitung Province, in October 2023, 42,542 tourists were visiting Bangka Belitung Province. This number increased by 5.79% compared to the number of guests in the previous month, which reached 40,215 people. In m-to-m terms, the number of domestic guests increased by 6.2%, and the number of foreign guests decreased by 12.68%. The number of domestic guests dominates those who come to the Bangka Belitung Islands Province compared to foreign guests. Of the total 42,542 guests, 98.98% were domestic guests. The increase in the number of guest visits was due to the increase in Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) activities. Compared to the conditions of the previous month, all districts/cities experienced a decrease in the number of foreign tourists except for Central Bangka Regency and Pangkalpinang City. Bangka Regency experienced a decrease in the number of guests by 10.92% or the number of guest visits by 3,973 people. Following next is Belitung Island, with a decrease in the number of guests of 2.67% or the number of guest visits of 15,260 people. Meanwhile, Central Bangka Regency experienced an increase in the number of foreign tourists by 17.88%, with a total of 8,360 foreign tourist visits. Next is Pangkalpinang City, with an increase in the number of guests of 15.13% or the number of guest visits of 14,949 people (BPS Babel, 2023).

Since 2013 Bangka Regency has had annual international events, one of which is a Sport Event that was held on Matras Beach, now the new route is diverted to Tanjung Pesona Beach, precisely in Sungailiat City, namely Sungailiat Triathlon with the theme #STRONGERTHENBEFORE which is the best Sport Tourism Event included in the Bangka Regency Tourism Event Calendar and is directly supported by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy. This Sport Tourism Event combines competitions in three sports, namely swimming, cycling, and running, across the panoramic beauty of the best exotic beaches in Bangka Regency. Sungailiat Triathlon has three race categories, namely Sprint Distance, Sprint Local Distance, and Standard Distance. The three categories have differences in terms of entrance tickets and mileage, and the sprint local distance category is specifically for residents who have Bangka Belitung ID cards. Sungailiat City Government and IndoRace Event Organizer as the executor in organizing Sungailiat Triathlon to invite all Indonesian people, especially Triathlon sports fans to participate and feel the excitement of togetherness at Sungailiat Triathlon so that the Bangka district is increasingly famous in the eyes of the world (S.Triathlon, 2024).



Figure 1. Sungailiat Triathlon Race Category

However, there is a problem in promoting this event so that the wider community can find out about the event to be held, and a proper and planned tourism and marketing communication strategy is needed. Currently, the main challenge is communicating the uniqueness and excellence of the Sungailiat Triathlon Event and Bangka's tourist attractions to potential tourists, both domestic and foreign. In addition, it is necessary to synergize between the government, tourism actors, and the local community to support and promote this event.

**"Communication"** originates from the Latin word "communic," which means creating togetherness between two or more people. The root of the word "communis" is "communico," which signifies sharing. In this context, communication involves the exchange of messages to establish a common understanding. Different experts have varying definitions of communication. According to Bernard Berelson and Barry A. Stainer, communication encompasses transmitting information, ideas, emotions, and skills through language, visuals, numbers, graphs, and more. Communication is integral to human life, especially in daily social interactions. It is crucial to consider the sender, content, recipient, medium, and the resulting impact or feedback in any communication process. (Isdarmanto, 2020).

**"Communication Strategy"** plan is designed to effectively and efficiently deliver a message to a target audience. It considers the target audience, the type of message, the media to be used, and how the message is delivered. Karl von Clausewitz, a retired Russian general, in his book "On War," defined strategy as "the art of using the means of war to achieve war aims." Martin-Andersin (1968) also described strategy as "an art that involves the ability of reason/mind to bring all available resources to achieve goals by obtaining maximum profit and efficiency." According to Moekijat (2000), promotional strategies are company activities that encourage sales through persuasive communication with buyers (Cangara, 2014). The Sungailiat Triathlon was selected as the focal point of the research for several reasons. Firstly, it is a crucial international standard race, a long-standing tradition in Sungailiat City on Bangka Island. Therefore, analyzing the strategies employed to promote this race as a tourist attraction holds excellent value. Secondly, the study is highly relevant to communication strategy analysis within communication science. Delving into the effective communication of messages and the strategies utilized to attain communication objectives is a crucial area of study within communication science. (Pambudi & Hariayanti, 2023).

## 2. Method

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research, because the researcher conducted detailed and in-depth research on the object. This research describes a researcher's findings which are presented in accordance with the facts found in the field. The type of qualitative research in this research is a case study. A case study is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail and in depth about a program, event and activity, either at the individual, group of people, institution or organization level, to obtain in-depth knowledge about the event. The selected events, now referred to as cases, are usually real-world events (real-life events) which are ongoing, not something that has already passed (Mudjia Rahardjo, 2017). Data collection is one of the most essential stages in research. The correct data collection technique will produce data that has high credibility and vice versa. Therefore, this stage must be correct and carried out carefully according to the procedure. This is because errors or imperfections in data collection methods will have fatal consequences, namely in the form of data that is not credible, so the research results cannot be justified. The results of such research are hazardous, mainly if they are used as a basis for consideration to make public policy (Rozali, 2016). Researchers usually use this data collection technique or method to collect data that refers to an abstract word that is not embodied in objects but can only be seen in use. For example, questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests or tests, documentation, and online data searching (Fadillah & Huiquan, 2024). Data collection is carried out for research so that the data and theories are valid and according to reality, so researchers must go directly and know the data collection techniques. Thus, researchers will know the validity or truth of the research concept. In this study, researchers used three procedures used in data collection, namely:

**Observation,** Observation is a complex data collection method because it involves various factors in its implementation. Observation methods not only measure respondents' attitudes but can also record various phenomena. Observation data collection techniques are suitable for research that aims

to study human behaviour, work processes, and natural symptoms. This method is also appropriate for respondents whose quantity is manageable (Situmeang, 2020). **Interview**, an interview is a process of obtaining information for research purposes by means of questions and answers while meeting face-to-face between the interviewer and the respondent or interviewee. Interviews are the most sociological of all social research methods. This is because its form comes from the verbal interaction between the researcher and the respondent. Interview is a method of data collection that is carried out through face-to-face and direct question and answer between data collectors and researchers to resource persons or data sources (Rozali, 2016). Therefore, researchers conducted interviews with: Head of the Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office (Mrs. Rismy Wira M, S.STP., M. Si.) The person in charge of the Sungailiat Triathlon Event (Mr. Agung Ferianda, Head of Event and Destination Sector) Sungailiat Triathlon Athlete (Kak Karin Amran) The community around the race area (Muhammad Arya Al-Faaiz).

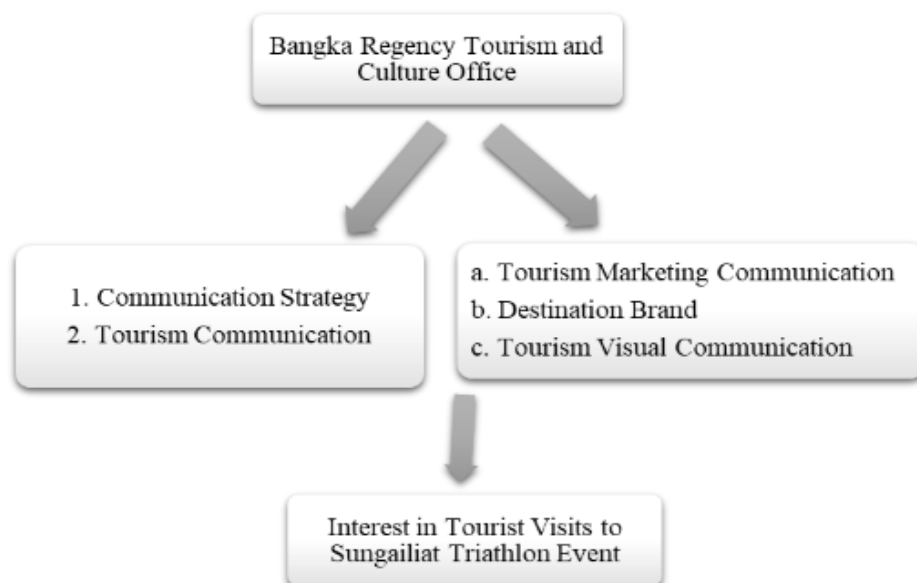
**Documentation**, Documentation is the search and acquisition of the necessary data through data that is already available. The documentation technique used is intended to complement the results of data obtained through interview and observation techniques that have been carried out previously. Documentation is carried out in this study by saving various activities in the research that contain the process and results of the research through taking pictures and documentation. Documentation is one of the data collection techniques, which involves taking pictures or documents to obtain data. There are three aspects of triangulation sources, data collection techniques, and time. The author only uses source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation ensures data trustworthiness by examining information from various sources, such as interviews and documents (Alfansyur & Mariyani, 2020). Meanwhile, triangulation techniques verify data from the same source using different methods, for example comparing observation and interview data (Sugiyono, 2017).

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Presenting the Result

In this study, the authors found similarities that are in line with the Sungailiat Triathlon Event in handling tourism communication strategies in carrying out the tourism promotion and marketing process in Bangka Regency which involves three stages. Strategy Communication, Tourism Communication, Tourism Marketing Communication, Destination Brand. Building destination branding is an important issue to create a strong destination branding in the tourism attraction strategy that is marketed to attract tourists. Quoting from (Bungin, 2017) Tourism Communication book says there are five stages in building destination branding, namely:

**Table 1.** Frame of Mind





## A. Strategy Communication

According to Shannon and Weaver, a communication strategy must pay attention to the essential elements of communication, namely sender, message, media (channel), receiver, and feedback. A good communication strategy must ensure that the message sent can be received and understood correctly by the recipient and pay attention to obstacles (noise) that might interfere with the communication process. Meanwhile, according to (Lasswell, 2007), the communication strategy must answer the following question: "Who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect?" In this model, communication strategies are developed with a focus on Who speaks (communicator), What is delivered (message), Through what channel (media), To whom (target audience), and With what effect (desired outcome). This emphasizes the importance of understanding the target audience and choosing the suitable media to achieve the expected effect.

According to the theory mentioned above, the increase in tourist numbers for the Sungailiat Triathlon event is attributed to the promotional strategies employed by the Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office. These strategies include leveraging social and digital media, collaborating with mass media and travel agents, and offering enticing tour packages. Furthermore, efforts have enhanced infrastructure, curated diverse supporting attractions such as cultural and culinary exhibitions, and engaged local communities in tourism service training. The event's international appeal is bolstered by the participation of overseas athletes, sponsorship support, and environmental campaigns to attract more tourists.

## B. Tourism Communication

According to Bungin (2015) Tourism communication is a human activity that conveys information about travel to an area/tourist attraction to be visited by tourists while enjoying other tourist attractions. Thus, tourists know where to visit and are very interested in visiting other tourist attractions.

The significant development of tourism economics in recent decades may result from a combination of factors. However, one of the main drivers is undoubtedly the rise of tourism as an essential economic activity worldwide (Faza & Deslia, 2024). Tourism is a composite commodity that involves many industries. When calculated, tourism is the world's largest industry in terms of employment and production globally. In addition, the tourism industry continues to grow. On the demand side, its expansion reflects the growth of the global economy. The number of people around the world earning higher per capita incomes and more leisure time. As tourism demand is income elastic and tends to increase as leisure time becomes more available, this has stimulated tourism demand.

Tourism communication has several main fields of study that can be combined into separate fields of study, such as:

### 1. Tourism Marketing Communication

Tourism marketing communication theory emphasizes the importance of a planned and integrated strategy to promote destinations and attract tourists (Kotler, 2017).

Tourism marketing communications for the Sungailiat Triathlon required a comprehensive approach to achieving audience objectives, the creation of an event identity, and the use of various communication platforms, including social media (Instagram and FaceBook), the official website ([www.sungailiattriathlon.id](http://www.sungailiattriathlon.id)), and print and digital media. The event was designed to attract triathlon athletes, sports enthusiasts, and visitors by engaging with influencers and tourism ambassadors. In addition, local community engagement and collaboration with government and private institutions were essential to foster a sense of ownership and support. To measure participant satisfaction and improve future events, response analysis on social media was also utilized. This comprehensive method allows Sungailiat Triathlon to function as both a competition event and a tourism promotion tool that helps increase the number of visitors coming to Bangka Regency.



Figure 2. Official Sungailiat Triathlon 2024 Website Banner

## 2. Destination Brand

Destination branding is a discussion of destination branding in the context of destination product branding, where destination branding is the medium and message itself in the context and process of marketing communication in general and specifically in the context of tourism marketing (Rahman, Bag, Hassan, Hossain, & Singh, 2022).

The Sungailiat Triathlon event cultivates a destination brand by incorporating unique local attributes, like the natural splendor and cultural heritage of Bangka Regency, into the participant experience. The event draws both athletes and visitors by forging a distinctive event character through logos, slogans, and captivating print and social media marketing campaigns. Furthermore, by working together with stakeholders and local communities, the event produced genuine experiences that piqued interest in the location. Sungailiat Triathlon is not only a sporting event but also a useful instrument to raise Bangka Regency's profile and appeal as a travel destination by highlighting its distinctiveness and offering participants a good experience.



Figure 3. Destination Branding in Instagram @sungailiattriathlon

## 3. Tourism Visual Communication

According to Kumara Jaya (2024), tourism visual communication theory underscores the importance of visual elements in attracting, educating, and influencing tourist behavior. The Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office created eye-catching and educational promotional materials, such as posters and brochures, as well as digital content, with captivating images of the destination, the race atmosphere, the beauty of nature, and the local culture, in an effort to draw tourists to the Sungailiat Triathlon event. They developed an eye-catching visual identity by combining dynamic designs and vivid colors. They also used social media to post intriguing images and teaser films from

past editions, emphasizing the one-of-a-kind experience that both competitors and viewers could have. Collaborations with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, local communities, and influencers further strengthened the positive visual message, creating excitement and raising interest among tourists who were taking part in the event.



Figure 4. Visual of Sungailiat Triathlon

### 3.2. Create a Discussion

This research can serve as a valuable reference and source of information for further study and development. It represents a compilation of insights and experiences obtained through data collection methods such as interviews, observation, and documentation.

In the subsequent discussion, the author should analyse the research results without reiterating them. Comparisons with previous studies, mainly those mentioned in the introduction, are essential. The study's findings should either clarify, enhance, or contradict those of previous research. Regardless of the outcome, the author must engage in a dialogue with the results of other researchers based on the prevailing theoretical framework. If the findings diverge from those of others, the author must acknowledge this and persuade the reader of the accuracy or superiority of the current findings. It is important to note that such truths may only be temporary, as they are subject to refinement through discoveries reported by other researchers, which is the nature of scientific progress.

In this discussion, efforts to increase the number of tourists to the Sungailiat Triathlon event in Bangka Regency, the Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office usually applies several comprehensive strategies. Some of the strategies communication used include:

**Verbal Communication**, Direct communication through speeches, press conferences, and dialogue with various stakeholders. Sungailiat Triathlon involves outreach to triathlon communities, influencers, and the public to encourage participation in the event. **Nonverbal Communication**, this includes gestures, body language, and the overall presence of the organizers during meetings, collaborations, and promotional events. Nonverbal cues likely played a role in establishing strong partnerships and conveying enthusiasm for the event. **Visual Communication**, Visual promotion was likely carried out through posters, videos, digital banners, and social media posts showcasing the race highlights. Collaborating with influencer athletes who posted their participation moments on social media further boosted the event's visibility, drawing the attention of stakeholders and even the Minister of Tourism.

The Tourism & Culture Office also collaborated with triathlon communities within and outside Bangka, influencers, and the Ministry of Tourism to increase exposure and ensure the event's success. Also collaborating with a third party is INDORACE, a race and event management company specializing in triathlon, cycling, and running events. Founded in 2008, INDORACE has created over

200 events and collaborated with other event organizers. We strive to create high-quality events emphasizing safety, experience, and participant happiness. Until now, INDORACE has organized many events yearly and has become part of several BUMN, local government, private, and event organizers. With the development of triathlon, cycling and running events in Indonesia. Since 2019, INDORACE has also been committed to becoming an eco-green, lifestyle-based event organizer by minimizing the use of plastic and materials that are not environmentally friendly in every event. In addition, influencer athletes also contribute to the event's reach by sharing their race experiences, which helps engage more audiences online and expand its promotional reach (Rohadian, 2024).

**Target Marketing:** Running, Biking, and Swimming Communities These athletic groups were likely a key focus, as the triathlon involves all three sports. Professional triathlon and elite athletes are targeted to raise the competitive level and prestige of the event. General Public (Local and beyond) Efforts were made to attract local participants and tourists to the event, making it a regional attraction. Sports Influencers: These individuals were pivotal in extending the event's reach by sharing and promoting their experiences to their followers. The synergy between these strategies and partnerships contributed significantly to the success of the Sungailiat Triathlon event.

**Promotion Tools:** Sungailiat Triathlon actively uses social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Gmail, and websites to promote Sungailiat Triathlon. They use print and promotional media such as tourism books, banners, brochures, and pamphlets. As well as using local tourism ambassadors, "Bujang Miak", who help promote the event at exhibition fairs. They often create promotional content through videos, photos, press releases, and articles that attract local and international tourists. Unique hashtags and digital campaigns are also often used to increase public engagement. However, according to the researcher, social media admins still need to be more active and consistent in creating content and replying to comments on social media because this event is held once a year, so after the event, social media is no longer active. The researcher suggested posting three times a week to promote the pre-event and tourism in Bangka before the following year's event.

**Partnerships with Travel Agents and Airlines:** Cooperation with travel agents, airlines, and tour service providers is also done to offer tour packages that include accommodation, transportation, and admission to the Sungailiat Triathlon event. Attracts tourists who want to have a complete experience while in Bangka. Suggestions for the Bangka government include adding flight routes to major cities or creating international routes in the next ten years.

**Tourism Infrastructure Improvement:** Bangka local governments often focus on improving infrastructure, such as athletes' hotels, road access to event locations, public transportation facilities, and accommodation facilities. Improved public facilities such as parking lots, toilets, and information centers also support the smoothness and comfort of visitors during the event. As well as improving natural facilities such as beautifying the beach area, repairing damaged roads, creating a Sungailiat Triathlon museum, adding new routes to promote culture and nature in the city of sungailiat.

**International Event:** By inviting athletes from various countries, the Sungailiat Triathlon is packaged into an international event. It not only increases the number of participants but also attracts tourists from abroad who want to support the athletes or travel to Bangka. Data that researchers took in the previous year, Sungailiat Triathlon 2023, was attended by 229 participants (Yopi, 2023), as well as participants from Australia, Singapore, and Malaysia who participated. Hopefully, every year, the number of participants and audiences will increase in order to increase tourist attraction to Sungailiat City (Yopi, 2023).

**Government and Sponsor Support:** The tourism office actively cooperates with sponsors from various local and national companies to support the continuity of the event. Sungailiat Triathlon is also included in the national event calendar of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative of the Republic of Indonesia and collaborates with Kominfo and DPRD. According to researchers, sponsors and local government support are very important for the success of the event. This year, Sungailiat Triathlon is working with quite large sponsors, namely Pertamina, Tritan, Jolt, ISOPLUS, Sunpride, and others.

According to Selviana (2019), it shows that the stages or steps of the communication strategy of the Ponorogo Tourism Office are in accordance with the communication strategy theory presented by the researcher, namely: selecting and determining communicators, determining target targets, compiling messages, selecting media or communication channels, media production, disseminating



communication media, determining budget plans, preparing activity schedules, determining work teams, and evaluation. No obstacles can be found in the communication process. Meanwhile, communication supporters were found, namely the existence of introductory media used, including conventional media, namely radio; outdoor media, namely billboards and car advertisements; and new media (internet), namely the internet social media Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The Bangka district tourism office also does almost the same thing in increasing the number of tourists by using social media as a powerful promotional tool.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Tourism and Culture Office of Bangka Regency utilized an integrated marketing communication strategy to promote the Sungailiat Triathlon event. This strategy focused on identifying the target audience, developing the event's identity, and engaging local communities. Through tourism visual communication, tourism marketing communication, and an appealing destination brand, they conveyed messages to pique the interest of tourists. They used promotional materials that showcased the natural beauty and local culture of the area. This approach allowed the triathlon event to not only serve as a sporting event but also as an effective tool to establish a destination brand and enhance the appeal of Bangka Regency as a tourist destination.

#### 5. Acknowledgement

This research was made possible with the help of multiple parties. The Author wants to express my gratitude to the Ahmad Dahlan University Communication Science study program for providing us with the opportunity to conduct this research. The Author would also like to thank Ahmad Dahlan University, particularly the communication science lecturers, Bangka Regency Tourism and Culture Office, Bangka TIC, Indo Race, and everyone who took the time to discuss digital content marketing with me. Researchers are also grateful to my parents, supervisors, examiners, and friends for their unwavering support throughout the research process. The dedication and hard work of these individuals have significantly enhanced my academic journey and played a vital role in expanding my expertise in the field of communication studies, with a specific focus on tourism communication strategy. Their efforts have greatly enriched the researcher's understanding and knowledge in this area, and the researcher is genuinely grateful for their impact on academics and research.

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