



Digital Marketing Strategy Of Agrotourism Bhumi Merapi Yogyakarta In Maintaining Existence Amidst The Competition In the Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

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Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism Yogyakarta is one of the tourist destinations that combines the concept of agriculture, animal husbandry, and plantations, with recreational activities. Competition in the agritourism business world currently shows interesting dynamics with several key trends and challenges affecting the development of this sector. Along with technological developments, changes in consumer behavior, and a dynamic global situation, entrepreneurs and professionals in the field of tourism marketing are faced with increasingly complex challenges. In the face of increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry, digital marketing strategy are key to maintaining existence and attracting visitors. Digital Marketing is defined as marketing activities including branding that use various web media such as blogs, websites, e-mail, adwords, or social networks, by utilizing the internet in practice. This research aims to find out how the digital marketing strategy applied by Agrotourism Bhumi Merapi in maintaining its existence. The research method used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection through interviews, observation, and documentation. This research is based on digital marketing theory from Chaffey & Smith (2017). The results showed that Bhumi Merapi has not fully utilized the six digital channels proposed by Chaffey and Smith (2017). For now, Bhumi Merapi only uses two main digital channels, namely Mobile Messaging Marketing with the Whatsapp application and Social Media Marketing using Instagram, which are known to be quite effective. Despite only use these two platforms, Bhumi Merapi is able to maintain contact with the audience, increase engagement, and promote the various tourism activities they offer.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a dynamic activity that involves many people and revives various business fields. Where the development of tourism is seen as the right way, and efficient in mobilizing the people's economy to become a sector that is considered ready from the object of natural availability compared to other sectors. This is based on the fact that tourism is an activity to be able to promote beautiful places, both natural and culture of an area to tourists, both domestic and foreign (Ismayanti, 2010).

Many types of tourism have the potential to be developed in Indonesia, including marine / water tourism, historical tourism, archaeological tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, health tourism, elderly tourism, youth tourism, plantation tourism / agrotourism, nostalgic tourism, educational tourism, adventure tourism, nature tourism, aerospace tourism, hunting tourism,

shopping tourism, and industrial tourism (Susanto, 2001). Agrotourism sub-sector or agritourism is one of the potential types of tourism to be developed in Indonesia. In Indonesia, agritourism or agrotourism is defined as activity that utilizes agro business (agribusiness) as a tourist attraction. The aim is to expand knowledge, recreational experience, and business relationships in agriculture (Nugroho, 2017).

Sleman Regency is a tourism development area in the Special Region of Yogyakarta that holds diverse tourism potential, ranging from natural tourism, cultural tourism, imitation tourism, etc. The development can be seen from the construction of new tourist attractions, as well as the improvement of old tourist attractions that are starting to be redeveloped. The development can be seen from the construction of new tourist attractions, and also the improvement of old tourist attractions that are starting to be redeveloped. One of the tourist attractions in Sleman Regency that is currently popular is Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism.



Figure 1. One of the photo spots in Bhumi Merapi
(Source: detik.com)



Figure 2. Santorini ar Bhumi Merapi
(Source: berbagifun.com)



Figure 3. Photo spots with Ostrich & Snake example of Mini Zoo at Bhumi Merapi
(Source: Documentation by Researcher)

Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism is a popular tourist spot and is visited by tourists who come from various regions, even from abroad. Bhumi Merapi does not just offer beauty, visiting here will get knowledge about agriculture, animal husbandry, and plantations. In addition, you can test your adrenaline, because at that location there are a number of challenging rides such as horse riding, river cruising in caves and offroad. There is also a selfie room with a building venue that is an icon of famous cities from a number of countries in the world. This agrotourism is located at Jalan Kaliurang km 20, Hargobinangun, Pakem, Sleman.

During the Merapi eruption that occurred in 2016, the owner of Bhumi Merapi was forced to temporarily stop the business. After Mount Merapi was declared safe, the owner decided to reopen it with a different concept, namely using farm animals in Bhumi Merapi as a learning tool for children. Not only for children, Bhumi Merapi's target market is also for millennials who like to take selfies. Bhumi Merapi provides unique rides in the form of building spots with the architecture of world-famous cities such as Greece. The agrotourism is never empty, always crowded with visitors, especially from schools both from Yogyakarta and outside the region. Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism entrance ticket is also quite affordable, with a price of Rp. 35.000 visitors can enjoy the cool atmosphere and do exciting activities at Bhumi Merapi.

However, in the current era of globalization, the tourism industry continues to evolve with the emergence of various new tourist destinations that offer unique and exciting experiences for tourists. These new tourist attractions often have a fresh and innovative appeal that is able to attract tourists' attention quickly. For long-established tourist destinations, such as Agrotourism Bhumi Merapi, it is a big challenge to maintain their existence and attractiveness amidst increasingly fierce competition.

In Yogyakarta, there are several agritourism sites such as Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism, Bendhung Lepen, Kampung Flory, Mangunan Pine Forest, Jogja Agro Techno Park, Nglinggo Tea Garden, Sabila Farm, Obelix Vilage, Jogja Exotarium, etc. that offer unique and interesting experiences for visitors. Each of these agritourism locations provides an opportunity for visitors to get closer to nature and learn about agriculture and animal husbandry.

The current competition in the agritourism business world shows interesting dynamics with several key trends and challenges affecting the development of this sector. Along with a dynamic global situation, entrepreneurs and professionals in the field of tourism marketing are faced with increasingly complex challenges. Some of them are the continuing impact of the covid19 pandemic, changes in travel patterns and tourist preferences, increasingly fierce global competition, technological developments and social media. However, overall, the current competitive situation in the agritourism business is very dynamic with many innovations and new strategies adopted by business actors. Those who are able to adapt to changing trends and market needs and maintain the quality of the tourist experience will be more likely to survive and thrive in the industry.

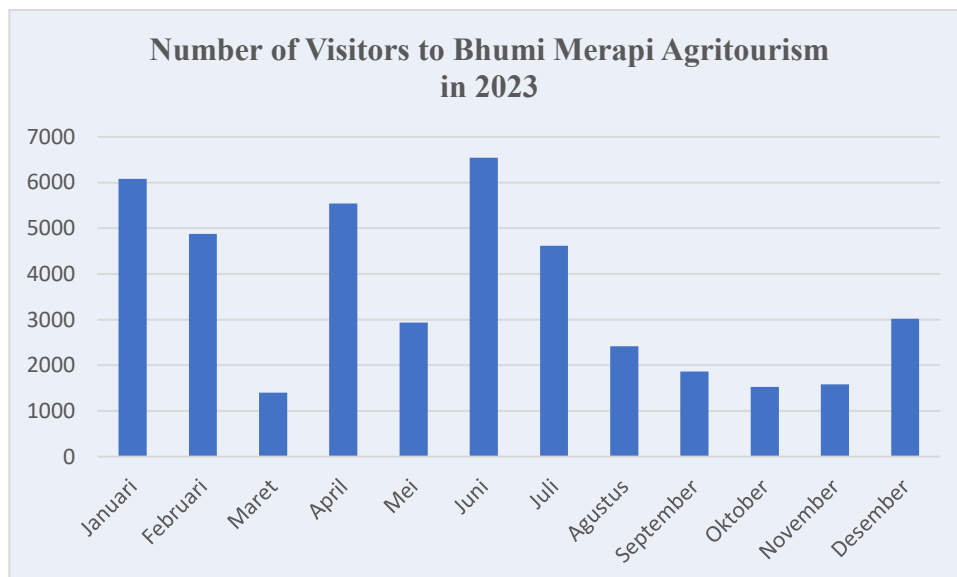


Figure 4. Graph of the number of visitors to Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism in 2023
(Source: data from Bhumi Merapi)

Bhumi Merapi's visitor graph in 2023 shows significant fluctuations amidst competition in the tourism industry. The months with the highest number of visitors are January (6.083) and June (6.544), driven by the new year and school holidays. March recorded the lowest number of visitors (1.400), likely due to a lack of promotional activities or vacations. The decline continued in months such as September (1.861) and October (1.526). Fierce competition in the tourism sector requires Bhumi Merapi to continuously improve its marketing and promotional strategy to attract tourists outside the main holiday season.

In the face of increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry, digital marketing strategy are the key to maintaining existence, and increasing the attractiveness of tourist destinations. From previous research according to Chaffey and Chadwick (2016) cited from (AC Dewi et al, 2023: 1123) "Digital marketing is the application of the internet and related digital technologies in conjunction with traditional communications to achieve marketing objectives." This goal can be achieved by improving the understanding of consumers, such as their profiles, behaviors, values, and loyalty levels, and integrating targeted communications and online services according to individual needs. The

emergence of new competitors, changes in traveler preferences, utilization of digital technology, effectiveness of digital marketing, influence of social media and online reviews, importance of branding, and traveler engagement and loyalty are key factors that must be considered.

Based on the explanation above, researchers chose to explain how the Digital Marketing Strategy of Agrotourism Bhumi Merapi Yogyakarta In Maintaining Existence Amidst The Competition In the Tourism Industry.

2. Method

The type of this research chosen is descriptive qualitative to find out in depth about how the digital marketing strategy of Agrotourism Bhumi Merapi in maintaining its existence amidst increasingly fierce competition. Qualitative method is a research method that collects data in the form of descriptions in the form of writing or speech from individuals or observable behavior (Moeleong, 2018). Descriptive research involves the description and analysis of data on the subject or object of research to provide the latest information for the development of science and solving relevant problems. It is conducted systematically and factually with the aim of creating an accurate picture of the events or symptoms under study (Supardi, 2005).

The data used in this research is data that comes from the field in the form of direct observation and interviews with related parties, namely Riski as a marketing & ticketing employee of Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism. The stages of this research flow are problem identification, collecting the necessary information, and data analysis. In this study, researchers used data analysis techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992) which included three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Then validate the data with source triangulation and technique triangulation.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Presenting the Results

In the current era of globalization, it is necessary to introduce its products with a strategy that must be mature so that marketing communication can be conveyed properly and in accordance with what the company wants. According to Kotler & Keller (2009, p.172) marketing communication is a means by which companies try to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the products they sell. Meanwhile, according to Machfoedz (2010) marketing communication is a term used to explain information about a product from a company to the public. Companies can use direct and indirect (digital) marketing to provide information that they hope can influence consumer purchasing decisions.

Digital marketing is defined as marketing activities including branding that use various web media such as blogs, websites, e-mail, adwords, or social networks (Sanjaya & Tarigan, 2009). Digital marketing is a promotional tool that aims to reach consumers so as to influence their purchasing decisions for certain products. While a complete explanation from Chaffey (2015) digital marketing and e-marketing have almost the same meaning. Both involve setting up and executing marketing strategies using social media platforms. As such, digital marketing involves the use of digital technologies to create online channels to market (such as websites, emails, databases, digital TV, and recent innovations including blogs, feeds, podcasts, and social networks). The goal of digital marketing is to generate profits, strengthen customer relationships, and improve understanding of consumers, including their behaviors, values, and brand loyalty, and then tailor targeted communications and online services to individual or specific customer needs. So, it can be concluded that digital marketing is an online or electronic-based marketing strategy. This marketing strategy can be carried out through digital services, such as social media by utilizing the internet in practice.

The advances in information and communication technology have led to important changes in many areas of life. One of the most striking changes is in the way we communicate and share information. Digital channels that include social media, websites, mobile applications, and various other platforms, have become an essential part of everyday life. These channels not only affect the

way individuals interact, but also how businesses can operate and communicate with their customers. There are six main channels according to Chaffey and Smith (2017):

a. Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search Engine Marketing or SEM is a key technique to generate quality visitors to a website. Nowadays, we often turn to search engines when we are already familiar with a brand, either to streamline website navigation by searching for the brand name, adding the brand name to a product, or typing the URL directly into Google. This is known as navigational search or brand search. With the high level of competition in digital marketing, SEM has become key to reaching audiences during the process of product consideration or brand search. There are two main types of SEM, each requiring different marketing approaches for management, which are:

SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is a set of practices, techniques, and strategies used to improve a website's ranking and visibility on search engine results pages (SERPs), such as Google, Bing, or Yahoo. The main goal of SEO is to increase the amount and quality of organic traffic to a website, i.e. visitors who come without going through paid advertising.

PPC (Pay-Per-Click), PPC (Pay-Per-Click) is a digital marketing model where advertisers pay a fee every time their ad is clicked by a user. It is one form of paid advertising on the internet, mainly used to generate traffic to websites in a fast and measurable way. Unlike the traffic obtained through SEO, the traffic obtained through PPC is obtained by paying search engines or advertising platforms.

b. Online Public Relations & Influencer Relationship Management

Online public relations activities are closely related to improving the results of many other communication techniques, specifically SEO (link-building), partnership marketing, and social media marketing. It is also strongly linked to content marketing as a core activity in content marketing is content distribution, which can involve working with influencers to showcase content that has been developed. Nowadays, online public relations and influencer engagement is often organized as a year-round ongoing process of influencer relationship management (IRM). There are two reasons for this change. Initially, the emergence of a type of software service used to recognize and interact with influencers. Service providers are labeling this category IRM as it demonstrates the value of their products. Secondly, smart companies are leveraging the reach of influencers in a more planned and continuous way to match with inbound marketing strategy or content that stays active. In this case, Bhumi Merapi has never worked with influencers, but some visitors who are celebrities / influencers have made video content for free about the beauty of tourist attractions and various activities in Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism.

c. Online Partnerships Including Affiliate Marketing

Partnerships are a crucial element in modern marketing strategy. Collaboration with partner sites and influencer outreach plays a vital role in content marketing, SEO, and online public relations. Many large companies have dedicated teams to manage these relationships, while smaller organizations often overlook partnership management, missing out on significant opportunities. There are three main types of online partnerships that need to be managed: co-marketing and influencer outreach, affiliate marketing, and online sponsorships. Affiliate marketing is the most significant form of marketing communication because it operates on a pay-per-performance model, where merchants only pay when sales are made or leads are generated. Affiliate marketing can also increase the turnover of businesses in various sectors. Many banks, travel companies, and online retailers get more than 10% of their sales from effective affiliate marketing programs. However, it is less suitable for low-priced business or consumer products as it may not be profitable enough for affiliates, and it may be difficult to attract enough affiliates. In this case, Bhumi Merapi does not implement an affiliate marketing strategy. The manager feels that the use of affiliate marketing is not effective. For now, Bhumi Merapi is not in need because Bhumi Merapi only sells a few products such as t-shirts, hats, keychains, etc. that can be gifts for visitors.

d. Interactive Display Advertising

Display Advertising is placing paid advertisements using graphic ad units or rich media within web pages to achieve goals such as brand awareness, familiarity, preference, and purchase intent. Many ads encourage participation by asking viewers to interact or hover to perform a specific action

such as playing a video, filling out an online form, or exploring more details through a link to a website.

e. Opt-in Email Marketing & Mobile Messaging

Chaffey (2017) categorizes email marketing with mobile messaging because they are both push media that have many similarities in application for prospect and customer communication. They are essential for building and maintaining relationships along with marketing automation. Chaffey (2017) has focused his discussion on email marketing in this section because the marketing investment and activity levels in email marketing are much higher compared to mobile text messages. This is due to the fact that receiving emails that have been authorized tends to be more welcome than receiving text messages which can be considered intrusive on mobile devices. In addition, email marketing allows for more complex and visual messaging. However, as mobile apps become the primary platform for communicating with customers, mobile push notifications can be more engaging than emails, especially for smartphone users who use the device as their primary one. In this case, Bhumi Merapi promotes through mobile text using the Whatsapp application. Special staff who serve visitors via Whatsapp usually send information about events or daily promo offers or promos when celebrating certain special days. For now, Bhumi Merapi also uses chatbots or automated messaging to respond to customer inquiries in real-time.

f. Sosial Media & Viral Marketing

Social media marketing is an important category in digital marketing that involves customer communication on company websites or other social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, publisher sites, blogs, and forums. This strategy utilizes social media for promotional activities. Social media is considered an effective way to market products or services online. Therefore, businesses need to leverage influential social media platforms today to increase sales. In this case, the social media platforms used by Bhumi Merapi are Instagram, Facebook, and Tiktok. But currently, the main social media used is Instagram. With 57.8k followers and good video content, Bhumi Merapi is able to attract customers / potential customers to visit Bhumi Merapi. Although there are quite a lot of Tiktok and Facebook users in Indonesia, in fact Tiktok and Facebook are not effectively used in Bhumi Merapi's marketing activities. Staff and Admin of social media Tiktok and Facebook several times created interesting content, but the results were not as viral as when promoting on Instagram. So that Bhumi Merapi is not maximizing in utilizing these two social media accounts.



Figure 5. Bhumi Merapi Official Instagram Account

Source: Instagram @agrowisatabhumimerapi

The content shared by Bhumi Merapi on Instagram stories and feeds are videos, pictures, and testimonials from visitors with interesting captions and special hashtags #agrowisatabhumimerapi #minizoo #santorini #explorwisatajogja. In addition, Bhumi Merapi also posts highlights on Instagram with various titles such as 'Agropedia', 'Selfie Spot', 'Fun Fact', 'Interaction', 'Ramadan Promo', etc.

3.2. Create a Discussion

Digital marketing is very important for businesses because digital marketing is the easiest and most efficient approach to interact with target audiences. By utilizing the various platforms and tools available, businesses can deliver their messages more precisely, create engaging experiences for customers, and measure the impact of campaigns more accurately (Setiawan, Zunan, et al 2023). Maintaining good relationships with customers is undeniable. By sending greeting cards, periodic offers, and good communication from the telephone can collect accurate data for long-term marketing purposes (Krisana, 2013).

From previous research by (Sangkot Salamah, 2017) with the same digital marketing strategy, it was concluded that; 1) The content strategy presented by Wahana Haji Umrah is good enough. 2) The use of SEO on the wahanahajiumrah.com website is already running quite well. 3) Community Web management of Wahana Haji Umrah is an effective tool in building two-way communication. 4) Utilization of social media is carried out by Wahana Haji Umrah, namely by promoting through social networks on Facebook and Instagram. 5) The utilization of Mobile Apps by Wahana Haji Umrah is known to have not run well, and has several obstacles. 6) The CRM strategy system utilized by Wahana Haji Umrah in order to maintain and improve relationships with pilgrims is by communicating in continuity not only pre and post Hajj or Umrah but also continuing to communicate and consider consumers as family. 7) The statements from the pilgrims regarding the implementation of digital marketing of PT Wahana Mitra Wisata (Wahana Haji Umrah) are overall very good. Then, previous research by (Jonathan Vittorio, et al. 2021) states that the results of this study show the many ways that the manager of Taman Kyai Langgeng has made efforts to develop tourism which has experienced a decline in visitors during the pandemic. Some of the strategy carried out include selling tickets online, strengthening the use of social media accounts such as Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and Tiktok. The manager also provides special staff to handle digital marketing and collaborates with editors and communities outside the company to increase the existence of Taman Kyai Langgeng.

Meanwhile, the results showed that Bhumi Merapi has not fully used the six digital channels proposed by Chaffey and Smith (2017). For now, Bhumi Merapi only implements two digital channels, namely Mobile Messaging Marketing using the Whatsapp application and Social Media Marketing using Instagram. This is certainly a gap that needs to be addressed by Bhumi Merapi. There are several aspects that need to be improved such as adding digital channels in the form of Search Engine Marketing (SEM) using Google Ads to display paid ads on search results pages when someone searches for keywords such as 'educational tourism in Yogyakarta' or 'mini zoo in Yogyakarta'. Working with influencers / travelers with a large number of followers, whose content focuses on nature or entertainment. Positive influence on their followers can encourage more people to visit Bhumi Merapi, first-hand experience testimonials from influencers can make followers feel encouraged to feel the same way, influencers can also provide information about facilities, uniqueness, or interesting activities at Bhumi Merapi. In addition, interactive advertising such as 'Swipe Up' on Instagram Stories, for example Bhumi Merapi can show a short interesting video about the activities at Bhumi Merapi, can encourage Instagram users to swipe up and see the tour packages offered. Or 'Spin The Wheel Promo' to get special promos in the form of discounted entrance tickets or food vouchers at the Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism cafe, allowing for a more interesting and personalized experience for visitors. Researchers hope that the manager of Bhumi Merapi can add these digital channels in order to increase the number of visitors and be able to maintain its existence in the midst of competition in the all-digital tourism industry.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results that have been conducted through field observations and interviews, it is known that Bhumi Merapi has not fully used the six digital channels proposed by Chaffey and Smith (2017). For now, Bhumi Merapi only uses two main digital channels, namely Mobile Messaging Marketing with the Whatsapp application and Social Media Marketing using Instagram, which are known to be quite effective. Despite only using these two platforms, Bhumi Merapi is able to maintain connection with the audience, increase engagement, and promote the various tourism activities they offer. However, to face the increasingly fierce competition in the tourism industry, diversification of

digital marketing channels is needed. While Mobile Messaging Marketing and Social Media Marketing are able to reach certain segments, expanding to other digital strategies such as SEM, Influencer Marketing, and Interactive Advertising can have a greater impact in expanding audience reach, attracting more tourists, and maintaining better competitiveness in the long run. This research is expected to add to the knowledge in the field of communication, especially in the field of digital marketing strategy and become a reference for researchers who have the same research basis. And can be used as evaluation material for Bhumi Merapi Agrotourism, for the strategy that have been carried out.

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