

# The Function of Social Media as a Promotion Tool for Tourism Destinations

Ira Nuriya Santi<sup>1,\*</sup> Adfiyani Fadjar<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Management Department, Economics and Business Faculty, Tadulako University, Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia*

*\*Corresponding author. Email: ira\_nuria@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

Globalization and technological development make information spread easier and faster, particularly through social media. Tourists can get new information just in seconds. Social media can be used as an innovative tool to promote tourism destinations, especially in Indonesia. The use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as a new 'word of mouth' promotions enables tourists to share their holiday experiences, seen by millions of others who want to have the same experience. The purpose of this study is to investigate the development of social media and tourism in Indonesia and to identify the role of social media in promoting tourist destinations in Indonesia. The data of this qualitative study was collected from books, journals and articles. This study finds that social media play a prominent role in promoting tourist destinations in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *social media, digital marketing, promotion, tourism destinations, tourism marketing*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of internet makes information exchange take place in seconds [1, 2]. Information does not always come from official sources since personal accounts can provide information, read and trusted by many. Therefore, personal or unofficial accounts appear, and they become famous for their role in providing information on the net. Information that is frequently shared is about tourist destinations. Users of social media (e.g. blogs, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) are recognized for providing information about tourist destinations through their accounts. This interaction made some tourists interested and decided to visit the tourist destinations they had seen on social media accounts.

Social media is defined as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological foundations and technologies of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content [3, 4]. In other words, social media can also be interpreted as a forum or online media to gather freely, in a sense that it is free in conveying responsible aspirations, and the users can easily participate and share.

The Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, in its efforts to promote tourism, has also utilized social media as a means of promotion. The ministry's efforts can be seen from the creation of two official ministry websites, namely [www.parekraf.go.id](http://www.parekraf.go.id), the official website containing news and information about the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, and [www.indonesia.travel](http://www.indonesia.travel), an Indonesian tourism promotion

website. It has accounts on Facebook and Twitter with the same name, i.e. [Indonesia.travel](https://www.facebook.com/indonesia.travel) for Facebook and [@indtravel](https://twitter.com/indtravel) for Twitter. However, the use of websites, Twitter, and Facebook is still not optimal because the message is only delivered one way. Therefore, it is necessary to develop more effective ways to deliver tourism promotion messages. Tourism promotion is an important part for increasing visits to Indonesia. Even though the visit to Indonesia is increasing annually, the country still has to compete with other countries.

This study tries to explore social media as a means of interactive promotion for tourist destinations in Indonesia by elaborating the development of social media and tourism in Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to identify the potential of social media as a means of interactive promotion for Indonesian tourism. In the end, by answering the research problem and fulfilling the research objectives, suggestions for the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in developing interactive tourism promotion through social media can be provided.

## 2. METHOD

This descriptive qualitative research uses library research, which incorporate references that are relevant to the case. This research was conducted based on previous studies published in international journals. This research uses secondary data from books, the internet, and previous research reports.

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 *The Development of Social Media*

The massive flow of globalization in Indonesia can no longer be contained. This is accompanied by the increasingly sophisticated technological developments. The world is now entering the era industrial revolution 4.0, in which the way of communicating changes and grows significantly. The changes today is due to the emergence of social media. The use of social media grows rapidly; more and more new social media popped up along the easy access of the internet at homes and the development of smartphone and tablet technology. People can access the internet 24 hours a day from personal computers in their homes and their smartphones or tablets. As access to the internet becomes easier, social media networks have also emerged; take Facebook as an example, which began worldwide since 2008, not to mention Twitter, Path, Instagram, and many more. Through social media, people share information on various issues.

According to Data from <https://websindo.com>, the number of internet users in 2019 is 150 million users, and 95 per cent of that number uses the internet to access social media. This means that most internet users socialize through social media. The number of social media users reaches 56% of Indonesia's total population of 264 million, with mobile-based users reaching 130 million. It is not surprising that all social media platforms are finally focused on optimizing their applications on mobile phones. The most widely used social media are YouTube (88%), WhatsApp (83%), Facebook (81%), Instagram (80%), and Line and Twitter (59% and 52%).

The development of social media has changed the current pattern of communication. People now are encouraged to write comments on any issue, both personal and public, in social media. What they write can spread immediately to all parts of the world. Moreover, the dissemination of information is no longer only through word of mouth, but also through social media. The dissemination information through social media has a greater impact because such media cover the entire world. The rapid growth of social media is gained through effective and efficient information dissemination and minimum misunderstanding. In spreading information, the internet (in this case social media) is cheap and quick. The broadcast of information that previously could only be done by and to a handful of people now can done and to billions of people. Broadcast through written media also minimizes misinterpretation because the conveyed message is clearly recorded in the media. Therefore, it is clear that social media is not only a cheap but also accessible for many groups, so it is very suitable to be used as a promotional tool.

#### 2.2 *The Development of Tourism*

Tourism sector is currently very competitive [5, 6]. It is also recognized as being able to reduce poverty and increase economic growth [7]. UNWTO (United Nations of World Tourism Organization) predicted that tourism industry will become one of the major industries in the rapid developing world. It is predicted that the level of tourist arrivals will reach 1.8 billion by 2030, with foreign exchange generated at the USD 1.03 billion. Tourism, according to Law No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, is various tourism activities supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, entrepreneurs, government, and local governments.

The development of tourism in Indonesia can be seen from the increasing number of, both foreign and domestic, tourist arrivals. Tourism was ranked 2nd in contributing foreign exchange to the country in 2018 (Kemenpar.go.id). The foreign exchange contribution from tourism is only under crude palm oil (CPO) industry. Foreign exchange from tourism sector in 2018 was fairly high, reaching USD 19.29 billion, almost meeting this year's target of USD 20 billion. The figure increased for about 20% from 2017, which was around USD 16.8 billion. The role of tourism in the national economy can also be seen from the contribution of tourism sector to the GDP in 2018 (4.50 per cent) and 2019 (4.80 per cent). According to the WEF (World Economic Forum), Indonesia's tourism competitiveness is ranked 42nd in 2017, going up 8 ranks from the 2015. The potential of tourism sector for the Indonesian economy is evident.

Tourism as a service sector can be said as an endless source for Indonesian economy. The main object of tourism is tourists themselves. Tourists are divided into two: foreign and domestic. The former are foreign nationals visiting Indonesia, and the latter are Indonesian residents who travel within the geographical area of Indonesia. Foreign tourist visits continue to increase and always reach the target in each year, as well as domestic tourists. Every year the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy sets a target of foreign and domestic tourist visits as a benchmarks of tourism level in Indonesia. In 2018, the number of foreign tourists visiting Indonesia reached 15.81 million, an increase of 12.58% compared to the same period in 2017, which amounted to 14.04 million visits. Domestic tourists made 275 million trips. Both targets were met. Based on the data, domestic tourists have a great potential in developing tourism in Indonesia (bps.go.id).

#### 2.3 *The Role of Social Media for Tourism Destinations*

Several studies by Leung et al., Miguéns et al. and Zeng & Gerritsen [5, 8, 9] show that many tourists use social media to find references from previous destination visitors. Social

media provide a space for interaction and travel experience exchange. This shows how internet users have high trust in the experiences of others.

The fact above is relevant with Jupiter Research in 2009 that 50 per cent of internet users consulted first on blogs before making a purchase. Then Nielsen's research also indicates that surprisingly 81 per cent of internet users see the opinions of others before going on vacation, 90 per cent of internet users trust a friend's recommendation, and only 14 of internet users trust advertising. This phenomenon shows how interaction is very important to increase the effectiveness of promotion, which in this case is a promotion for tourism destinations.

Social media has become the most instrumental and inseparable aspect of tourism. The most frequently used social media for tourists in searching tourist destinations is TripAdvisor, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter [1]. This makes it clear that social media play a key role before, during, and after travelling to tourism destinations.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The development of world tourism is very rapid. Therefore, Indonesia must not be left behind and try its best to improve its tourism sector. Although the contribution of Indonesian tourism continues to increase every year, improvements must be made in order to compete with other countries whose tourism is also growing. One of the improvements is by attracting more tourists (both foreign and domestic) to Indonesia. The path that must be taken is of course through promotion. Therefore, increasing innovation in the field of promotion must continue. One simple innovation that can be done to increase promotion is conducting interactive promotions through messages in social media.

Dissemination of information through social media can provide advantages and disadvantages, depending on how it is used. Appropriate use of social media can increase the traveling intention of internet users who read and follow social media.

The appropriate use of social media is through persuasion and establishment of emotional closeness to increase the confidence of account followers. Tourism is one of the important sectors both in the world and in Indonesia.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] E. Constantinides, "Foundations of Social Media Marketing," *Procedia - Soc. Behav. Sci.*, vol. 148, pp. 40–57, 2014.
- [2] Y. I. Hamzah, P. Penelitian, D. Pengembangan, K. Kepariwisata, K. Pariwisata, and D. E. Kreatif, "Potensi Media Sosial Sebagai Sarana Promosi Interaktif Bagi Pariwisata Indonesia," *J. Kepariwisata Indones.*, vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 1–9, 2013.
- [3] A. M. Kaplan and M. Haenlein, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Bus. Horiz.*, 2010.
- [4] H. Delerue, A. M. Kaplan, and M. Haenlein, "Social media: Back to the roots and back to the future," *J. Syst. Inf. Technol.*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 101–104, 2012.
- [5] D. Leung, R. Law, H. van Hoof, and D. Buhalis, "Social Media in Tourism and Hospitality: A Literature Review," *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*. 2013.
- [6] I. N. Santi, "Tourism Destination Competitiveness Perception of Tanjung Karang Donggala Beach at Central Sulawesi," *Aust. J. Basic Appl. Sci.*, vol. 9, no. July, pp. 633–640, 2015.
- [7] K. Hung et al., "Knowledge Dissemination in Tourism Education: A Case of Tourism Marketing," *J. Travel Tour. Mark.*, vol. 27, no. 5, pp. 519–532, 2010.
- [8] J. Miguéns, R. Baggio, and C. Costa, "Social media and Tourism Destinations: TripAdvisor Case Study," *Adv. Tour. Res.*, 2008.
- [9] B. Zeng and R. Gerritsen, "What do we know about social media in tourism? A review," *Tourism Management Perspectives*. 2014.
- [10] Z. Xiang and U. Gretzel, "Role of social media in online travel information search", *Tourism Management*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 179-188, 2010. Available: 10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016.