



The Role of Social Media and Destination Image in Increasing Tourist Visits to UNESCO Global Geopark in West Java

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Abstract. Tourism is one sector that plays a role in the economy of a country. It has multiplier effect that is able to create easy and cheap jobs that have an impact on the creation of a country's foreign exchange. The development of international tourism in various developing countries can increase their role in the global economy. This study aims to determine the role of social media and destination image in increasing tourist interest in UNESCO Global Geopark in West Java. The research design used was explanatory research with social media Instagram, destination image, and interest in visiting as the variables. The method of data collection used was a questionnaire. The research subject was Ciletuh Geopark, one of the UNESCO Global Geoparks in West Java, involving 200 GURILAPSS Instagram followers as research respondents. The analysis tool used was the structural equation modeling structural equation model (SEM). The results showed that social media had a positive and significant effect on the image of the destination, and destination image had a significant positive effect on visiting interest.

Keywords: destination image · Instagram · interest to visit · social media · UNESCO global geopark

1 Introduction

The development of tourism has undergone many changes in terms of patterns, forms, and nature of destination activities. The tourism sector has now been taken into account in the economic progress of a country. It is proven that the tourism sector can create easy and cheap jobs and contribute a large amount of foreign exchange for the country.

Especially in Indonesia, the contribution of tourism foreign exchange to the national foreign exchange earnings showed an increase before Covid-19. In the period from 2016 to 2018, there was an increase in foreign exchange by 47 percent from 11.206 billion USD to 16,426 billion USD in 2018 (BPS, 2018).

Many developing countries have succeeded in increasing their participation in the global economy through the development of international tourism [1].

Tourism development is inseparable from marketing strategies. The existence of good tourism potential, supported by good accessibility and promotion, will optimize the marketing carried out [2].

Sukabumi Regency has a complete tourist destination consisting of mountains, jungles, oceans, beaches, rivers, and cultural arts with the tagline “GURILAPSS”. Sukabumi Regency has world-recognized tourist destinations, namely: CPUGG (Ciletuh Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark). However, because of Covid-19 tourist visits both foreign and domestic have decreased by 64% and in CPUGG have decreased by 66%. (Source: Dispar Kab. Sukabumi, 2022).

To increase the number of tourist visits, the Regional Government of Sukabumi Regency through the Marketing Division of the Tourism Office utilizes social media as a means to conduct marketing/promotion of CPUGG tourism objects.

Tourism marketing is an important component of tourism development and must be carried out continuously and sustainably by paying attention to marketing media that are targeted at a tourist attraction that can be used to maintain and increase tourist visits [3].

Schaffer [4] argues that social media is mostly described as an attractive, timely, low-cost, and highly efficient tool providing companies with new market access, reduced transaction costs, and worldwide instant communication [5].

The latest phenomenon of social media is the marketing of a product or service of a company. According to Tuten and Solomon [6], social media marketing is the use of social media technology, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offers that have value for organizations and stakeholders.

Tourism marketing activities are often carried out through Instagram social media. This is because Instagram is one of the media used by tourists in determining tourist destinations to visit through reviews from tourists who have visited first. There are also many tourists who join the tour after seeing the photo on Instagram [7].

Using Instagram can achieve brand popularity, increase sales volume, and business exposure on a large scale with minimal or almost no cost [8]. Initially, Instagram only had photo editing and sharing features, then it developed with other features, namely sharing videos and photo messages directly to other users [9]. Instagram has become an effective platform for disseminating tourism information and its platform is very strategic, able to connect more attractive images for promotion compared to YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

According to As'ad and Alhadid [10], dimensions of social media marketing include:

1. Online Communities

Online communities are communities that have the same interest in a product or business that are built through the use of social media. Online communities on Instagram are followers of a business's Instagram account. The active participation of followers on social media can help in improving content.

Schau [11] proposed the indicators of online communities consisting of; a) Social networking; focusing on creating, enhancing, and maintaining bonds, b) Impression management; activities aimed at building a good impression in a community and c) Community engagement; activities that members undertake that will strengthen and increase engagement.

2. Interaction

Interaction is the ability to add or invite friends to a network, where followers can connect, share and communicate with each other. The indicators of interaction are: a) sharing information with other users through the Instagram direct message (DM) feature, two-way interaction from the business's Instagram account with followers, b) enabling conversation, exchanges, and interactions with other users through the mention feature, and c) the convenience of giving opinions by providing feedback on business Instagram account posts through likes and comments.

3. Sharing of content

Sharing of content is an individual exchange, distribution, and receipt of content in social media rules, where possible content can be in the form of images, videos, or status updates.

The indicators of sharing of content are: a) as a media for exchanging information: sharing posts from the Instagram account to be sent via DM to other users, b) distributing content by sharing posts from Instagram accounts via Instagram stories.

4. Accessibility

Accessibility is the ease of access and minimal cost of using social media that allows users with online access to initiate or participate in social media conversations.

Accessibility indicators according to Parasuraman [12] also Jun and Cai [13] include: a) short waiting time: getting a response or service in a short time, b) convenience in accessing: Instagram can be accessed anytime and anywhere without any location and time restrictions, c) Ease of accessing Instagram using various electronic media (smartphone, laptop, tablet).

5. Credibility

The last dimension is credibility. Credibility is described as sending a message that clearly articulates the brand to build credibility for what is said or done that relates emotionally to the target audience.

The credibility dimension on Instagram can be linked to the credibility indicator according to Fandy Tjiptono [14], which consists of a) expertise (competence): users can judge the credibility of the business's Instagram account seen from the number of followers and likes, b) trustworthiness: reliable, always put the interests of customers first, and c) likeability: interesting, fun, and well worth choosing and using. In this indicator, the user can assess it based on the testimony of consumers who have purchased or used the products or services offered.

One of the social media used by the Marketing Division of the Sukabumi Regency Tourism Office is Instagram with the consideration of the most followers, widely used to collect information on tourist attractions recommendations, its creative and innovative features, and social media that is in great demand by customers in Indonesia as it is ranked the 3rd mostly used media with the number of users as much as 86.6% of the total population of 274.9 million [15].

The use of Instagram is able to realize the awareness of tourists as a target market for cultural diversity and natural beauty [16]. Instagram is one of the media used by tourists in determining tourist destinations to visit through reviews from tourists who have visited it first [7]. In addition to Instagram, the image of the destination also affects the interest of visiting tourists and becomes an important consideration for tourists in choosing a tourist destination to visit. According to Coshall [17], the image

of a destination is a picture, thought, belief, feeling, and perception of a destination. Destination image is the general impression of tourists towards a tourist destination. The image of the destination will be the initial reference in determining how attractive a tourist destination is, and will influence decisions about which tourist destinations to visit.

Hunt [18] said that an image is the impression of a person who states that the destination has not been visited. Destination image is not only defined as the perception of individual destination attributes but also the overall or holistic impression of the destination. The destination image consists of functional characteristics that focus on aspects of physical evidence and psychological characteristics that focus on non-physical aspects [19]. In other words, the image of the destination should be perceived both in the form of individual attributes and a holistic impression (mental atmosphere and imagination about the destination).

Khairani [20] said that the process of selecting a tourist destination is the most important stage in the formation of the image of the destination before the trip. The image perceived after a tourist visit will also affect consumer satisfaction and the intensity to make return visits in the future, depending on the ability of the tourist destination to provide experiences that are in accordance with the needs of tourists and the image of the tourist area.

Destination image is the result of understanding and knowledge of a fact that exists in a person's mind and has been processed and stored in his memory so that the image can be measured by the attitudes and opinions that arise from the person. Hanif et al. [21] stated that the image of a destination is the belief that tourists have about a destination. Destination image is not always in the form of facts or experience, but also can be formed as a strong motivating factor or driving force to travel tourists to a tourist destination.

1. Cognitive destination images are knowledge of the attraction, facilities, and reputation of the destination.
2. Effective destination images are evocative feelings, cool/exciting feelings, happy feelings, and calm feelings at a destination.

The image of a tourist destination will be affected by the use of social media [22], which can increase the buying interest of tourists, namely visiting tourist destinations [23]. Buying interest is a decision-making process in the process of evaluating, purchasing, and utilizing products (Schiffman et al., 2000).

The decision to visit a tourist destination can be considered a consumer activity in choosing a product or service in a purchase decision [24]. Kotler [25] stated that in the same behavior, interest in visiting tourists is equated with buying interest in consumers, which is measured by the same indicators, which is in accordance with in Kotler's et al., theory [25], before making a purchase, tourists or consumers usually have various considerations to visit one destination, so that it can provide motivation to make choices and actions which are then referred to as interest.

Furthermore, according to Ferdinand [26] the buying interest is interpreted into several indicators, namely transactional, referential, preferential, and exportation interest. Before going on a tour, a tourist first carries out a mental process to arrive at an election decision, which involves when to visit, how long the visit is, where the destination is,

how the visit is carried out, and so on. This decision-making process is very important for tourism development related to various facts that influence the decision to visit a tourist destination [27].

Previous research discussed the role of social media and destination image in increasing tourist visits. Gaffar et al. [28] research results showed that there was a new view on the role of social media marketing to visit tourist destinations influenced by the image of the destination, then it was proven that social media marketing had a positive effect on the image of the destination. In addition, interest in visiting and the image of the destination had a positive effect on interest in visiting. Cahyono et al. [29] found that Instagram social media and websites affected the interest of visiting tourists. Charli et al. [30] revealed that there was a significant influence of the marketing of social media, tourist facilities and the image of tourist destinations on the interest of tourists visiting tourist objects. Syahreza et al. [31] showed that social media content had an important role in shaping the destination image and tourist interest in visiting tourist destinations. Nifita et al. [32] also stated that social media had a significant effect on visiting interest.

The study described in this study aims to determine the role of Instagram social media and destination image in increasing tourist interest in CPUGG tourist attractions.

2 Methods

This study was explanatory research. The variables studied in this study were the independent variables, namely social media Instagram, destination image, and tourist interest. The type of data used was quantitative data, and the data source was obtained from primary data.

Data collection was done through a questionnaire, and the measurement used an ordinal scale with the instrument scale, namely the Likert scale with a score range from 1 to 5.

The population used in this research was GURILAPSS Sukabumi Instagram followers, which amounted to 2,601 in May 2022. Random sampling was employed in which the number of samples ranges from 100–200 or at least five times the number of indicators as a condition for using SEM analysis tools (Byrne, 2016).

3 Result and Discussion

Figure 1 illustrates the measurement results of a complete structural model of the influence of Instagram social media on destination image and tourists' interest in visiting Ciletuh Palabuhan Ratu Unesco Global Geopark (CPUGG). Figure 1 also shows the value of the analysis results; chi-square = 18.854, $df = 11$, $p = .064$, $cmin/df = 1,714$, $RMSEA = .063$, $RMR = .032$, $AGFI = .929$, $GFI = .972$, $CFI = .958$ and $TLI = .921$.

Table 1 shows that:

- a. The probability value (P) of X (instagram) to Z is 0.012, where this value is smaller than the significance level of 1%, 5%, and 10%, so that X has a positive effect on Z.
- b. The probability value (P) of X to Y (visit interest) is 0.027, where this value is smaller than the significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%, so that X has a positive effect on Z.

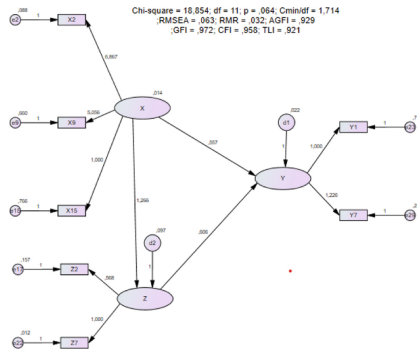


Fig. 1. Complete structural model measurement

c. The probability value (P) of Z (Destination Image) to Y is 0.015, where this value is smaller than the significance level of 5%, and 10%, so that Z has a positive effect on Y.

The results of the analysis show that social media has a positive influence on the interest of visiting tourists. This is in accordance with the hypothesis test which shows the probability value (P) of X against Z of 0.012, where this value is smaller than the significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%. Thus, X (Instagram) has a positive effect on Y (visit interest).

Instagram has an influence on tourist interest in visiting which can help make it easier for tourists to get information about CPUGG tourist destinations. Instagram social media also affects tourists' interest in visiting CPUGG by looking at posts related to tourist destinations that invite them to visit tourist attractions or see posts from friends/family regarding tourist information.

Instagram social media has a positive influence on the image of the destination. This is in accordance with the results of hypothesis testing which shows the probability value (P) of X against Y is 0.027, where this value is smaller than the significance levels of 1%, 5%, and 10%. Thus, it can be concluded that X (Instagram) has a positive effect on Y (destination image).

Instagram affects the image of the destination. Instagram is an important tool to provide information about CPUGG tourist destinations in Sukabumi Regency to the public. The more people know and visit the CPUGG tourist destinations, the more the destination image from within the tourists will be formed.

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Z	←	X	.1266	.828	1.528	.012	par_7
Y	←	X	.557	.508	1.096	.027	par_5
Y	←	Z	.606	.249	2.435	.015	par_6

Destination image has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest. The results of hypothesis testing shows that the probability value (P) of Z against Y is 0.015, where this value is smaller than the significance level of 5%, and 10%. Thus, Z (destination image) has a positive effect on Y (visit interest).

Interest in visiting is strongly influenced by destination goals because the image of the destination comes from the perception of each tourist on a tourist destination that is seen from the products and attributes of a destination, so if a tourist destination has a positive image, it will attract tourists to visit.

Instagram has a positive effect on interest in visiting which is mediated by the image of the destination, so social media Instagram has a very important role in influencing interest in visiting CPUGG tourism objects in Sukabumi Regency. The existence of social media allows people to form an image of the destination such as a tourist experience that can be shown through social media which then forms a positive destination image, so that it will generate interest in visiting tourist destination. The impact of the results of this study is that Instagram can disseminate information quickly, so that it can influence someone to do something. Thus, it is suggested for tourism business actors who are in Sukabumi District to be more aggressively promoting on social media about these tourism destinations to influence tourists to visit CPUGG tourist destinations.

The results of this study are in accordance with previous research, which examined the influence of Instagram social media on visiting interest, Instagram social media on destination image, and Instagram social media on visiting interest mediated by destination image, in which destination image had a positive and significant influence on visiting interest.

4 Conclusion

This study aims to determine the role of social media and destination image in increasing tourist interest in UNESCO Global Geopark in West Java. The results showed that social media had a positive and significant effect on the image of the destination. Social media also had a positive and significant effect on the image of the destination. Destination image had a significant positive effect on visiting interest. Thus, it can be concluded that destination image played a role in mediating social media relations with interest in visiting.

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