

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS TOOL TO PROMOTE BEACH TOURISM IN AKKARENA BEACH

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the use of social media as a promotional tool to enhance the attractiveness of Akkarena Beach, located in Makassar City. Digital promotion through social media has become a crucial strategy in strengthening destination branding and attracting tourists, especially in the era of rapidly evolving information technology. The research focuses on the effectiveness of social media in delivering tourism information, the types of content that most appeal to audiences, and the most influential platforms in promoting Akkarena Beach. Despite its natural beauty and available tourism facilities, Akkarena Beach still faces challenges such as the lack of a targeted promotional strategy, limited involvement of local stakeholders in digital content creation, and outdated online information. This study uses a qualitative case study approach, employing observation, interviews, and content analysis of social media related to the destination. Data were analyzed using a SWOT approach to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in utilizing social media as a promotional medium. The findings show that key strengths include the beach's scenic appeal, accessibility, and strong visual potential for digital content, while weaknesses involve inconsistent content and low participation from local actors. Opportunities arise from the growing trend of visual-based tourism promotion and government support for digitalization programs, while threats include competition from other destinations that are more active on social media. The study concludes that creative, collaborative, and sustainable promotional strategies are essential in leveraging social media to improve the visibility and competitiveness of Akkarena Beach as a leading beach tourism destination.

Keywords: social media, digital promotion, beach tourism, akkarena beach, tourist attraction

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media plays an important role in promoting beach tourism. Through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, various elements of tourist attractions, including natural panoramas, facilities, and visitor activities, can be disseminated widely and quickly. These posts are effective in building a positive image and increasing the attractiveness of destinations in the public eye. The use of location tags, popular hashtags, and interactive features also expands the reach of promotion organically. In addition, social media also contributes to strengthening tourist engagement, increasing exposure for local businesses, and encouraging community-based economic growth around tourist areas. The use of social media in promoting beach tourism shows that digital platforms serve as effective communication tools. Active user participation in sharing their experiences creates a viral effect that expands the reach of promotions without significant costs. This digital strategy not only increases awareness of beach tourism but also strengthens public engagement and supports local economic growth. Overall, the strategic use of social media has become an important part of efforts to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of beach tourism.

A number of previous studies have discussed the use of social media as a promotional tool in the tourism sector, particularly beach tourism. Hays, Page, and Buhalis (2013) in their research stated

that social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become an integral part of modern tourism destination marketing strategies. Social media is considered capable of expanding the reach of promotion while building two-way communication between destination managers and potential tourists. Research by Mariani, Di Felice, and Mura (2016) also shows that visual content shared through social media can strengthen the image of beach destinations and increase interest in visiting them. Meanwhile, Zeng and Gerritsen (2014) highlight the important role of user-generated content in shaping tourists' perceptions of a destination. These studies conclude that social media is not only a medium of information, but also an effective means of persuasion in attracting tourists. Thus, social media has great potential as a relevant and adaptive promotional strategy in response to the development of digital consumer behavior in this era of globalization.

However, promoting Akkarena Beach tourism through social media still faces a number of issues that require serious attention. One of the main obstacles is the suboptimal digital communication strategy used by destination managers in conveying information to potential tourists. The promotional content uploaded tends to be inconsistent, visually unappealing, and poorly structured in terms of narrative and publication schedule. In addition, cooperation between local governments, tourism industry players, and social media users such as influencers is still limited, resulting in less than optimal promotional reach. The participation of the local community in utilizing social media as a means of promotion is also still low, due to a lack of digital literacy and access to training. In addition, the absence of integrated promotional guidelines has resulted in sporadic and unsustainable promotional efforts. These issues show that the potential of social media as a promotional tool has not been optimally utilized in supporting the development of tourism in Akkarena Beach.

This study aims to analyze the use of social media as a promotional tool in increasing the attractiveness of Akkarena Beach, located in Makassar City, South Sulawesi. The main objective of this study is to determine the extent to which social media is effective in influencing tourist interest in visiting this destination. In addition, this study also aims to identify the most attractive types of promotional content and the most widely used social media platforms in promoting Akkarena Beach. Akkarena Beach was chosen as the location for this study based on its potential as one of the leading beach tourist destinations in Makassar that is actively promoted through social media. Through this study, it is hoped that an overview of appropriate digital strategies for increasing the visibility of beach destinations in the information technology era can be obtained. This study also seeks to provide recommendations to local tourism stakeholders on optimizing the use of social media as an effective promotional tool. Thus, the results of this study are expected to contribute positively to the development of sustainable tourism in coastal areas.

2. RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY

This study uses the case study method because it is considered the most appropriate method for gaining a deeper understanding of tourism promotion strategies through social media at Akkarena Beach. This method was chosen because the researchers wanted to directly explore the experiences, perceptions, and communication patterns of managers, business actors, and tourists in utilizing social media as a means of promotion. A qualitative approach was used to obtain more detailed and in-depth data through interviews, observation, and field documentation. This method allowed the researcher to observe the actual conditions of digital promotion taking place at the research location directly without any manipulation. Direct field research aims to provide a complete picture of the tourism promotion practices that actually occur at the destination. The collected data will be analyzed thematically to find patterns or trends in the use of social media as a tourism promotion tool. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to provide concrete input for the development of digital-based beach tourism promotion strategies, especially at Akkarena Beach.

In this study, the data collection technique used was direct observation at Akkarena Beach, Makassar. The observation was conducted so that researchers could see firsthand how tourism promotion activities through social media were carried out at that location. This method allowed

researchers to record various promotional activities, interactions between tourism operators and tourists, and tourists' responses to promotional content circulating digitally. Observation also helped researchers gain a deeper understanding of the situation on the ground, including the obstacles and potential associated with the use of social media in tourism promotion. The data obtained from the observation was systematically recorded in the form of field notes to facilitate the analysis process. This technique was chosen because it was considered the most appropriate for capturing the actual and authentic conditions at the research location. It is hoped that the results of these observations can provide a concrete picture of the effectiveness of using social media as a tool for tourism promotion at Akkarena Beach.

In this study, data analysis was conducted using the SWOT analysis approach, as it was considered the most appropriate for evaluating tourism promotion strategies through social media at Akkarena Beach. This analysis helped researchers identify the “strengths” in the use of social media, such as the visual appeal of the beach and ease of digital access. The researchers also highlighted “weaknesses” that may hinder the effectiveness of promotion, such as a lack of content consistency or the limited digital literacy of local tourism stakeholders. In addition, “opportunities” that can be exploited, such as the increasing use of social media by the younger generation and digital tourism trends, were also analyzed. External “threats” such as competition with other destinations or environmental issues are also considered to make the promotion strategy more adaptive. The data obtained from direct observation in the field is organized into four SWOT categories to facilitate drawing relevant conclusions. The final result of this analysis is expected to provide applicable recommendations for the sustainable development of Akkarena Beach tourism promotion through social media.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 An Over View of Akkarena Beach

Akkarena Beach is one of the marine tourism destinations located in the Tanjung Bunga area, Makassar City, South Sulawesi. Its location, only about 10 minutes from the city center, makes this beach easily accessible to tourists, whether by private vehicle or public transportation. Akkarena Beach is known for its beautiful sea views and its calm and comfortable atmosphere for family recreation. This area is also a favorite spot for locals to unwind, especially on weekends and holidays. Its presence reinforces Makassar's image as a coastal city with promising marine tourism potential.

Physically, Akkarena Beach has black sand, relatively calm waves, and a wooden pier jutting out into the sea as one of its main attractions. The sunset view on this beach is also a moment that is sought after by tourists. In addition to its natural panorama, the area is equipped with various supporting facilities such as a parking area, seating areas, gazebos, restaurants, and water rides. The availability of this infrastructure supports visitor comfort and extends the length of stay of tourists at the location. This certainly contributes to increased economic activity around the beach area.

From a management perspective, Akkarena Beach is under the control of a private entity that works closely with the local government, particularly in terms of regulation and area development. Although it already has a management structure in place, there are still challenges in maximizing the potential of this destination, especially in terms of promotion. Competition with other marine tourism attractions in Makassar, such as Samalona Island and Losari Beach, requires innovation in marketing strategies. One approach currently being developed is social media-based promotion to reach young tourists and digital users.

In addition to its natural beauty, Akkarena Beach also has the potential to be a center for cultural and entertainment activities. Various events such as music performances, culinary festivals, and community activities are often held in the beach area. This makes Akkarena not only a place for recreation, but also a public space that supports community social activities. Collaboration between the government, management, and local communities is one of the key factors in maintaining the appeal of this area. With careful planning, Akkarena Beach can be developed into an integrated tourist destination that combines natural, cultural, and entertainment aspects.

In general, Akkarena Beach has great potential to develop as a leading tourist destination in the city of Makassar. However, this potential still needs to be supported by more effective and innovative promotional strategies, particularly through the use of social media as the main communication tool. The presence of social media can increase the visibility of the destination, attract tourists, and build a positive image among the public. Therefore, the development of planned and collaborative digital promotion is an important step in strengthening the position of Akkarena Beach on the regional and national tourism map.



Figure 1: Akkarena Beach
Source: Authors, 2024

3.2 The use of social media as a promotional tool to increase the appeal of Akkarena Beach

Social media is currently one of the main instruments in supporting digital tourism promotion activities. The speed of information dissemination, ease of access, and wide reach make social media an effective communication tool in attracting tourists. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which social media is used to increase the attractiveness of Akkarena Beach in Makassar City. Through this approach, it is hoped that the promotional strategies carried out can be more targeted and efficient. This study also aims to analyze the types of promotional content, such as photos, videos, and narratives, that are most effective in building the image of a destination. In addition, the involvement of social media users in disseminating tourism information is also an important indicator in measuring the effectiveness of promotion. Thus, social media can be optimally utilized to increase interest in visiting Akkarena Beach.

Akkarena Beach has potential natural attractions, but it is not yet widely known by tourists from outside the region. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of massive and strategic promotion on social media platforms. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify how social media can be used optimally in building a positive image of this destination. This study also aims to highlight how visual content such as photos of the beach, sunset scenes, and tourist activities can improve potential tourists' perceptions of Akkarena Beach. In addition, the involvement of local promotional accounts and tourism influencers in publishing content is an important part of the digital promotion strategy. In this context, social media is not only a channel of information, but also a two-way communication tool between the destination and potential tourists. With the right strategy, Akkarena Beach can emerge as a leading destination in digital media.

This study also aims to determine how tourists perceive social media content related to Akkarena Beach. Through analysis of comments, number of likes, and user interactions, it is possible to understand how the appeal of this beach is built digitally. Visually and emotionally appealing content is believed to shape positive perceptions and encourage people to visit. Another objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube in disseminating tourism information. The advantage of social media lies in its ability to reach audiences in a short time and at a relatively low cost. Therefore, it is important to know which

platform is most influential in the context of promoting Akkarena Beach. The results of this study are expected to provide recommendations on the most suitable platforms and content strategies.

Promotions conducted through social media must be tailored to current trends and digital user habits. This study aims to examine the most effective communication styles and visual approaches in attracting audience attention. One aspect analyzed is the use of promotional language that is persuasive, informative, and engaging. Short video content, tourist reviews, and visual testimonials have proven to be easier to share and reach more users. Thus, promotions are not only carried out by tourism managers, but also by users who are satisfied with their experiences. This study aims to show that experience-based promotion can be a powerful strategy on social media. This certainly supports the main objective of increasing the appeal of Akkarena Beach in a broad and sustainable manner.

In addition, this study aims to identify key actors who play a role in promoting Akkarena Beach on social media. Influencers, content creators, and local tourism accounts play a significant role in shaping public opinion about tourist destinations. Therefore, collaboration between beach managers, local governments, and social media actors needs to be analyzed to determine the extent to which this synergy has been formed. In an interview conducted by the researcher with one of the managers of Akkarena Beach, it was revealed that promotion through social media is currently sporadic and not yet strategically organized. "We only rely on personal posts on the beach's Instagram account, there is no collaboration with influencers or digital marketers," said the manager. This finding indicates that opportunities for digital collaboration are still wide open and need to be improved to expand the reach of promotion. By actively involving various parties, the promotion of Akkarena Beach can be carried out in a more targeted manner and have an impact on increasing tourist interest.

The next objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which social media has succeeded in shaping the image of Akkarena Beach as a destination in the public eye. The image of a destination is very important in building tourist confidence and interest in a place. Through analysis of content circulating on social media, it can be seen how Akkarena Beach is portrayed-whether it is attractive, clean, friendly, and worth visiting. This study also seeks to identify the gap between the image presented digitally and the actual conditions on the ground. By identifying this gap, managers can make adjustments to their promotional strategies to improve the accuracy of perceptions. The results of this objective are expected to assist in more realistic and accurate promotional planning. In this way, social media can become a means of shaping a consistent and credible image of the destination.

Furthermore, this study aims to formulate promotional strategies that are more innovative and adaptive to developments in digital technology. In an increasingly competitive tourism industry, innovation in digital promotion is a crucial differentiating factor. This study will examine various current promotional trends on social media, such as the use of interactive filters, augmented reality (AR) content, and live streaming as part of promotional campaigns. The use of these strategies can create an engaging digital experience and increase engagement with potential tourists. This objective is expected to provide practical recommendations to the management of Akkarena Beach in creatively utilizing social media. It also encourages the implementation of promotions that are not only informative but also entertaining and interactive. Ultimately, this approach aims to strengthen the appeal of Akkarena Beach in the digital era.

Overall, this shows that social media has a strategic role in increasing the attractiveness of Akkarena Beach tourism. By understanding how social media works and its effectiveness in promotion, it is hoped that tourism managers can make more informed decisions in designing their digital campaigns. This study provides a comprehensive overview of the types of content, platforms, and strategies that are most suitable for attracting tourists. In addition, the results of this study can be used as a reference for other tourist destinations in Makassar City in developing digital-based promotions. Social media is not only a promotional tool, but also a medium for building relationships between destinations and visitors. Therefore, its use must be planned, consistent, and adaptive to market needs. With this approach, it is hoped that Akkarena Beach will become better known and more popular.

3.3 The Effectiveness of Social Media in Influencing Tourists' Interest in Visiting Akkarena Beach

In today's digital age, social media has become one of the main sources of information for travelers when planning their trips. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube play a significant role in shaping the perceptions of potential tourists through the visualization of destinations. Images, videos, and reviews shared online have the power to arouse curiosity and interest in a destination. Therefore, it is important to know how much influence social media has on tourists' decisions to choose Akkarena Beach as a destination. This study will examine this effectiveness based on the responses and digital media consumption habits of tourists. Through this analysis, we can determine the extent to which social media plays a role in increasing tourist visits.

Social media has characteristics that enable the rapid, widespread, and interactive dissemination of information. This is a major advantage in influencing tourist preferences and decisions, including in choosing destinations such as Akkarena Beach. This study aims to identify indicators of effectiveness, such as user engagement levels, the number of content shares, and reactions to tourism information shared online. Additionally, it is important to evaluate the extent to which the content displayed meets the needs and expectations of potential tourists. Interest in visiting is not only influenced by visual beauty, but also by the narrative conveyed in promotional content. Therefore, the effectiveness of promotion through social media must be measured comprehensively. This assessment will provide a basis for more targeted and measurable digital promotion strategies.

In the context of Akkarena Beach, the effectiveness of social media can also be seen from the level of public awareness of the existence and attractiveness of this destination. This study aims to measure how many tourists know about Akkarena Beach through social media compared to other sources such as conventional advertisements or personal recommendations. The influence of social media is assessed through variables such as the intensity of viewing content, the type of platform used, and how often the content encourages the desire to visit. This is important because the high visibility of a destination on social media is often directly proportional to the level of interest in visiting it. Consistent, informative, and interesting content is considered capable of creating a positive image of the destination. Therefore, the effectiveness of social media is not only seen from the amount of content, but also from its quality and impact on tourist behavior. This study attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of these aspects.

To support the findings of this study, the author conducted a direct interview with one of the visitors to Akkarena Beach who came from outside the city of Makassar. He said, "I first learned about Akkarena Beach from a video on TikTok that showed a very beautiful sunset. After that, I searched for more information on Instagram, and it turned out that this place was indeed interesting to visit." This testimony shows that social media plays a direct role in creating curiosity, which then turns into a decision to visit. In addition, the visitor also stated that authentic and understated content is more convincing than official advertisements. This indicates that the effectiveness of social media greatly depends on how messages are conveyed and narratives are constructed. This interview supports the assumption that user-generated content tends to be more influential than formal promotions. Thus, the experiences and testimonials of tourists on social media have great potential in encouraging visits to Akkarena Beach.

Social media shapes tourists' perceptions of Akkarena Beach. Perceptions formed through visual and narrative content can increase curiosity and emotional interest among potential tourists. In many cases, destinations that successfully attract attention on social media tend to experience a significant increase in visits. Therefore, the perceptions built through social media must be positive, credible, and consistent with the reality on the ground. If there is a discrepancy between the expectations created by social media and the reality of the destination, it can reduce tourist satisfaction. This study also looks at how reviews and comments from other users contribute to shaping travel decisions. By understanding this perception-building process, digital promotion strategies can be designed more wisely.

The effectiveness of social media is also greatly influenced by the type of content used in promotions. Content in the form of short videos, high-quality photos, and personal stories are considered more effective in generating interest among tourists. The purpose of this study is to analyze what type of content has the most impact in attracting potential visitors to Akkarena Beach.

This will help destination managers determine the direction of promotional content development in line with target market preferences. Not all visual content is capable of influencing emotions; therefore, it is important to combine visual beauty with a strong narrative. Social media is not just a place to share information, but a space where emotions and interests can be shaped through creative approaches. Understanding the effectiveness of these types of content is an important aspect of this research.

In assessing the effectiveness of social media, engagement is one of the main indicators. This study aims to measure the level of user engagement with promotional content for Akkarena Beach, such as the number of likes, comments, and shares. High engagement indicates that the content has successfully attracted attention and built meaningful interactions with the audience. In addition, comments that show interest in visiting can be a sign that the content has a real impact on interest. This activity is an important parameter for assessing how effective social media is in generating interest in visiting. This study will also evaluate whether this engagement leads to actual decisions to visit. With this data, the effectiveness of social media in tourism promotion can be measured more objectively.

Overall, the purpose of this study is to provide an empirical description of the extent to which social media influences tourists' decisions in choosing Akkarena Beach as a tourist destination. The effectiveness of social media is measured not only by the quantity of content dissemination but also by its impact on tourist behavior and visitation intentions. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more adaptive and data-driven digital promotion strategies. These findings can also provide input for tourism managers, local governments, and creative industry players in managing the image of destinations online. With an approach based on tourist interests and responses to content, the promotion of Akkarena Beach can be directed more efficiently. Social media can be an effective bridge between destinations and tourists if managed professionally and sustainably. Therefore, its use must be designed with the digital behavior of potential visitors in mind.

4. CONCLUSION

Research on the use of social media in promoting Akkarena Beach tourism shows that social media plays an important role in increasing the attractiveness and visibility of this destination. Through visual content such as photos, videos, and visitor reviews shared on digital platforms, the image of Akkarena Beach can be quickly shaped and disseminated to a wide audience. This promotion not only has an impact on increasing the number of visits, but also builds a positive perception that influences tourist interest. The participation of the community, managers, and digital actors such as influencers is an important element in strengthening this promotion organically. The findings of this study also show that most tourists learn about Akkarena Beach through social media, not conventional media. This confirms that social media-based digital strategies need to be the main focus in developing beach destination promotion in the current era. Therefore, the use of social media must be designed in a structured, attractive, and relevant manner to the behavior of today's digital tourists.

Optimizing digital promotion through social media requires a collaborative and sustainable approach between destination managers, local governments, and the digital community. Training in content creation, improving the quality of tourism support facilities, and collaborating with creative industry players are key steps to increase the effectiveness of promotion. Social media does not only function as a one-way promotional tool, but also as an interactive space that allows tourists to share experiences, provide feedback, and form a digital community that is loyal to the destination. In the context of Akkarena Beach, promotional strategies based on real experiences and visitor testimonials have proven to be more effective in driving visitor interest. This shows that the success of tourism promotion depends not only on technology, but also on the authenticity of the message and the active participation of all stakeholders. With strong synergy and an adaptive digital approach, Akkarena Beach has great potential to become a leading beach destination that is widely known at the national and international levels. Going forward, social media-based promotion must be an integral part of sustainable tourism destination management.

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