

The Role of Digital Marketing in Developing Tourism Marketing Networks in Regions of Pulo Aceh

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Abstract. *This study aims to identify natural potentials integrated with local wisdom in the remote area of Pulo Aceh and to formulate an appropriate digital marketing system to expand tourism business marketing networks. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data triangulation techniques, including field observations, literature review, and documentation. The sampling technique used is probability sampling. The results indicate that Pulo Aceh possesses significant natural tourism potential, particularly in marine tourism and local culture, which can be developed through integrated digital marketing strategies. The optimal utilization of digital media plays an important role in enhancing destination visibility and expanding the marketing reach of tourism businesses in Pulo Aceh. This study is expected to serve as a reference for local governments and tourism business actors in designing sustainable digital marketing strategies in remote areas.*

Keywords: *natural potential, local wisdom, digital marketing, tourism, Pulo Aceh.*

1. Introduction

Equitable development and economic growth remain key priorities of the Indonesian government, with tourism playing a strategic role as a driver of national and local economic development. The tourism sector contributes significantly to employment creation, community income, and foreign exchange earnings (UNWTO, 2019). Indonesia's vast archipelagic nature and rich diversity of natural and cultural resources provide strong potential for the development of sustainable tourism, particularly in coastal and island regions (Hall, 2011).

Pulo Aceh is a remote island region in Aceh Province that possesses considerable natural tourism potential, especially in marine tourism, scenic coastal landscapes, and rich marine biodiversity supported by strong local wisdom among coastal communities. Despite these advantages, tourism development in Pulo Aceh has not been fully optimized. Limited infrastructure, accessibility constraints, and inadequate promotion remain major challenges that hinder the growth of tourism businesses and reduce the visibility of the destination. In the digital era, the utilization of information and communication technology, particularly digital marketing, offers a strategic solution to overcome geographical and infrastructural limitations in remote areas (Scheyvens & Russell, 2012).

Digital marketing enables tourism stakeholders to promote destinations more broadly through social media platforms, tourism websites, and other digital channels in a cost-effective manner (Kotler, 2017). Well-designed digital marketing strategies can effectively showcase natural attractions and local wisdom, thereby enhancing destination competitiveness and sustainability (Buhalis, 2015).

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on identifying natural potentials integrated with local wisdom in Pulo Aceh and analyzing the implementation of effective digital marketing systems to expand tourism business marketing networks. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for local governments and tourism business actors in formulating sustainable digital-based tourism development strategies while supporting the economic empowerment of local communities in remote areas (UNESCO, 2018).

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth description of the natural potentials and local wisdom of Pulo Aceh, as well as analyzing the implementation of digital marketing systems in expanding tourism business marketing networks. This approach was considered appropriate for understanding social and economic phenomena in remote areas.

2.2 Sample

The sampling technique applied in this study was probability sampling, in which each member of the population had an equal opportunity to be selected as a research sample. The samples consisted of tourism business actors, local community members, and relevant stakeholders involved in tourism management and promotion in Pulo Aceh.

2.3 Research Location

The research was conducted in Pulo Aceh, Aceh Province, a remote island region with significant marine tourism potential. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that Pulo Aceh possesses substantial tourism resources that have not yet been optimally developed.

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using a data triangulation model to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings. The data collection techniques included:

- a. Field observation, to directly observe natural tourism potentials, community activities, and supporting tourism facilities.
- b. Literature review, by examining relevant journals, books, official reports, and policy documents related to tourism and digital marketing.
- c. Documentation, including photographs, archives, and other supporting data related to tourism potential and promotional activities in Pulo Aceh.

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2.6 Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The analysis process involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. An inductive approach was applied to identify natural potentials and local wisdom and to

formulate appropriate digital marketing strategies in accordance with the characteristics of remote areas.

3. Results and Discussions

Pulo Aceh is a cluster of small islands located in Aceh Besar Regency, endowed with considerable potential for marine tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism. Field observations reveal that the region’s primary tourism assets include pristine beaches, diverse marine ecosystems, and the authentic socio-cultural life of coastal communities. Despite these advantages, tourism-related businesses in Pulo Aceh remain largely managed through traditional practices. Local enterprises predominantly consist of family-operated homestays, small-scale food services operating on a reservation basis, and transportation services that are irregular and limited in availability.

Interviews with local residents indicate that tourism promotion is still largely dependent on word-of-mouth communication and recommendations from previous visitors (Tussyadiah, 2016). Only a limited number of community members have adopted digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or WhatsApp to market their services. This finding is consistent with Setiawan (2021), who reports that tourism-related micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in remote areas generally exhibit low levels of digital marketing literacy.

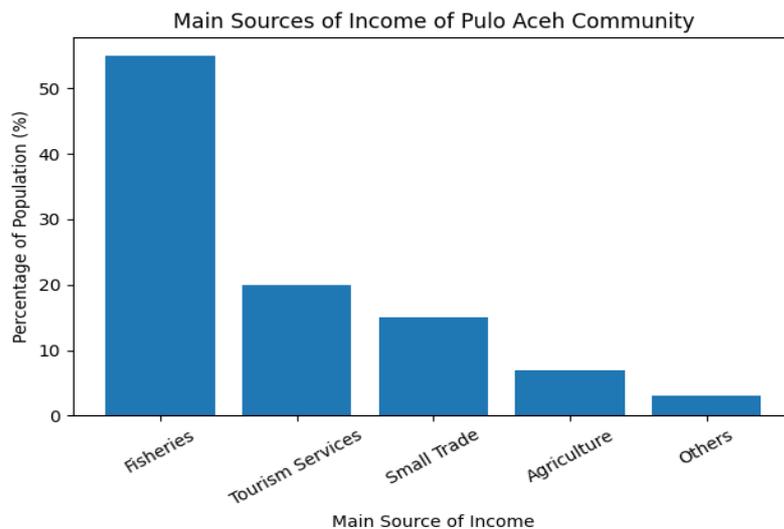


Figure 1. Main Sources of Income in Pulo Aceh.



Figure 2. Interviews with the Local Community in Pulo Aceh.

4. Conclusions

This study confirms that digital marketing plays a significant role in supporting the development of marketing networks for tourism-related businesses in Pulo Aceh. The findings indicate that social media has become the primary platform for local entrepreneurs to promote tourism destinations, build a positive destination image, and reach potential tourists beyond the local area. In addition, the use of simple communication applications such as WhatsApp Business has facilitated faster and more efficient reservation processes and communication with tourists.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies several major challenges, including limited digital literacy among local stakeholders, inadequate internet infrastructure, and a lack of collaboration among relevant stakeholders. These constraints reduce the effectiveness of digital promotion efforts and slow the integration of Pulo Aceh into national and global tourism networks.

Therefore, it can be concluded that although the implementation of digital marketing in Pulo Aceh is still at an early stage, it has considerable potential to be further developed as a key strategy for expanding marketing networks and enhancing the competitiveness of the destination.

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It is hoped that the results of this study will be beneficial for Serambi Mekkah University in particular, as well as for the community and MSME actors in Pulo Aceh, Aceh Besar Regency, especially in providing insights into the effective use of digital marketing to expand tourism business marketing networks.

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