

## ANALYSIS OF LANGKAT REGENCY TOURISM COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN INCREASING TOURIST VISIT INTEREST

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi komunikasi pariwisata yang diterapkan oleh Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Langkat dalam meningkatkan minat kunjungan wisatawan. Kabupaten Langkat memiliki potensi alam dan budaya yang besar, namun belum sepenuhnya dioptimalkan melalui strategi komunikasi yang efektif dan adaptif terhadap tren global. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian explanatory, melalui teknik observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi yang digunakan meliputi pemanfaatan media sosial, pelibatan micro-influencer, penguatan narasi destinasi berbasis lokalitas, pengembangan ekonomi kreatif berbasis komunitas, serta kolaborasi lintas aktor. Strategi ini telah mampu membangun citra destinasi secara positif dan memperkuat keterlibatan wisatawan secara emosional terhadap Langkat, terutama melalui pendekatan digital dan promosi berbasis pengalaman. Namun demikian, penelitian juga menemukan tantangan seperti infrastruktur yang belum memadai, rendahnya kualitas layanan, serta kurangnya integrasi antara promosi daring dan kenyataan layanan di lapangan. Dengan mengacu pada teori Marketing Mix 7P, strategi komunikasi Langkat belum sepenuhnya menyentuh seluruh aspek bauran pemasaran secara seimbang. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan pendekatan strategis yang lebih terintegrasi dan berbasis keberlanjutan untuk membangun sistem komunikasi pariwisata yang inklusif, adaptif, dan berorientasi jangka panjang. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam merancang kebijakan komunikasi pariwisata yang efektif bagi daerah dengan karakteristik dan tantangan serupa. Komunikasi Langkat belum sepenuhnya menyentuh seluruh aspek bauran pemasaran secara seimbang. Oleh karena itu, dibutuhkan pendekatan strategis yang

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lebih terintegrasi dan berbasis keberlanjutan untuk membangun sistem komunikasi pariwisata yang inklusif.

**Kata Kunci:** *Komunikasi, Pariwisata, Strategi, Mix Marketing, Wisatawan*

### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the tourism communication strategy implemented by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office in increasing tourist interest. Langkat Regency has great natural and cultural potential, but has not been fully optimized through an effective and adaptive communication strategy to global trends. This study uses a qualitative approach with an explanatory research type, through observation techniques, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the communication strategies used include the use of social media, the involvement of micro-influencers, strengthening locality-based destination narratives, developing a community-based creative economy, and cross-actor collaboration. This strategy has been able to build a positive destination image and strengthen tourists' emotional involvement in Langkat, especially through a digital approach and experience-based promotion. However, the study also found challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, low quality of service, and lack of integration between online promotion and the reality of services in the field. Referring to the Marketing Mix 7P theory, Langkat's communication strategy has not fully touched all aspects of the marketing mix in a balanced manner. Therefore, a more integrated and sustainability-based strategic approach is needed to build an inclusive, adaptive, and long-term oriented tourism communication system. This study is expected to be a reference in designing effective tourism communication policies for areas with similar characteristics and challenges. Langkat Communication has not fully touched all aspects of the marketing mix in a balanced manner. Therefore, a more integrated and sustainability-based strategic approach is needed to build an inclusive tourism communication system.

**Keywords:** Communication, Tourism, Strategy, Marketing Mix, Tourists



## INTRODUCTION

Langkat Regency has great potential to become one of the leading destinations in North Sumatra. This is supported by data showing the growth of foreign tourist visits to North Sumatra. In July 2017, the number of foreign tourists reached 21,076 visits, an increase of 11.37% compared to the previous month. This increase not only reflects the attractiveness of North Sumatra as a tourist destination, but also opens up opportunities for Langkat Regency to attract more tourist visits through strategic and innovative tourism management. Langkat Regency has natural and cultural advantages that can be optimized to support the growth of the tourism sector, such as Gunung Leuser National Park, Bukit Lawang, and local cultural traditions. However, challenges in marketing tourism in Langkat Regency remain. One phenomenon that needs to be considered is the increasing awareness of tourists about the importance of environmental sustainability. As many as 70% of global tourists now consider environmentally friendly aspects in choosing tourist destinations. This shows that Langkat Regency needs to apply sustainability principles in the management of its tourist destinations. Improving the image as an eco-friendly destination can be an effective strategy to attract tourists who care about the environment, while preserving Langkat's nature as the main capital for tourism (De Crescenzo et al., 2022; Luong, 2023).

In addition, technological developments also affect tourist consumption patterns. The use of technology such as virtual reality (VR) in tourism promotion has become a global trend that provides great opportunities for destinations such as Langkat Regency. By utilizing this technology, tourists can experience a virtual experience before they visit directly. This not only increases their interest in coming but also eliminates doubts that may arise due to the lack of visual information. The use of this technology can help Langkat Regency expand its marketing reach, especially to foreign tourists who may not be familiar with this destination (Tyutyunnik et al., 2023; Zhuang et al., 2022). Another trend that needs to be adopted is the optimization of mobile devices in the tourism experience. Data shows that more than 70% of tourists in several countries use smartphones to plan their trips. For Langkat Regency, developing a mobile application that makes it easier for tourists to search for information, book tickets, or plan trips will be an important step to increase competitiveness. The use of this mobile application can also support a more personal and interactive marketing strategy, thus creating a more interesting tourism experience for tourists (Moscardo & Hughes, 2023; Peng et al., 2023).



Micro-influencer marketing is also a relevant approach in tourism marketing today. As many as 92% of consumers trust recommendations from micro-influencers more than traditional advertising (Errmann et al., 2019; Lv & Huang, 2024). Langkat Regency can take advantage of this trend by collaborating with local influencers who have an audience that is emotionally connected to them. This strategy not only increases the credibility of the destination but also helps create a closer relationship between tourism managers and potential tourists. The urgency of collaboration between stakeholders is also increasing. In an unstable economic condition, tourism destination managers in Langkat Regency cannot rely solely on government funding (Seraphin et al., 2018; Sugimoto et al., 2019). Partnerships with the private sector, local communities, and other tourism destinations can create synergies that strengthen Langkat's appeal as a leading destination. A successful example of this partnership can be seen in the collaboration between the London and Paris destinations, which offers a unique and integrated cross-country tourism experience.

The trend of video marketing, especially live streaming, should also be a major concern in promoting tourism in Langkat Regency (Janjua et al., 2023; Zhenrao et al., 2021). Research shows that 65% of tourists use videos to decide which destinations they will visit. Through live streaming, tourism managers can show the natural beauty of Langkat in real time, creating an authentic impression that is difficult to match with other types of promotions. This strategy is also more cost-effective than conventional video production, making it an ideal choice for Langkat Regency. In addition, the concept of "experience economy" is increasingly becoming a major focus in the tourism industry. Today's tourists are no longer just looking for famous destinations, but also unique experiences that can provide unforgettable memories. Langkat Regency can take advantage of this trend by offering tourism activities that focus on local cultural interactions, nature exploration, and experiences that cannot be found anywhere else (Agostino et al., 2021; Ristić, 2019). This approach will help Langkat attract a segment of tourists who are looking for something authentic and different.

Expert opinions such as Philip Kotler support the importance of innovative and adaptive marketing in winning the competition in the tourism industry. According to him, effective marketing not only creates value for customers but also builds long-term relationships with them. This principle is relevant for Langkat Regency, which must be able to combine modern marketing strategies with local wisdom to create close relationships with tourists (Anggraeni et al., 2023; Song et al., 2022). With the various



opportunities and challenges that exist, research on tourism marketing strategies in Langkat Regency is very important. This research will help identify existing strengths and weaknesses, as well as formulate appropriate strategies to increase tourist interest (Elyta, 2021; Suwanti, 2023). In addition, this research can also be a reference for tourism managers in facing changing market dynamics. Through this research, it is hoped that Langkat Regency can optimally utilize its tourism potential. Not only to increase the number of tourist visits, but also to support local economic growth and cultural and environmental preservation. With the right marketing strategy, Langkat Regency has a great opportunity to become a leading tourist destination that is able to compete at the national and international levels.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to strengthen adaptive and effective tourism communication strategies for Langkat Regency in facing the dynamics of global tourism trends, such as increasing awareness of sustainable tourism, digitalization of promotions, and changes in tourist behavior that are more personal and experience-based. Although Langkat Regency has superior natural and cultural potential, the lack of integration of technology-based communication strategies, cross-stakeholder collaboration, and promotional approaches that are relevant to today's tourist preferences are obstacles to increasing the competitiveness of this destination. Therefore, this research is important to evaluate and formulate tourism communication strategies that can increase tourist interest significantly and sustainably.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study refers to an in-depth study of the steps taken by tourism managers in Langkat Regency to attract tourists, both domestic and foreign. The focus is on understanding and evaluating the marketing strategies implemented, such as promotion, destination management, collaboration with stakeholders, and adaptation to modern marketing trends such as the use of technology and experience-based approaches (experience economy). This study aims to identify the effectiveness of existing strategies, obstacles faced, and potential developments so that tourist interest in visiting Langkat Regency continues to increase. This study is relevant considering that tourism plays an important role in supporting local economic growth and preserving culture and the environment in the region. In this study, the author collected 1,000 previous studies for analysis. After all the data was collected, the author conducted network analysis and density analysis. The results are as follows:

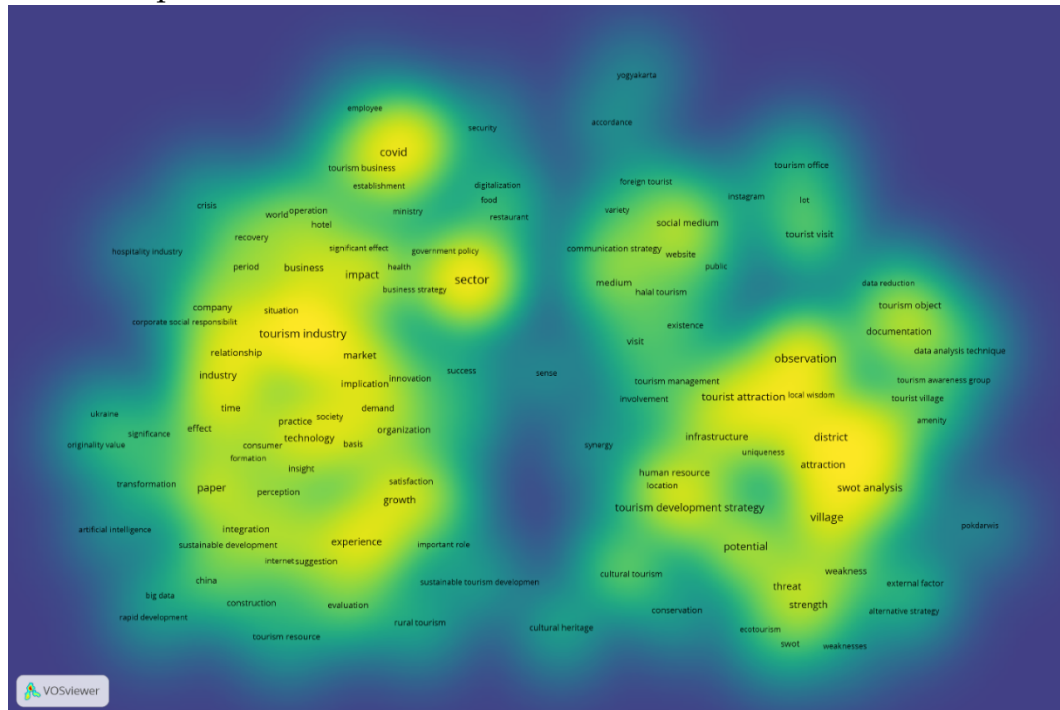






The green cluster focuses on tourist objects and attractions, infrastructure development, and tourism development strategies based on local wisdom and sustainability. Topics such as tourism village development, SWOT analysis, and cultural heritage preservation are the main focus, showing the importance of a local approach in attracting tourists. Meanwhile, the blue cluster highlights the role of social media and communication in tourism marketing strategies. This includes the use of digital platforms for promotion, engagement with tourists, and enhancing

the destination's image. Inter-cluster interactions show that effective tourism strategies must integrate technological innovation, community-based approaches, and digital media to create engaging and sustainable tourism experiences.



**Figure 2. Analysis of previous research density**

The figure above is a visualization of the density analysis of previous research related to tourism marketing strategies. From this analysis, it can be seen that topics such as the impact of COVID-19, technology integration, tourism experience, and tourism attraction management are the main focus in the existing literature. The dense cluster shows that research on the tourism industry has discussed a lot about the application of innovative technology, sustainability, and the development of experience-based strategies to improve the competitiveness of tourist destinations. In addition, infrastructure management efforts, observations of local attractions, and documentation and SWOT analysis are also important concerns in tourism development.

However, previous research still tends to be general and less specific in exploring marketing strategies at the local level, especially in areas with great tourism potential such as Langkat Regency. While topics such as tourism attraction management and SWOT analysis often appear, in-depth approaches related to local wisdom-based marketing and adaptation to



global trends such as micro-influencer marketing, optimization of mobile devices, and the use of virtual reality technology have not been comprehensively discussed in the context of the region. Therefore, this study attempts to fill this gap by analyzing marketing strategies that can be applied effectively to increase tourist interest in visiting areas with unique tourist attractions such as Langkat. This research is expected to provide a more relevant strategic contribution to local tourism development.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach with an explanatory research type. This approach aims to explain the marketing strategies carried out by tourism managers in Langkat Regency in increasing tourist interest. This study utilizes primary and secondary data as the main sources of information. Primary data was obtained through direct observation of tourist attractions in Langkat Regency and in-depth interviews with tourism destination managers, related business actors, and tourists. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from official documents, tourism statistics reports, and literature related to tourism marketing strategies (Alfikri, 2022; Samosir, 2023).

Data collection techniques in this study include three main methods, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations are carried out to directly observe the conditions of tourist destinations, tourist activities, and the implementation of marketing strategies in the field. In-depth interviews are used to obtain information from competent sources, such as tourism managers, tourism business actors, and tourists. Documentation is carried out by collecting supporting data in the form of photos, activity reports, tourist visit statistics, and documents related to tourism policies in Langkat Regency. The combination of these three techniques is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied (Alfiyahsari et al., 2023; Mira Susanti, 2023)

Data analysis in this study uses content analysis based on the Krippendorff approach. This technique is used to evaluate data systematically and objectively, so that it can identify patterns, themes, and meanings from the data obtained. The analysis process includes the stages of coding, categorizing, and interpreting data to answer research questions. Data validity testing is carried out using triangulation techniques, namely comparing and validating data from various sources and data collection methods. This triangulation aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the research results so that the findings obtained can be relied on in providing recommendations for the development of tourism marketing strategies in Langkat Regency.





## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Communication Strategy of Langkat Regency Tourism Office in Increasing Tourist Visit Interest**

The Langkat Regency Tourism Office realizes that the potential of natural and cultural tourism will not have a significant impact without a targeted and innovative communication strategy. Therefore, managing the destination narrative is a crucial first step. The communication strategy begins with building a destination identity that emphasizes local wealth, such as Gunung Leuser National Park, Bukit Lawang, and the traditions of indigenous peoples that are still preserved. This narrative is packaged in various forms of visual and narrative campaigns that not only highlight visual beauty but also show the uniqueness of local values that distinguish Langkat from other destinations (Anggela et al., 2018).

In the digital era, the use of information technology has become a central aspect in the communication strategy of the Tourism Office. Social media is maximized as an interactive space to convey information, build destination image, and communicate directly with tourists. Digital content such as photos, short videos, and live streaming are used to build emotional appeal and present authentic virtual experiences. In addition, the use of official websites and mobile-based tourism applications has begun to be developed to make it easier for tourists to access information, make reservations, and plan trips independently (Eichhorn et al., 2008).

The Tourism Office also implements a collaboration-based communication strategy with various stakeholders, including local communities, tourism business actors, and digital influencers. This approach allows the creation of promotional messages that are more authentic and closer to the reality of tourists. Local influencers, especially those who have an emotional closeness to their followers, are involved in promoting destinations through personal experience stories. This collaboration not only builds public trust but also expands the reach of promotions without having to rely on expensive conventional media (Li et al., 2023). Another significant strategy is strengthening value communication, especially related to sustainability issues. The Langkat Regency Tourism Office has begun to mainstream environmentally friendly messages in every promotional material. This is done in response to the increasing awareness of tourists towards ecotourism issues. By positioning Langkat as a destination that cares about conservation and empowering local communities, this communication strategy not only attracts value-oriented tourists but also strengthens the image of the region as a socially and ecologically responsible destination (Widjaja, 2022).



Overall, the communication strategy implemented by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office shows a shift from a traditional promotional approach to a participatory, experience-based, and adaptive communication model to global trends. Through a combination of strengthening local identity, utilizing digital technology, cross-actor collaboration, and delivering sustainability messages, Langkat positions itself as a destination that is not only visually appealing, but also socially and emotionally relevant for today's tourists. This strategy is expected to be able to increase tourist visits sustainably and provide real contributions to economic growth and preservation of regional culture (Widaningsih et al., 2020).

Researchers have conducted interviews with the Langkat Regency Tourism Office as tabulated below:

Table 1. Tourism Communication Strategy

No	Informant	Strategy	Result
1	Tourism Office	Digital communication through social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)	Promotion of leading destinations such as Tangkahan, Bukit Lawang, Batu Katak
2	Tourism Office	Annual events (photo and video competitions)	Increasing community involvement and destination exposure
3	Tourism Office	Community-based creative economy development	Increasing the capacity of local human resources through UMKM Technical Guidance
4	Tourism Office	Increasing accessibility and infrastructure	Planning for opening routes and repairing roads to destinations
5	Tourism Office	Digitalization training for tourism promotion	Increasing the promotional capabilities of tourism actors in Bukit Lawang
6	Tourism Office	Development of tourism villages and agro-tourism	Focus on fisheries-based agro tourism
7	Tourism Office	Collaboration and the "Bubur Pedas" program	Synchronization of cross-sector destination development



8	Tourism Office	Development of sustainable tourism villages	27 tourist villages are designated and given environmentally friendly management technical guidance
9	Tourism Office	Community-based ecotourism approach	Communities are active in making tourism management decisions
10	Tourism Office	Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (Riparda)	Collaboration between government, communities, and tourism groups in sustainable development

Based on the results of the interview tabulation, it can be concluded that the Langkat Regency Tourism Office has implemented a fairly comprehensive communication strategy by optimizing social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube as the main channels for promoting leading tourist destinations. The use of this digital platform is not only effective in reaching domestic and foreign tourists but also provides an interactive space that brings destinations closer to potential visitors. This strategy reflects the adaptation to the increasingly dominant technology-based promotion trend in the global tourism industry (Papyshev & Yarime, 2023). In addition to digital promotion, the Tourism Office is also actively organizing annual events such as photo and video competitions. This strategy has proven to be able to increase destination exposure and build creative community participation. This activity is not only a promotional medium, but also a tool to strengthen the visual identity and tourism image of Langkat Regency. This kind of event also triggers the involvement of the younger generation and local creative communities in supporting the development of the tourism sector (Uyar et al., 2023).

Another strategic step is the development of a community-based creative economy and improving tourism infrastructure. The Langkat Regency Government has shown its commitment to empowering local communities through training for MSME actors and increasing accessibility to tourist areas. Initiatives such as opening new routes and improving roads to tourist destinations are concrete forms of efforts to create a visitor-friendly and economically inclusive tourism ecosystem (Andrade & Rhodes, 2012). In supporting the principle of sustainability, the agency's strategy also includes the development of tourist villages and agro-tourism as well as a community-based ecotourism approach. This shows a long-



term orientation in preserving nature and local culture as the main attraction. Community involvement in tourism management decision-making creates a sense of ownership and collective responsibility in maintaining a sustainable tourism ecosystem (Konu et al., 2024).

In general, the communication and tourism development strategies carried out by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office show a holistic and collaborative approach. Collaboration between sectors, innovation in the "Bubur Pedas" program, and the existence of planning documents such as Riparda are a strong foundation for structured and measurable tourism management. This effort is not only aimed at increasing the number of tourist visits, but also at strengthening the position of Langkat Regency as a leading destination in North Sumatra that is oriented towards sustainability (Astuti, 2021).

The tourism communication strategy implemented by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office can be analyzed comprehensively through the Marketing Mix 7P theory approach which includes product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. In the context of products, Langkat Regency has various superior tourist attractions such as Gunung Leuser National Park, Bukit Lawang, and Batu Katak. The Tourism Office not only highlights natural beauty, but also markets tourism experiences such as jungle trekking, rafting, and local cultural interactions as part of the "tourism product" sold to tourists (Khotimah & Jalari, 2021).

In terms of promotion, digital communication strategies are the main focus. The use of social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook has been utilized optimally to reach tourists, especially the younger generation who are more responsive to visual content. In addition, annual events such as photo and video competitions are also held to encourage public involvement while increasing destination visibility. This campaign is packaged with an interesting approach and emotional narrative to strengthen Langkat's image as an exotic and environmentally friendly destination. This strategy not only disseminates information, but also shapes tourist perceptions and interests (Pérez Gálvez et al., 2021).

In terms of place and physical evidence, Langkat faces challenges in terms of infrastructure and accessibility. For this reason, the communication strategy is not only oriented towards promotion, but also includes efforts to build tourist trust by showing development progress such as road repairs, providing environmentally friendly homestays, and creating transportation routes from Kualanamu to tourist destinations. The physical evidence element is also strengthened through the launch of an official tourism website and application that displays information, photo



galleries, and tourist testimonials to increase credibility (de Souza et al., 2020).

The people and process components are realized through tourism HR training and collaboration with local actors such as MSMEs, traders, and communities. The Langkat Regency Government held technical guidance, promotional digitalization training, and strengthening the capacity of tourist villages. The tourism service process also continues to be improved so that tourists are not only satisfied with the destination, but also with the services they receive. By integrating the seven elements of the 7P, Langkat's tourism communication strategy not only aims to attract tourist visits, but also to build a sustainable, inclusive, and adaptive tourism system to changing times (Rogers & Oats, 2022).

### **Exploring Tourist Experience: Perceptions and Responses to Tourism Communication**

Tourists' experiences with a destination are greatly influenced by how information and imagery of the destination are communicated before, during, and after the visit. In Langkat Regency, communication strategies that have been implemented through social media, digital events, and the involvement of local influencers have shaped tourists' initial perceptions of destinations such as Bukit Lawang and Tangkahan. Foreign tourists, for example, often stated that their interest arose because of visual content about orangutans, tropical rainforests, and jungle trekking experiences that were intensively displayed on Instagram and YouTube (Widanta, 2021).

Tourist responses to Langkat Regency's tourism communication showed an appreciation for an authentic and local value-based approach. Many tourists felt that the content they saw before visiting was in accordance with the reality on the ground. They felt connected to the narrative of nature conservation, local culture, and activities that were oriented towards experiences, not just tourism consumption. This provides added value compared to other destinations that only display visual beauty without contextual values or stories (Rosida & Saputri, 2019).

However, there were also critical notes from domestic tourists regarding the lack of variety of information available in Indonesian, as well as the lack of integration between promotional media and the reality of services on the ground. For example, although social media displays activities such as rafting and wildlife watching, not all of this information can be easily accessed or booked once tourists are on site. This indicates a gap in the continuity of communication between the digital world and real experiences (Sirikhvunchai, 2023).

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Tourist experiences are also influenced by the quality of interactions with local tourism actors. Foreign tourists generally respond positively to the friendliness of local guides who are considered to have in-depth knowledge of the Gunung Leuser National Park ecosystem. They also appreciate community involvement in ecotourism practices. However, some tourists regret the lack of supporting facilities such as information boards, sanitation, and adequate transportation access, which indirectly reduce overall tourist satisfaction (Setiawati & Pamungkas, 2022).

From this exploration, it can be concluded that tourist perceptions and responses to tourism communication in Langkat Regency are greatly influenced by the balance between digital narratives and the quality of direct experiences. The success of tourism communication is not only determined by how attractive a promotion is displayed, but also by the extent to which the promises of the promotion are realized in real experiences at the destination. Therefore, consistency between online communication and offline services is key to building loyalty and positive testimonials from tourists (Túñez López et al., 2016).

Table 2. Traders and Tourists' Responses to Tourism Communication Strategies

No	Informant	Response	Description
1	Trader 1	Tourism Impact	Tourism drives local economic growth, but also has socio-cultural and environmental impacts.
2	Trader 1	Collaboration with Management	The village tour program involves local traders such as palm sugar and tempeh to increase income.
3	Trader 2	Hotel Management Involvement	The hotel recommends that tourists visit the traders' shops as part of a promotional strategy.
4	Trader 2	Promotion Strategy	Using face-to-face methods and collaboration with travel agents and hotels to attract tourists.
5	Tourist 1	Information Source	Learned about Langkat tourism from the Instagram account and the "Visit Bukit Lawang" website.



6	Tourist 1	Promotion Influence	Digital promotion influences decisions about visits and activities during the holidays.
7	Tourist 2	Word of Mouth	Interested in Bukit Lawang after hearing stories from friends, and was impressed by the beauty of the river.
8	Tourist 2	Favorite Activities	Whitewater rafting and the friendliness of the residents are the main attractions that distinguish Langkat from other areas.
9	Tourist 3	Visit Motivation	Interested in coming because of reading a book about orangutans and the forest in Bukit Lawang.
10	Tourist 3	Criticism & Suggestions	The road to the location is damaged, but the experience in TNGL is very impressive and deserves to be widely promoted.

Based on the tabulation above, it can be seen that the tourism sector in Langkat Regency has a significant influence on various parties, especially local business actors and tourists. From the perspective of traders, tourism is a driving force for the economy that can create business opportunities and increase community income. However, they also highlighted the negative impacts such as socio-cultural changes and potential environmental damage, which are challenges in developing this sector sustainably (Mbaidin et al., 2023). Collaboration between tourism managers and local traders is an appreciated strategy. Activities such as village tours involving sellers of palm sugar, tempeh, and other traditional products not only create added value for tourists but also strengthen the microeconomic network around the destination. This shows the existence of participatory economic practices that provide space for local actors to be involved in the tourism ecosystem, not just as a complement, but part of the tourism experience itself (Mahendra, 2018).

From the tourist's perspective, promotion factors and digital information play a very important role in influencing visiting decisions. Domestic and foreign tourists are familiar with Bukit Lawang through social media and websites such as "Visit Bukit Lawang", which are

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considered quite effective in presenting the destination's appeal visually and informatively. This promotion has proven to be able to create positive expectations which then encourage tourists to come and explore the various activities offered (Srisusilawati, 2020). Tourists' experiences while in Langkat Regency are also very diverse. Some mention jungle trekking and rafting as favorite activities, while aspects such as the friendliness of the residents and the uniqueness of the surrounding environment also strengthen the positive impression of the destination. However, criticism of inadequate infrastructure has also emerged, especially regarding the condition of the roads to tourist locations. This indicates that promotional communication must be balanced with improving the quality of supporting facilities so that tourist satisfaction is not reduced (Moon & Han, 2018).

This tabulation reflects the importance of integration between communication strategies, multi-party collaboration, and improving the quality of destinations. Strong digital promotion needs to be accompanied by infrastructure development, involvement of local actors, and protection of environmental carrying capacity. If this synergy continues to be strengthened, Langkat Regency has the opportunity to become a tourist destination that is not only in demand, but also appreciated for its consistency in presenting authentic and sustainable tourism experiences (Deale et al., 2010).

The tourism communication strategy implemented by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office shows an increasingly adaptive orientation towards technological developments and changes in tourist behavior. In this context, the use of social media as the main promotional medium is a form of innovation in conveying information, building destination image, and establishing direct interaction with tourists. This finding is in line with the research of Janjua et al. (2023) which emphasizes the effectiveness of video-based promotions and visual content in increasing destination attractiveness. By utilizing channels such as Instagram and YouTube, the government has succeeded in forming positive perceptions of tourists through strong and emotional visual narratives, especially for areas such as Bukit Lawang and Tangkahan (Pitasari et al., 2022). Furthermore, efforts to strengthen community-based tourism products and the involvement of local MSMEs reflect a holistic strategy that is oriented towards community empowerment. This strategy not only strengthens the product dimension in the marketing mix (7P), but also builds social ties between tourists and local residents. This is in accordance with the findings of Elyta (2021) which states that the integration of communication strategies and the creative economy has the potential to create new sustainable attractions, especially



in areas that have cultural and natural wealth. Programs such as village tours, tourism village development, and MSME digitalization training are concrete manifestations of collaboration between stakeholders in inclusive tourism development (Rohani et al., 2023).

However, the results of this study also found that there are still a number of structural challenges that affect the effectiveness of tourism communication in Langkat, such as inadequate infrastructure, minimal cross-sector coordination, and lack of tourism HR training. This problem is reinforced by Suwarti (2023) who highlighted that the success of tourism promotion in the region is not only determined by how massive the digital campaign is carried out, but also by the readiness of services and the convenience of access to the destination. Therefore, communication strategies must be developed in an integrated manner with infrastructure development policies and strengthening service quality (Castellano et al., 2021).

In the context of sustainability, the commitment of the Langkat Regency Government to integrating the principles of ecotourism and preserving local culture is an important added value. This approach is relevant to the studies of De Crescenzo et al. (2022) and Luong (2023), which state that global tourists are now increasingly considering environmentally friendly aspects in choosing destinations. The implementation of programs such as the development of 27 sustainable tourism villages and community involvement in the management of the TNGL area reflects an awareness of the importance of balance between conservation and tourism. Thus, Langkat's tourism communication strategy is not only promotive, but also transformative, because it is able to direct tourism towards a more responsible and sustainable model (Duxbury et al., 2021)

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the tourism communication strategy implemented by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office has demonstrated an adaptive, holistic, and collaborative approach. The use of social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook has become the main channel in shaping the destination image, reaching global tourists, and conveying a strong and experience-based visual narrative. In addition, annual programs, collaboration with local influencers, strengthening the creative economy, and involving the community in managing sustainable tourism villages demonstrate the local government's commitment to creating a communication model that is not only oriented towards promotion, but also empowerment and preservation.



However, this study also revealed a number of challenges such as limited infrastructure, low human resource training, and the ongoing gap between promotional narratives and real conditions in the field. Therefore, a more integrated communication strategy is needed with physical development, sustainability policies, and tourism service systems. By combining a technological approach, local wisdom, and the 7P marketing principles as a whole, Langkat Regency has great potential to increase tourist interest in a sustainable manner and strengthen its position as a leading destination that is competitive at the national and international levels.

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