

Enhancing Tourist Visits to Pantai Sembilan Through Effective Instagram Marketing Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep uses communication strategies to boost tourist visits to Pantai Sembilan, a well-known beach destination in Sumenep Region. By employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the research examines the effectiveness of digital marketing through Instagram in promoting tourist attractions. The findings show that the account utilizes various Instagram features to engage potential visitors. These features include posting attractive photos and videos, incorporating relevant hashtags, and using geotags. Additionally, the research highlights the crucial role of strategies such as identifying the target audience, crafting compelling messages, and selecting the right media in attracting both local and international tourists. The study concludes that effective use of social media, particularly Instagram, serves as a vital tool for enhancing Pantai Sembilan's visibility and increasing visitor numbers by providing a platform for interactive and direct marketing.

Keywords: digital marketing, tourism promotion, instagram strategies, visitor engagement

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry in Indonesia has witnessed a significant shift towards leveraging social media platforms for destination promotion. This research aligns with existing studies that highlight the growing importance of social media in attracting visitors (Achmad et al., 2024; Firman et al., 2023; Setiawati & Pritalia, 2023). Platforms like Instagram, with their focus on visual content and user engagement, have become powerful tools for showcasing destinations and influencing travel decisions (Rahman et al., 2021; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

Sumenep district, nestled on the captivating island of Madura, unveils a treasure trove of tourism gems, catering to every traveler's desire, from serene natural wonders to rich cultural experiences (Rosyidah et al., 2021). Among these jewels, Pantai Sembilan, situated in Bringsang Village, Gili Genting Subdistrict, stands out as a crown jewel. Accessible by a scenic 40-minute boat ride from the mainland, this haven unveils breathtaking natural beauty, complemented by comprehensive facilities and a unique blend of art and traditions. Pantai Sembilan's allure lies in its mesmerizing white sand dunes that gracefully form the numeral nine, complemented by vibrant coral reefs and pristine surroundings (Arfiyanto & Andini, 2021).

Pantai Sembilan caters to every visitor's need, offering a range of amenities that ensure a comfortable and memorable experience. Toilet facilities, a prayer room, eateries, gazebos, and lodging options are readily available. As the sun dips below the horizon, the beach transforms into a mesmerizing spectacle, with the golden sands harmoniously blending with the twilight sky. For those seeking an extended stay, 19 uniquely designed guesthouses dot the beachfront, providing a haven of tranquility.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sumenep's tourism industry witnessed a surge in visitor numbers, only to face a drastic decline during the pandemic's grip (BPS Kabupaten Sumenep, 2022). However, with the easing of restrictions in 2022, tourism is steadily regaining its momentum (Saifudin et al., 2022). Embracing the era of globalization, Sumenep's tourism has seamlessly integrated into the social media landscape, unlocking new avenues for promotion through technological advancements and effective communication strategies.

Social media has emerged as a cornerstone in marketing tourism destinations like Pantai Sembilan (Fauziah, 2023). Instagram, with its widespread popularity, plays a pivotal role in disseminating information and captivating potential visitors (Handayani & Adelvina, 2020). Effective social media management, including engaging and visually appealing content, has proven to drive a significant increase in visitor numbers (Isman et al., 2020).

To gain deeper insights into effective tourism marketing communication strategies on Instagram, several prior studies offer valuable perspectives. Firstly, a study by Karman et al. (2022) highlights the successful integration of various marketing aspects, including advertising, personal selling, and sales promotions, by Gunung Luhur tourism management on social media.

The study emphasizes the importance of providing COVID-19-related information to maintain visitor confidence.

Secondly, research on Pantai Sembilan, Gili Genting Island, underscores the immense potential of Bringsang Village to transform into a thriving tourism destination (Rosyidah et al., 2021). The study advocates for collaboration between BUMDes, the village government, and central government funding to support this development. Thirdly, exploration of social media management as a digital marketing strategy for halal tourism in Gampong Keude Unga reveals a remarkable surge in visitor numbers attributed to effective Instagram marketing (Sahputri et al., 2023). Fourthly, an investigation into Pantai Ekasoghi identifies four key aspects of social media marketing: advertising, interaction, collaboration, and connectivity. These elements collectively contribute to impactful promotion through Instagram (Perdana et al., 2023). Fifthly, Prasanti's study on digital marketing communication strategies at @stripesmestore demonstrates the effective utilization of Instagram Ads, promotions, and giveaways to capture audience attention (Prasanti et al., 2023).

Pantai Sembilan, like many tourist destinations in Indonesia, experienced a significant drop in visitor numbers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, tourism in Sumenep, including Pantai Sembilan, saw a steady increase in visitors, contributing positively to the local economy. The decline during the pandemic was attributed to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and health concerns. However, as restrictions eased in 2022, tourism began to recover, supported by enhanced promotion strategies, particularly on social media platforms like Instagram (Adiwilaga et al., 2022; Hassyati et al., 2022).

Before utilizing Instagram for promotion, Pantai Sembilan's visitor numbers relied heavily on word-of-mouth and local networks. Social media marketing has since proven to be a pivotal factor in attracting more tourists. Research has shown that effective social media campaigns not only boost visibility but also foster engagement, leading to increased visitor interest and trust (Hassyati et al., 2022; Valentino, 2024).

This research delves into the communication strategies employed by the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep to amplify tourist visits. By unraveling the secrets behind their effective strategies, the study aims to empower Pantai Sembilan's management to further boost

visitor numbers and contribute to the local economy. This research aims to address a gap in knowledge by examining the specific communication strategies employed by the @pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account. By analyzing their successful approach, the study can offer valuable insights for Pantai Sembilan's management and contribute to the development of best practices for social media marketing in Indonesian tourism.

This research holds significant importance as it addresses a critical gap in understanding the role of social media in promoting tourism destinations, specifically in the context of Pantai Sembilan. By examining effective digital communication strategies, the study offers valuable insights that can enhance marketing practices, foster sustainable tourism development, and strengthen local economies. The findings contribute to the broader discourse on digital marketing's impact, providing a framework that can inform best practices for similar destinations navigating the post-pandemic tourism landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, aiming to provide a detailed and in-depth understanding of the communication strategies utilized by the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep to amplify tourist visits. The research focuses on Pantai Sembilan's strategic use of digital marketing through Instagram for destination promotion. To gather rich and comprehensive data, the study employs two primary data collection methods: In-depth interviews and observation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants who possess valuable insights into Pantai Sembilan's Instagram marketing strategies. The participants in this study were Sutlan (S), aged 48, serving as a regional leader and manager of Pantai Sembilan; Ananda Fadzli (F), aged 31, managing an Instagram account; and tourists at the location, including Aelva Deliana (A), aged 28, Kartini (K), aged 38, Zenitzha Medina Zali (Z), aged 23. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility and in-depth exploration of the informants' perspectives. Observational data was gathered by carefully examining the @pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account,

analyzing its content, engagement patterns, and overall marketing strategies. The researchers provide data using brand24 application.

The collected data was subjected to a rigorous qualitative data analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Pratamasari & Achmad, 2024), involving three main steps: (1) Data Reduction: The vast amount of data was systematically reduced by identifying key themes, patterns, and recurring elements. (2) Data Presentation: The reduced data was organized and presented in a clear and structured manner, often using tables, diagrams, and visuals to enhance understanding. (3) Drawing Conclusions: Based on the analyzed data, conclusions were drawn about the effectiveness of Pantai Sembilan's Instagram marketing strategies and their impact on tourist visits.

By employing a rigorous qualitative descriptive approach, this study aims to shed light on the effective communication strategies employed by Pantai Sembilan's Instagram account, providing valuable insights for enhancing tourism marketing in the digital age.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In this study, to obtain results relevant to the research objective of identifying the communication strategies of the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep to increase tourist visits, the author conducted observations and interviews with individuals related to this issue. This research was carried out at Pantai Sembilan, utilizing social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram, and included observations on Instagram. To collect qualitative data in line with the descriptive research method, the author presents the research findings on the communication strategies of the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep aimed at increasing tourist visits. Based on interviews with eight informants, the researcher identified several key findings that provide valuable insights. These findings are categorized according to the identified issues.

As initial information, researchers analyzed the engagement of the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep using the Brand24 application to describe conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2021) and compare them with post-pandemic conditions (2022–2024). The analysis showed that engagement increased significantly in the post-pandemic period

compared to the pandemic period. Researchers noted an increase in mentions from 4 to 21, with 20 of the 21 coming from social media post-pandemic. Sentiment analysis showed a positive change, with three positive mentions and one negative mention in the post-pandemic period. In contrast, in the previous period, there was no data related to sentiment. Researchers also found that social media reach increased dramatically from 40 during the pandemic to 6,936 post-pandemic, supported by an additional non-social media reach of 347. Visitors created more user-generated content (UGC), increasing from 4 to 20, reflecting their increasingly active engagement (Figure 1).

	pantaisembilan	pantaisembilan
Total sebutan ⓘ	4	21 ★
Sebutan media sosial ⓘ	4	20 ★
Sebutan non-sosial ⓘ	0	1 ★
Penyebutan positif ⓘ	0% (0)	15% (3) ★
Penyebutan negatif ⓘ	0% (0) ★	5% (1)
Jangkauan media sosial ⓘ	40	6936 ★
Jangkauan media non-sosial ⓘ	0	347 ★
Presence Score ⓘ	1/100	1/100
AVE ⓘ	\$ 3	\$ 524 ★
Konten yang dibuat oleh pengg... ⓘ	4	20 ★

Figure 1: Engagement Comparison of @pantaisembilan_sumenep between Pandemic period (2019-2021) and Post-pandemic COVID-19 (2022-2024) (Souce: Brand24 application).

The metrics demonstrated the effectiveness of Instagram-based promotions and increased digital engagement efforts in the post-pandemic period. It shows the sharp increase in social media mentions and reach to the significant impact of focused marketing and relevant content creation. Visitors actively contributed to promoting the destination, as seen in the increase in UGC, which added authenticity and appeal to a broader audience.

The researchers highlighted that the presence score of 1 reflects brand strength or recognition limitations, which can be addressed through diversifying promotional strategies beyond social

media. Positive mentions that emerged post-pandemic indicate a positive reception of promotional content, while negative mentions indicate a need to improve service quality or visitor satisfaction. Overall, researchers describe these metrics as reflecting apparent engagement and economic potential growth, emphasizing the importance of maintaining and diversifying promotional efforts.

The visitor data for Pantai Sembilan from 2021 to 2023 highlights a significant growth trend, reflecting the effectiveness of strategic marketing and stakeholder collaboration (Figure 2). In 2021, during the height of the pandemic, the number of visitors totaled 4,066. As restrictions eased and promotional efforts intensified, visits surged to 9,543 in 2022, representing a 134.8% increase compared to 2021. This growth continued into 2023, with 22,748 tourists, a further increase of 138.3% from the previous year. The consistent year-over-year growth underscores the pivotal role of the Instagram-based promotions by @pantaisembilan_sumenep and support from the Sumenep Tourism Office (Dinas Pariwisata, Kebudayaan, Pemuda dan Olahraga).

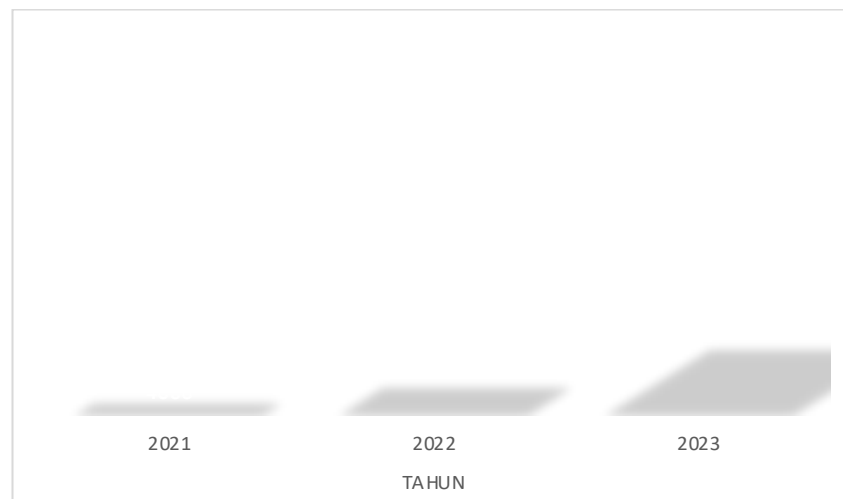


Figure 2. Comparison Tourist Visit to Pantai Sembilan, Giling Genting, Sumenep
(Source: Sumenep Tourism Office)

The data demonstrates a remarkable recovery and growth in tourism at Pantai Sembilan, with visitor numbers increasing from 4,066 in 2021 to 9,543 in 2022 and further to 22,748 in 2023. This growth reflects a successful alignment of targeted Instagram marketing and improved management facilitated by the Sumenep Tourism Office. Moving forward, the success in domestic tourism

serves as a foundation for expanding promotional efforts to global audiences, ensuring Pantai Sembilan's sustainability and elevating its position in the competitive tourism market.

Utilization of Instagram as a Promotional Medium

Social media, including Instagram, has become a pivotal tool in everyday life, facilitating various activities such as information seeking, communication, and promotion. Instagram enables users to access content via the internet, making it immensely popular for posting photos or videos and as a promotional medium (Basli & Achmad, 2024; Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019; Qumairoh et al., 2022). Pantai Sembilan in Sumenep harnesses this popularity by maintaining an official Instagram account for promotion and attracting more visitors. This aligns with the interview findings from the Informant, stating:

"Yes, it's in line, ma'am. In my opinion, promoting using Instagram is very easy and effective because people who used to not know about this place can now see everything that's here, surely also through the photo or video posts on Instagram." (Informant S, June 1, 2024).

The managers of Pantai Sembilan, together with the Instagram account handlers, strive to enhance the quality of visual content posted to attract more tourists. They utilize Instagram features such as posting photos and videos, gaining followers, using hashtags, geotagging locations, and activating comments for better interaction with followers. The following statement was provided by the Informant:

"Of course, the features like posting photos or videos in feeds, gaining followers, hashtags, and most importantly, enabling comments for interaction with our followers." (Informant K, June 1, 2024).

Implementation of Instagram Features by @pantaisembilan_sumenep

The beach tourism of Pantai Sembilan utilizes Instagram to promote its natural beauty to a wide audience. Through the official account @pantaisembilan_sumenep, managers leverage various Instagram features to support tourism promotion activities such as gaining followers, posting photos and videos, using hashtags and location tags, and enabling comment sections on their posts.

Currently, the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep has approximately 11.1 thousand followers. The account managers do not follow back all accounts that follow them; instead, they selectively follow certain accounts, such as those related to tourism such as @wisatamadura, @wisatasumenep, @pesonamadura, and @jawa_reepost_, to enhance the popularity of Pantai Sembilan.

The managers of the @pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account post appealing photos and videos sourced from smartphone albums or directly captured using Instagram's camera, showcasing the beauty of Pantai Sembilan. This practice was elucidated by the Informant, who stated:

"The photos or videos we upload are usually taken by ourselves specifically for posting on the Pantai Sembilan Instagram account, but we also often repost photos or videos uploaded on personal accounts or sent via direct message by tourists who have visited here."
(Informant F, June 1, 2024)

The use of hashtags is also a crucial part of Pantai Sembilan's marketing strategy. Hashtags such as #pantaisembilangiligenting facilitate other Instagram users in discovering and viewing content related to Pantai Sembilan. With these hashtags, tourists who post their photos or videos can be seen by the managers of the @pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account. Additionally, location tags are included in several posts, displaying the location of Pantai Sembilan in photos and videos. Geotags or locations on these visuals serve to guide potential visitors to the location with ease (Gan Giantika, 2019; Oktaviana et al., 2021; Wirawan et al., 2024).

The comment feature on Instagram enables two-way interaction between managers and visitors, enhancing engagement and providing space for feedback and suggestions (Anca Jurj, 2019; Murniaseh et al., 2021). Visitor comments often indicate satisfaction after visiting and help managers identify areas for improvement (Achmad et al., 2022). This feature is highly effective in building positive relationships with visitors and strengthening Pantai Sembilan's reputation as a tourism destination.

Communication Strategy of the Instagram Account @pantaisembilan_sumenep

There are four crucial aspects in designing a communication strategy: understanding the audience, crafting the message, determining the method, and choosing the communication media (Tranggono, Achmad, & Nurhaqiqi, 2022; Tranggono, Achmad, Sarofa, et al., 2022). In the context of increasing tourist visits through the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep, this communication strategy has been applied with a focus on audience understanding. The management identifies their primary audience, which includes the local community of Sumenep City, as well as people from other regions and abroad. The first thing to know is the target audience (Anggraeny et al., 2024; Prasanti et al., 2023), which for Pantai Sembilan includes the local community of Sumenep City, and then people from other regions and abroad.

In crafting the message, informants S and A describe how content is organized to capture the audience's attention. They utilize photos and videos showcasing the beauty of Pantai Sembilan and even save stories in Instagram highlights to ensure the content remains accessible to new visitors. While informant I explained:

"On Instagram, we usually post photos and videos, and sometimes we save stories in highlights so that people who are new to Pantai Sembilan's Instagram can also see them. Themes of natural beauty, such as clean white sand and lush surroundings, are used to attract more visitors through calming and inviting visuals." (Informant I, June 3, 2024)

Regarding communication methods, the researchers found that Pantai Sembilan employs the redundancy method, where messages are repeated to maintain audience attention (Arviani & Febrianita, 2020; Le Compte & Klug, 2021). This method aims to capture the attention of Instagram users continuously so that they remember the natural beauty of Pantai Sembilan and are compelled to visit. Pantai Sembilan's repetition method is implemented through repetitive posting of photos and videos.

The canalizing method is also applied to influence the audience to accept messages, gradually changing attitudes and thought patterns toward Pantai Sembilan. The activity of uploading photos and videos showcasing the natural beauty of Pantai Sembilan on the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep has impacted the public's attraction to visit due to its scenic

beauty. The resulting impact of altering attitudes and thought patterns is the increasing number of tourists visiting Pantai Sembilan.

The use of appropriate media significantly influences achieving communication goals, as evidenced by Pantai Sembilan's choice of Instagram as the primary promotional tool. Pantai Sembilan promotes tourism through the social media platform Instagram (@pantaisembilan_sumenep) to attract visitors. The managers of the @pantaisembilan_sumenep account utilize Instagram because it is deemed more effective in reaching the audience. Instagram features such as photo posts in feeds, videos in reels, and stories in the highlights of the @pantaisembilan_sumenep account support the information dissemination process conducted by the account.

From interviews and data analysis, it is evident that Pantai Sembilan has successfully implemented Marhaeni Fajar's communication strategy theory in managing their Instagram account. This not only strengthens their relationship with the audience but also enhances tourist interest and visits, demonstrating the effectiveness of their digital marketing approach.

The Effectiveness of Instagram in Promoting Pantai Sembilan Tourism

The Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep has emerged as an effective promotional tool for tourism in Sumenep Regency, leveraging the ease and speed of uploading photos and videos regularly from anywhere (Marchand et al., 2020; Qumairoh et al., 2022). Numerous visitors and followers have discovered Pantai Sembilan through this platform, enticed by the natural beauty showcased in the posts. One visitor said:

"I happened to have a close friend in class from Sumenep who told me about a beautiful beach in Sumenep that requires a ferry ride to access. I was intrigued and decided to search for it on Instagram, and I was indeed captivated by the scenery depicted in the posts. I eventually followed the account before visiting." (Informant A, June 16, 2024)

This positive impression was reinforced by the experience of other visitors. They were scrolling through Instagram looking for inspiration for a nature-based vacation with friends when came across Pantai Sembilan on the Explore page. Then they decided to check it out further and was immediately drawn to it. Since Sumenep is not too far away and traveling from Bangkalan

would be expensive, they decided to visit Pantai Sembilan instead. This demonstrates how Instagram not only attracts new visitors but also fosters repeat visits.

"The serene atmosphere makes it ideal for camping with family and a partner at night. There are also accommodations available for those who want to stay overnight but don't have their own tents. The air is calm, cool, and shady due to the abundance of trees, and the beach is clean and well-maintained." (Informant Z, June 2, 2024)

Instagram Content and Decision to Visit Pantai Sembilan

The Instagram content of @pantaisembilan_sumenep significantly influences tourists' decisions to visit destinations. Based on interview data, multiple respondents indicated that discovering Pantai Sembilan through Instagram posts played a pivotal role in shaping their travel choices. For instance, one informant from Surabaya was introduced to the beach through a friend and subsequently explored its Instagram page, finding the visual content compelling enough to plan a visit.

"I tried to search on IG and it turned out to be interesting if I saw the view from the posts. Finally, I also followed their Instagram before visiting." (Informant A, June 16, 2024).

Similarly, another respondent from Bangkalan discovered the destination while browsing Instagram for nature tourism options, highlighting the platform's role in promoting accessibility and inspiration.

"So at that time I was scrolling through Instagram to find references for nature tourism vacations with friends. Then I found Pantai Sembilan on Instagram, so I tried to stalk it right away. Then because Sumenep is not too far and it doesn't cost much if you go from Bangkalan, so we just went here." (Informant Z, June 2, 2024).

The persuasive power of Instagram lies in its visual appeal, fostering a sense of curiosity and desire to experience the destination firsthand. This suggests that strategically curated Instagram content—featuring scenic imagery, user testimonials, and engaging narratives—can effectively attract potential visitors, influence travel decisions, and enhance tourism promotion efforts.

These statements from interviews highlight Instagram's substantial influence on tourist decision-making, particularly in the case of Pantai Sembilan. Informants discovered the destination through visually engaging Instagram posts, often shared by friends or encountered while browsing.

These posts created interest and anticipation, ultimately motivating them to visit. The respondents' experiences underscore the platform's power to not only disseminate information but also evoke emotional responses and inspire travel behavior.

Discussion

The findings underscores the effectiveness of Instagram in promoting and sustaining interest in this tourist destination. There some key points: (1) @pantaisembilan_sumenep's frequent and engaging Instagram posts effectively capture the beauty of Pantai Sembilan. (2) Instagram serves as a powerful discovery tool, attracting new visitors to Pantai Sembilan. (3) The positive experiences shared on Instagram encourage repeat visits and promote Pantai Sembilan as an ideal destination for various activities. (4) Instagram's effectiveness lies in its ability to showcase the destination's allure and foster a sense of connection with potential visitors (Hyun, 2021; Marchand et al., 2020).

Also, there are some consideration from informants: (1) The use of hashtags and relevant keywords can further enhance the visibility of @pantaisembilan_sumenep's posts. (2) Engaging with followers through comments and direct messages can strengthen the connection with potential visitors. (3) Collaborating with influencers or local businesses can expand the account's reach and credibility. By implementing these strategies, @pantaisembilan_sumenep can further leverage Instagram's potential to promote Pantai Sembilan and attract even more visitors.

The communication strategy of the Instagram account @pantaisembilan_sumenep in enhancing tourist visits revolves around four main strategies: audience profiling, message crafting, method establishment, and media selection. Research also found that the use of Instagram features by this account is highly effective. Pantai Sembilan offers natural beauty such as fine white sand, clear seawater, stunning underwater views, comprehensive facilities, and delicious cuisine.

Audience profiling is the first strategy implemented. Pantai Sembilan identifies its target audience, comprising primarily local residents as well as domestic and international tourists. This understanding is crucial for tailoring communications disseminated through the @pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account. Message crafting follows as the next strategy. Pantai Sembilan conveys information and messages through photos and videos uploaded to the

@pantaisembilan_sumenep Instagram account. This includes highlighting tourism activities in Sumenep Regency, featured prominently in profile stories for easy access by new visitors.

Pantai Sembilan also applies methods in its communication strategy, namely redundancy and canalizing. Redundancy is achieved through repetitive posting of photos and videos to gradually influence audience attitudes and thought patterns, while canalizing aims to gradually direct the audience towards specific goals. Choosing Instagram as the primary social media platform is part of the strategy. Instagram was selected for its features that support interaction such as followers, photo or video posts, hashtags, geotags, and comments, all of which enhance communication effectiveness.

The account @pantaisembilan_sumenep has amassed 11.1 thousand followers with a total of 2,013 posts including photos and videos, indicating growing popularity. Active management includes following related tourism accounts to support Pantai Sembilan's promotion. The use of Instagram's photo or video posting feature proves highly effective in showcasing appealing content from Pantai Sembilan. This content focuses on the natural beauty offered by the destination, enticing visitor interest.

The use of hashtags facilitates other Instagram users in discovering posted photos or videos, aiding tourists who wish to visit by easily accessing posts related to Pantai Sembilan through relevant hashtags. Additionally, geotags added by managers to posts help visitors locate Pantai Sembilan, simplifying travel planning by simply clicking on the posted address. This aids visitors in planning their visits effectively.

Comments on posts serve as valuable feedback for managers to gauge visitor responses after visiting Pantai Sembilan. This feature facilitates two-way interaction, enabling visitors to provide suggestions, criticisms, or compliments, which are instrumental for managers in improving future service offerings.

Instagram influence on the tourism industry may be researched through the lens of two frameworks: Uses and Gratifications Theory and Social Influence Theory. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, people actively seek out media to fulfill specific needs or desires, such as information, entertainment, or social interaction. Under this theory, Instagram fills the desire of tourists for inspiration as well as information. Visual representations on Instagram provide

prospective travelers the opportunity to engage with destinations indirectly, cultivating both a sense of familiarity and aspiration. As illustrated by the narratives of the informants, utilizing Instagram for travel inspiration exemplifies this proactive, objective-driven engagement with media.

The Social Influence Theory posits that the behaviors and choices of individuals are often influenced by their perceptions of others' experiences and perspectives. Instagram is a medium through which user-generated content, such as posts and stories from peers or influencers, serves as a means of social validation. When users see others having fun at a certain destination, it enhances the appeal of that destination and motivates them to make plans to visit. The informants' decisions were influenced not only by the destination's visual appeal but also by recommendations from friends, enhancing the persuasive impact.

The interactive and visual nature of Instagram helps tourism destinations take advantage of digital storytelling, user-generated content, and influencer marketing in order to promote visitation. This juncture fosters a two-way communication line between travelers and destinations, with the enhancement of engagement and accessibility. The impact on tourism visits from Instagram could be attributed to the capacity of satisfying users' desires for information and affirmation through visually compelling content, concomitantly leveraging social influence to shape travel behaviors. This conceptual understanding makes clear the importance of carefully crafted Instagram content in modern-day tourism promotion.

CONCLUSION

The study results show that the strategic use of Instagram, primarily through the @pantaisembilan_sumenep account, significantly enhanced the visibility and attractiveness of Pantai Sembilan as a tourist destination. To promote the account, some specific communication strategies have been administered by the account's manager: determining target groups and creating appealing content are merely part of such. This turned out to be an effective way of grabbing local, regional, and even international audiences' attention. The increasing number of mentions and reach on social media from the pandemic to the post-pandemic period reflects the

increasing interest of tourists in Pantai Sembilan. It illustrates the effectiveness of digital promotion in the post-pandemic era.

This study also shows cooperation between the Instagram account manager @pantaisembilan_sumenep and the Sumenep Tourism Office. The account manager consistently produces attractive and informative visual content, while the Tourism Office supports promotion by providing destination data, managing tourist facilities, and initiating initiatives to attract tourists. This collaboration is critical to restoring the tourism sector after the pandemic while strengthening Pantai Sembilan's position as a leading destination in Sumenep.

Further research needs to examine in more depth how collaboration between destination managers and government agencies can influence the effectiveness of digital promotion, including its impact on increasing the number of tourist visits and also giving the recommendation to do a longitudinal study to analyze trends in tourist visits over a more extended period and the impact of promotional efforts on tourist loyalty. Moreover, by using in-depth analysis of visitors' feedback, studies can bring meaningful results in improving the quality of services and tourism experiences. This approach will lead to a more effective, sustainable, and integrated promotional campaign.

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