

Perceptions of Tourism Promotion and Business Challenges in Makassar: A Survey on Digital Marketing Effectiveness for Tourism Businesses

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Article History

accepted 2/1/2025

approved 1/2/2025

published 1/3/2025

Abstract

Makassar city as a tourist destination is increasing especially for its cultural, historical, and natural attractions, so that it is important to explore digital marketing in promoting the tourism. This research aims to investigate the role of digital marketing in promoting tourism in Makassar, focusing on the challenges faced by local tourism businesses in utilizing digital platforms. This research used a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with 13 millennials who visited Anjungan Pantai Losari, as a popular tourist destination in Makassar. The results showed that social media through Instagram and Tiktok, play an important role in attracting tourists by displaying attractive visual content. However, challenges such as limited digital literacy, inadequate technical skills, and inconsistency of online presence across platforms can hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts. In addition, the lack of detailed information about tour packages and limited budget for digital advertising are major obstacles for local businesses. The conclusion of this research is that digital marketing provides opportunities for tourism promotion but doing business requires an investment to improving digital capabilities, creating engaging content, and utilizing platforms strategically to increase reach.

Keywords: Social media, promotion, business challenges, Makassar City

Abstrak

Kota Makassar sebagai destinasi wisata semakin meningkat khususnya untuk daya tarik budaya, sejarah, dan alamnya sehingga sangat penting untuk mengeksplorasi pemasaran digital dalam mempromosikan pariwisatanya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki peran pemasaran digital dalam mempromosikan pariwisata di Makassar, dengan fokus pada tantangan yang dihadapi oleh pelaku bisnis pariwisata lokal dalam memanfaatkan platform digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap 13 generasi milenial yang mengunjungi Anjungan Pantai Losari, sebagai destinasi wisata populer di Makassar. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa media sosial melalui Instagram dan TikTok, memainkan peran penting dalam menarik wisatawan dengan menampilkan konten visual yang menarik. Namun, tantangan seperti keterbatasan literasi digital, keterampilan teknis yang kurang memadai, dan ketidakonsistenan kehadiran online di berbagai platform menghambat efektivitas upaya pemasaran digital. Selain itu, kurangnya informasi detail tentang paket wisata dan terbatasnya anggaran untuk iklan digital menjadi hambatan besar bagi bisnis lokal. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini bahwa pemasaran digital memberikan peluang untuk promosi pariwisata tetapi dalam berbisnis memerlukan sebuah investasi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan digital, membuat konten yang menarik, dan memanfaatkan platform secara strategis untuk meningkatkan jangkauan.

Kata kunci: Media sosial, promosi, tantangan bisnis, Kota Makassar



PENDAHULUAN

In the past decade, much research has focused on the rapid development of tourism in major Indonesian cities, with Makassar emerging as a key destination. The city's rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and growing infrastructure have attracted both local and international tourists. As noted by (Sulfikar et al., 2020), Makassar has become a popular city for various types of tourism, including beach tourism, historical sites, cultural attractions, and culinary experiences. The number of domestic tourists visiting Makassar has reached over 15 million in recent years, with international tourists also contributing to the city's tourism growth. Makassar's strategic location as a gateway to Eastern Indonesia further enhances its attractiveness, offering access to natural wonders such as the Spermonde Archipelago (Zulkifli H et al., 2022). These islands, with their natural beauty and marine tourism potential, are poised to become major attractions, benefiting from both accessibility and the development of supporting infrastructure.

This growth has been further accelerated by the rise of digital platforms, which facilitate tourism activities and improve tourists' access to information. According to (Darmayasa et al., 2023), digital marketing through spatial-based information systems (GIS) has enhanced the promotion of tourism products, making them more accessible and relevant to potential visitors. These digital tools are crucial in offering accurate, timely, and valuable information to help tourists in their decision-making process. Furthermore, the integration of augmented reality and location-based services, as demonstrated by (Sulfikar et al., 2020; Susanto et al., 2023), allows tourists to access interactive information about tourist spots in real time, helping them explore the city's attractions more effectively. Despite these advancements, however, there remains limited research on how digital marketing specifically influences tourism promotion in Makassar and how these strategies impact tourists' decision-making processes. (Taufik, 2023) highlights that while the government of Makassar has embraced integrated digital services, including web-based platforms for public services, the role of digital marketing in tourism is still an underexplored area in academic research.

Over the years, social media has become an essential tool for tourism promotion, with platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube offering tourism businesses the opportunity to reach a vast audience through visual content and interactive communication. Instagram, in particular, has proven to be highly effective for showcasing tourism products due to its visual-centric features, ease of use, and extensive reach (Santoso et al., 2021). Social media also allows for targeted campaigns, enabling businesses to tailor messages based on demographics, ensuring promotions reach the right audience (Gebreel & Shuayb, 2022). This has been evident in other cities like Semarang and Yogyakarta, where social media was used effectively for promoting tourism, even during the COVID-19 pandemic transition period (Santoso et al., 2021).

Despite the widespread use of social media in tourism marketing, the effectiveness of these platforms in promoting Makassar as a tourism destination has yet to be thoroughly studied. Previous research from cities like Semarang and Yogyakarta shows that Instagram and Twitter have been strategically used to engage both local and international tourists through targeted content creation and health protocols. Such strategies could provide valuable insights for Makassar, offering a path toward enhancing its digital marketing efforts. However, there is a significant gap in research regarding how social media can be leveraged to promote Makassar's tourism, which requires further academic exploration (Santoso et al., 2021).

Tourists' perceptions are vital for the success of tourism promotions, especially in the digital age where social media plays a significant role in shaping their decisions. Studies have shown that social media platforms, like Instagram, influence tourists' choices through visuals and online reviews, creating assumptions about destinations and

services (Gupta et al., 2023). For instance, positive perceptions of tourism promotion on Instagram have been observed in destinations like Central Java, where effective content marketing builds public trust (Sholihat, 2023). Similarly, social media helps represent the image of religious destinations like Borobudur, shaping tourists' interest (Latifah, 2023). In Makassar, understanding how tourists perceive digital marketing could help optimize promotional strategies as competition grows. While social media has proven effective in other regions, there is still a gap in research regarding its impact on Makassar's tourism. Insights from other destinations show that well-crafted content on social media influences tourists' perceptions, offering valuable lessons for Makassar's local businesses to enhance their marketing efforts (Latifah, 2023).

Promoting tourism through digital marketing offers significant opportunities for businesses in Makassar but also presents challenges, particularly due to intense competition and the need for constant content creation. Smaller businesses may struggle with limited resources, expertise, and high advertising costs, making it difficult to compete in the crowded digital space. Research has shown that small-scale businesses in other regions, like homestays, also face challenges such as limited technology adoption and high operational costs (Singh & Sharma, 2023). Additionally, the adoption of advanced technologies like blockchain could improve transparency and security, but it requires substantial investment (Kathuria et al., 2023). Furthermore, strategies like industrial tourism and community engagement have proven effective in promoting sustainability and attracting tourists, but they require proper support and communication (Badia et al., 2024). To succeed, tourism businesses in Makassar must address these challenges by leveraging technology, strategic content, and local collaboration, ensuring long-term success in the digital space.

Tourism businesses in Makassar face a range of challenges when it comes to digital marketing. Many businesses struggle with a lack of digital literacy and technical skills, hindering their ability to create and manage effective online campaigns (Ramdan et al., 2022). This issue is compounded by difficulties in maintaining a consistent online presence across multiple platforms, which is vital for engaging potential customers. Additionally, businesses often face limited budgets for digital advertising, which can restrict their ability to compete effectively in the crowded digital space (Cilliers & Hermann, 2023). Moreover, the challenge of managing digital marketing strategies is further complicated by the lack of expertise in measuring the effectiveness of campaigns, making it difficult to optimize marketing efforts.

In terms of opportunities, tourism businesses can leverage digital marketing tools to create innovative and profitable services, though this requires mastery of technology and competitive marketing strategies (Ramdan et al., 2022). For smaller tourism businesses, this can be particularly challenging, but it also presents the chance to tap into new and creative service offerings that can enhance customer experiences. Furthermore, sustainable marketing strategies, while important, require an understanding of both local and global trends, as seen in the agri-tourism sector (Salim et al., 2022). In addition, businesses can benefit from tourist co-creation by engaging with customers in a meaningful way, though it's essential to avoid excessive co-creation, which could lead to negative marketing outcomes (Zhang et al., 2024). Ultimately, overcoming these challenges will require not only improved digital skills and resources but also a strategic approach to engaging customers and measuring marketing success.

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of digital marketing in promoting tourism packages in Makassar and to understand the challenges faced by local tourism businesses. This research aims to explore how digital platforms are perceived by tourists and how effective they are in promoting the city's tourism offerings. By investigating the experiences of tourism businesses and promotion organizations, the study will shed light on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, it will provide insights

into the challenges that businesses face in utilizing these platforms and offer recommendations for improving the digital promotion of tourism in Makassar. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the development of more efficient digital marketing strategies for tourism businesses in Makassar.

METODE

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive method (Yanti, et al., 2024). The aims for this study is to explore tourists' perceptions of digital promotions in Makassar, specifically at Anjungan Pantai Losari. The aim of this research is to understand how tourists evaluate and respond to the digital promotional efforts made by tourism businesses in Makassar. The location for this research was selected at Anjungan Pantai Losari because it is a popular tourist destination in Makassar, frequently visited by both domestic and international tourists. The data collection was conducted during November 2024, using purposive sampling, with 13 tourists selected as informants based on the criteria of having visited Makassar and being engaged with digital promotions in the region.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with informants, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into their experiences. Interviews were conducted in person using a pre-designed interview guide (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004; Patton, 2002). The data analysis employed thematic analysis, where the collected data were categorized according to emerging themes, which were then analyzed to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourists' perceptions of digital marketing (Cheuk et al., 2017). The findings from the data analysis will be presented descriptively to offer a clear insight into the research outcomes, providing valuable information for stakeholders in the tourism industry to enhance their digital promotion strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

In exploring the tourism landscape in Makassar, this research delves into the challenges faced by tourism businesses, particularly when navigating digital marketing. With the rapid growth of social media as a promotional tool, the tourism sector in Makassar has experienced both opportunities and challenges in leveraging these platforms effectively. The theme "Tourism Business Challenges" was explored through interviews with 13 tourists who visited the city, each providing valuable insights into their perceptions of how digital marketing influences their travel decisions. Understanding these challenges is crucial to optimizing digital promotional strategies and improving the overall tourist experience in Makassar.

The interviews conducted with the 13 informants reveal the diverse experiences and perspectives of tourists engaging with digital content related to Makassar's tourism offerings. These findings highlight the difficulties faced by tourism businesses in maintaining a consistent online presence, managing digital marketing efforts, and effectively utilizing social media platforms to attract visitors. Moreover, the challenges of limited budgets, digital expertise, and competition in the digital space were among the key concerns raised by the informants. These issues underscore the need for businesses to innovate and refine their digital marketing strategies to remain competitive and effectively promote the rich cultural and tourist offerings in Makassar.

1. Tourism Makassar City

The tourism scene in Makassar is characterized by a blend of rich culture, historical landmarks, and beautiful coastal destinations that attract both local and international tourists. From the iconic Losari Beach to Fort Rotterdam, Makassar offers a unique experience for those seeking to explore its beauty and history. Many of the informants, such as I (21), emphasized their desire to visit Makassar for its vibrant culture and iconic

locations, while others like DAP (23) mentioned that they were drawn to the city's diverse food offerings and scenic views. The city's tourism is a dynamic mix of natural and historical elements, making it an exciting destination for all types of travelers. However, despite its potential, the challenge lies in effectively promoting these attractions to a wider audience. MR (25) emphasized that Makassar's natural beauty and rich culture need to be showcased better through social media content to draw more visitors.

2. Social Media

Social media plays a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and choices of tourists when it comes to travel destinations, and this was evident in the responses of several informants. DAP (23) and RC (19) highlighted the importance of platforms like Instagram and TikTok, with DAP specifically noting, "Social media (Instagram, Facebook, etc.) is very helpful," in providing exposure to destinations. Additionally, YRDP (19) mentioned the power of viral content, emphasizing, "Creating viral content uploaded on TikTok or Instagram" as a key strategy for drawing attention to tourism packages. For GEE (23), the visual appeal of promotional materials on social media was an essential factor, with "attractive promotional visuals like photos and videos" being the main draw. These insights show how essential social media is in attracting potential tourists, making it a key tool for promoting Makassar's tourism in a competitive digital landscape.

3. Tourism Promotion and Business Challenges

Despite the significant role of social media, several informants pointed out the challenges in the digital marketing of tourism in Makassar. IA (20) highlighted that a lack of detailed information in social media promotions is a critical issue, noting that "uploading tourism packages on social media with inadequate information" limits potential tourists' decision-making. On the other hand, FLS (22) indicated that tourism promotion through digital marketing requires a more structured and well-planned approach. FLS suggested, that "Optimizing the use of social media and forming partnerships" could help increase the effectiveness of tourism promotion. The respondents agree that digital marketing has the potential to boost tourism; however, more comprehensive and clear communication is required to enhance the overall experience. Many tourists are seeking more than just beautiful images; they are looking for informative content that guides them through their travel journey.

4. Tourism Business Challenges

The tourism industry in Makassar also faces several challenges related to the effective use of digital marketing. I (21) mentioned the difficulty in navigating digital platforms, which can be overwhelming for both businesses and tourists alike. This sentiment was echoed by AP (23), who identified "content marketing" as a key strategy but acknowledged the hurdles involved in maintaining a consistent digital presence. DAP (23) discussed the importance of having a strong online presence to stand out in a highly competitive digital space, yet many businesses struggle to implement these strategies effectively. The informants also noted the importance of creating engaging and shareable content. MR (25) pointed out, that "Posting attractive videos or photos" is crucial for drawing attention, but he also noted the need for more detailed and engaging content about the city's attractions to ensure greater interest. Overall, the challenge lies in overcoming the barriers to effective digital marketing, such as technical skills, content creation, and platform management, which are essential for maximizing the potential of digital marketing in the tourism industry.

The tourism sector in Makassar has rapidly developed in recent years, and much of this progress can be attributed to the city's rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and growing infrastructure, which are factors that attract both domestic and international tourists. According to informants, such as DAP (23), RC (19), and YRDP (19), Makassar's popularity as a tourism destination is largely driven by its unique attractions, such as Losari Beach and historical landmarks. These destinations hold significant

appeal for travelers, particularly young people seeking cultural and beach tourism. The number of tourists visiting Makassar has reached over 15 million, and its role as a gateway to Eastern Indonesia further enhances its attractiveness. As DAP (23) mentioned, "I always see promotions of tourism destinations like Losari Beach and historical sites in Makassar on social media, which makes me want to visit the city more." This aligns with the findings of Sulfikar et al. (2020) and Harahap et al. (2022), who highlighted Makassar's potential for both natural and cultural tourism. Therefore, digital marketing, especially through social media, has become an essential tool for attracting tourists to these iconic destinations.

Discussion

The growing role of social media in tourism promotion is echoed by the responses of the informants, who identified Instagram and TikTok as key platforms for sharing travel experiences. DAP (23), RC (19), and GEE (23) all acknowledged the importance of visual content in engaging potential tourists, especially through Instagram's photo and video-centric features. DAP (23) stated, "Instagram is very helpful because it helps me discover new places and also see reviews from other visitors." This sentiment aligns with the research by Santoso et al. (2021), who noted the effectiveness of Instagram in promoting tourism products due to its ability to showcase destinations with appealing visuals. Additionally, MR (25) highlighted the power of videos and photos to attract tourists, stating, "Posting attractive videos or photos is crucial to catching people's attention on social media." The importance of social media in shaping tourists' perceptions is underscored by (Gupta et al., 2023), who found that visuals and online reviews significantly influence tourists' decision-making. As a result, businesses in Makassar must continue to leverage social media platforms to effectively showcase their tourism offerings and engage with a wide audience.

However, despite the growth of digital marketing and its potential to increase tourism in Makassar, several challenges remain, particularly for smaller businesses in the industry. I (21), AP (23), and FLS (22) pointed out difficulties in navigating digital platforms and creating consistent, engaging content. I (21) noted the challenges of finding detailed and engaging information on tourism packages, which often affects her decision-making process. Moreover, AP (23) mentioned the challenge of creating relevant content for a variety of audiences, while FLS (22) suggested that more effort should be put into "optimizing social media usage and building partnerships to increase promotion." These insights reflect the concerns of smaller tourism businesses, which may struggle with limited resources and expertise in digital marketing. As (Taufik, 2023) noted, despite the government's push for integrated digital services, tourism businesses still face significant hurdles in adopting effective digital marketing strategies. Furthermore, MR (25) identified another key issue: the lack of technical skills and knowledge among local businesses, which limits their ability to create and manage successful online campaigns. These challenges point to the need for local businesses to improve their digital literacy and invest in tools that will help them compete in the crowded digital space, as well as tailor their strategies to meet the increasing demand for information-rich and interactive digital content.

This study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted only at the Anjungan Pantai Losari area in Makassar, which restricts the scope of the study to a single tourist location. While Anjungan Pantai Losari is a popular destination, the findings of this research may not fully reflect the dynamics or perceptions of tourists at other tourist destinations in Makassar. Therefore, further research covering other tourism locations in the city is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of digital promotion on the tourism sector (Kasim et al., 2024; Rahmat et al., 2023).

Second, the number of respondents involved in this study is limited to millennials (ages 19-27). This limitation means that the study may not fully represent the views of other age groups, such as Generation Z, Generation X, or older age groups, who may have different perceptions and behaviors regarding social media use in selecting travel destinations. To obtain a more comprehensive understanding, future research should involve a sample that covers a broader age range.

Third, the approach used in this study is qualitative, relying on in-depth interviews with a small number of informants. While interviews provide a deep understanding of individual perceptions, a quantitative approach with a larger sample size would more effectively capture broader trends or patterns that are more generalizable and reliable. Therefore, a quantitative research approach is recommended to provide more generalizable results and strengthen the existing findings.

CONCLUSION

The development of Makassar's tourism sector presents both opportunities and challenges, with digital marketing playing an increasingly important role. Social media platforms, especially Instagram and TikTok, are effective tools for showcasing the city's tourism offerings, yet the city's tourism businesses face challenges related to content creation, digital literacy, and resource constraints. As indicated by the informants, leveraging digital platforms for tourism promotion can significantly enhance the city's visibility and appeal to potential tourists. However, businesses must overcome the barriers to effective digital marketing by improving their technical skills and using social media strategically to engage with their target audience. This study highlights the importance of digital marketing in promoting Makassar's tourism industry and suggests that further efforts must be made to optimize digital platforms to improve the promotion of the city's tourism packages.

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