Digital Marketing Strategies to Enhance the Tourism Appeal of Pasir Panjang Beach, Pu'ungkeu Village, through a Blue Economy Framework

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ABSTRACT

Pasir Panjang Beach, located in Pu'ungkeu Village, Bungku Pesisir District, Morowali, Central Sulawesi, is a coastal destination characterized by a long stretch of white sand, clear seawater, and a tranquil marine atmosphere. These natural qualities make it an increasingly preferred leisure site among local visitors, particularly during weekends. However, limited digital exposure and promotional initiatives have hindered its wider recognition. This study aims to formulate digital marketing strategies to strengthen the branding of Pasir Panjang Beach as a sustainable marine tourism destination grounded in the blue-economy concept. A descriptive qualitative approach was applied through field observation, visual documentation, and literature review related to ecotourism and digital promotion. Findings indicate that digital content focused on natural beauty, sustainability narratives, and local community participation can significantly enhance destination visibility while fostering environmental preservation. Recommended strategies include creative content development, social media optimization, collaborative promotion, and applying green-tourism principles to reinforce the beach's identity as an eco-friendly coastal tourism destination.

Keywords: Digital marketing, coastal destination, tourism branding, blue economy, Morowali, sustainable tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country, has an extensive coastline and a wide variety of coastal attractions, making the coastal tourism sector one of the key pillars of both local and national economic development. One emerging coastal destination that has begun to attract attention is Pasir Panjang Beach, located in Pu'ungkeu Village (Tangofa Village/Puungkeu Village), Bungku Pesisir District, Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi a white-sand beach with ecotourism potential and a diversity of marine biota that remains relatively well preserved. Documentation from mass media and government platforms shows that tourist visits have increased at certain periods; however, the management and promotion of this destination still face limitations in capacity and public exposure (Yakin & Abidin, 2024).

The post COVID 19 period demands a shift in tourism marketing strategies: digitalization of marketing has become a key instrument to accelerate the recovery of tourist visits, expand market reach, and build a sustainable destination image. Scientific literature and practical studies in Indonesia indicate that the use of digital marketing strategies (social media platforms, search engine optimization, content marketing, and collaboration with micro-influencers/local influencers) can enhance travel interest and market penetration at both domestic and regional levels, especially when combined with experience-based innovations (virtual tours, digital tour packages, online reservation systems). However, the adoption of these strategies at the scale of tourism villages remains uneven, often hindered by limited human resource capacity, inadequate digital infrastructure, and a lack of coordination between local managers and government stakeholders (Afandi et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, the concept of the Blue Economy offers a framework for developing coastal tourism that balances economic growth and marine ecosystem conservation. The Government of Indonesia through its blue economy roadmap and several sectoral policies positions the sustainable utilization of marine resources as a strategic development direction (e.g., the Blue Economy Roadmap 2023–2045). This approach is highly relevant for destinations such as Pasir Panjang Beach: tourism development must take into account coral reef conservation, marine waste management, and the welfare of local communities, ensuring that economic benefits do not compromise environmental sustainability (Badarab et al., 2017).

However, there exists a clear contrast between the natural potential of the area and the current level of management and promotion. Local news reports and field observations show that Pu'ungkeu Village continues to face challenges related to accessibility, supporting facilities, and promotional capacity factors that hinder sustained growth in visitor numbers

despite its rich attraction potential. This situation highlights the need for an integrative approach: a digital marketing strategy tailored to the context of coastal tourism villages and synergized with blue economy principles could serve as a pathway to increasing the number of visitors while simultaneously safeguarding environmental sustainability and ensuring economic benefits for the community (Ministry of National Planning and Development, 2024).

Based on the aforementioned phenomena, this research is aimed at designing, analyzing, and recommending a digital marketing strategy grounded in the blue economy concept to enhance the attractiveness and increase the number of visits to Pasir Panjang Beach in Pu'ungkeu Village. This study holds both scientific and policy urgency: scientifically, it closes the research gap between digital tourism marketing and blue economy practices at the scale of tourism villages; practically, it provides an implementable guide that fits the local context (Yakin & Abidin, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital marketing encompasses a series of activities that utilize digital channels (social media, websites, and content) to build consumer awareness, interest, and conversion (Briggs & Burke, 2018). The main frameworks applied are the AIDA model and IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications), which emphasize message consistency across channels. In the context of tourism villages, its implementation must adapt to limited technical capacity by focusing on value-based content (storytelling) and the use of low-cost platforms (Instagram, WhatsApp) (Natania Abigael Tesalonika & Dwijayanti Renny, 2024).

The theory of tourist behavior (Armutçu, 2023) explains that digital touchpoints (reviews, photos, videos) function as cues that influence risk perception and expectations of travel experiences. Digital marketing strategies must optimize credibility signals (testimonials, endorsements) because high-quality content increases visit intention through mechanisms of social proof and perceived value.

The Blue Economy is a development paradigm that integrates the utilization of marine resources with the principles of ecological sustainability and economic inclusiveness (Bappenas Roadmap). Its core principles include coastal ecosystem conservation, improvement of local welfare through value-added activities, and the integration of environmental literacy. These principles require (Alana Melia Dhaniswari et al., 2024) success indicators that go beyond visitor numbers, encompassing ecological impacts (e.g., coral reef quality, waste management) and local economic benefits.

The concept of Community-Based Tourism (CBT) reinforces this framework by positioning the local community as the main actor. Digital marketing within the CBT framework must be designed in a participatory manner—through digital training, platform access, and transparent data governance—to strengthen conservation orientation and the equitable distribution of economic benefits.

The conceptual framework is constructed to address the identified research gap. This study proposes a Blue Economy–Based Digital Marketing Intervention (Input), which includes the development of conservation-oriented content, enhancement of local human resource capacity, and multi-actor collaboration. This intervention is mediated by Digital Engagement and moderated by Local Capacity, which are expected to generate three key output indicators: (1) Marketing Indicator (i.e., increased destination awareness), (2) Economic Indicator (i.e., growth in tourist visits and local income), and (3) Environmental Indicator (i.e., sustained coastal ecosystem and effective waste management). This framework is reinforced by a feedback loop through an adaptive monitoring mechanism, combining digital data and field data to ensure long-term sustainability of the strategy.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive–exploratory case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Blue Economy–based digital marketing strategies at Pasir Panjang Beach, Pu'ungkeu Village, Morowali Regency. Key informants were selected purposively (15–20 participants), consisting of BUMDes/Pokdarwis managers, village government representatives, MSME actors, tourists, and environmental communities, to achieve data saturation.

Data were collected through method triangulation: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation (digital content analysis and village reports) (Satria & Wibowo, 2021). The primary research instrument was the researcher (human instrument), supported by interview and observation guidelines. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation and member checking. Data analysis employed the Miles, Huberman & Saldaña model (data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing) combined with Thematic Analysis to formulate a destination development strategy model that is relevant, operational, and sustainable.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pasir Panjang Beach is located in Pu'ungkeu Village, Bungku Pesisir District, Morowali Regency. This area has a ±2.1-kilometer white sandy coastline with the characteristics of calm waters, relatively well-maintained coastal vegetation, and potential tourist activities such as swimming, photography, coastal culinary, and conservation tourism. The majority of local people work as fishermen, coconut farmers, and micro business actors who provide beach snacks.

Source: Google Earth (2024)

Figure 1. Map of Bungku Pesisir district.

BUMDes Pu'ungkeu Mandiri carries out destination management in collaboration with the village government and tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). However, until 2024, digital promotion is still limited and unorganized, relying only on sporadic uploads on Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp Stories. This is the urgency of research on digital marketing strategies based on the concept of the blue economy.

Pasir Panjang Beach is a group of beaches that offer an original panorama. In addition, this beach also has natural tourism potential with the characteristics of elongated white sand, clear seawater, and a calm beach atmosphere.

The condition of this beach, which is still very beautiful, is also comparable to the lack of support in terms of tourist attractions and the existence of facilities such as gazebos, toilets, and parking areas. This then becomes a consideration for tourists to choose this beach as their destination. However, the basic thing is still the lack of tourists who visit this location is the marketing or how this place can be known. From this finding, we can also know that there is still a lack of support from the Pu'ungkeu Village government to manage Sand Panjang Beach as a tourist destination. According to Abdul Malik of Pu'ungkeu Village:

"Pasir Panjang Beach seems to only be known by word of mouth, while digital promotion is still modest. We ourselves don't have a special social media manager, so the uploads are inconsistent."

Figure 2. Pasir Panjang Beach.

Marketing tourism destinations in the current traditional way will certainly not be able to run optimally. Marketing using digital platforms must certainly be done to increase a person's awareness of the existence of a product. The product in this case is a long sand beach as a tourist destination.

Digital marketing in question is social media, websites, videos and others. According to one of the tourists of Sand Panjang Beach, when interviewed:

"The beach is nice, but I know from friends. If only there was an Instagram or TikTok that actively shared this beach, surely more people would come."

From the results of searches on several digital platforms about Sand Panjang Beach, it can be seen that there are still very few people who upload this beach. The digital platform analyzed in this study is the use of social media to see how much tourist traffic to the destination.

Table 1. Social media analysis table about Pasir Panjang Beach post.

Platform Digital	Upload Frequency Per Month	Content Type	Engagemen Rate (Traffic)
Facebook	2-3	Beach photos	1,8%
Tiktok	1-2	Short video of visitors	2,4%
Instagram	Inactive	-	-
WhatsApp	Immeasurable	Tourist information	Low

From the data obtained, it is explained that Pasir Panjang Beach in digital marketing still needs to be maximized. The role of several stakeholders is needed so that Sand Panjang Beach can become a leading destination that can become a new economic means for the community.

The marketing of sand panjang beach destinations can be seen from two segments. The two segments in question are tourists who enjoy the beauty of nature with a variety of tourist attractions and tourists who want the authenticity of the panorama.

Socio-ecologically, Pasir Panjang Beach faces the following challenges:

1. Lack of digital educational content about conservation.
2. Variations in the quality of beach cleanliness in a given season.
3. Dependence on word-of-mouth promotion.
4. Limited digital infrastructure such as public Wi-Fi.

However, the potential for blue economy development is very strong considering the existence of natural coastal ecosystems, community involvement in maritime culture, and opportunities for conservation tourism collaboration.

The behavior of long beach sand tourists when viewed from the post has done blue economy marketing. In the content itself, it has provided a description of the pure beauty of nature and awareness to maintain its cleanliness and authenticity.
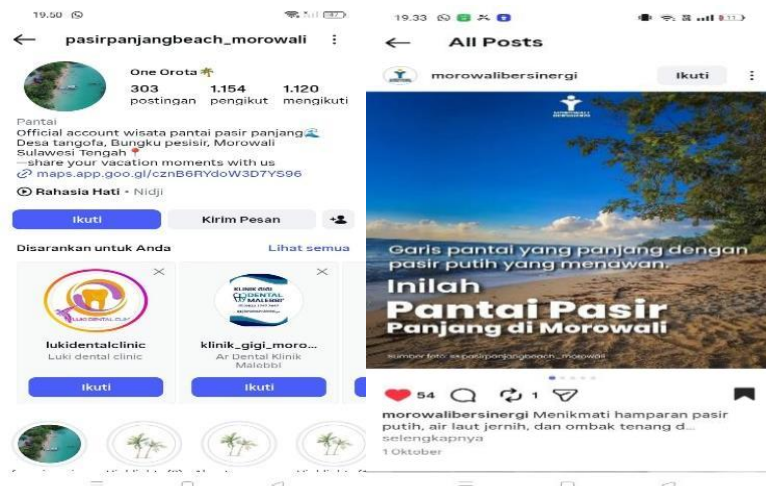

Figure 3. Content about Pasir Panjang Beach on social media.

To develop a destination with a blue economy concept for long sand beaches is experiencing great challenges. This beach is included in the nickel mining area owned by PT IMIP and other nickel mining. This company has an environmental impact, one of which is water pollution on the beach. Bete-bete Village, which is a neighbor of Pu'ungkeu Village,

where the long sand beach is located, is a village that is directly affected by this mining activity.

Figure 4. Seawater pollution in Bete-bete Village (Walhi).

The conditions that occur do not mean that Pasir Pantai Panjang is an obstacle to be used as a destination with the concept of a blue economy. However, this can be a step for environmental maintenance efforts by various stakeholders, both from companies and the government, to care more about nature.

5. CONCLUSION

The research on digital marketing strategies to enhance the attractiveness of Pasir Panjang Beach Tourism shows that existing digital promotion efforts remain limited, unplanned, and do not yet reflect the identity of the destination. Promotional activities are merely sporadic postings without a content calendar, audience analysis, or integration of a Blue Economy narrative, resulting in low destination visibility and stagnant visitation growth. In reality, Pasir Panjang Beach possesses strong competitive advantages, including natural beauty, an extensive white-sand coastline, and recreational–educational potential. However, these physical strengths have not been translated into digital content that highlights destination storytelling, local culture, conservation values, or Blue Economy potential. In addition, essential tourist information regarding access, facilities, safety, and available activities is not yet fully provided on digital channels, decreasing visitors' intention to travel.

This study also finds that the Blue Economy concept holds strategic relevance for strengthening tourism branding, particularly through the development of coastal conservation narratives, maritime culture, and ecotourism potential. However, this potential has not yet been visualized in the existing digital communication. The involvement of local communities MSMEs, tourism awareness groups, and youth shows great opportunities, but digital literacy

remains low and media management structures are not yet established. Overall, the findings emphasize that strengthening Blue Economy–based digital marketing strategies, improving content quality, empowering communities, and providing relevant tourism information are crucial steps for enhancing the attractiveness of Pasir Panjang Beach in a sustainable manner.

The Village Government and BUMDes are advised to establish a dedicated team to manage destination social media with structured responsibilities including content planning, information management, and routine digital evaluation. A Blue Economy–based digital identity should be developed through a logo, slogan, and visual narrative that depict coastal sustainability, supported by infrastructure such as public Wi-Fi, information QR codes, and documentation systems. Conservation activities should be integrated into digital content to reinforce the ecological image of the destination, accompanied by digital literacy training for managers and the community.

Tourism awareness groups and local communities can initiate user-generated content campaigns, develop Blue Economy–based tourism packages, and expand promotional networks through inter-village collaborations. MSME actors are expected to develop local product content aligned with the destination narrative and maximize digital platforms and marketplaces connected to tourism promotion (Safitri et al., 2025).

Academically, future research may adopt quantitative or mixed methods to measure the impact of digital marketing on tourist behavior, digital engagement, and regional income. Additional studies such as sentiment analysis or social network analysis can provide a more comprehensive understanding of public perceptions of Pasir Panjang Beach. Further research may also explore the integration of the Blue Economy model into regional policy and conduct comparative studies across coastal destinations. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the community's technological readiness is required to develop an adaptive and sustainable community-based digital ecosystem (Himmah & Laila, 2025).

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