

Digital Marketing Strategy for Mangrove Ecotourism Towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 8.3 (Case Study: Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, Southeast Sulawesi)

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the external and internal environment, including opportunities, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses, regarding the Digital Marketing Strategy for Mangrove Ecotourism towards SDG 8.3 at Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park. This research method utilizes a qualitative approach with SWOT analysis. Findings reveal that the Park supports various training and capacity-building activities for local entrepreneurs around the Park, reflecting the local community's enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, thus establishing a connection between SDG 8.3 and the Park. Weaknesses include the need for improvement in the quantity of tourism facilities, transportation, public infrastructure, and internet connectivity. Opportunities arise from leveraging social media for optimal promotion of tourism locations to attract tourists. Threats stem from competition with similar tourist destinations, potentially reducing visitor numbers. Additionally, climate change and threats to species diversity in the park necessitate better management planning.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Ecotourism, SDG 8.3

1. Introduction

The tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally (Sofronov 2018; Behere 2018; McIntyre 2011). Tourism is recognized as a vital contributor to job creation, environmental preservation, cultural conservation, and poverty alleviation (Anderson 2015; Wood 2007). The tourism sector is designed to be managed well to preserve culture, nature, and generate opportunities while fostering cross-cultural understanding (Parmawati et al. 2022; Boonabaana 2017; Du Cros and McKercher 2020). Ecotourism is estimated to grow by up to 15% annually and contributes \$154 billion to the global economy. According to Statista data, revenue in the Travel and Tourism sector is projected to reach \$854.80 billion in 2023, with an annual revenue growth rate (2023-2027) projected at 4.41%, creating a market volume of \$1.016 trillion in 2027 (Hasibuan et al. 2023).

Based on Law No. 5 of 1990 concerning the Conservation of Biological Resources and Ecosystems, Article 1 paragraph 14, relevant to this research, a National Park is a natural conservation area with original ecosystems managed through zoning systems utilized for research, science, education, supporting cultivation, tourism, and recreation. The mangrove forest area in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park (TNRAW) is one of the largest mangrove areas in Sulawesi that remains in good condition. The mangrove ecosystem is located in the southern part of the area, stretching from west to east for 24 km with an area of 6,173 hectares. The thickness of the mangrove forest from the innermost point to the beach reaches 7 km, and mangrove trees with diameters of one to two meters can still be found (Setiawan, 2015).

Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park (TNRAW) has significant potential as an attractive ecotourism destination, especially with its extensive and diverse mangrove ecosystem. This area offers a unique and appealing natural recreational experience for tourists seeking the beauty of nature and biodiversity. However, to maximize the potential of mangrove ecotourism in supporting sustainable development, an effective digital marketing strategy is needed.

By utilizing a digital marketing strategy, TNRAW can reach more people, both locally and globally, to promote the beauty and uniqueness of mangrove ecotourism offered. Through social media, websites, and travel applications, information about TNRAW can be disseminated quickly and efficiently to potential tourists, increasing interest and awareness of the tourism potential of this area.

One of the primary objectives of developing mangrove ecotourism in TNRAW is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.3. This SDG aims to promote policies supporting productive activities, job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and to encourage formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) (Endris and Kassegn 2022; Carpentier and Braun 2020), including through access to financial services. SDG 8.3 aims to promote policies supporting various essential aspects of a country's economy, including promoting productive activities and creating decent jobs. SDG 8.3 also highlights the importance of promoting entrepreneurship as one of the drivers of the economy. Support for entrepreneurs in the form of training, financing, and supportive infrastructure can help improve a country's economic competitiveness (Tambunan 2020).

Innovation and creativity are crucial factors in enhancing a country's economic competitiveness in the current era of globalization. SDG 8.3 encourages the adoption and development of technological innovation, products, and business processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness in various economic sectors. For example, in the aspect of formalization and Growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), it emphasizes the importance of formalizing micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises so that they can access the resources and support needed for growth and sustainability. Business formalization also helps improve access to markets, financing, and collaboration opportunities.

In this context, a digital marketing strategy can be an effective tool to increase the participation of local communities in mangrove ecotourism development. By leveraging digital platforms, TNRAW can involve more people in environmental preservation efforts and local economic development. Moreover, online promotion can also increase the number of tourist visits, which, in turn, can provide economic benefits to local communities.

However, in implementing this digital marketing strategy, several factors need to be considered. One of them is the limited internet access in some areas, especially in rural areas, which may hinder potential visitors who want to find information about TNRAW online. Additionally, skilled human resources are needed to manage digital marketing campaigns so that this strategy can run smoothly. Also, the lack of an ideal place for TNRAW-assisted business actors to engage in various innovation activities to discuss business and development is another challenge.

The aim of this study is to formulate and analyze the external environment, including opportunities and challenges, and the internal environment, including strengths and weaknesses, regarding the Digital Marketing Strategy for Mangrove Ecotourism towards SDG 8.3 in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, Southeast Sulawesi.

2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach. Creswell (2016) penelitian kualitatif adalah jenis penelitian yang mengeksplorasi dan memahami makna di sejumlah individu atau sekelompok orang yang berasal dari masalah sosial. The analysis begins with observation and interviews with informants such as the Head of Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, who can provide information regarding the current mangrove conditions at the research location. Data analysis utilizes a combination of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, as well as segmentation, targeting, and positioning to formulate a digital marketing strategy for mangrove ecotourism towards SDG 8.3 in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The obtained facts are then compiled, explained, and analyzed through description or verbal form.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Mangrove Ecotourism in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, Southeast Sulawesi, Towards Sustainable Development Goal 8.3

Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park (TNRAW) develops tourism destinations through the concept of Savana Education Track, which integrates educational tourism, tracking, wildlife observation, and enjoying the natural panorama in 3 sites: Tatangge Education Forest, Mandu-Mandula Education Forest, and Mangrove Site. This approach was chosen because, in addition to increasing tourist visits, it can also boost the local economy through the natural tourism sector.

It is known that Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park can be a place for ecotourism activities, where this place has a 23,000-hectare savanna area that is one of the beautiful landscapes for nature recreation. Visitors can witness vast expanses of grasslands and occasionally see deer or cows, although their numbers are not as many as before due to rampant poaching. The strength of this digital marketing strategy lies in its ability to reach a wider audience efficiently and effectively.

Digital marketing strategy in the context of mangrove ecotourism in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park (TNRAW) has great potential to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.3, which encourages development policies that support productive activities, creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, as well as encouraging formalization and growth of micro, small, including access to financial services. First, through digital marketing, TNRAW can expand the promotion reach of mangrove ecotourism destination to local and global audiences. By utilizing digital platforms such as social media, websites, and travel apps, information about the natural beauty, tourist activities, and ecotourism programs in TNRAW can be widely disseminated, attracting tourists' interest, and increasing visits to the national park. Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park has taken various steps and activities in this regard. The community also receives support from various elements of the Regional Government organization. One of the weaknesses that may be present is the limited internet access in some areas, especially in rural areas, this can hinder the potential visitors who want to search for information about TNRAW online. Additionally, skilled human resources are needed to manage digital marketing campaigns for this strategy to work well. Furthermore, there is still no ideal place for beneficiaries of Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park to conduct various innovation activities to discuss business and development.

Table 1. SWOT Matrix Analysis

		INTERNAL	
		Strength	Weakness
EXTERNAL	1	Rawa Aopa Watumohai boasts extraordinary natural wealth, especially in terms of biodiversity, and there are human resources eager to start businesses and participate in capacity development training.	1 Limited number of business mentors at the Balai.
	2	Commitment to SDG 8.3: Focusing on SDG 8.3 encourages development policies that support productive activities, creation of decent jobs, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and promote formalization and growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, including access to financial services	2 Limited options for business innovation spaces at the Balai.

		3	Strategic Location: Situated in Southeast Sulawesi, which can attract both local and international tourists	3	Lack of awareness among the local community about the importance of environmental conservation and ecotourism.
		4	Adequate Facilities: There are adequate facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of visitors such as toilets, parking lots, and food stalls	4	Limited number of security personnel monitoring the national park.
	Opportunities		SO		WO
1	Many visitors seek natural and ecological tourism experiences, which can increase interest in mangrove ecotourism and serve as a market for local products.	1.1	Optimizing the use of technology and information to enhance promotional activities to attract more tourists.	1.1	Optimizing local entrepreneurship to market local products to visiting tourists.
2	Potential to tap into a large market through tourist visits.	2.2	Maximizing the potential of tourist attractions by collaborating with the local Government to develop tourist attractions.	2.2	Increasing the number of tourism facilities and infrastructure, as well as public transportation access to tourist locations.
3	Opportunity to develop community-based ecotourism programs by involving the local community.	4.3	Empowering the local community both as managers and by providing space for food stalls and other amenities.	3.3	Involving the local community in the development of ecotourism programs and providing education related to environmental conservation around tourist attractions.
4	Utilize digital technology to market locally produced products and this destination globally, including social media marketing, content marketing, and data-driven campaigns.	3.4	Publicizing the location or tourist attractions using various social media platforms through well-planned promotional activities.	4.2	Strengthening the security sector of tourist attractions by increasing both the quantity and quality of security personnel on duty.
	Threats		ST		WT
1	Threats of climate change that may lead to a decline in the population of several species sensitive to temperature and rainfall changes.	1.1	Creating a management plan for the tourist attraction to preserve species diversity and develop climate change risk management strategies.	4.1	Developing management oversight functions for every tourist attraction activity.
2	Competition with other destinations offering similar experiences can be a challenge.	3.2	Enhancing the uniqueness of the tourist attraction to attract tourists through various management policies such as sustainable mangrove planting, organizing attraction activities, and providing diverse local food options.	3.2	Enhancing promotional efforts through print or electronic media and other channels.
3	Threats of forest and peat fires that can damage the Aopa marsh ecosystem.	2.3	Ensuring a strong commitment to SDG 8.3 and effectively implementing it to preserve the natural environment of the tourist attraction.	4.3	Increasing public and management awareness of the importance of the environment and sustainable tourism development, with the aim of transforming local communities into tourism communities and developing

				innovative products to compete effectively.
4	Economic uncertainty: Economic factors such as inflation or exchange rate fluctuations can affect purchasing power and tourist interest.	4.4	Increasing various promotional activities periodically for both tourist activities and culinary experiences to boost tourist interest.	1.4 Providing various economically priced packages for available tourist activities and maximizing the performance of guides and information officers.

Source : based on researcher analysis

The SWOT technique is employed to identify internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and analyze known external factors, serving as the initial analysis for this research presented through a table showcasing Internal Factors Evaluation (IFE) and External Factors Evaluation (EFE) as illustrated in the following table:

B. Analysis of Digital Marketing Strategy

Utilizing visual platforms such as Instagram and YouTube can be highly effective tools in promoting the beauty of the mangrove ecosystem in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park and supporting SDGs Goal 8.3. Here is a discussion of several digital marketing strategies that can be implemented:

- 1) Visual Posting and Hashtag Campaigns: Leveraging the visual appeal of Instagram by posting high-quality images and videos showcasing the natural beauty, biodiversity, and ecotourism activities in Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park, as well as promoting locally produced products like Non-Timber Forest Products. Creating unique hashtag campaigns related to Goal 8.3 SDGs, such as #MangroveSustain or #SDGsGoal8.3 #TNRAWProducts. Encouraging visitors and followers to use these hashtags when sharing their experiences can expand the reach of Rawa Aopa Watumohai National Park promotions.
- 2) b) High-Quality Video Content on YouTube: Producing high-quality videos that explore the beauty of the mangrove ecosystem, ecotourism activities, and conservation efforts. Including interviews with environmental experts and conservation officers to provide deeper insights into biodiversity, management, and conservation projects. This can provide viewers with comprehensive and insightful content.

C. Analysis of STP Model Strategy

Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning (STP) Aspects in the Context of Mangrove Ecotourism in TNRAW:

a. Segmentation:

- 1) Local Visitors: Local residents living around TNRAW who are interested in nature recreation and ecotourism.
- 2) National Visitors: Foreign tourists interested in the natural beauty and biodiversity of TNRAW.
- 3) Educational Visitors: Schools, educational institutions, and organizations interested in educational visits and research at TNRAW.

b. Targeting:

After segmentation, the next step is to determine the most promising and relevant target markets. In the context of TNRAW, targeting is done to identify the most potential market segments to visit and support.

- 1) Family Visitors: This group may include local visitor segments looking for nature recreation experiences with their families.
- 2) Ecotourism Visitors: Local and international tourists concerned about environmental conservation and biodiversity interested in TNRAW's ecotourism programs.
- 3) Educational Visitors: Educational institutions wishing to provide field learning experiences to their students or scholars.

c. Positioning:

Positioning involves efforts to create the desired image or perception in the minds of the target audience. In this case, TNRAW needs to position itself as a unique ecotourism destination that is sustainable and provides valuable experiences to visitors.

- 1) Sustainable Ecotourism Destination: TNRAW positions itself as an environmentally responsible tourism destination that supports local economic sustainability.
- 2) Environmental Education Center: TNRAW emphasizes its role as an educational and research resource on biodiversity and the importance of conservation.
- 3) Natural Recreation Destination: TNRAW highlights the natural beauty and diverse recreational activities offered to visitors, including hiking, trekking, and wildlife observation.

By implementing the STP concept in the digital marketing strategy, TNRAW can attract attention and meet the needs of various market segments effectively and efficiently. This will help support the achievement of SDG 8.3 in promoting policies that support productive activities, job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encouraging the growth of microenterprises in the area. .

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the strengths lie in the support from the TNRAW office through various training and capacity-building activities for local entrepreneurs around the Rawa Aopa Watumohai Tourism Park, coupled with the enthusiasm of the local community to engage in entrepreneurship. This creates a connection between SDG 8.3 and TNRAW. Weaknesses include the need to increase the number of tourism facilities and infrastructure as well as transportation and communication facilities to facilitate tourist access and internet connectivity. In addition, the involvement of the local community still needs to be improved in the development of ecotourism programs and in preserving the surrounding environment. Opportunities include the optimal utilization of social media in promoting locations or tourist attractions to attract tourists. Awareness of the importance of the environment and sustainable tourism can increase the participation of the local community in developing innovative tourism products. Threats include competition with other tourist destinations that have similar promotional strategies, which can reduce the number of tourist visits. Climate change and threats to species diversity at TNRAW demand better management planning.

As for recommendations, organizing regular training programs focusing on local entrepreneurs around TNRAW, integrating digital marketing and business management topics into the training curriculum, encouraging collaboration between the TNRAW office and local educational institutions and economic development organizations to conduct economic empowerment programs. On a practical aspect, developing relevant training programs tailored to the needs of local entrepreneurs, such as digital marketing and business management. Involving industry experts and relevant practitioners in designing the training curriculum to ensure its relevance and quality, and conducting regular environmental awareness campaigns and education in the local community.

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