

The Role Of Instagram Social Media As A Promotional Platform For UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen

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ABSTRACT

Purpose—Social media has become a powerful communication tool in promotion and marketing, particularly in the tourism industry. This study aims to identify the impact and effectiveness of using Instagram as a social media platform to promote the uniqueness, natural beauty, local culture, and environmental conservation efforts of Geopark Ijen, a UNESCO Global Geopark in East Java, Indonesia. The research addresses the problem of how social media can enhance the visibility and attractiveness of tourism destinations.

Design/methods/approach—The research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology, presenting data clearly and comprehensively without conducting comparative analysis or examining relationships with other variables. Data is analyzed qualitatively, with findings presented in words and sentences.

Findings—The research findings demonstrate that Instagram significantly contributes to promoting Geopark Ijen through attention-grabbing content that enhances its visibility as a prominent tourism destination in Indonesia. The study confirms that social media can effectively highlight the unique features and conservation efforts of Geopark Ijen, thereby attracting a wider audience.

Research implications/limitations – The study's qualitative design limits the generalizability of the findings. The research does not compare the effectiveness of Instagram with other social media platforms or marketing strategies, which could be explored in future studies. Additionally, the study is constrained by the specific context of Geopark Ijen, and results may vary in different settings.

Originality/value—This research provides valuable insights into Instagram's role in promoting tourism destinations and supporting sustainable development. It highlights effective strategies for leveraging social media to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of unique natural and cultural sites. Future research could explore comparative analyses with other platforms and broader applications in different tourism contexts.

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Introduction

Information technology and the internet have become integral to everyday life in the current digital era. The Internet provides easy and fast access to information, thereby changing communication, social interaction, and consumer behavior. Marketing via social media has become a very important aspect for tourism organizations or destinations to build and increase their brand awareness. One tourism destination that has significant potential is the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen, which is located in East Java, Indonesia.

Initially, it was known as the Banyuwangi Geopark, then changed to Ijen Geopark and was designated as a National Geopark on November 30, 2018. After two years, in 2020, Ijen Geopark was promoted to become part of UNESCO Global Geopark and validated by UNESCO in 2022. After that, Geopark Ijen officially became part of the UNESCO Global Geopark (UGGp) through the 216th UNESCO Executive Board meeting in Paris, France, on Wednesday, 24 May 2023. So, it can be said that the Ijen Geopark is the fastest Indonesian representative to be promoted to become a UNESCO Global Geopark (UGGp).

With an area of 4,723 km², the Ijen Geopark landscape has 21 geological heritage sites, 6 biodiversity sites, 10 cultural diversity sites, and 8 intangible heritage spread across two districts, namely Banyuwangi Regency and Bondowoso Regency. Located at the eastern tip of Java Island, the name Ijen is taken from the old Mount Ijen, which is the basis for forming the geological story throughout this Geopark area. The caldera stretches for more than 15 kilometers. There are 22 post-caldera volcanoes produced in and on the edge of the caldera, one of which is Mount Ijen, which is the most iconic mountain because it has the only blue fire phenomenon in the world and the world's most acidic crater, so both are used as the leading site as well as the theme of this geopark.

As an area bordered by the sea and straits, the Ijen Geopark is a human crossing area and a commercial intersection. As a result, this area has become a place for various cultural intersections and multicultural identities represented in various cultures, arts, and traditions. The population in the Ijen Geopark Area consists of various tribes, namely Javanese, Osing, Madurese, Balinese, Arab, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, and Bugis. Among these tribes, the Osing tribe is an indigenous people.

The existence of the Ijen Geopark functions as a management bridge between education, conservation, and community empowerment. The harmony of the three geopark pillars starts from the equal distribution of knowledge at all levels of society, which is then supported by institutions and the government so that the natural landscape of the Ijen Geopark is maintained and able to have a positive impact on all its residents.

UGG Geopark Ijen is one of the most famous geoparks in Indonesia. It is located in the Mount Ijen area, East Java. UGG Geopark Ijen aims to preserve biodiversity, geology, and cultural heritage around Mount Ijen. Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also the focus of UGG Geopark Ijen, which aims to achieve sustainable development goals in various aspects, such as environmental management, education, and a sustainable economy.

In this context, social media marketing management strategies can effectively contribute to sustainable development, especially in the education sector at the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen. By using the broad social media platform Instagram, which can be reached by various segments of society, UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen can expand its communication reach and introduce the uniqueness and benefits of this geopark.

Additionally, implementing an appropriate Instagram social media marketing management strategy can positively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations (UN). Through social media, UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen can educate the public about the importance of environmental conservation, education, cultural preservation, and local economic empowerment, all of which are components of the SDGs.

By strengthening brand awareness through managing Instagram's social media marketing and utilizing its potential contribution to the SDGs, UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen can achieve its sustainability vision and actively participate in global efforts to build a better world. However, a deep understanding of social media marketing management that is effective and relevant to the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen context and its influence on SDGs contributions to education is required to achieve this goal. Therefore, this research will analyze and identify the role of Instagram social media as a promotional platform for UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen.

Methods

The research method used is qualitative descriptive, which describes research data clearly and completely without carrying out comparative analysis and relationships with other variables. Qualitative analysis shows data from research results in words and sentences, providing a rich, detailed understanding of the studied phenomena. The data collection technique in this research was carried out through a literature study, where data related to the role of Instagram in promoting the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen was collected from various relevant literature sources. This approach allows for a comprehensive examination of existing knowledge and insights from previous studies, ensuring the research is grounded in a solid theoretical framework.

After the data was collected, analysis was carried out in three stages. The first stage is data reduction, where relevant data is filtered and grouped based on certain themes or topics. This step is crucial for managing vast information and focusing on the most pertinent aspects. The next stage is data presentation, where the filtered data is presented systematically so that it is easy to understand. This involves coherently organizing the data, often using visual aids such as charts or tables to enhance clarity. Finally, conclusions are drawn based on the data analysis that has been carried out. This stage involves interpreting the findings, identifying patterns, and making informed judgments about the role of Instagram in promoting Geopark Ijen. The conclusions provide actionable insights and recommendations for leveraging social media in tourism promotion and sustainable development efforts.

Result

The development of technology is proliferating because of the internet, which helps make it easier to find information and communicate without limits and distance. Currently, the role of the internet is not only as a means of finding information and communicating but also has great potential as a marketing medium. With the development of the marketing world today, every business should be able to adapt to snowballing conditions (Taan et al., 2021). Currently, the internet can connect people with digital media and be a link between consumers. This facilitates communication in the form of marketing promotions through cyberspace. The existence of digital marketing also makes communication between producers, marketers, and consumers or buyers easy (Mulyansyah & Sulistyowati, 2021).

Many young and old generations have used technology, especially those closely related to the internet, such as social media. Social media is a set of applications related to the Internet where social media is formed on ideological foundations and Web 2.0 technologies that provide opportunities for social media users to create and share the content they create (Herdiyani et al., 2022). In the current era of technology 4.0, the role of social media cannot be ruled out because it has become a necessity for society (Dahmiri, 2020). In its development, social media can be used for various purposes, from making friends and campaigning for certain programs (education, social, religious, environmental, health, etc.) to promoting and marketing certain products or services (Suryani, 2014).

The emergence of these new platforms in the social media world facilitates consumer-to-consumer communication and supports communication between unknown consumers. On the other side of marketing, part of the content of marketing is the distribution and highlighting of certain content. Like advertising, content needs to be placed on the right media. The easiest and most straightforward way is through the company's social networks, such as websites and social media (Suarmaja et al., 2023). Business people need effective marketing media intending to expand their market share. Currently, social media can be defined as a virtual world, a computer-based simulation of an environment inhabited by three-dimensional avatars (Novianto et al., 2022). Social media as a marketing tool is certainly related to marketing communication. In marketing communication, there is a marketing mix, one of which is promotion. The main reason someone promotes is so that the product being marketed is increasingly recognized by people (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019).

The marketing mix consists of four elements: product, price, place, and promotion. Meanwhile, for marketing services, the marketing mix needs to be expanded with the addition of three elements, namely people, physical facilities (physical evidence), and process (process), so that it becomes seven elements (7P). The seven elements are interconnected and can be combined according to the environment, both inside and outside the company, to achieve company goals (Nugroho & Azzahra, 2022).

In connection with marketing and technology, the term digital marketing was born. Digital marketing is an effort to market using internet-connected devices with various digital strategies and media so that companies can still communicate with consumers through online channels (Rohmah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, social media marketing is a process that empowers individuals and companies to promote their websites, products, or services online and through social channels to communicate with a much larger community that may not be available through traditional advertising channels (Untari & Fajariana, 2018).

Marketing with technology through the Instagram application media through promotion through diverse content related to products or services. Content can be audio, visual, and audiovisual. Various and interesting content will certainly attract consumer interest in the products or services offered by business people (Yanthi et al., 2023). Instagram is a photo and video-sharing application that allows users to take photos, take videos, apply digital filters, and do other networking activities. The name Instagram itself comes from "instant" and "telegram." The word instant, which underlies the naming "insta," is intended to be like a polaroid camera, which in its time was better known as instant photos (Subiyanto & Valiant, 2022).

Instagram has various features such as carousel photos, filters, nametags, insights and about reposting. These features allow users to disseminate information through content posts in various formats (Kusuma & Sari, 2023). Another advantage of the Instagram application is that it can edit photos such as cutting photos into other shapes so that they can get maximum results as well as using Instamatic and Polaroid cameras. This is different from the 4:3 aspect ratio that is generally used using mobile device cameras. Instagram seems to increase its function to become a strategic place for business people, including communities or individuals struggling in the social sector to make Instagram a promotional medium (Retnasary & Fitriawati, 2018).

Promotion through social media has a huge impact on digital development, precisely more at the business level. As a result, the use of Instagram social media is very much in vogue (Aryani & Murtiariyati, 2022). Promotion is an activity carried out by companies as an effort to communicate to consumers in marketing the products / services produced (Nendi et al., 2022). According to Khairul Maddy in Martowinangun et al., (2019) in detail the objectives of the promotion can be described as follows:

Informing: informing the market about the existence of a new product, introducing how to use a product, communicating price changes to the market, clarifying how a product works, informing the services provided by the company, correcting wrong impressions, reducing buyer fears or concerns, building a company image, persuading target customers, forming brand thoughts, shifting minds to certain brands, changing customer perceptions of product attributes, encouraging buyers to shop immediately, and encouraging buyers to accept salesperson visits.

Reminding: reminding buyers that the production in question is needed shortly, reminding buyers of places that sell the company's products, making buyers remember even though there is no advertising campaign, and keeping the buyer's first memory falling on the company's products.

Through Instagram promotions, UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen can educate the public about the importance of environmental conservation, education, cultural preservation, and local economic empowerment, all of which are components of the SDGs.

The UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen Management Board is the organization responsible for managing Ijen Geopark. Ijen Geopark was designated a National Geopark on November 30, 2018, and then promoted to UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020. In 2022, UNESCO validated the recognition, and Ijen Geopark officially became part of the UNESCO Global Geopark through the 216th session of the UNESCO Executive Board in Paris on May 24, 2023.

The Ijen Geopark is a bridge management that integrates education, conservation, and community empowerment. It aims to spread knowledge to all levels of society, supported by institutions and the government, so that the sustainability of the Ijen Geopark landscape is maintained and positively impacts its inhabitants.

Programs carried out and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the field of education include:

Geopark goes to School: This program aims to introduce and provide an understanding of geoparks to schoolchildren. Thus, it contributes to SDG 4 (Quality Education) by providing students with access to inclusive, quality, and sustainable education about the history of earth formation and the potential of natural phenomena around the Ijen Geopark area.

School goes to Geopark: This program invites students to visit Ijen Geopark sites and get educated about the sites they visit. This provides a hands-on learning experience and contributes to SDG 4, by providing students with a more tangible and immersive educational experience.

Visit Geopark Information Center (GIC): The Geopark Information Center is an educational tourist attraction that provides information, outcropping rocks, and guides who are ready to assist visitors. With the GIC, the program contributes to SDG 4 by providing easy access to information and learning for people of all ages.

Geopark Corner: The Geopark Corner program aims to provide a geopark corner in schools as a learning medium. In Geopark Corner, materials related to Geopark Ijen can be provided and used as a learning tool. This program contributes to SDG 4 by providing learning facilities and resources that support quality school education.

Through these programs, the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen Management Board contributes positively to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in education, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education). As such, Instagram is a significant promotional medium for UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen. With its strong visual features, Instagram enables Geopark Ijen to share engaging photos and videos about the importance of safeguarding the environment and cultural heritage, creating sustainable economic opportunities for local communities, strengthening social and ecological integrity, and promoting overall sustainable development principles. Using relevant hashtags and collaboration with relevant influencers or accounts, Geopark Ijen can increase the global community's awareness and interest in this sustainable tourism destination and extend the reach of its message to inspire nature conservation and understanding of geological heritage.

Conclusion

Social Media has significantly promoted the Ijen Geopark through content that attracts the audience's attention and increases its visibility as a major tourism destination in Indonesia. With its visual-centric approach, platforms like Instagram have revolutionized how destinations like the Ijen Geopark can share their unique attractions with a global audience. Geopark's breathtaking natural beauty, including the mesmerizing Ijen Crater and the rare "Blue Fire" phenomenon, can be showcased to potential tourists worldwide through carefully curated images, videos, and stories. This visual appeal not only captivates viewers but encourages them to visit and experience the wonders of the Geopark firsthand.

This research aims to dig deeper into the role of Instagram as an effective social media platform in promoting the UNESCO Global Geopark Ijen. By analyzing the types of content that generate the most engagement and reach, the study seeks to uncover the strategies that have proven successful in drawing attention to Geopark. This involves examining user interactions, follower growth, and the overall impact of Instagram campaigns on the perception and popularity of Geopark. Through qualitative analysis, the research will provide detailed insights into how Instagram can be leveraged to enhance the promotional efforts for such unique destinations.

By understanding the role played by social media, this research aims to identify effective strategies for utilizing the potential of Social Media to promote tourism destinations and support sustainable development efforts in the Ijen Geopark. The findings will offer valuable guidance for tourism marketers and destination managers on harnessing the power of platforms like Instagram to increase visitor numbers and promote conservation and sustainable tourism practices. Ultimately, the research aspires to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism development, highlighting how digital tools can play a crucial role in balancing tourism growth with environmental preservation.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

The lead author participated in the conceptualization and design of the study, analysis, interpretation of data, and initial drafting of the paper. Each author contributed to the critical revision of the content for intellectual rigor and provided final approval for the published version. All authors are responsible for every aspect of the work

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Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. However, due to privacy and ethical considerations, the data are not publicly accessible.

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