

## Marketing communication for temple tourism destinations: from the perspective of post-COVID-19 pandemic visitors

### Komunikasi pemasaran destinasi wisata candi: dari sudut pandang pengunjung pasca pandemi COVID-19

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#### ABSTRACT

The spread of Corona virus disease-2019 (COVID-19) has had a negative impact on the tourism industry and the creative economy in Indonesia. Since February 2020 the number of foreign visitors coming to Indonesia has decreased. This also has an impact on state revenue in the tourism sector. Coupled with the existence of Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) and the closure of access to and out of Indonesia, it has also caused a decrease in state revenue in the tourism sector. The purpose of this research is to find out the marketing communication of temple tourism destinations after the COVID-19 pandemic from a visitor perspective. This research is a research with a qualitative approach. Data collection was carried out by interviewing visitors to temple tourism destinations (Prambanan Temple and Ratu Boko Temple). The conclusion from this research is that post-COVID-19 pandemic marketing communications for temple tourism destinations from the visitor's point of view have not been fully implemented. Because based on visitors, word of mouth is the strongest factor for visitors visiting temple tourist destinations.

#### ABSTRAK

*Penyebaran Corona virus disease-2019 (COVID-19) telah membawa dampak negatif bagi industri pariwisata dan ekonomi kreatif di Indonesia. Sejak Februari 2020 jumlah pengunjung mancanegara yang datang ke Indonesia menjadi berkurang. Hal ini juga berdampak salah satunya pada penerimaan negara di bidang pariwisata. Ditambah lagi dengan adanya Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar (PSBB) dan ditutupnya akses keluar masuk Indonesia turut menyebabkan penurunan pendapatan negara di sektor pariwisata. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui komunikasi pemasaran destinasi wisata candi pasca pandemi COVID-19 ditinjau dari perspektif pengunjung. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan wawancara terhadap pengunjung destinasi wisata candi (Candi Prambanan dan Candi Ratu Boko). Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah komunikasi pemasaran pasca pandemi COVID-19 untuk destinasi wisata candi dari sudut pandang pengunjung belum sepenuhnya terlaksana. Karena berdasarkan pengunjung, word of mouth menjadi faktor terkuat pengunjung mengunjungi destinasi wisata candi.*

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#### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on various sectors, especially for tourism players and businesses (Purwahita et al., 2021) Indonesia is no exception in boosting foreign exchange, one of which is the

tourism sector (Rahma, 2020). The tourism industry also contributes to the Indonesian economy, especially in terms of GDP (gross domestic product).

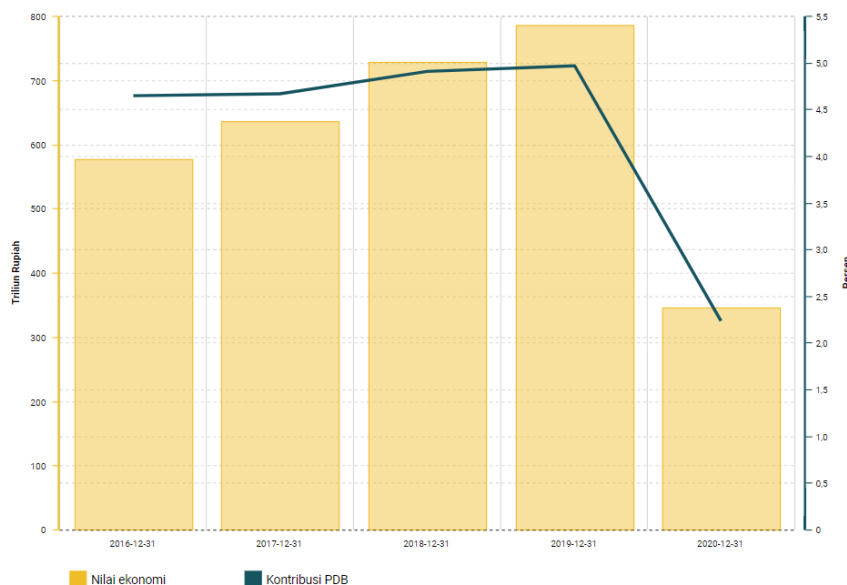


Figure 1. Value and Contribution of the Tourism Sector to Indonesia's GDP

Source: (Santika, 2023)

Based on figure 1, the tourist Satellite Account provides information to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) on the economic worth and GDP (gross domestic product) contribution of Indonesia's tourist industry. Rewinding to 2016, the tourist industry brought in IDR 576.7 trillion. Its GDP contribution is 4.65% at the moment. The value increased once more to IDR 635.3 trillion a year later. But in 2017, the contribution went up a little, to 4.67%. Actually, since 2016, there has been a consistent upward trend in the importance and contribution of tourism. Up till 2019, the contribution was 4.97% and the amount has climbed dramatically to IDR 786.3 trillion. But just IDR 346 trillion was the economic value in 2020, when the COVID-19 outbreak struck and all operations were curtailed. Its share dropped to 2.24%.

In 2019, the tourism industry made a direct contribution of 4.8 per cent of GDP, an increase of 0.30 points compared to its contribution in 2018 of 4.5 per cent (Kemenparekraf, 2020). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the development of tourism has experienced a drastic decline even to minus since 2020 which has paralysed various sectors, especially in the economic sector, especially in the tourism business sector and in the employment sector which can be seen in layoffs (Purwahita et al., 2021).

In the social field, it can also be seen from the behaviour and habits of the community, tourism actors and tourists. Various rules from the government are an obligation that needs to be implemented by the community to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These efforts are known as 3M (washing hands, wearing masks, maintaining distance) and CHSE (cleanliness, health, safety and environment) which include the health protocol implementation programme. The environmental sector, which has an impact on the pandemic situation, has a positive impact, considering that excessive and excessive exploitation of nature can now be minimised and reduced. Pollution caused by economic activities is also reduced, thus improving air quality and the environment. Seeing these conditions, the government plays an important role in issuing policies for the community and tourism components (stakeholders) to remain active and productive in the movement in the economic sector (Purwahita et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on the tourism industry resulting in a significant loss of Regional Original Revenue (PAD). Some things that must be implemented during the pandemic and the new normal era such as First, tourism industry health protocols must be enforced during the pandemic and new normal in places such as hotels, restaurants, tourist attractions, and transportation for both guests and employees. In addition, it also pays attention to hygiene, health, and safety (cleanliness, health, and security). Provide hygiene facilities such as handwashing sinks with soap and water, hand sanitisers, and thermometers for temperature monitoring. For guests experiencing corona symptoms, the hotel even provides an isolation room. Second, electronic money payment (cashless). Third, set strict visitation limits to avoid crowds and ensure safe distancing to reduce spread. Fourth, attractions for tourists are opened gradually by prioritising low-risk areas such as natural areas and mountains (Wicaksono, 2020).

The main factor that the government and tourism businesses must take into account is health and safety regulations. Furthermore, try to plan a number of new travel options to deal with the pandemic that tourists are still interested in but can be done while still paying attention to safety precautions. In order to provide a sense of security and comfort to tourists in travelling during this outbreak, tourism operators can do the following things (Paramita & Putra, 2020) i.e. 1) High standard sanitation. The use of benchmarks of well-being by making sanitation satisfactory. 2) High standard security. Security benchmarks are important things that must be considered. Expanding security benchmarks in tourist areas because visitor comfort will have an impact on increasing visitor visits. 3) Staycation. Some of the things that we will encounter in the post-COVID-19 'new normal' in the tourism segment are visitors who will prioritise well-being and security such as continuing to hone self-distancing, implementing the COVID-19 convention, so that clean office accessibility will be the most culprit centre of tourism. 4) Niche tourism. A very big change will be seen from the gathering of tourists who follow the visit. If they are already in large numbers because it will save the budget. But given the high safety and comfort guidelines, the choice of Niche Tourism is crucial as they will be in small groups with similar entertainment, interface or visual acuity. 5) Solo travel tour. Utilisation of people transport will be higher than mass transport as the physical separation will last longer than evaluated so that the fear of visitors being in one mode of transport can be avoided. 6) Wellness tour. These excursions are done to restore the body and feed the intellect. These wellness excursions offer a perfect match of great travel destinations, recovery activities, and healthy eating experiences that will help travellers feel better than they did before the trip. 7) Virtual tourism. The innovation created in the tourism division is the expansion of the stage.

Based on this background, the tourism sector must rise up and find new ways of marketing in generating public enthusiasm for travelling. Temple tourism destinations must be able to carry out appropriate marketing communications after the COVID-19 pandemic in attracting both local and foreign tourists. Marketing communication is a combination of two studies, namely communication and marketing. The definition of marketing communication can be the main preparation in selecting, creating, implementing, assessing, and managing with all organisational partners for a certain period of time (Kushwaha *et al.*, 2020). Marketing communication contains an instruction that begins with direct promotion, which is the main activity in the interaction carried out by the brand owner (brand). It is this interaction movement that is then recognised by the target of the advertisement and responded to as a form of input (Yunus, 2020; Putranto & Vallejo, 2022). Marketing communications plays an important role in developing and building awareness of the product (Febriyantoro, 2020).

Marketing communications focuses on promotions including Advertising, Sales promotion, Public relations and publicity, Personal selling, and Direct marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Putranto, 2023). Marketing communication has also utilised new media, one of which is used by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism in communicating Indonesian tourism marketing consists of various media, including through the official Pesona Indonesia website which is included with email, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Haryono & Albetris, 2022). Marketing communication also cannot be separated from the marketing communication mix (marcommix). The importance of a marketing activity carried out through marketing communication must be an alternative that is used to make a tourist attraction more attractive to tourists (Labanauskaitė *et al.*, 2020). Some of the marketing communication strategies implemented by Tirta Sinongko are: online promotion through social media; organising special events; direct communication activities carried out through personal selling (Prastiani & Pratiwi, 2020). Marketing communication is an important part in reviving the vibrancy of the tourism sector. One of them is the temple tourism sector in Yogyakarta and Central Java.

The recovery of the tourism sector in Yogyakarta cannot be done quickly. There are several stages that must be passed. Tourism in Yogyakarta needs to shift from relying on mass tourism to class tourism. The scenery of tourist destinations is limited to the optimal capacity towards sustainable tourism. The development of SMART Tourism requires tourism innovation in Yogyakarta based on information technology. Collaboration between tourism industry players, government, universities, and the community is needed so that SMART Tourism can be built and developed. Through innovative tourism development and the fulfilment of health protection and standardisation of international standard tourist services, tourism in Yogyakarta is expected to recover in 2022. 2020 is the year of SMART Tourism development through the Visiting Jogja and Jogja Pas applications. 2021 is the year of optimal implementation of SMART Tourism. 2022 is expected to be the year of recovery of the tourism sector in Yogyakarta with higher quality and reliability (Kusuma *et al.*, 2021).

Yogyakarta, which is rich in culture and history, is still a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, one of which is temple tourism. The temple serves as a repository of knowledge about the history of Hindu-Buddhist civilisation, a source of science, a place of worship for Hindu-Buddhists, a place for monks or the first residence, and a bathing place for Hindu-Buddhists, allowing the community to benefit from its popularity as a tourist destination (Alpino & Soyusiawaty, 2020).

**Table 1.** Temple visitor data

No.	Tourism Objects	Visitors per day
1	Prambanan Temple	6.043.219
2	Kalasan Temple	1.221
3	Sari Temple	1.351
4	Gebang Temple	375
5	Ijo Temple	-
6	Banyunibo Temple	64
7	Barong Temple	-
8	Ratu Boko Temple	1.017
9	Sambisari Temple	246,6
10	Klodangan Temple	-
11	Palgading Temple	-
12	Kedulan Temple	-
13	Morangan Temple	-
14	Gupolo Temple	-

Source: (Alpino & Soyusiawaty, 2020)

Based on Table 1 related to temple visitor data, it shows that the number of tourists visiting the temple is minimal. The Yogyakarta Tourism Statistics Agency conducts a division by counting the number of visitors who visit the temples each year. Meanwhile, when viewed from the number of visits, Prambanan Temple is the most visited tourist attraction per day as many as 6,043,219. This reason is the basis for researchers in choosing Prambanan Temple as a research location. In addition, this study also explored data on visitors to Ratu Boko Temple to compare the data obtained.

The first step in determining the potential to attract tourists is to understand visitors' perspectives on cultural traditions in a tourist destination (Maulana & Agustina, 2022; Utami et al., 2019). Based on previous research by Rahmawati & Agustina (2022) that visitors have a perspective on Keraton Kanoman tourist destinations that are different from Keraton Kasepuhan, namely having several buildings with various uses that are not owned by Keraton Kasepuhan, and the characteristics of Keraton Kanoman appear simpler than Keraton Kasepuhan. This makes visitors able to quickly recognise the structure of Keraton Kasepuhan and Keraton Kanoman through its characteristics. In addition, visitors provide recommendations for the maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage buildings, especially the buildings of Keraton Kasepuhan and Keraton Kanoman, including social media promotion and updating without reducing the authenticity of the keratin (Rahmawati & Agustina, 2022). The visitor perspective in the scope of tourism was also conducted by Niagara (2018) who discussed the city's tourism image which is one of the fundamental keys to competitive advantage as the tourism industry faces increasingly fierce competition. A city is competing to create a tourism programme that will make it the top choice for tourists. The main determinants of tourists' preference for a brand are visitors' attitudes towards it, city perceptions, and brand equity. If visitors to a city tend to favour it over other cities, this will influence their desire to visit and improve their perceptions and attitudes towards the city (Niagara, 2018). In another study, it was also mentioned that the development of Parangtritis Beach tourist attraction is related to sustainable development (Dejan, 2019).

Through this research, the perspective of visitors to temple tourist destinations is explored in finding the right efforts in arousing the desire of prospective tourists to travel. Based on the background that has been described, this study aims to determine the marketing communication of temple tourist destinations after the COVID-19 pandemic from the perspective of visitors.

## METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach, where qualitative research uses an inductive reasoning process to try to understand reality, engage in the circumstances and environment of the events studied in the research. Researchers are expected to always concentrate on facts or events that exist in the area under study (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Meanwhile, the data collection technique in this research uses interviews.

Interviews are the most widely used tool for collecting data in qualitative research (Foley et al., 2021). Qualitative research interviews are a powerful data collection tool that provides researchers with the opportunity to explore (McGrath et al., 2019). Interviews are a useful method for collecting qualitative research data on phenomena that cannot be observed directly. Traditionally, in-person interviews have been considered the standard because the interviewer communicates and builds rapport with participants while observing their body language and environment (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Qualitative interviewing does not only focus on capturing the experiences and perspectives of the participants. It also allows for the interpretation and in some cases explanation of those experiences in relation to each other and the context in which the experience arose (Roberts, 2020). Interviews were conducted by researchers to explore visitors' perspectives on viewing marketing communications. Especially regarding marketing communication efforts carried out by temple tourism managers before visitors finally make a visit.

Determination of informants in this study was carried out using snowball technique on visitors to tourist destinations Prambanan Temple and Ratu Boko Temple with the criteria 1) Male and Female, 2) Visitors to Prambanan Temple or Ratu Boko Temple, 3) Age 20-60 years. As shown on Table 2, there were 6 informants involved in data collection. The six informants were chosen because they were temple visitors who were found at Prambanan and Ratu Boko Temples.

**Table 2.** Research informants

Informant	Name	Origin
1	SA	East Java
2	ME	West Sumatra
3	AD	Central Java
4	RP	East Java
5	NV	West Java
6	TU	DKI Jakarta

In this study, researchers set several stages in the data collection process to get the results of the research objectives, namely:

1. Preparation

This stage begins with analysing the existing problems and then conducting a literature study related to similar research that has been done. Then proceed with making points that will be discussed with informants during the interview.

2. Implementation

This stage begins with gathering a number of informants who will be involved in the interview. When they have joined together, the researcher will ask a number of questions to the informants with the guidelines that have been compiled.

3. Data Analysis

This stage is carried out with data triangulation where the initial stage is carried out by collecting all data or recorded evidence conducted through interviews. The next stage is to select the selected data by eliminating data that is in accordance with the research objectives (transcribed recordings). The final stage draws conclusions on the data that has been selected.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 6 informants involved in this research. In relation to the reasons for visitors coming to temple tourist destinations, the informants explained the reasons that varied.

### Inadequate Implementation of Promotion by Temple Tourism Managers

*"I haven't seen it yet. But I have seen reviews from YouTube, mostly from outside YouTubers, like those from Korea, Japan. When I saw it on YouTube"*

Regarding the search for YouTube content, informant SA explained that most of them saw reviews from Korea or Japan. Because according to him, foreign tourists are more interested in the architecture of Prambanan Temple. because there is historical value, plus foreign tourists prefer Indonesian tourism.

*"Less, more Borobudur, Prambanan. Well, even Prambanan should be, if for example I am. Maybe if it is considered as marketing, I will immediately take the marketing technique to get a cheaper package. So it should be, Ratu Boko became famous when we first entered Prambanan. it wasn't, so the system was fifty thousand, now I probably know where Ratu Boko is, I asked for the package. Meanwhile, not all people are active, so I think the promotion is lacking. Even though the opportunity was right at Prambanan earlier. It was crowded with small children who could be included there. If social media is lacking" (Interview with informant RP).*

Regarding promotion in marketing communication, Informant RP, when he came to Ratu Boko Temple, did not really see promotions around the entrance specifically. Regarding the attraction is also not very visible. If at Prambanan Temple there is, but you have to ask first. However, the attraction for Informant RP regarding Ratu Boko Temple lies in the atmosphere. For visitors who want a quieter place, Ratu Boko Temple is one of the recommendations for temple tourism destinations.

*"From social media. Google actually, more like google. You see, I've seen it in the film AADC (Ada Apa Dengan Cinta). Random, random. Then here I am looking for tourist recommendations in Jogja" (Interview with informant NV).*

Informant NV said that Ratu Boko's marketing communication on social media has never been seen. Through Instagram, I have also never seen a special Ratu Boko Temple. According to him, the use of social media related to marketing communication and conventional marketing is not very visible compared to the marketing communication of Prambanan Temple and Borobudur Temple. Informant NV also added that there are more tours at Prambanan Temple and Borobudur Temple compared to Ratu Boko Temple on Instagram.

Regarding conventional marketing communication around the temple location, informant NV added that it has not been specifically found at either Prambanan Temple or Ratu Boko Temple.

*"Just search for myself. I really want to come here. Searching on google directly. It's not specific, the temple's social media, you want to, you just want to come here from the beginning. If marketing on ig or tiktok, Ratu Boko itself has never done that" (Interview with informant TU).*

Informant TU said that he searched for the tourist destinations he wanted to visit himself. However, marketing communication on social media such as IG or TikTok has never been seen directly. Before entering the temple location, the TU Informant was not aware of any advertisements or promotions around the temple location. Informant TU explained that the attraction that brought him to come to the temple was mainly Ratu Boko Temple because of the cheap entrance ticket price compared to Borobudur Temple. Plus the atmosphere and weather at Ratu Boko is better than Borobudur Temple which tends to be hot.

TU informants also added that marketing communication on social media and conventional around the entrance is also not very significant. Because TU informants already have personal plans to visit the temple. If anything, according to the TU informant, it might be a promotion related to the promotion of a pass from Prambanan Temple to Ratu Boko Temple using a shuttle. Because the number of visitors to Prambanan Temple is greater, so it is used as a place to promote other temple tourist destinations.

Based on previous research by Anjelina *et al* (2022), the amount of WhatsApp messages or snaps that make an impression on visitors in the form of images or videos indicates how many tourists visit the area each month. Meanwhile, based on Haryono & Albetris (2022), New media is used in marketing communications to communicate Indonesian tourism marketing. These media include the official website, email, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Meanwhile, in this research, new media such as YouTube and Google have become a forum for potential tourists to search for information related to temple tourism. For visitors, the temple tourism management has not utilized and maximized new media as an effort to attract the attention of potential visitors.

### **WoM: Promotion through Recommendation from Close Relatives**

*"Someone suggested it, there are also friends who have lived in PT (Limited Liability Company) but have also been here" (Interview with informant SA).*

Informant SA stated that he did not know much about temple marketing on social media. It is also added that informant SA does not actively use social media. Although currently social media has been widely used and utilised as a marketing medium, SA informants do not follow it, just want to see the atmosphere.

*"For me, it's from my brother, yesterday. Older sibling. He said, let's go to Prambanan tomorrow. Yes, we can travel while learning here" (Interview with informant ME).*

Informant ME explained that it was the interest in culture that made him come to visit the temple. According to him, effective marketing communication needs to be made so that potential visitors want to visit the temple. One of them is by presenting the story or storyline of why the Prambanan temple can be formed so that it makes people curious, especially through TikTok.

*"Usually it's family. If it's from social media, no, it's just like googling, usually directly what is the favourite tour, then we look for information" (Interview with informant AD).*

Informant AD again added that he had never seen temple marketing communication on social media. Despite using social media, Informant AD rarely sees any temple tourism marketing communication on social media. Related to conventional marketing communications around the temple location is also not very visible. According to Informant AD, a decent advertisement promotion is seen when

offering visitors to visit other tours through leaflets.

Based on previous research by Dewi *et al.* (2022), the study's findings indicate that digital content marketing influences visiting interest favorably, that it influences social word of mouth favorably, that social word of mouth favorably influences visiting interest, and that social word of mouth mediates the effect of digital content marketing on visiting interest. Meanwhile, in this study, the interest of potential temple visitors was more influenced by information obtained from close relatives. Generally, the family has a lot of influence on potential tourists visiting the temple. Apart from that, co-workers are the ones who influence potential tourists to visit the temple tour.

## CONCLUSIONS

The convenience provided by social media which is widely used in various sectors has not been widely captured and interpreted by visitors to temple tourist destinations. Apart from inadequate marketing communications both through social and conventional media, temple tourism visitors have not seen many efforts by temple tourism managers to attract enthusiasm from potential temple tourism visitors. For visitors to temple tourist destinations, the power of word of mouth from close relatives to them is the biggest strength for visitors to visit temple tourist destinations. In the midst of management's inadequate efforts to attract visitors, the role of friends, family and co-workers becomes a promotion that helps increase tourist visits to the temple.

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