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Scroll, discover, visit: potential of TikTok media platform in boosting Indonesian domestic ecotourism and nature conservation

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Abstract

The potential of social media to promote ecotourism products and services, and nature conservation through engaging content, needs thorough exploration. This research focuses on TikTok social media platform, which has seen a surge in tourism-related content, particularly linked to Indonesian domestic tourism. As awareness of domestic tourism grows among Indonesians, the use of hashtags to highlight local attractions has become prevalent. This study aims to investigate TikTok's efficacy as a marketing tool for promoting domestic tourism in Indonesia, utilizing the hashtag (#) feature. The frequency of likes, comments, and shares of 50 videos (5 videos from each of 10 popular hashtags) were analysed. Additionally, the videos against the 7 dimensions of tourism product qualitywere further analysed. The cumulative engagement metrics for these TikTok videos included 14.9 million likes, 213.2 thousand comments, and 580.9 thousand shares. Despite more than half of the videos falling short of all seven tourism product quality dimensions, they still managed to attract millions of views and significant engagement. The findings suggest that TikTok holds considerable potential as an effective marketing tool for tourism industry, especially in enhancing visibility and engagement for Indonesian domestic ecotourism and nature conservation efforts. Future research should further explore the impact of content quality on long-term tourism sustainability and conservation awareness.

Keywords: domestic tourism, hashtag, promotion tool

1. Introduction

As technology evolves, social media has become a vital tool for ecotourism actors to promote their products and services [1]. In addition to promotional use, social media currently plays a crucial role in sharing biodiversity information [2]. This has significant implications for nature conservation, such as generating awareness, increasing pro-conservation behaviors, raising funds for wildlife conservation, and inciting policy changes [3]. Social media has revolutionized the tourism sector, transforming it from a traditional model to a highly information-driven one [4]. Consequently, utilizing social media can serve as a powerful tool for publicizing tourism locations and supporting nature conservation efforts.

TikTok is one of the social media platforms currently experiencing a surge in popularity. Its influence is evident as platforms like Instagram and YouTube have introduced similar vertical video features, namely Reels and YouTube Shorts, respectively, to compete [5]. As of early 2022, ByteDance's advertising sources revealed that TikTok had a total of 92.07 million Indonesian users aged 18 and above, highlighting its emergence as a novel cultural phenomenon in Indonesia. Travelers increasingly use TikTok to make travel decisions, showcasing the platform's role in Electronic Word of Mouth (E-WOM), where information is shared from consumers to other consumers through electronic content [6]. E-WOM has proven to be an effective way to promote destinations, as evidenced by studies illustrating how Twitter content can attract visitor interest and Facebook travel posts can inspire envy and motivate users to visit destinations [7] [8]. Therefore, TikTok possesses similar potential as a promotional tool for tourism.

However, the quality of tourism content on TikTok needs careful consideration. There are seven dimensions of tourism product quality [9] that can enhance the effectiveness of promotional videos. This article examines TikTok's potential as a promotional tool for boosting domestic tourism in Indonesia.

2. Materials and Methods

The research was conducted between May and July of 2022. The researchers are specifically studying the utilization of TikTok as a promotion tool for promoting domestic tourism in Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on one of TikTok's notable features, the hashtag (#). The hashtag symbol (#) on TikTok videos serves as a functionality that facilitates the discoverability of topics, events, and products. Utilizing a hashtag on TikTok videos has the potential to impact the quantity of views received by the video [10]. This research analyses 5 videos from 10 most popular hashtags about Indonesian domestic tourism with total 50 videos. Primary data is directly obtained from the TikTok platform. The researchers made first-hand observations, commencing with a quest for the ten most prevalent hashtags, subsequently documenting the quantity of likes, comments, and shares for the five most prominent videos/hashtags. The procedure proceeds by evaluating the presence or absence of the seven dimensions of tourism product quality as outlined in Poerwanto [9]. These dimensions include attractions, information, human resources, public facilities, service, accessibility, and cleanliness. Descriptive statistics are utilized to analyse data, encompassing measures such as frequency and percentages.

3. Results and Discussion

An insightful investigation into the potential of TikTok to promote domestic tourism in Indonesia through the use of hashtags is provided by the study. In a methodical manner, it studies the popularity and influence of particular hashtags, with a particular emphasis on the total engagement of those hashtags.

3.1. Popularity and Engagement

More specifically, the study classifies ten of the most important hashtags in the field of Indonesian domestic tourism, with a particular emphasis on the extensive viewership that each of these hashtags receives. The most popular hashtag, #wisatabandung, has received an astounding 461.6 million views. Other hashtags, such as #wisata and #explorebandung, have also received a significant amount of views, with the total number of views for these top 10 hashtags reaching an astounding 2.7 billion. It is remarkable that the hashtag #wonderfulindonesia, which represents the official TikTok presence of the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism, has garnered 374.1 million views, demonstrating that it has made a considerable contribution to this digital interaction.

3.2. Key Tourist Destinations

Among the larger landscape that encompasses Java and Bali, the findings highlight Bandung and Jogjakarta as significant focal areas within the digital narrative of Indonesian domestic tourism on TikTok. These cities are located in the middle of the landscape. Despite the fact that some of the content does not satisfy all of the tourism quality characteristics that were analysed, the large viewership of these videos demonstrates TikTok's adaptability in terms of content generation and the critical role that community engagement plays in increasing the visibility of tourism attractions. This digital engagement highlights the content's ability to attract and resonate with the audience, so contributing to the development of an interactive community.

3.3. Engagement Metrics

The findings of this research indicate that the content is primarily concerned with providing viewers with an experience that is both interesting and educational, and that it is accompanied with appealing audio and explanation dubbings. In Table 1, engagement metrics are displayed for 50 different TikTok videos that are related to Indonesian domestic tourism. There are five videos for each hashtag.

Table 1. Engagement metrics for 50 selected TikTok videos on Indonesian domestic tourism

Hashtag	Likes (n)	(%)	Comments (n)	(%)	Shares (n)	(%)
# wisatabandung	2,158,200	14.39	53,927	25.28	16,7882	28.90
# wisata	1,174,500	7.83	5,775	2.71	71,562	12.32
# explorebandung	1,802,400	12.02	47,248	22.15	51,599	8.88
# wonderfulindonesia	3,616,000	24.11	24,062	11.28	87,242	15.02
# wisatajogja	1,376,000	9.17	15,803	7.41	47,291	8.14
# explorejogja	1,142,100	7.62	11,478	5.38	35,452	6.10
# wisataindonesia	1,700,200	11.34	36,780	17.24	36,374	6.26
# explorebali	933,700	6.23	37,15	1.74	19,782	3.41
# staycationjakarta	486,300	3.24	4,620	2.17	32,440	5.58
# explorejakarta	608,600	4.06	9,890	4.64	31,278	5.38
Total	14,998,000		213,298		580,902	

Based on the total number of likes, Bandung is the most anticipated travel destination. This research demonstrates that TikTok's influence is significant in large cities, given that only Java and Bali are represented in the top ten hashtags connected to domestic tourism in Indonesia. Despite not meeting all seven criteria for travel product quality, over 25 videos managed to amass millions of views, showcasing TikTok's content flexibility. It should be noted that TikTok's terms and conditions allow users to develop content freely, provided it adheres to their guidelines. For instance, a well-known video with the hashtag #travel had its comments section disabled to minimize the total number of comments, reflecting TikTok's privacy settings flexibility. The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) explains that TikTok users are driven by various motivations such as entertainment, information, and social engagement. This theory helps elucidate why TikTok's engaging content, particularly related to domestic tourism, is so effective. Users find this content both informative and entertaining while actively engaging with the community, which in turn drives more views and interactions [11].

3.4 Functional Features of TikTok

TikTok videos are characterised by the presence of certain buttons, including those for liking, commenting, and sharing. The objective of the *like* tool is to provide viewers with the ability to show their approval of the content, whereas the comments feature is designed to encourage the expressing of opinions and the exchange of those viewpoints among users respectively. It is also possible for users to distribute one other's videos to their friends and followers on TikTok through the usage of the share option [12].

The high engagement metrics can be partly explained by Social Influence Theory, which posits that individuals are influenced by the opinions and behaviors of others within their social network. This participatory culture on TikTok encourages users to interact with and share tourism-related content, thus enhancing its reach and impact [13]. TikTok's many features make it possible to disseminate video content to a large number of people, particularly in the tourist industry. The theory of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) highlights the power of sharing user-generated content online. TikTok's structure facilitates the rapid spread of eWOM, significantly boosting the visibility of tourism destinations. eWOM is often perceived as more authentic and trustworthy compared to traditional marketing, which reinforces its effectiveness in promoting tourism [14]. This facilitates an increase in the visibility of a website to those who might be interested in visiting that location. Previous studies confirm TikTok's capability to boost destination awareness and encourage tourism [15].

TikTok videos, on the other hand, are continually receiving an increasing number of likes, comments, and shares for their content. As a result, it is absolutely necessary to carry out ongoing research in order to analyse videos uploaded to TikTok. A further investigation of the effectiveness of Tik Tok as a tool for promoting tourism by remaining current is anticipated to be conducted in the course of future study. Tik Tok is well-known for its unique algorithm, which makes it possible to investigate a wide variety of topics.

3.5. Role of Official Accounts and Influencers

The revelation that the Ministry of Tourism Indonesia has an official TikTok account with the handle @wonderfulid and the hashtag #wonderfulindonesia is an intriguing new piece of information that has been uncovered. A large number of films showcasing the natural splendour of Indonesia may be found on this account. The video description that was prepared also includes information that is informative regarding domestic destinations. It would appear from this that the Indonesian government is aware of the possible impact that could result from utilising TikTok as a platform for the promotion of tourism related activities. In order to make Indonesia more appealing to tourists, the government ought to take this preventative precaution, as tourism will grow when it is combined with technological advancement and environmental responsibility. It is also possible to use this step-in conservation areas in order to introduce and educate people about the biodiversity or places that are located inside their conservation zones. To be more specific, TikTok has the potential to serve as a tool for enhancing the prestige and identity of conservation places, such as the Plitvice Lakes National Park in Europe and the Gauja National Park in the United States [16].

3.6. Future Implications

Given TikTok's evolving nature and increasing user engagement, ongoing research is necessary to continually analyse its effectiveness in promoting tourism. Continuous research is essential to consistently evaluate TikTok's efficacy in boosting tourism, given its dynamic character and growing user involvement. Analysing user behaviour patterns and preferences on TikTok might yield important insights about the specific type of tourism content that strongly appeals to viewers. Analyse user interactions, such as likes, comments, and shares, to customise content tactics that closely match audience expectations and interests.

Future research endeavours may also concentrate on creating interactive functionalities inside TikTok to augment user involvement with tourism-related content. Integrating interactive features such as virtual tours, quizzes, or challenges can enhance the immersion of viewers, leading to increased engagement and interest in travel locations.

Studying efficient methods of collaborating with influencers on TikTok might provide significant insights on how to effectively utilise influencer partnerships for promoting tourism. Comprehending the influence of influencers on audience engagement and perception of travel destinations can assist tourism marketers in establishing fruitful relationships for wider reach and significant impact.

4. Conclusions

Based on this research, the top 10 hashtags on TikTok that are associated with domestic tourism are revealed. A total of 14.9 million likes, 213.2 thousand comments, and 580.9 thousand shares were amassed by the engagement metrics for fifty selected TikTok videos that focused on Indonesian domestic tourism. All videos are accompanied by captivating soundtrack, and the majority of videos feature dubbings that explain the content. However, despite the fact that they do not meet all seven criteria for travel product quality, over 25 films still managed to amass millions of views. By doing an analysis of the engagement metrics, the public and the government of Indonesia can make use of this data to determine the most popular sites and natural areas in the country. Reevaluating additional locations that have the potential to be advertised on TikTok in order to broaden their appeal to a larger audience is another possibility that the government may take into consideration. By promoting locations, educating users, motivating consumers to provide feedback, and collecting public opinion through the use of comments, TikTok has the potential to act as an efficient instrument for tourism marketing and contribute to the preservation of natural resources.

Author Contributions

HRN: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing**.**

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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