

BIRA BEACH TOURISM GOVERNANCE THROUGH DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the role and implications of digital marketing communication strategies in the tourism governance of Bira Beach. Bira Beach, renowned for its pristine coastal beauty, has witnessed fluctuating tourism trends over the years. Ensuring sustainable tourism development, which balances economic benefits, environmental protection, and socio-cultural integration, necessitates effective governance mechanisms. Digital marketing communication strategies have emerged as instrumental in shaping this governance. Through a qualitative approach encompassing interviews, surveys, and digital data analytics, this study explores (1) the existing digital communication practices in promoting Bira Beach, (2) stakeholders' perceptions about the effectiveness of these practices, and (3) the influence of these strategies on tourism governance frameworks and decisions. Preliminary findings suggest that well-structured digital communication campaigns can enhance stakeholder participation, foster transparent decision-making, and drive sustainable tourism policies. However, certain challenges like digital literacy, infrastructural constraints, and authenticity concerns have been identified. The research emphasizes the need for a cohesive strategy that integrates technology, local community insights, and environmental considerations for robust tourism governance at Bira Beach. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the intertwining realms of digital marketing and tourism governance, offering insights for policy-makers, tourism planners, and marketers.

Keywords: *Bira Beach, Tourism Governance, Digital Marketing Communication, Sustainable Tourism, Stakeholder Participation.*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, the landscapes of tourism and destination marketing have witnessed unparalleled changes (Shehade & Stylianou-Lambert, 2020). Today, tourists are not just passive receivers of promotional content but are also active participants and contributors in the digital ecosystem (Neuhofner, 2016). Bira Beach, known for its crystalline waters and powdery sand, is at the crossroads of modern tourism governance and the burgeoning influence of digital marketing

communication(Asmawaty, 2021). Tourism governance refers to a nexus of power relations, decision-making processes, and stakeholder engagement, determining how tourism resources are managed and how benefits are distributed(Farsari, 2023). The essence of effective governance lies in the holistic and sustainable development of a destination, fostering economic growth without compromising on environmental sanctity or cultural integrity(Beaumont & Dredge, 2010). In this matrix, digital marketing communication strategies emerge as powerful tools, altering the paradigms of how destinations are perceived, experienced, and consequently governed(Rahimi et al., 2020). Historically, Bira Beach, like many untouched paradises, relied heavily on word-of-mouth and traditional advertising avenues for its promotion(Junaid, 2018). However, with the proliferation of the internet and the subsequent digital revolution, the tourism marketing strategies for Bira Beach, and indeed for destinations worldwide, have undergone significant shifts(Neuhofer et al., 2012). Today, platforms like Instagram, TripAdvisor, and various travel blogs play a pivotal role in molding the perceptions of potential tourists. This digital word-of-mouth, driven by user-generated content, influencers, and digital advertising campaigns, has an immediacy and breadth of reach that traditional methods can't rival(Ismagilova et al., 2017).

Yet, the introduction of digital tools doesn't merely amplify the volume or speed of communication. It revolutionizes the essence of governance by introducing an array of stakeholders into the conversation (Dawes, 2009). Tourists, local businesses, environmentalists, and even casual digital observers can have a say in the narrative of a destination like Bira Beach(Bassano et al., 2019). This democratization, while empowering, brings forth challenges in governance, particularly in managing conflicting interests and ensuring that the destination's promotion remains authentic and sustainable(Akinyetun & Ebonine, 2022; Blayone et al., 2017). A key advantage of digital marketing communication is data analytics, which provides insights into tourist behaviors, preferences, and feedback in real-time(Dolnicar, 2002). Such data-driven strategies can aid in adaptive governance, allowing for real-time policy tweaks and responsive

destination management(Yüksel et al., 2005). For instance, if digital feedback suggests an increase in waste due to tourist activities, governance mechanisms can quickly introduce stricter waste management policies or initiate clean-up drives(Wang et al., 2018). However, with every advantage comes associated challenges. The digital divide, characterized by disparities in access to digital tools and platforms, can exclude certain stakeholders, particularly the older generation or those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds(Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010). Moreover, the authenticity of digital content can sometimes be questionable, with influencers and paid promotions potentially painting an unrealistic picture of destinations(Schaffer, 2020).

Bira Beach's pristine charm, while a magnet for tourists, is also its vulnerability. Ensuring that the influx of tourists, propelled by compelling digital narratives, doesn't harm its delicate ecosystems or disrupt local socio-cultural norms is a critical governance challenge(Drius et al., 2019; Jones & Phillips, 2009). This underscores the need for not just effective but also ethically-grounded digital marketing communication strategies that prioritize the destination's long-term well-being over short-term gains(Camilleri, 2018). In sum, the relationship between tourism governance at Bira Beach and digital marketing communication strategies is intricate, dynamic, and multi-faceted. By diving deep into this relationship, this research hopes to shed light on the best practices, potential pitfalls, and future trajectories for destinations navigating the digital era. Over the last decade, the convergence of digital communication and tourism governance has gradually ascended the research ladder, providing us with significant insights. The onset of the digital age led to an influx of studies dedicated to understanding how destinations leverage digital platforms to enhance their marketability(Kushwaha, 2020). There's no denying the transformative power of digital strategies, with contemporary literature documenting case studies where destinations have seen dramatic tourism booms driven purely by digital media(Singh & Hess, 2020). Moreover, with the digital age ushering in an era of

unprecedented data availability, studies have begun to focus on data analytics and its potential to redefine tourism governance (Centobelli & Ndou, 2019).

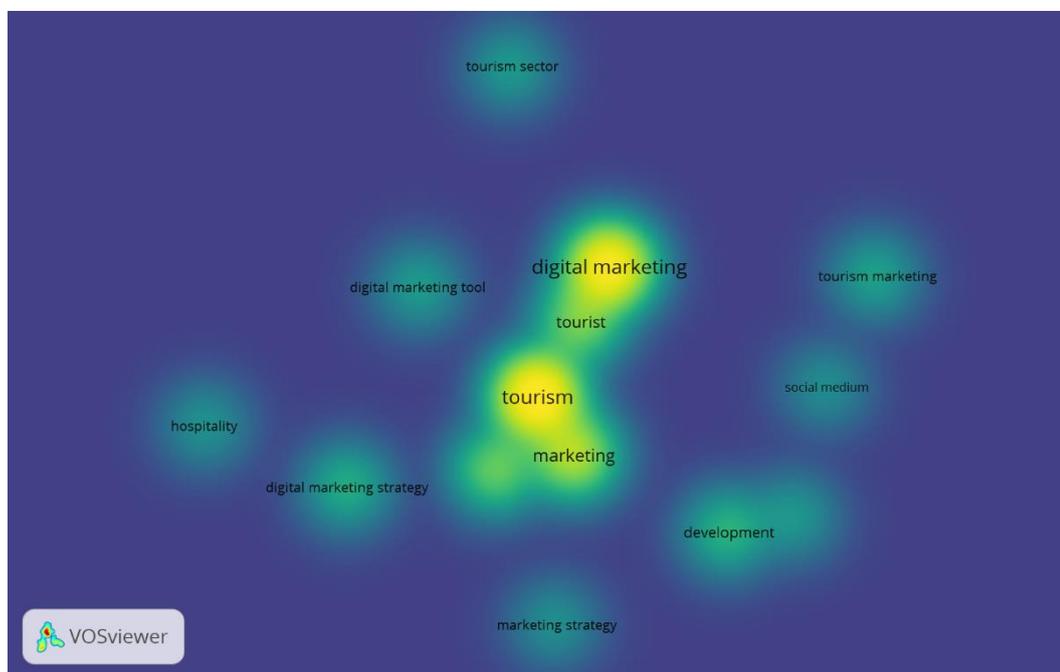


Figure 1. Research Position Mapping
Source: Processed by Vosviewer, 2023

In particular, some scholars have posited that data can provide actionable insights, thereby leading to better policy decisions and resource allocation for tourism boards (Yang et al., 2022). Bira Beach, in its nascent stages of digital adaptation, can significantly benefit from these learnings. However, despite these advancements, there's a palpable gap in the literature. First, while there's significant focus on top-tier destinations and their digital strategies, second-tier and lesser-known destinations like Bira Beach remain underrepresented (Reiffer et al., 2022). This leads to a lack of contextual understanding for such destinations, which might have unique challenges and opportunities compared to their more popular counterparts (Minteer & Manning, 2005). Furthermore, there's an overemphasis on the quantitative benefits of digital marketing (like tourist footfall) at the expense of qualitative aspects. The repercussions of digital marketing campaigns on the local community, environment, and cultural authenticity remain underexplored (Mallia & Windels, 2011). The current literature seems to be siloed, often dealing with digital marketing and governance

as disparate entities rather than intertwined phenomena (Melović et al., 2020). Also, the ethical dimensions of digital marketing, especially in today's age of influencers and paid promotions, lack comprehensive exploration. Questions about the authenticity of online content and its potential misrepresentation of destinations are only sporadically addressed (Fisher & Schoemann, 2018). This becomes especially pertinent for pristine locations like Bira Beach, which may face the threat of overtourism and its associated challenges (Malani et al., 2020). In essence, while strides have been made in understanding the role of digital marketing in tourism, there's a significant opportunity to holistically explore its interplay with governance, especially for emerging destinations. This research seeks to address these gaps, with a particular focus on Bira Beach, aiming to offer both theoretical insights and practical implications for stakeholders in the tourism industry.

RESEARCH METHOD

The current use of digital technology has influenced various sectors, including the tourism sector. This research aims to understand how tourism governance at Bira Beach can be optimized through digital marketing strategies. This research uses a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of practices and perceptions related to tourism governance and digital marketing at Bira Beach. The target population is parties involved in the Bira Beach tourism sector, including local authorities, tourism businesses, tourists and local residents. Purposive sampling is a data collection method, by selecting informants who have knowledge and experience in tourism management and digital marketing at Bira Beach. In-depth interviews were conducted with local authorities, business people and local residents to gain their perspectives on current tourism governance and how digital marketing strategies can be integrated.

The research team observed the digital platforms currently used to promote Bira Beach, analyzing content, engagement metrics and the overall effectiveness of the strategies implemented. The research team also analyzed official documents and marketing materials related to the promotion of Bira

Beach. Qualitative data obtained from interviews and observations were analyzed using content analysis techniques. This process involves coding data, identifying themes, and interpreting findings to understand how tourism governance at Bira Beach can be improved through digital marketing strategies. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide recommendations to authorities and business people at Bira Beach on how to utilize digital technology to improve tourism governance that is more effective and sustainable.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Digital Marketing Strategy to Increase the Number of Tourists at Bira Beach

Digital marketing is a way to carry out comprehensive promotions for activities carried out by Bira beach managers. The digital marketing strategy increases the number of tourists using many methods including digital promotions, online media as well as print and electronic media, apart from that, to further improve communication outside involving several communities and the public including friends and business actors who play a big role in promoting Bulukumba tourism. Of the 250 respondents who visited Bira Beach in the last year, 65% said that they learned about Bira Beach through digital platforms, such as social media, travel blogs or online advertisements (see figure 2).

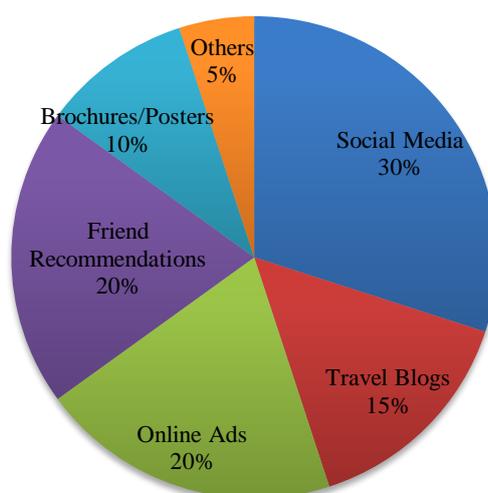


Figure 2. Source of information for Bira Beach tourists
Source: Primary Data, Conducted by the Authors, 2023

Local business people recognize the importance of digital marketing strategies and 70% of them have used social media for promotion. However, only 40% have an official website or advertise online. Posts about Bira Beach that get high engagement usually feature natural beauty, tourist activities and positive reviews from visitors.

Survey results show that the majority of tourists know about Bira Beach through digital platforms. This shows how important digital marketing strategies are in attracting tourists to tourism destinations. Social media is the dominant promotional tool for Bira Beach. Posts with high engagement tend to display the positive aspects of Bira Beach, which attract the attention and interest of potential tourists. Even though most business people have used social media, there is still a gap in the overall use of digital strategies, such as the use of official websites or online advertising.

As technology advances and information becomes easier to access, global tourism is experiencing significant changes in the way destinations are promoted and discovered by potential tourists (Li et al., 2017). One destination that has felt the positive impact of this digital revolution is Bira Beach. Most tourists obtain information about Bira Beach tourism through digital platforms. In today's digital era, platforms such as social media, travel blogs and online advertisements have become the main source of information for many people when planning their visits to tourist destinations. Data shows that social media, in particular, has become a dominant promotional tool for Bira Beach, with a large number of visitors learning about the beauty and attractions of Bira Beach through posts, reviews and recommendations on these platforms. This underlines the importance of having a strong online presence and an effective digital marketing strategy to increase tourist visits to destinations like Bira Beach.

In an effort to increase visits and promote Bira Beach as a leading tourist destination, the Bulukumba Government has adopted a number of innovative and focused digital marketing strategies. Strong Social Media Presence: The Bulukumba government has actively utilized social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Through these official accounts, they regularly

share amazing images from Bira Beach, including sunset moments, snorkeling activities and various other attractions. These posts not only show the beauty of nature, but also the positive interactions of visitors with the local community. Recognizing the power of digital influence, the government has collaborated with several travel influencers and bloggers to visit and promote Bira Beach. Reviews and stories from their experiences often provide a fresh perspective and appeal to a wider audience. Through advertising on Google Ads and paid promotions on social media, Bulukumba targets specific audiences who have a high interest in beach tourism or diving. This allows them to reach the right demographic with tailored messages.

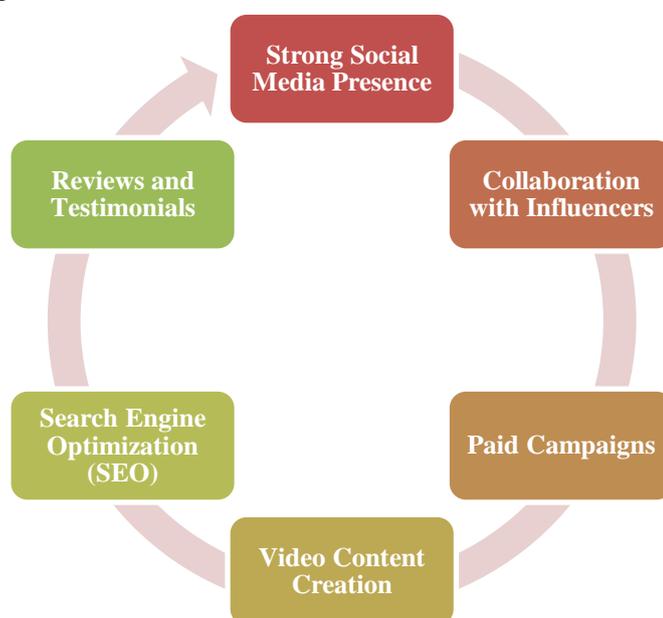


Figure 3. Digital Marketing Strategy for Bira Beach by the Bulukumba Government
Source: Conducted by Authors from Various Resources, 2023

Recognizing the increasing trend of video content consumption, the Bulukumba government has produced and shared high-quality videos showcasing activities and attractions at Bira Beach. This includes drone videos capturing aerial views and story videos of visitors sharing their experiences. The official Bulukumba tourism website has been optimized for search engines, ensuring that information about Bira Beach is easy to find for potential tourists looking for their next destination. Inviting visitors to leave reviews and testimonials after their visit

helps in building credibility and trust. These positive reviews are then shared on digital platforms to showcase authentic experiences enjoyed by previous travelers.

The Impact of Digital Marketing Strategies on Increasing the Number of Tourists

Over the years, Bira Beach has witnessed a consistent and remarkable surge in its number of visitors. This uptrend in tourism not only emphasizes the destination's growing popularity but also brings forth a series of implications and considerations for both the local community and the regional government. As the waves of the azure waters continued to allure travelers from various corners of the world, Bira Beach began to shine brightly on the global tourist map. With each year, the footprints on its pristine white sands multiplied, showcasing the universal appeal of its natural beauty, rich marine life, and the warm hospitality of the local inhabitants. This consistent rise in tourism has significantly impacted the local economy. Small businesses, local artisans, and vendors have benefited immensely. The burgeoning demand led to the establishment of numerous local cafes, eateries, and accommodations, offering visitors a taste of authentic local flavors and experiences. The once-sleepy coastal town has now transformed into a bustling tourist hub, with vibrant markets and lively streets echoing with myriad languages and cultures.

However, this influx of tourists also poses challenges. With the surge in visitation, the local infrastructure has been under pressure to accommodate and serve the growing numbers. The need for sustainable practices has become paramount to ensure that the natural beauty and ecosystem of Bira Beach remain undisturbed. The local government, realizing the potential long-term effects of over-tourism, has been proactive in initiating measures to manage the flow of tourists. Efforts have been made to promote eco-friendly tourism, emphasizing waste management, sustainable accommodations, and responsible snorkeling and diving practices. Furthermore, to preserve the cultural integrity of the region, there have been initiatives to educate visitors about local customs, traditions, and etiquettes. The community has been actively involved in these endeavors, ensuring that while the world gets a glimpse of their paradise, the essence and

spirit of Bira Beach remain untarnished. In reflection, the ascending trajectory of tourism at Bira Beach is a testament to its unparalleled charm and the combined efforts of the community and authorities in its promotion. However, as the adage

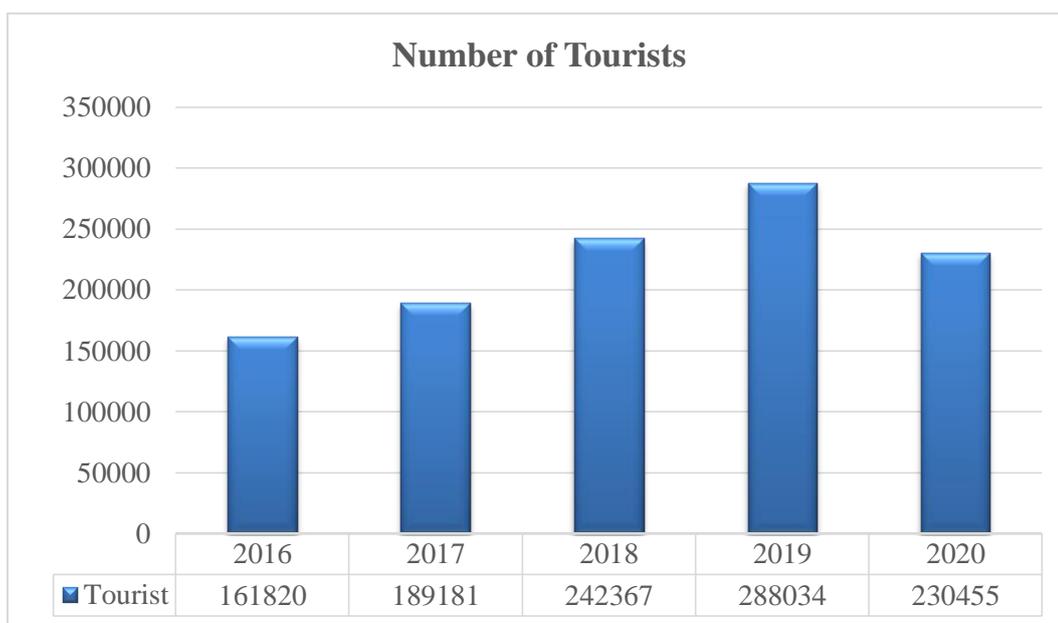


Figure 4. Bira Beach Tourist Visit Data
 Source: Bulukumba Regency Tourism Office

goes, with great power comes great responsibility. As Bira Beach continues to welcome the world to its shores, the onus lies in balancing growth with sustainability, ensuring that future generations too can bask in its untouched glory.

From the table above, you can see the number of domestic and foreign tourist visits to Bulukumba Regency, especially Bira Beach from 2016 to 2020. From this data, it can be seen that the number of tourist visits always increases every year. The largest number of visits occurred in 2019, namely 288,034 tourists, whereas in 2020 only amounting to 230,455 tourists. Over the past few years, Bira Beach has experienced a notable upswing in its number of visitors. A significant catalyst behind this surge has been the digital marketing strategies implemented by the Bulukumba district government. Their concerted efforts in leveraging the online space have played a pivotal role in elevating Bira Beach's status as a sought-after tourist destination. In today's digital age, where most travelers begin their journey online – researching destinations, reading reviews,

and viewing picturesque images – a strong digital presence is paramount. Recognizing this, the Bulukumba district government undertook a comprehensive approach to digital marketing, ensuring that Bira Beach was prominently visible and appealing to potential tourists.

Through a series of targeted campaigns on platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, Bira Beach's pristine sands, azure waters, and vibrant local culture were showcased to a global audience. High-quality images, engaging videos, and captivating stories painted a compelling picture, urging travelers to experience the beauty firsthand. Additionally, collaborations with influential travel bloggers and vloggers brought Bira Beach to the forefront of many travel bucket lists. These influencers, with their vast reach and credibility, shared their authentic experiences, further amplifying the beach's allure. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies ensured that any potential visitor researching a beach destination in Indonesia would come across Bira Beach. This was complemented by paid online advertisements, which strategically appeared on travel-related websites and platforms, further embedding Bira Beach in the minds of potential tourists.

Moreover, the digital strategy wasn't just about attracting visitors but also about enriching their experience. The Bulukumba government ensured that potential visitors had access to comprehensive information – from travel tips and accommodation options to cultural etiquettes and local events. The impact of these digital marketing efforts was palpable. Not only did they result in an increased number of bookings and inquiries about Bira Beach, but they also fostered a broader awareness and interest in what the Bulukumba district had to offer. Local businesses, from eateries to handicraft shops, experienced increased patronage, translating to economic growth for the region. In conclusion, the forward-thinking digital marketing strategies of the Bulukumba district government have undeniably played a significant role in the rising popularity of Bira Beach. It's a testament to the power of effectively harnessing digital tools and platforms in today's interconnected world. As Bira Beach continues to thrive, it

stands as a shining example of how digital strategies, when executed well, can uplift and transform a destination.

CONCLUSION

The rise of digital technology has revolutionized many sectors, and the tourism industry is no exception. As this research has shown, the governance of tourism at Bira Beach has been significantly influenced by digital marketing communication strategies. Digital marketing communication strategies have proven to be an indispensable tool in promoting Bira Beach. The use of social media platforms, SEO-optimized websites, influencer collaborations, and online advertising has effectively increased visibility and awareness of Bira Beach as a prime tourist destination. The research highlighted the active role of local authorities, tourism businesses, and the community in leveraging digital platforms. Their collaborative efforts ensured that authentic and attractive content about Bira Beach reached a vast audience. Digital strategies have not only attracted tourists but have also enhanced their overall experience. Through digital platforms, potential visitors gained access to valuable information, which allowed them to better plan their trips and engage more deeply with the local culture and environment. While digital marketing has brought an influx of tourists, it has also raised concerns about sustainable tourism practices. The research pointed out the need for balancing promotional efforts with initiatives that ensure the long-term sustainability of Bira Beach's natural and cultural resources. The research identified some challenges, including the need for continuous technological upgradation, addressing over-tourism, and ensuring that the digital portrayal of Bira Beach aligns with its on-ground reality. However, these challenges also present opportunities. For instance, using digital platforms to promote off-peak visitation can help in managing tourist flow throughout the year. In conclusion, the governance of tourism at Bira Beach has been significantly enhanced by digital marketing communication strategies. These strategies have succeeded in putting Bira Beach on the global tourism map, driving economic growth for the region. However, for continued success, it's imperative that these digital efforts are combined with robust on-ground management and a strong focus on

sustainability. The future of Bira Beach tourism lies in harnessing the power of digital while ensuring that its natural beauty and cultural integrity remain preserved for generations to come.

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