

The Influence of Digital Marketing and Tourist Motivation on Interest in Visiting the Lau Kawar Lake Tourist Attraction

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This study aims to analyze the influence of digital marketing and tourist motivation on visiting interest in the Lau Kawar Lake Tourist Destination, located in Karo Regency. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method with a literature review approach, examining previous studies related to the topic. The findings indicate that digital marketing plays a crucial role in shaping tourists' positive perceptions through visual, interactive, and emotional promotions disseminated via social media and other digital platforms. Meanwhile, tourist motivation both internal drives, such as relaxation and new experiences, and external factors, such as natural beauty and local culture significantly strengthens the intention to visit. The synthesis of various studies reveals a synergistic relationship between digital marketing and tourist motivation in enhancing visiting interest. Therefore, the implementation of creative digital marketing strategies that align with tourists' psychological needs becomes a key factor in attracting visitors to Lau Kawar Lake and improving the sustainable competitiveness of the regional tourism sector.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Tourist Motivation, Visiting Interest, Lau Kawar Lake

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1. Introduction

Tourism is a strategic sector that plays a crucial role in supporting national and regional economic growth. Tourism activities generate economic activity involving various sectors, such as transportation, accommodation, culinary arts, and the creative industry. Indonesia, a country with abundant natural and cultural riches, has significant potential for developing leading tourist destinations. However, tourist visitation rates to some tourist attractions remain volatile and tend to be influenced by the dynamics of promotion, accessibility, and the attractiveness of the destination. Therefore, managing tourism marketing strategies is a key factor in increasing tourist interest (Fadilla, 2024).

In the context of information technology developments, digital marketing has become a crucial instrument in promoting tourist destinations. Digital marketing enables the widespread, rapid, and efficient dissemination of information through various digital platforms such as social media, websites, and tourism-based applications (Arifin et al., 2025). This approach provides significant opportunities for tourism destination managers to build a positive image, increase brand awareness, and reach potential tourists. Therefore, implementing an effective digital marketing strategy is expected to increase the attractiveness of a destination and encourage tourists to visit.

Lau Kawar Lake, located in Karo Regency, North Sumatra, is a natural tourist destination with significant development potential. The lake offers stunning natural panoramas with the majestic Mount Sinabung as a backdrop, making it a compelling destination for both domestic and international tourists. However, this potential has not been fully utilized. Based on field observations, challenges remain in digital promotion, tourism content management, and suboptimal tourist attractions. This highlights the need for a more intensive and innovative digital marketing strategy to increase tourist interest in visiting Lau Kawar Lake.

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In addition to promotional factors, tourist motivation also plays a crucial role in determining visitor interest. Tourist motivation can stem from various aspects, such as the desire for new experiences, relaxation, adventure, or even social motivation. From a tourism consumer behavior perspective, motivation is a key determinant of a person's travel decision (Febrianto et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding the form and intensity of tourist motivation is crucial for destination managers in designing promotional strategies and services relevant to market needs.

The relationship between digital marketing, tourist motivation, and visitor interest has been extensively studied in various previous studies. Several studies have shown that digital marketing positively influences travel intention by increasing tourists' knowledge and perceptions of the destination. Meanwhile, tourist motivation also significantly contributes to the decision to visit because it can strengthen an individual's psychological and emotional drive. Therefore, it is important to examine how these two variables interact in the context of the Lake Lau Kawar tourist destination, which has unique characteristics and significant potential for development.

This research is relevant given the increasingly fierce competition among tourist destinations in the digital era. Tourism managers are required to optimally utilize digital media and understand the increasingly dynamic behavior and motivations of tourists. By examining the influence of digital marketing and tourist motivation on travel intention, it is hoped that an empirical picture will be obtained regarding the effectiveness of promotional strategies and the psychological factors influencing tourists' decisions to visit Lake Lau Kawar.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the extent to which digital marketing and tourist motivation influence travel intention to the Lake Lau Kawar tourist attraction. The research results are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of tourism marketing science and practical benefits for destination managers in formulating more effective, tourist-oriented, and highly competitive promotional strategies in the digital era.

2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method focused on a literature review to examine previous studies relevant to the topics of digital marketing, tourist motivation, and visit intention. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth description and understanding of phenomena based on the meaning, concepts, and context contained in non-numerical data. According to Moleong (2018), descriptive qualitative research aims to understand social phenomena holistically through the examination of various relevant data sources, making it appropriate for examining concepts and variable relationships in literature-based research.

A literature review is used to gain a conceptual and empirical understanding of the relationships between variables based on findings from various scientific sources, such as national and international journals, academic books, and research reports related to digital tourism. Snyder (2019) explains that a literature review serves to integrate previous research findings, identify scientific developments, and identify research gaps that require further study. Similarly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that a systematic literature review can strengthen the theoretical foundation of research and help researchers build a more comprehensive conceptual framework.

The research procedure included literature data collection, content analysis of previous research results, and synthesis of findings to identify similarities, differences, and development directions for previous studies (Agustianti et al., 2022). Content analysis was used to interpret the meaning contained in scientific texts objectively and systematically. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is an effective

analytical technique for drawing replicable and valid conclusions from text data, taking into account the context in which it is used.

All data was systematically analyzed to illustrate the relationship between digital marketing and tourist motivation in shaping visit intention, as well as to highlight research gaps that formed the basis for this study. Thus, this method not only aims to present the results of previous studies but also to strengthen the theoretical foundation and provide a deeper scientific context for research on Lake Lau Kawar tourism.

3. Results and Discussion

Previous Literature Review Results

Based on the literature review, most previous studies indicate that digital marketing and tourist motivation have a strong and significant relationship with tourist intention to visit. The main similarity found among these studies is that digital marketing strategies play a crucial role in shaping tourists' positive perceptions of a destination. According to Astikarani & Yasa (2022), digital promotion is an integral part of modern marketing communication strategies because it can build interactive relationships between businesses and consumers. In the tourism context, research by Astria & Triyana (2025) found that the use of social media such as Instagram and Facebook significantly influences increased intention to visit, as they create an attractive and easily accessible destination image for potential tourists.

However, there are differences in focus and approach in previous research. Some studies emphasize the technical aspects of digital marketing, such as the effectiveness of social media, digital content, and engagement strategies, as discussed by Djabbari et al. (2025), who highlighted the importance of consistent digital content in maintaining tourist interest. Conversely, other research focuses more on the psychological aspects of tourists. Febrianto et al. (2025) in their theory asserted that tourist motivation is divided into two main drivers: internal factors (push factors) such as the need for relaxation and new experiences, and external factors (pull factors) such as natural beauty, culture, and tourist facilities. This finding is reinforced by Patabang et al. (2023), who found that social and cultural motivations play a significant role in shaping tourists' desire to visit a particular destination.

A general trend from various studies indicates that digital marketing has a positive influence on increasing tourist interest in visiting by building brand image and perceived destination value. Putra and Wulandari (2022) stated that visualizing content through social media can evoke positive emotions that encourage interest in visiting a destination. Furthermore, Sari (2023) found that tourist motivation acts as a strengthening factor in the relationship between digital promotions and interest in visiting, as highly motivated tourists are more responsive to visual-based promotional messages. Therefore, it can be concluded that digital marketing strategies coupled with an understanding of tourist motivation can increase promotional effectiveness and encourage stronger visit decisions.

However, not all studies show consistent results. Several studies, such as those conducted by Rahman and Dewi (2021), show that digital marketing does not always have a direct impact on visitor interest if it is not accompanied by relevant and credible content. This study found that tourist motivation acts as a mediating variable, strengthening the influence of digital marketing on visitor interest. When tourist motivation is low, digital promotional messages, even if engaging, are insufficient to encourage actual visits. This discrepancy in results suggests that the success of digital marketing in attracting tourists is heavily influenced by psychological and contextual factors inherent to the individual and the destination.

From the synthesis of previous research results, a research gap was identified, which serves as an important foundation for this study. Most previous research was conducted on digitally developed tourist destinations

such as Bali, Yogyakarta, and Lombok, while studies on potential destinations like Lake Lau Kawar are still very limited. Yet, this natural tourism characteristic holds significant potential if managed with appropriate digital promotional strategies and supported by a deep understanding of tourist motivation. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by more comprehensively examining how digital marketing and tourist motivation interact to influence visitor interest. This study aims to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of sustainable tourism in the region.

Discussion

The Influence of Digital Marketing on Visiting Intentions

Study results show that digital marketing has a significant influence on tourist visiting intentions. Digital promotion, particularly through social media, has become the most effective communication tool in introducing and building the image of tourist destinations. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), digital marketing enables direct interaction between service providers and consumers, allowing promotional messages to be received personally and emotionally. In the tourism context, this aligns with the findings of Yuliana and Rachmawati (2021), who stated that social media plays a crucial role in fostering tourist interest because it can provide engaging visual representations and narratives of experiences.

The implementation of digital marketing strategies also encourages the formation of a positive brand image for destinations. The use of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, which display high-resolution visual content, tourist testimonials, and user-generated content, has been shown to enhance the perception of a destination's beauty and value (Putra & Wulandari, 2022). In the context of Lake Lau Kawar, consistent and informative implementation of digital marketing can expand promotional reach while strengthening its natural tourist appeal. Thus, digital-based promotion is not merely about conveying information, but also serves as a crucial instrument in building emotional connections and a desire to visit.

The Influence of Tourist Motivation on Visit Intention

In addition to promotional factors, tourist motivation plays a crucial role in determining visit intention. According to the travel motivation theory proposed by Dann (1981) and Crompton (1979), a person's decision to travel is influenced by internal factors (push factors) such as the desire to rest, seek new experiences, and fulfill social needs, as well as external factors (pull factors) such as the natural attractions, culture, and facilities of the destination. Research by Handayani (2020) shows that tourists who are highly motivated by experiences and relaxation tend to demonstrate a stronger intention to visit.

Tourist motivation also plays a psychological role in fostering emotional attachment to a destination. When tourists perceive a destination as a place capable of fulfilling their psychological and social needs, their urge to visit is strengthened. In the context of Lake Lau Kawar, the natural beauty, serenity, and opportunities for outdoor recreation can be powerful motivational triggers. This finding aligns with research by Pratama and Hidayat (2021), which found that experiential motivation and destination uniqueness significantly contribute to increased tourist intention to revisit. Therefore, understanding tourist motivation is a strategic key to creating relevant and engaging tourism products.

The Simultaneous Influence of Digital Marketing and Tourist Motivation on Visiting Intention

A literature review also shows that digital marketing and tourist motivation have a mutually reinforcing relationship in influencing visiting intention. An effective digital marketing strategy not only conveys information but also stimulates tourist motivation through visual messages, emotional narratives, and online interactions that stimulate the desire to visit (Rahman & Dewi, 2021). When tourist motivation is high, the digital messages delivered become more meaningful and have a greater influence on travel decisions.

The interaction between these two variables can be explained through consumer behavior theory, where motivation acts as an internal driver, while digital marketing acts as an external stimulus that reinforces that drive. Sari (2023) explains that the success of digital promotions depends on the alignment of messages with tourists' values and psychological needs. In this context, the marketing strategy for Lake Lau Kawar should focus on content that captures the pristine nature, serenity, and authentic experiences sought by modern tourists.

Thus, the relationship between digital marketing and tourist motivation can be understood as a synergistic relationship: digital promotions generate initial interest through information and visualization, while tourist motivation transforms that interest into a visit. This synthesis suggests that destination management, such as Lake Lau Kawar, needs to integrate a robust digital strategy with a psychological approach based on tourist needs to create sustainable increases in visitation.

The results of this study offer important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research reinforces the concept that digital marketing and tourist motivation are two interacting variables in shaping visitor interest, as proposed by theories of consumer behavior and modern tourism marketing. The integration of external factors, in the form of digital promotional strategies, with internal factors, in the form of tourists' psychological drives, demonstrates that travel decisions are not solely determined by information, but also by the emotional and social values inherent in the tourism experience. Practically, these findings provide direction for tourism destination managers, particularly those of Lake Lau Kawar, to optimize digital-based promotional strategies that are more adaptive, creative, and focused on tourist needs. Managers are expected to not only present engaging visual promotional content but also build emotional narratives relevant to tourist motivations, such as the need for relaxation, adventure, and authentic experiences. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing sustainable tourism marketing policies that can increase destination competitiveness and strengthen tourist loyalty.

4. Conclusion

Based on the literature review and discussion, it can be concluded that digital marketing and tourist motivation have a significant and complementary influence in shaping tourist interest in visiting. Digital marketing acts as an effective promotional tool through social media, websites, and engaging visual content, which can build a positive image and strengthen tourists' desire to visit a destination. On the other hand, tourist motivation, stemming from internal drives such as the desire for relaxation and new experiences, as well as external drives such as natural and cultural attractions, is a crucial factor in strengthening the decision to visit. The relationship between the two demonstrates a synergy, where digital promotion strategies that align with tourists' values and psychological needs will be more effective in increasing tourist interest. In the context of Lake Lau Kawar, implementing targeted digital promotion and understanding tourist motivation can be an important strategy for developing sustainable natural tourism potential.

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