Digital Marketing Strategies for Religious Tourism Packages Through Instagram: A Case Study of CV. Mahkota Borobudur

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the digital marketing strategies implemented by CV. Mahkota Borobudur for promoting religious tourism packages through Instagram, focusing on its impact on brand visibility and tourist attraction. Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through in-depth interviews with company stakeholders and systematic content analysis of Instagram posts during 2021-2024. The research reveals that the company successfully utilizes visually appealing content, strong storytelling narratives, and active community engagement to build emotional connections with audiences. Key findings demonstrate that Instagram serves as an effective platform for showcasing the spiritual and cultural values of Borobudur Temple experiences, with engagement rates exceeding industry benchmarks by 52%. However, challenges include limited human resources and promotional budget constraints that hinder further development. The study contributes to understanding digital marketing effectiveness in religious tourism, particularly for UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Results indicate that social media integration with local stakeholder collaboration enhances authentic tourism experiences while supporting sustainable community development. This research provides insights for digital marketing practices in the tourism industry and serves as a reference for developing innovative strategies in heritage tourism marketing. The implications suggest that destination marketing organizations should invest in comprehensive social media strategies to leverage the growing religious tourism market, which is projected to reach USD 18 billion by 2030..

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1. Introduction

Religious tourism represents one of the fastest-growing segments in the global tourism industry, with an estimated market value projected to reach significant growth by 2034. According to Future Market Insights (2024), the faith-based tourism market demonstrates resilience and consistent growth patterns, particularly in Asia-Pacific regions where spiritual journeys and retreats constitute more than half of global religious travel activities. In Indonesia, Borobudur Temple stands as the world's largest Buddhist monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, attracting millions of visitors annually who seek spiritual experiences and cultural enlightenment.

The Borobudur Temple complex, built in the 8th and 9th centuries during the Sailendra Dynasty, serves not only as an archaeological marvel but also as an active pilgrimage destination for Buddhist practitioners worldwide. The temple's unique architectural design follows Buddhist cosmology, representing the three spheres of existence through its pyramidal structure with five concentric square terraces, three circular platforms, and a central monumental stupa. This spiritual significance, combined with its historical importance, creates compelling narratives for tourism marketing that extend beyond conventional sightseeing experiences.

The emergence of digital marketing has fundamentally revolutionized tourism promotion strategies, with social media platforms becoming essential tools for destination marketing organizations and tourism enterprises. Contemporary research demonstrates that digital platforms offer unprecedented opportunities for tourism businesses to reach global audiences, create engaging content, and build meaningful relationships with potential visitors through targeted social media strategies (Velentza & Metaxas, 2023). Instagram, in particular, has proven highly effective for tourism marketing due to its visual-centric nature and ability to inspire travel decisions among users through compelling imagery and storytelling that resonates with diverse cultural audiences (Sixto-García & Rodríguez-Valderrey, 2022).

Recent statistics from destination marketing organizations reveal the significant impact of social media on travel behavior, with digital platforms becoming primary sources for travel inspiration and destination research among younger demographics (Digital Tourism Think Tank, 2024). This behavioral shift toward digital platforms for travel planning has created significant opportunities for tourism operators, particularly those specializing in niche markets such as religious and cultural tourism.

CV. Mahkota Borobudur, established in 2021, represents a new generation of tourism enterprises that specialize in developing religious tourism packages combining spiritual and cultural experiences around the Borobudur Temple area. As a relatively new company operating in the competitive tourism market, the organization faces substantial challenges in building brand awareness and attracting visitors through limited traditional marketing resources. The company has strategically invested in Instagram marketing to overcome these constraints and reach wider audiences, particularly targeting Buddhist communities and spiritual tourism enthusiasts globally.

The strategic focus on Instagram marketing reflects broader trends in the tourism industry, where visual storytelling and user-generated content create emotional connections that significantly influence travel decision-making processes. Previous research has demonstrated the significant impact of social media marketing on tourism destination attractiveness and visitor behavioral intentions (Alzaydi & Elsharnouby, 2023). Studies consistently show that visual content, authentic narratives, and community engagement through social media platforms contribute to enhanced brand visibility, customer loyalty, and ultimately, increased tourism revenue (Keelson et al., 2024).

However, limited research exists on the specific application of Instagram marketing strategies for religious tourism packages, particularly in the context of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Southeast Asia. The unique characteristics of religious tourism, including spiritual motivations, cultural sensitivity requirements, and community involvement considerations, create distinct marketing challenges and opportunities that require specialized approaches. Understanding how tourism operators can effectively leverage social media platforms while maintaining authenticity and respect for religious traditions represents a significant gap in current tourism marketing literature.

The digital transformation of tourism marketing has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing tourism businesses to adapt innovative online strategies for survival and growth (Zhou & Chen,

2023). Religious tourism operators have particularly benefited from digital platforms' ability to maintain spiritual connections and promote meaningful travel experiences during and after the pandemic period. This shift presents both opportunities and challenges for small tourism enterprises seeking to establish their market presence through digital channels while competing with larger, established operators.

The Indonesian government's designation of Borobudur as a super-priority tourism destination in 2021, with targets of attracting up to USD 8 billion in investments and increasing annual visitor numbers to 2 million, creates additional context for understanding the importance of effective marketing strategies in this region. The establishment of the Borobudur Authority Zone covering 309 hectares, developed with culture and adventure eco-tourism concepts, demonstrates the significant potential for sustainable tourism development that balances conservation, spirituality, education, and tourism objectives.

This research aims to explore the digital marketing strategies implemented by CV. Mahkota Borobudur through Instagram and analyze their effectiveness in promoting religious tourism packages. The study specifically examines how visual content creation, narrative development, and community engagement contribute to brand visibility and tourist attraction in the context of religious tourism marketing. Additionally, the research investigates challenges faced by the company and identifies potential optimization strategies for enhanced digital marketing performance, providing insights that can benefit other tourism operators in similar contexts.

The significance of this study extends beyond individual company strategies to broader destination marketing considerations, particularly for UNESCO World Heritage Sites that balance conservation requirements with tourism development objectives. Understanding how digital marketing strategies can effectively promote religious tourism while respecting cultural authenticity and supporting local community development represents an important contribution to sustainable tourism literature and practice.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Philosophical Foundation

This study employs a qualitative research approach grounded in interpretivist philosophy to provide in-depth understanding of digital marketing strategies implemented by CV. Mahkota Borobudur through Instagram platform. The qualitative methodology was selected to capture nuanced perspectives from multiple stakeholders and analyze the complex relationship between social media content and tourism marketing effectiveness. This approach allows for comprehensive exploration of human experiences, meanings, and interpretations within the specific context of religious tourism marketing (Kale et al., 2023).

The interpretive nature of this research acknowledges that digital marketing effectiveness cannot be fully understood through quantitative measures alone, but requires deep investigation into the experiences, perceptions, and cultural contexts that shape both marketing strategies and consumer responses. The study adopts a constructivist stance, recognizing that knowledge about effective marketing strategies emerges through interaction between researchers, participants, and the social contexts in which marketing activities occur.

The research design incorporates elements of case study methodology, focusing on CV. Mahkota Borobudur as a bounded system operating within the broader context of Indonesian religious tourism. This approach enables detailed examination of how specific organizational factors, cultural contexts, and market conditions influence digital marketing strategy development and implementation. The case study approach is particularly appropriate for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

2.2. Research Setting and Context

The research was conducted within the operational environment of CV. Mahkota Borobudur, located in the Borobudur Temple area of Central Java, Indonesia. This setting was specifically chosen due to its significance as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and its designation as one of Indonesia's super-priority tourism destinations. The geographical and cultural context provides rich background for understanding

how digital marketing strategies must navigate the intersection of religious significance, cultural sensitivity, and commercial tourism objectives.

The temporal scope of the study covers the period from January 2021 to December 2024, encompassing the company's establishment and subsequent development of Instagram marketing strategies. This timeframe is particularly significant as it includes the post-COVID-19 recovery period for tourism, during which digital marketing became increasingly crucial for tourism operators worldwide. The study examines how the company adapted to changing market conditions and leveraged digital platforms to build brand awareness and attract customers during this challenging period.

2.3. Data Collection Methodology

Data collection was conducted through multiple methods to ensure comprehensive analysis and triangulation of findings. The multi-method approach enhances the validity and reliability of research findings by providing different perspectives on the same phenomena and reducing the potential for bias associated with single-method studies.

2.3.1. In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight carefully selected participants representing different stakeholder perspectives within the tourism ecosystem. The interview participants included three company management personnel responsible for strategic decision-making, two marketing staff members directly involved in Instagram content creation and management, and three customers who had booked tourism packages through Instagram-driven awareness campaigns.

Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian language to ensure participant comfort and natural expression of thoughts and experiences. Interview topics covered multiple dimensions of Instagram marketing strategy, including strategic planning processes, content development approaches, customer engagement techniques, and perceived effectiveness of various marketing initiatives. The semi-structured format allowed for flexible exploration of emerging themes while maintaining consistency across interviews.

2.3.2. Systematic Content Analysis

Comprehensive content analysis was performed on Instagram posts published by CV. Mahkota Borobudur during the study period. The analysis examined 486 posts systematically, covering all content published between January 2021 and December 2024. This systematic approach ensures comprehensive coverage of the company's Instagram marketing activities and provides robust data for identifying patterns and trends in content strategy development.

The content analysis framework examined multiple dimensions of Instagram posts, including visual elements such as image composition, color schemes, and subject matter; textual elements including captions, hashtags, and calls-to-action; engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares; and temporal patterns including posting frequency and timing.

2.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary analytical approach for processing interview transcripts and identifying patterns within the qualitative data. This approach involves systematic identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns within the data that relate to the research objectives. The thematic analysis process follows established procedures to ensure rigor and transparency in analytical decision-making.

The analysis process comprised six distinct phases: familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and content analysis notes; generation of initial codes through systematic identification of relevant text segments; searching for themes by grouping related codes into broader categories; reviewing themes through iterative refinement and validation processes; defining and naming themes with clear descriptions and boundaries; and producing the research report through integration of analytical findings with existing theoretical frameworks.

2.5. Validity and Reliability Considerations

Multiple strategies were implemented to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings, addressing potential sources of bias and ensuring the credibility of analytical conclusions. Data triangulation was achieved through the combination of multiple data sources, including interview transcripts, Instagram content analysis, and engagement metrics. Member checking procedures involved sharing preliminary findings with selected interview participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations and ensure that participant perspectives are represented faithfully.

3. Result

3.1. Instagram Marketing Strategy Framework and Implementation

The comprehensive analysis reveals that CV. Mahkota Borobudur has developed and implemented a sophisticated Instagram marketing strategy comprising multiple interconnected components that work synergistically to achieve brand visibility and customer acquisition objectives. The company's approach demonstrates strategic thinking that goes beyond simple social media posting to create a comprehensive digital marketing ecosystem centered around Instagram as the primary platform.

The strategic framework encompasses five key pillars: visual content excellence, authentic storytelling, community engagement, strategic partnerships, and performance optimization. Each pillar represents a distinct aspect of the marketing strategy while contributing to overall coherence and effectiveness. The integration of these pillars creates a holistic approach that addresses various aspects of customer journey from initial awareness through to booking conversion and post-experience advocacy.

3.1.1. Visual Content Strategy and Creative Excellence

The company employs a comprehensive visual content strategy that prioritizes professional photography and videography to create compelling representations of Borobudur Temple experiences. Analysis of 486 posts shows that 78% feature high-resolution photographs of the temple complex captured during various times of day, with particular emphasis on sunrise and sunset moments that hold special spiritual significance in Buddhist traditions. The remaining 22% consists of video content showcasing meditation sessions, traditional ceremonies, visitor experiences, and behind-the-scenes glimpses of tour preparation activities.

Content themes identified through systematic analysis include spiritual awakening journeys (32%), cultural heritage exploration (28%), meditation and mindfulness practices (24%), local community engagement (10%), and sustainable tourism initiatives (6%). This thematic distribution reflects deliberate strategic choices that position the company as a authentic provider of meaningful spiritual experiences rather than conventional tourism services.

The visual strategy demonstrates sophisticated understanding of Instagram's algorithmic preferences and user behavior patterns. Images consistently utilize rule-of-thirds composition, natural lighting optimization, and strategic color palette selection that enhances visual appeal while maintaining authentic representation of the temple environment. The company has developed a recognizable visual identity through consistent application of specific photographic styles and editing techniques that create brand recognition across different posts.

3.1.2. Narrative Development and Authentic Storytelling

Interview data reveals that CV. Mahkota Borobudur places extraordinary emphasis on storytelling as a fundamental component of their Instagram marketing strategy. The company has developed sophisticated narrative frameworks that create emotional connections with potential visitors while respecting the religious and cultural significance of Borobudur Temple. These narratives combine historical information, spiritual teachings, and personal transformation stories to create compelling content that resonates with diverse international audiences.

The storytelling approach integrates multiple narrative layers that address different audience motivations and interests. Historical narratives provide educational context about Borobudur's

construction, architectural significance, and role in Buddhist civilization. Spiritual narratives focus on the temple's continuing relevance for contemporary Buddhist practice and meditation. Personal transformation narratives share testimonials from visitors who experienced meaningful spiritual insights during their temple visits.

3.1.3. Community Engagement and Interactive Relationship Building

The study identifies active community engagement as a crucial component of the company's Instagram strategy that distinguishes their approach from many competitors in the tourism industry. CV. Mahkota Borobudur has developed comprehensive engagement protocols that prioritize meaningful interaction with followers rather than superficial social media metrics. This approach reflects sophisticated understanding of relationship marketing principles applied to digital environments.

Response rate analysis indicates that the company responds to 89% of comments within 24 hours, demonstrating exceptional commitment to customer service excellence in digital spaces. The quality of responses goes beyond simple acknowledgments to provide substantive information, personalized recommendations, and genuine expressions of appreciation for follower engagement.

3.2. Marketing Effectiveness and Performance Impact Analysis
3.2.1. Quantitative Performance Metrics and Growth Indicators

Instagram analytics data demonstrates substantial growth in follower count from 1,200 in January 2021 to 8,500 in December 2024, representing a 608% increase over the four-year study period. This growth trajectory significantly exceeds industry benchmarks for small tourism enterprises and indicates successful audience building strategies. The growth pattern shows consistent monthly increases with notable acceleration during specific promotional campaigns and viral content incidents.

Average engagement rates consistently exceed tourism industry benchmarks, with posts receiving 12.5% engagement compared to the tourism industry average of 8.2% according to recent social media marketing studies. This superior performance indicates that content quality and audience targeting strategies effectively capture and maintain follower attention. The higher engagement rates translate to increased visibility through Instagram's algorithmic promotion of high-performing content.

3.2.2. Business Impact and Revenue Generation

Interview data indicates that Instagram marketing efforts directly contribute to business growth, with approximately 65% of new customers citing Instagram as their primary discovery channel for learning about CV. Mahkota Borobudur's services. This high attribution rate demonstrates the effectiveness of Instagram marketing in generating qualified leads and supporting customer acquisition objectives. The direct correlation between social media activity and business results validates the company's investment in Instagram marketing capabilities.

The company reports a 340% increase in booking inquiries since implementing structured Instagram marketing strategies in 2021. This dramatic improvement in lead generation directly correlates with strategic content development, community engagement initiatives, and brand awareness campaigns conducted through Instagram. The quantitative impact on business metrics provides compelling evidence of Instagram marketing effectiveness in the religious tourism context.

3.3. Challenges and Implementation Obstacles
3.3.1. Resource Constraints and Operational Limitations

The study identifies significant challenges related to limited human resources that impact the sustainability and scalability of Instagram marketing efforts. With only two dedicated marketing staff members, the company struggles to maintain consistent content quality while responding to increasing customer inquiries and managing expanding social media presence. The resource constraints create potential bottlenecks that could limit future growth if not addressed strategically.

Budget limitations restrict access to professional photography services, advanced social media management tools, and paid advertising campaigns that could amplify organic marketing efforts.

Interview participants describe how financial constraints require creative solutions and strategic prioritization of marketing activities. The company must balance investment in marketing capabilities with operational requirements and service delivery obligations.

3.3.2. Market Competition and Differentiation Challenges

The growing number of tourism operators promoting Borobudur experiences through social media creates increased competition for audience attention and market share. Differentiating authentic spiritual experiences from commercialized tourism packages presents ongoing challenges for brand positioning and marketing message development. The company must continuously evolve its approaches to maintain competitive advantages in an increasingly crowded marketplace.

Platform algorithm changes and social media policy updates create uncertainty and potential volatility in marketing effectiveness. The company's dependence on Instagram's platform creates vulnerability to external changes beyond their control. Developing platform diversification strategies while maintaining focus on proven successful approaches requires careful strategic planning.

4. Discussion

4.1. Theoretical Implications and Framework Development

The findings of this study make significant contributions to understanding digital marketing effectiveness in religious tourism contexts, extending existing theoretical frameworks to address the unique characteristics and requirements of heritage-based spiritual tourism marketing. The successful implementation of Instagram marketing strategies by CV. Mahkota Borobudur demonstrates how contemporary social media marketing theories can be adapted and applied within specialized tourism segments that require cultural sensitivity and authentic representation.

The integration of spiritual narratives with visual storytelling reflects the application of narrative marketing theory within religious tourism contexts, where emotional connection and meaningful experiences drive consumer behavior more than traditional tourism motivations. The company's approach validates theoretical frameworks that emphasize the importance of authentic storytelling in building brand relationships, while extending these concepts to address the specific requirements of religious and cultural heritage tourism marketing.

4.2. Practical Implications for Tourism Marketing Strategy

The research provides valuable practical insights for tourism operators, destination marketing organizations, and heritage site managers seeking to develop effective digital marketing strategies. The systematic approach to content development, community engagement, and performance optimization implemented by CV. Mahkota Borobudur offers replicable frameworks that can be adapted to different tourism contexts and market conditions.

The study demonstrates the importance of authentic storytelling in differentiating tourism offerings within competitive markets. The company's success in creating compelling narratives that respect religious traditions while appealing to commercial markets provides a model for other heritage and religious tourism operators. The balance between authenticity and accessibility represents a significant achievement that offers lessons for similar enterprises.

4.3. Strategic Considerations for Heritage Tourism Development

The research findings have significant implications for heritage tourism development, particularly regarding the integration of digital marketing strategies with conservation and cultural preservation objectives. The successful promotion of Borobudur Temple through Instagram marketing demonstrates how digital platforms can enhance rather than compromise heritage site significance when implemented thoughtfully and respectfully.

The study shows how effective digital marketing can support sustainable tourism development by attracting visitors who are genuinely interested in cultural and spiritual experiences rather than superficial sightseeing. This alignment between marketing approaches and sustainability objectives offers

valuable insights for heritage site managers seeking to balance visitor attraction with preservation responsibilities.

4.4. Implications for Small Tourism Enterprise Development

The research provides valuable insights for small tourism enterprises seeking to compete effectively in increasingly digital tourism markets. The success of CV. Mahkota Borobudur demonstrates how strategic use of digital marketing platforms can enable small enterprises to achieve significant market presence despite limited resources compared to larger competitors.

The study illustrates the importance of focusing on niche markets and developing specialized expertise rather than attempting to compete broadly with established operators. The company's focus on authentic spiritual tourism experiences creates defensible market positioning that leverages their local knowledge and cultural connections rather than competing on price or scale.

4.5. Broader Industry and Policy Implications

The research findings have broader implications for tourism industry development and policy considerations, particularly regarding the role of digital marketing in supporting tourism recovery and growth in post-pandemic contexts. The company's success during challenging market conditions demonstrates the resilience and adaptability that digital marketing approaches can provide for tourism enterprises.

The study's documentation of international market reach through social media marketing suggests opportunities for tourism policy development that leverages digital platforms to support tourism promotion and economic development. The global connectivity enabled by social media platforms creates opportunities for small enterprises and destinations to access international markets previously dominated by large tour operators.

5. Conclusion

This comprehensive study demonstrates that CV. Mahkota Borobudur has successfully implemented highly effective Instagram marketing strategies for promoting religious tourism packages, achieving remarkable growth in brand visibility, customer acquisition, and business performance. The company's strategic approach, which combines professional visual content creation, authentic storytelling, and genuine community engagement, provides a valuable model for small tourism enterprises operating in specialized markets and competitive digital environments.

The research reveals several key success factors that distinguish effective Instagram marketing in religious tourism contexts. The integration of spiritual narratives with cultural heritage content addresses the complex motivations of religious tourism participants while appealing to broader audiences interested in meaningful travel experiences. The company's commitment to authenticity and cultural sensitivity, demonstrated through respectful representation of Buddhist traditions and integration of local community perspectives, creates trustworthy brand positioning that resonates with target audiences.

The systematic approach to visual content development, emphasizing professional photography and videography that captures both aesthetic beauty and spiritual significance of Borobudur Temple experiences, proves crucial for Instagram marketing effectiveness. The strategic use of multilingual content and cross-cultural communication approaches enables successful reach to international Buddhist communities while maintaining accessibility for diverse audiences with varying levels of religious knowledge and cultural familiarity.

However, the study also identifies significant challenges that require strategic attention for sustained marketing success and business growth. Resource constraints, including limited human resources and budget restrictions, create operational bottlenecks that could limit future development if not addressed through strategic planning and investment. The increasing competitive pressure from other tourism operators utilizing similar marketing approaches necessitates continued innovation and differentiation efforts to maintain competitive advantages.

The research makes important theoretical contributions to understanding digital marketing effectiveness in specialized tourism segments, extending existing frameworks to address the unique requirements of heritage-based religious tourism marketing. The successful integration of narrative marketing, community engagement, and visual storytelling theories provides evidence for comprehensive theoretical approaches that acknowledge the complexity of contemporary tourism marketing environments.

The practical implications of this research extend beyond individual company strategies to broader considerations for heritage tourism development, small enterprise support, and destination marketing policy. The demonstration that authentic, culturally sensitive digital marketing can support both commercial objectives and cultural preservation goals suggests significant opportunities for policy integration and collaborative approaches to sustainable tourism development.

Future research should explore the long-term sustainability of digital marketing strategies in religious tourism, particularly as markets mature and competitive pressures intensify. Investigation of collaborative marketing approaches between multiple tourism operators, destination marketing organizations, and heritage site management authorities could provide insights for coordinated strategies that maximize collective benefits while reducing individual enterprise risks.

The effectiveness of emerging social media platforms and technologies in religious tourism marketing represents another important area for future investigation. As digital marketing landscapes continue to evolve rapidly, understanding how tourism enterprises can adapt to new platforms while maintaining authentic communication and community engagement will be crucial for sustained success.

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