

# Social Media Marketing and Customer Review's Influence towards Visit Decisions at Gunung Kidul Beach Tourists Attraction

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## Abstract

*This study aims to explore the relationship between social media marketing, customer review, and visit decisions in the context of Gunung Kidul beach tourists attractions. This research explores the phenomenon of tourists who keep on coming to visit Gunung Kidul beach even though there are minimal infrastructure facilities. Library study method was selected for this study because it is suitable for analyzing existing body of knowledge and identifying patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. This approach involves reviewing and synthesizing articles, books, journals, conference proceedings and other credible sources, related to the impact of social media marketing and customer reviews on visiting decisions. The number of sources used in this research is around 20. The findings of this study reveal interesting insights about the dynamics of social media marketing and customer review in the context of Gunung Kidul beach tourism object. This research shows that social media marketing and customer review have a positive impact on the formation of trust among tourists. From the analysis that has been carried out, social media marketing and customer reviews have a positive relationship with the decision to visit. This study combines two variables that are not combined much, social media marketing and customer review to determine the influence on the decision to visit. This research contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between social media marketing, customer review and visit decisions, offering practical insights for promoting sustainable tourism development in Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta.*

**Keywords:** Social media marketing, customer reviews, trust, visit decisions, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, tourism, destination management

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries, and makes a significant contribution to the global economy. Indonesia managed to rank 32nd in the Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI), then increase the contribution of tourism's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 from 2.4% in 2021 to 3.6%, increase in the value of tourism foreign exchange in 2022 from 0.52 billion USD in 2021 to 4.26 billion USD, and an increase in the added value of the creative economy from IDR 1,191 trillion in 2021 to IDR 1,236 trillion (Hendriyani, 2023). In addition, in 2022 there will be an increase in foreign tourist visits reaching 4.58 million and domestic tourists reaching 633 million tourists. One of the mixed destinations as a student city, cultural city, and tourist city is Yogyakarta, with the people of Yogyakarta who are known for their creativity and the various communities within it. The world knows Yogyakarta as a

miniature of Indonesia with a variety of creative potentials including digital creative industries, and Yogyakarta is the second largest tourist destination in Indonesia after Bali (Setwan, 2022).

Yogyakarta has a rich cultural heritage, beautiful natural landscapes, and various tourist attractions that attract visitors from all over the world. There are 5 regencies in Yogyakarta, namely Yogyakarta City, Sleman Regency, Bantul Regency, Kulonprogo Regency, and Gunung Kidul Regency. One of the regencies that have white sand beach attractions is Gunung Kidul. Gunung Kidul which has a natural tourist attraction that is so exotic. Apart from beach tourism, there are tours of Goa, Hills, Waterfalls, and others. Gunung Kidul Regency has an area of 1,485.36 km<sup>2</sup> or about 46.63% of the total area of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The capital of Gunung Kidul Regency is Wonosari. Wonosari city is located in the southeast of Yogyakarta city with a distance of  $\pm$  39 km.

Tourism must be supported by various adequate facilities so as to increase tourist visits. Improving facilities and implementing the right strategy can be an effective and efficient media marketing funneling. The decision to visit a tourist is influenced by several factors such as destination, type of trip, time and cost, travel agent, and source of services (Wahyuni et al., 2022). The results of this study indicate that road access and tourist facilities have an important role in increasing visit decisions followed by other variables such as operating hours, travel time, costs, and tour managers or agents. This is quite opposite to the beach tourism object in Gunung Kidul which has access that is not easy to pass, the roads are steep, narrow, winding, uneven, and the distance is far from the city center.

Apart from the fairly difficult access, reported by kumquat.com, the fact has not reduced the number of visits to beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul. The fact is that it is recorded that tourists who decide to visit Gunung Kidul tourism can reach 1,760,349 people in 2021 (Tugu Jogja, 2022). This figure is considered very good considering that in that year the number of COVID-19 cases was still high. Head of the Gunungkidul Tourism Office Mohamad Arif Aldian said that tourist visits in 2022 will reach 2.86 million (2,867,448) tourists (Yuwono, 2023). Until now, beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul have often become the destination of choice for tourists, both local and foreign. So this is an interesting phenomenon because according to the research above, road access and tourist facilities have an important role in increasing visiting decisions at tourist destinations, but contrary to the phenomena that occur in tourist destinations in Gunung Kidul, this is interesting for research.

With the rapid growth of social media, travelers are increasingly using online platforms to research and make decisions about their travel destinations. Social media marketing has become an important tool for tourism businesses to attract visitors and increase brand awareness. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube enable tourism businesses to reach a global audience at relatively low costs (Xu et al., 2021). In addition, social media provides a platform for tourists to share their experiences and opinions about tourism products and services, which may influence the decisions of other potential visitors, such as Google Maps and Trip Advisor.

There are several previous studies that have results that are not in line with this study. A study by Shields and Peruta (2019) found the negative impact of social media on students' decisions to make matriculation decisions or university selection. The study shows that social media does not affect students' matriculation decisions but only to learn more about higher education levels. Likewise with the study by Ye, Q et al (2020) which discusses the impact of negative customer reviews on hotel booking intentions and perceptions of consumer trust, which lead to reduced booking intentions and decreased trust in hotels or tourism services. The research investigated the factors that contribute to negative reviews and their effect on potential diners' perceptions and intentions.

The originality of this research lies in the influence of social media marketing and customer reviews on visiting decisions at beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul. Although there have been many studies conducted on the impact of social media and customer reviews on tourist behavior, the current phenomenon is very interesting related to the decision to visit beach tourism in Gunung Kidul district, Yogyakarta, as previously described.

Therefore, the writer investigates the formulation of the problem as follows:

1. Does social media marketing affect tourist visit decisions at beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul?
2. Do customer reviews affect the decision to visit beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul?

## **THEORY**

### **SOCIAL INFLUENCE THEORY**

The theory of social influence refers to the tendency of individuals to adapt to the behavior or opinions of others in an effort to adjust or make the right decision. One of the originators of social influence theory is Stanley Milgram by conducting experimental research. Social influence theory revolves around the concept of obedience to authority (Milgram, 1974). Milgram showed that individuals tend to obey the directions of authority figures, even if those directions conflict with their own moral beliefs. Milgram's research shows how social influence can make people act in ways that may conflict with their personal values.

Social influence is often seen in online reviews or testimonials, where individuals are more likely to purchase a product or visit a location if they see others having positive experiences. Influence tactics refer to strategies used by individuals or groups to persuade or influence others. One marketing expert outlines six main influence tactics: reciprocity, commitment and consistency, social proof, likeability, authority and scarcity (Cialdini, 2009). This tactic has been shown to be effective in influencing behavior and decision making.

### **VISIT DECISION**

Visit decision theory focuses on understanding the factors that influence consumer decisions to visit a particular destination or engage in a particular activity. In recent years,

researchers have explored this topic in the context of the tourism, hospitality and leisure industries. One of the key factors influencing visit decisions is the perceived value of the experience. Perceived value is a major factor that consumers consider when making decisions about travel and tourism, and directly influences their intention to visit and revisit a destination (Woo et al., 2021). Other factors that can influence visit decisions include service quality, destination or activity reputation, and recommendations of others (Yu et al., 2021).

## **SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING**

Social media marketing refers to using social media platforms and websites to promote products or services. Marketing through social media is becoming increasingly popular among businesses, including in the tourism industry, because of its ability to reach a large audience at a relatively low cost. The number of social media users worldwide is expected to reach 4.41 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2021). Social media provides a platform for tourism businesses to showcase their products and services, communicate with visitors and build brand awareness.

Social media marketing can be used as a tool for branding, promotion, communication, visitor engagement, and knowledge management in tourism (M, Johnson & Gustafsson, 2020). By leveraging social media platforms, tourism businesses can target specific audiences, generate buzz and increase the visibility of their products and services. In the context of beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul Yogyakarta, social media marketing can play an important role in attracting and retaining visitors to tourist attractions.

## **CUSTOMER REVIEW**

Customer reviews are a form of user-generated content that allows customers to share their opinions and experiences about a product or service. Customer reviews are becoming increasingly influential in the consumer decision-making process, with many people relying on reviews to make informed purchase decisions, which can have a significant impact on the decisions of potential diners.

Customer reviews have become an important source of information for tourists when making visit decisions (X, Li et al., 2020). Customer reviews can provide valuable insight into the quality of tourism products and services, as well as the overall visitor experience. Positive reviews can enhance the reputation of a tourism business, while negative reviews can damage their reputation and deter potential visitors. In the context of the Gunung Kidul beach tourism object, customer review can be an important factor in the tourist decision-making process when considering visiting beach tourism objects in the area.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The research method used in this study is the literature study method, which involves a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing literature, research articles, and relevant academic sources. This method allows a thorough examination of the

relationship between social media marketing, customer reviews and visit decisions in the context of Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta. The literature study method was chosen for this study because it is suitable for analyzing existing body of knowledge and identifying patterns, trends, and gaps in the literature. This approach involves reviewing and synthesizing articles, books, journals, conference proceedings and other credible sources related to the impact of social media marketing and customer reviews on visiting decisions. By utilizing various scientific sources, this methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. Data collection for this study involved 20 systematically relevant literature relating to social media marketing, customer reviews, and visit decisions in the context of Gunung Kidul. The selected sources are critically analyzed, and key themes, findings, and insights are extracted to identify relationships and trends between the variables investigated.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON VISIT DECISIONS**

This hypothesis is based on previous research which found a positive relationship between social media marketing and visit decisions. In the context of Yogyakarta's Gunung Kidul beach tourism object, social media marketing can be a tool to reach potential visitors and display interesting experiences from each tourist attraction. By using social media to build awareness, interest and desire to visit tourist objects in the region, it is hoped that the desire to visit will increase.

However, marketing through social media may not be enough to persuade visitors to actually visit the tourist attraction. This is where trust comes in as a mediator variable. According to previous research, trust plays an important role in the relationship between marketing efforts and consumer behavior (Chang et al., 2018). In the context of beach tourism objects in Gunung Kidul, visitors may need to trust the information they see on social media before deciding to visit. Therefore, hypothesis 1 proposes that social media marketing has a positive effect on visit decisions.

Several studies have shown that social media marketing has a significant impact on the tourist decision-making process, one of which, as stated by Kusumawardani and Santoso (2019), social media marketing can create brand awareness and influence consumer attitudes which ultimately influence their buying behavior. Social media platforms allow marketers to interact with potential customers and provide them with information about attractions, events and other related content.

Another study by Balakrishnan and Arjunan (2020) shows that social media marketing is an effective tool for creating positive consumer engagement with tourist destinations, which can lead to higher intention to visit. The study has noted that social media platforms enable more targeted marketing efforts and better engagement with potential customers, leading to better attraction recognition and a positive impact on consumer behavior. Social media is a powerful tool that can help tourism marketers create information sharing and disseminate information about destinations and their services, ultimately leading to increased awareness, engagement and sales.

Overall, social media marketing has the potential to positively influence tourist visit decisions by creating awareness of visiting interests, shaping interest in visiting destinations, and providing information that can affect the expected quality.

H1: Social media marketing has a positive effect on visiting decisions.

### THE INFLUENCE OF CUSTOMER REVIEWS ON VISIT DECISIONS

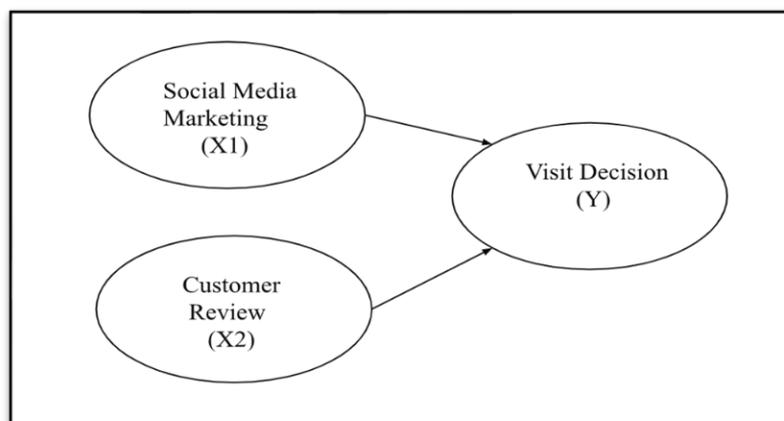
According to previous research, the element of trust in other consumers is an important factor in the influence of customer reviews on consumer behavior (Gao & Nusair, 2020). In the context of a beach tourism object in Gunung Kidul Yogyakarta, visitors may need to trust the information provided by other tourists before they decide to visit the tourist attraction. Therefore, hypothesis 2 proposes that customer reviews will have a positive effect on visit decisions.

Customer reviews play an important role in shaping the tourist decision-making process. According to Tran et al (2019) customer reviews have a positive impact on tourists' perceptions of the quality of destinations and their intentions to visit. The study found that positive reviews can increase tourists' perceptions of quality and trust in a destination, leading to a higher likelihood of a visit.

In addition, Lu et al (2019) show that tourists are more likely to trust and rely on customer reviews on social media platforms when making visiting decisions. They note that social media platforms provide a convenient and accessible platform for tourists to get information and recommendations from other travelers, which leads to better decision-making. Customer reviews have become an important source of information for tourists and can significantly influence their decision-making process when selecting destinations or activities. In short, customer reviews can significantly influence tourist visit decisions by providing valuable information, shaping perceptions, and increasing trust in a destination.

H2: customer reviews have a positive effect on visit decisions.

Below is the diagram of conceptual framework that highlights the relationship between social media marketing, customer review, and visit decision.



**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

It is inferred on the diagram that social media marketing and customer review has influence towards visit decision, therefore from the discussion the relationship of each variable is accepted as positive relationship. Overall social media marketing has positive effect towards visit decisions and customer review also has positive effect towards visit decisions.

## CONCLUSION

Overall this study highlights the dynamics between social media marketing, customer reviews, and visit decisions in the context of the Gunung Kidul beach tourism object. This research has discussed the phenomenon of tourists visiting the area who continue to arrive even though the infrastructure facilities are still not good. Through the method of literature study this research explores in depth the perceptions regarding the decision to visit tourists. The findings of this study have revealed significant insights that contribute to both theoretical understanding and practical implications. Social media marketing and customer reviews have emerged as influential factors that have a positive impact on tourist visit decisions.

The results of the study have significant implications for stakeholders in destination management, marketing and policy making. The potential of social media marketing and the power of positive customer reviews can be utilized to foster trust among potential tourists. This, in turn, improves visit decisions, reducing the impact of infrastructure challenges on tourist choices. These findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to destination development, which focuses not only on tangible facilities but also on the intangible factors that shape tourist experiences and perceptions. Suggestions for subsequent research are developing journal interpretations by adding quantitative methods to obtain direct data from tourists and adding variables in order to broaden the scope of research.

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