

GREEN TOURISM MARKETING STRATEGY FOR EDU-TOURISM

Dino Gustaf Leonandri¹⁾, Wala Erpurini²⁾, Nur Alamsyah³⁾

¹⁾Institut Pariwisata Trisakti, Indonesia

²⁾ Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani, Indonesia

³⁾ Universitas Informatika dan Bisnis Indonesia, Indonesia

Corresponding author: walaerpurini@mn.unjani.ac.id

Abstract

The growing demand for sustainable tourism has led to an increased interest in green tourism marketing strategies for eduwisata destinations. This study aims to explore the development of effective marketing approaches that promote eduwisata while minimizing its environmental impact. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. The findings highlight the importance of green marketing components, such as eco-friendly products, green promotions, and sustainable practices, in enhancing the appeal of eduwisata destinations. The study also identifies key challenges and opportunities in implementing green tourism marketing strategies, including the need for stakeholder collaboration, community engagement, and innovative marketing techniques.

The study's results provide insights into the development of green tourism marketing strategies that balance economic, social, and environmental benefits, ultimately contributing to the sustainability of eduwisata destinations. The findings have implications for eduwisata operators, policymakers, and marketers seeking to promote sustainable tourism practices. By adopting green tourism marketing strategies, eduwisata destinations can differentiate themselves in a competitive market, attract environmentally conscious tourists, and contribute to the preservation of natural and cultural resources.

Keywords: Green Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Edu Tourism

Introduction

In recent years, the global tourism industry has been shifting towards more sustainable and environmentally responsible practices. Green tourism, often referred to as eco-tourism or sustainable tourism, emphasizes environmental preservation, local community involvement, and responsible travel behavior. (Becken, 2019) In parallel, edu-tourism—an emerging segment that combines education with tourism—has gained traction among travelers seeking meaningful and knowledge-based experiences. (Kotler, Bowen, Makens, & Baloglu, 2017). The integration of green tourism principles into edu-tourism offers a unique opportunity to foster environmental awareness and sustainability values among travelers, particularly students and young learners. By embedding educational components into eco-friendly travel experiences, destinations can cultivate a deeper understanding of ecological issues, cultural preservation, and global citizenship. According to (D. B. Weaver & Lawton, 2007), experiential learning in natural and culturally rich environments enhances knowledge retention and encourages pro-environmental behavior. Moreover, green edu-tourism initiatives often promote local engagement through community-based learning, where participants actively contribute to conservation efforts or social projects, aligning with the principles of responsible tourism. This synergy not only strengthens the educational impact but also enhances the authenticity and value of the tourism experience (Frey & George, 2010). As such, the strategic development of green edu-tourism can serve as a powerful tool for both environmental education and sustainable economic growth in local communities.

Integrating green tourism principles into edu-tourism offers a unique opportunity to not only minimize environmental impact but also to promote awareness, learning, and cultural understanding. (Fennell, 2021) This strategic alignment can contribute significantly to the development of sustainable destinations and educational institutions that promote ecological values. (S Wearing & Neil, 2009) By fostering immersive, hands-on experiences, green edu-tourism encourages participants to actively engage with environmental challenges and local cultures, thereby reinforcing both cognitive and affective learning outcomes. Programs that incorporate ecological fieldwork, conservation activities, or heritage preservation projects provide learners with a sense of purpose and connection to the places they visit. As highlighted by (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011), such experiential learning environments enhance environmental stewardship and are more likely to inspire long-term behavioral change. Furthermore, when educational institutions collaborate with sustainable tourism

operators, they can co-create curricula that align academic goals with real-world sustainability practices, resulting in a mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources. This integrated approach not only enriches the educational journey but also supports the broader goals of sustainable development by creating informed, responsible global citizens who value the interplay between nature, culture, and learning.

Marketing plays a crucial role in promoting green edu-tourism by effectively communicating the environmental, cultural, and educational value of such experiences to target audiences. (Mowforth & Munt, 2015) A green tourism marketing strategy, therefore, should not only focus on conventional promotional tools but also highlight the eco-friendly practices, community engagement, and educational benefits offered by the destination or institution. (Canton, 2021) (Ritchie, 2003). To maximize its impact, green edu-tourism marketing must adopt a values-based approach that resonates with the ethical and educational motivations of its audience, particularly environmentally conscious students, educators, and institutions. This involves crafting authentic narratives that emphasize sustainability credentials, such as the use of renewable energy, conservation partnerships, or curriculum-integrated eco-activities. Digital storytelling, social media engagement, and user-generated content have become powerful tools for building trust and emotional connection, especially among younger demographics who are highly responsive to visual and experiential content (Hudson & Thal, 2013). Moreover, transparent communication about environmental certifications, local collaborations, and measurable sustainability outcomes enhances the credibility of marketing campaigns and helps prevent skepticism or accusations of greenwashing. As noted by Peattie and Crane (2005), successful green marketing must be both substantive and sincere, ensuring that promotional messages are backed by genuine practices. Ultimately, a strategic and ethically grounded marketing approach can position green edu-tourism destinations not just as travel options, but as transformative experiences that support global sustainability goals.

This paper aims to explore and develop a strategic marketing framework for promoting edu-tourism through a green tourism approach. The study also discusses key components such as branding, digital engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and environmental messaging to support sustainable growth in the edu-tourism sector. To achieve this objective, the study employs a qualitative methodology involving literature analysis, case study evaluation, and expert interviews to identify best practices and innovative strategies within the green edu-tourism landscape. By examining real-world examples of destinations that have successfully integrated environmental principles with educational tourism offerings, the research uncovers actionable insights into how marketing efforts can be tailored to resonate with eco-conscious and knowledge-seeking audiences. Particular attention is given to the role of digital media in amplifying green messages and the importance of authentic storytelling in building trust. Equally important is the value of cross-sector collaboration—especially between educational institutions, tourism operators, and local communities. The resulting framework is designed to guide stakeholders in crafting marketing strategies that are not only effective in attracting visitors but also aligned with long-term sustainability and educational impact goals.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore the implementation of green tourism marketing strategies within selected edu-tourism destinations. The method involves in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including tourism marketers, educators, and eco-tourism program managers, supported by direct field observations and document analysis of marketing materials such as brochures, websites, and social media content (Yin, 2017). To deepen the understanding of recurring themes, thematic analysis is employed, allowing researchers to identify patterns in participants' perceptions regarding eco-friendly marketing and educational value (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, a SWOT analysis framework is used to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of current green marketing practices in the edu-tourism sector (Gurl, 2017). The integration of these methods provides a holistic view of how green marketing is strategically used to attract visitors while promoting sustainability and educational enrichment. To support the research design, this study draws on established tourism and marketing theories, including works by (Kotler et al., 2017) and (Hughes, Weaver, & Pforr, 2015), to contextualize the intersection between sustainable tourism and educational travel experiences. Building on this methodological foundation, the study first analyzes qualitative data obtained from stakeholder interviews, which reveal nuanced insights into the motivations, challenges, and strategic considerations involved in implementing green edu-tourism marketing. Tourism marketers emphasized the importance of aligning marketing messages with tangible eco-practices to build trust and attract environmentally conscious visitors. Educators, on the other hand, highlighted the need for experiential learning components that align with curricular goals and promote critical thinking about sustainability. Eco-tourism program managers shared perspectives on operational constraints, such as limited funding and regulatory barriers, that often impact the scalability and effectiveness of green marketing initiatives. Thematic coding helped identify key categories such as authenticity, stakeholder collaboration, digital engagement, and learner-centered content, which were consistently referenced across interviews and corroborated by field observations and promotional material analysis.

In parallel, the SWOT analysis offered a strategic lens to assess the internal and external factors shaping the success of green marketing in edu-tourism. Strengths included a growing societal demand for sustainability and education-focused travel, as well as the high perceived value of immersive eco-learning experiences. However, weaknesses such as inconsistent messaging and limited digital infrastructure were seen as hindrances to broader market outreach. Opportunities emerged in the form of increasing climate education in school curricula, potential government incentives for sustainable tourism, and the rise of social media platforms that favor storytelling and transparency. Meanwhile, threats included greenwashing by competitors, economic uncertainties affecting travel budgets, and a general lack of public awareness regarding what constitutes truly sustainable tourism. These findings collectively inform a strategic framework aimed at guiding stakeholders in refining their green edu-tourism marketing efforts to ensure authenticity, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Results and Discussions

The results of this study indicate that the implementation of green tourism marketing strategies in edu-tourism destinations is growing in importance as both educational institutions and tourism operators seek to meet the increasing demand for sustainable and educational travel experiences. Through interviews with tourism managers and educators, as well as an analysis of promotional materials, three core marketing strategies were identified: environmental storytelling, eco-certification and credibility signaling, and community-based educational engagement.

First, environmental storytelling emerged as a key strategy, where destinations communicate their green values through narratives that connect educational experiences with environmental preservation. This aligns with the findings of (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012), who emphasized that storytelling enhances tourists' emotional attachment to green destinations and positively influences their behavioral intentions.

Second, the use of eco-labels and certifications (e.g., Green Globe, EarthCheck) was found to be central in building trust and credibility among potential edu-tourists. Previous studies, such as Font and (Font & McCabe, 2017), highlight that eco-certification not only serves as a marketing tool but also reinforces operational standards that improve sustainability performance.

Third, community-based engagement programs—such as local school partnerships, conservation projects, and cultural exchange—are actively promoted in green edu-tourism settings. This strategy not only differentiates destinations but also strengthens the educational impact of tourism. Similar approaches were observed by (Stephen Wearing & Schweinsberg, 2018), who found that community involvement increases both tourist satisfaction and destination sustainability.

Thematic analysis further revealed that successful green edu-tourism marketing is closely tied to three pillars: authenticity, educational enrichment, and sustainability integration. Authenticity refers to the alignment between the marketed message and the actual experience. For instance, one case study site advertised zero-waste lodging and delivered on that promise, which increased visitor satisfaction and word-of-mouth promotion. This finding is supported by (Han, Hsu, & Lee, 2009), who argue that perceived authenticity of green practices is a major predictor of tourist loyalty in eco-tourism contexts. Building on the pillar of authenticity, the second pillar—educational enrichment—centers on the design of learning experiences that are both immersive and pedagogically sound. Destinations that integrate structured curricula, expert-led workshops, and reflective debriefing sessions enable participants to connect theoretical knowledge with real-world environmental challenges, thereby deepening their understanding and retention (Ballantyne & Packer, 2011). For example, guided biodiversity surveys paired with interactive lectures on ecosystem dynamics not only enhance cognitive engagement but also foster critical thinking about conservation strategies. The third pillar, sustainability integration, ensures that all facets of the edu-tourism offering—from accommodations and transportation to curriculum content—adhere to rigorous ecological standards. This holistic approach, as advocated by (D. Weaver, 2007), helps to institutionalize green practices and signals a genuine organizational commitment to sustainability, which in turn reinforces educational messages and strengthens stakeholder trust. Together, these three pillars create a synergistic framework whereby authentic, educationally rich, and operationally sustainable experiences motivate participants to adopt long-term pro-environmental behaviors and advocate for broader sustainability initiatives.

SWOT analysis also uncovered several strategic insights. Strengths included a strong alignment between environmental education goals and sustainable tourism practices. Opportunities lie in the growing awareness of climate change and its integration into school curricula, which increases demand for meaningful travel. However, weaknesses such as limited funding for marketing and a lack of digital infrastructure were evident. External threats included the risk of greenwashing and competition from commercial tourism providers who use sustainability as a superficial branding tactic. To effectively leverage these insights, strategic responses must be developed that capitalize on strengths and opportunities while addressing weaknesses and mitigating threats. For instance, destinations can form partnerships with educational institutions and NGOs to co-develop

funding opportunities and access broader marketing channels, thereby overcoming budgetary constraints. Investing in digital infrastructure—such as user-friendly websites, social media platforms, and virtual tour previews—can also enhance visibility and attract tech-savvy learners. To differentiate themselves from superficial competitors, green edu-tourism providers must emphasize transparency by showcasing measurable sustainability outcomes, certifications, and community testimonials. This not only builds credibility but also aligns with the values of ethically motivated travelers. Ultimately, by proactively addressing internal limitations and external risks, edu-tourism destinations can strengthen their competitive positioning and deliver authentic, high-impact experiences that support both learning and sustainability objectives.

Overall, this study supports the view that effective green marketing in edu-tourism must go beyond surface-level messaging. It requires a deep alignment between environmental values, educational outcomes, and tourist experiences, as emphasized in the works of (Hughes et al., 2015) and (Kotler et al., 2017). These strategies not only attract environmentally conscious learners and travelers but also contribute to long-term destination sustainability. Furthermore, the success of such strategies depends on continuous evaluation and adaptation to evolving environmental issues, educational trends, and traveler expectations. Implementing feedback mechanisms—such as post-visit surveys, stakeholder consultations, and learning outcome assessments—can provide valuable insights to refine programs and enhance impact. As suggested by Fennell (2021), sustainable tourism must be viewed as a dynamic process that responds to both ecological realities and social change. By integrating ongoing research, local knowledge, and global sustainability frameworks (e.g., the UN's Sustainable Development Goals), edu-tourism providers can ensure their marketing remains relevant, impactful, and ethically grounded. This iterative approach not only sustains competitive advantage but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement, aligning tourism development with broader efforts toward environmental education and global citizenship. In light of these findings, stakeholder collaboration emerges as a vital component in strengthening green edu-tourism marketing strategies. Educational institutions, tourism operators, local governments, and community members must work together to co-create programs that align ecological sustainability with educational excellence. Such partnerships can enhance resource sharing, foster innovation, and ensure that initiatives reflect both local values and global best practices. As noted by Jamal and Stronza (2009), multi-stakeholder collaboration is essential in balancing the interests of conservation, education, and economic viability within sustainable tourism models. When all actors are involved in the planning and evaluation processes, it becomes easier to build trust, enhance program credibility, and promote shared ownership of sustainability outcomes.

Moreover, branding plays a strategic role in differentiating green edu-tourism destinations in a competitive market. A strong brand identity that reflects environmental stewardship and educational depth can attract a niche audience of conscious travelers and institutional partners. Effective green branding requires consistency in messaging, visual identity, and service delivery across all touchpoints—ranging from promotional campaigns to the on-site visitor experience. According to (Blain, Levy, & Ritchie, 2005), destination branding influences tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty. In the context of edu-tourism, a brand built on transparency, community connection, and measurable impact can position the destination as a transformative learning environment, rather than just a place of visit.

Finally, future directions for green edu-tourism marketing should prioritize technological innovation to enhance accessibility and engagement. Virtual tours, interactive learning platforms, and AI-powered personalization can extend the reach of eco-educational programs to global audiences, including schools and universities in remote areas. Technology can also support real-time data collection for sustainability monitoring and visitor feedback, enabling agile program adaptation. As emphasized by (Gretzel, Yuan, & Fesenmaier, 2000), smart tourism technologies can facilitate both operational efficiency and enriched tourist experiences. By embracing digital tools while staying grounded in ecological and educational values, green edu-tourism initiatives can scale their impact without compromising authenticity or sustainability.

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