



Communication Strategy Patterns in Tourism to Increase Visitors (A Study on Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi Pesawaran District)

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Abstract: This research aims to analyze the communication strategy patterns in tourism to increase the number of visitors at the Cuku Nyi-Nyi Mangrove Ecotourism in Pesawaran Regency. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including interviews, observations, and documentation. The results indicate that communication strategies through social media, word of mouth, local storytelling, collaboration with stakeholders, and local community participation have successfully formed a positive image of the destination and increased tourist visits in 2023-2024. This study utilizes the theory of Social Action, Phenomenology, and IMC as the basis for analysis. The findings show that digital, participatory, and educational communication strategies are effective in enhancing appeal and building sustainable tourist engagement.

Keywords: Communication Strategy, Digital Marketing, Ecotourism, IMC, Participatory Communication

Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in supporting regional development, both economically and socio-culturally. As one of the leading sectors, tourism not only contributes to economic growth but also serves as a tool for environmental conservation and cultural preservation. In recent years, the concept of ecotourism has gained considerable attention as an alternative form of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism emphasizes responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of local people, and involves interpretation and education. This approach promotes not just tourism, but also a deeper interaction between visitors and local communities through meaningful experiences.

Based on visit data in 2024, there was an increase in the number of tourists to the area. However, compared to other tourist destinations in the same district, the visitation rate to Cuku Nyi-Nyi Ecotourism is still relatively low. One of the reasons is the lack of a well-planned and integrated communication strategy in promoting this destination to a wider audience, especially through digital media and community participation.

In the context of local tourism development, communication strategy is a crucial component in shaping destination image, promoting sustainability values, and reaching broader target audiences. Effective communication can increase community participation,

strengthen local identity, and influence tourists' decision-making processes. (Yasir et al., 2019) emphasized that well-structured communication strategies play a vital role in raising public awareness about tourism destinations and in expanding their promotional reach sustainably. In the current digital era, communication strategies extend beyond traditional media, incorporating social media platforms, digital engagement tools, and community-based approaches. Previous studies have shown that well planned and integrated communication strategies can shape tourist perceptions, build destination appeal, and influence travel decisions (Trisia & Nugraha, 2022). However, many local tourism actors still struggle to fully understand or implement comprehensive communication strategies. Therefore, it is essential to explore how communication strategies are structured and applied by community-based ecotourism managers, particularly in emerging destinations such as Cuku Nyi-Nyi.

This study is grounded in the theoretical perspectives of Max Weber's Social Action Theory, Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology, and the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). These theoretical lenses help analyze how communication strategies are created, delivered, and interpreted by tourism stakeholders. By focusing on the case of Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi, this research aims to explore the patterns, media, and impacts of communication strategies in the effort to increase tourist visitation, particularly within the context of sustainable community-based tourism development.

Beyond merely mapping communication tools, this study seeks to understand how local values, cultural narratives, and grassroots participation shape the unique branding of Cuku Nyi-Nyi. Employing a qualitative approach, this research contributes to the academic discourse on tourism communication especially within the domains of community engagement, digital promotion, and relational tourism branding. The results are expected to inform both theory and practice, providing strategic insight for tourism managers and policy stakeholders in similar ecotourism settings.

Literature Review

1. Social Action Theory

The Theory of Social Action was developed by (Weber, 1978) to explain that every human action has subjective meaning and is performed by taking into account the existence of others. From this perspective, communication is understood not merely as the transmission of messages, but as part of a meaningful social process.

Weber classifies social action into four main types. First, instrumental rational action (Zweckrational), which is action performed logically to achieve specific goals, such as ecotourism managers utilizing social media to increase visits. Second, value-oriented rational action (Wertrational), which is action based on a belief in moral or cultural values, for example, environmental preservation by the community. Third, affective action, which is action that arises from emotions, such as tourists visiting out of admiration or nostalgia. Fourth, traditional action, which is performed based on customs or cultural heritage, such as generational participation in conservation.

In the context of this research, the communication strategy implemented by the Cuku Nyi-Nyi managers is understood as a form of social action because it involves the goal of

building relationships, shaping tourists' perceptions, and encouraging community participation. These actions reflect a combination of economic goal orientation and local values.

In line with this, (Mody & Day, 2014) found that social tourism actors use various forms of Weber's social actions to balance the attractiveness of destinations and community values. Meanwhile, (Swedberg, 2018) emphasizes the importance of using Weber's ideal type as an analytical tool to understand social relations in value-based tourism communication strategies.

2. Phenomenological Theory

The theory of phenomenology, developed by (Schutz, 1967), emphasizes that social reality is formed through the experiences and subjective consciousness of individuals. To understand the meaning of an action, researchers need to view it from the perspective of the actor, not just from the outside.

Schutz introduces the concept of lifeworld or the world of life, along with three main principles: (1) Intersubjectivity, which means social meaning is formed through mutual understanding among individuals; (2) Stock of Knowledge, which means individuals act based on past experiences and knowledge; and (3) Typification, which refers to the tendency of individuals to classify social experiences into certain categories.

In tourism, phenomenology helps explain how tourists, communities, and managers co-create shared meanings of a destination, not only as a physical space but also as symbolic and social (Rasid et al., 2021). Communication strategies such as storytelling, local values, and thematic experiences are understood as part of the co-creation process that shapes tourists' perceptions and engagement.

3. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The theory of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a strategic approach in communication that integrates various channels and marketing messages to ensure consistency, synergy, and audience orientation (SchulSchultz, D E, S Tannenbaum, and R Lauterborn. 1993. "Integrated Marketing Communications, NTC Business Book."tz et al., 1993). IMC encompasses not only advertising, sales promotions, and public relations, but also digital communication, direct marketing, and word of mouth within a unified framework (Belch & Belch, 2018).

IMC emphasizes the importance of message consistency, coordination across media, and alignment with the target audience, so that the communication delivered does not overlap or confuse the public. In the context of tourism, IMC can assist destination managers in conveying strategic messages through social media, educational activities, community collaboration, and visitor experience design.

In this study, the IMC framework is used to analyze how the managers of Cuku Nyi-Nyi Ecotourism develop communication strategies through various media and approaches, both online and offline. Communication is conducted through digital content (Instagram, TikTok), direct interaction with tourists, local narratives, and educational promotional activities that mutually support each other as a unified message.

Methodology

1. Type and Approach of Research

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, aimed at deeply describing the patterns of communication strategies in tourism applied in Cuku Nyi-Nyi Mangrove Ecotourism, Pesawaran Regency. This approach was chosen because it is considered capable of capturing the meanings, processes, and social contexts from the perspective of the actors in the field (Rukin, 2021).

2. Research Location and Time

This research is entitled "*Communication Strategy Patterns in Increasing Visitors: A Study at Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi in Pesawaran Regency*", which is located at Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi, Sidodadi Village, Teluk Pandan District, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung Province. The research was conducted from January to April 2025. The distance from Bandar Lampung University to the research location is approximately 41 km with an estimated travel time of 45 to 60 minutes.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three methods: interviews, observations, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with tourism managers, local residents, and visitors to gather insights on their roles and experiences. Observations were made during field visits to understand how communication strategies were applied in real time. Documentation involved collecting relevant materials such as promotional posters, social media posts, photos, and visitor data records.

4. Data Validity

Data validation is carried out through triangulation and member checking. Triangulation is done by comparing results from various sources of information and data collection methods (interviews, observations, and documentation). Meanwhile, member checking is performed by confirming the findings with informants to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process followed the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes three steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was done by selecting relevant information according to the research focus. The data were then organized into themes and presented in descriptive form. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on patterns and meanings that emerged during the analysis.

Result and Discussion

1. General Condition of Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi

Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi is a conservation-based tourism destination located in Sidodadi Village, Teluk Pandan District, Pesawaran Regency, Lampung Province.

The area was developed through a community driven initiative that combines educational tourism with coastal ecosystem conservation, particularly the preservation of mangrove forests. Its development has been supported by local residents, student volunteers, conservation organizations, and several government agencies.

The destination offers participatory and educational tourism experiences such as mangrove planting, mangrove trail exploration via wooden walkways, and environmental education about the coastal flora and fauna. In addition, the local cultural narrative behind the name “Cuku Nyi-Nyi” adds a distinctive identity to the site. These attractions are enriched by the natural atmosphere, the hospitality of the local community, and their active involvement in managing tourism facilities such as parking, food stalls, and local souvenir.

Although it has great potential, the management of the area still faces several limitations, particularly in terms of limited human resources in digital promotion management, as well as the lack of structured long-term planning. Nevertheless, the spirit of mutual cooperation and concern for the environment remains the main strength in maintaining the sustainability and development of this tourist area. Cuku Nyi-Nyi Ecotourism not only serves as a recreational place but also as a means of education and sustainable community empowerment.

2. Tourist Visit Growth

The number of tourist visits to Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi has shown a significant upward trend since official documentation began. In 2022, the site was still in its initial development phase and lacked a structured visitor recording system. During this period, tourism activities were mostly informal, involving local residents and environmental volunteers, and thus no quantitative visitor data was available.

Formal documentation of tourist visits commenced in 2023, recording a total of 626 visitors that year. By mid-2024, the number had increased sharply to 2,531 visitors, indicating growing public interest in the destination and suggesting that the communication strategies employed by the managers had begun to yield tangible results.

Several factors contributed to this increase, including the use of social media as a promotional tool, word-of-mouth dissemination by previous visitors, and collaborative support from local communities, university students, and educational institutions. In addition, rising public awareness of environmental education and nature-based experiences has further encouraged visitation. If these communication strategies are strengthened in a more structured and continuous manner, the number of tourist visits is projected to continue growing in the coming years.

3. Communication Strategy Patterns Implemented

The communication strategy implemented by the managers of Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi is adaptive and community-based. This approach evolved organically through the direct involvement of local residents in conveying the destination's narrative, educating visitors, and collectively building the image of the area. The strategy reflects a participatory spiral model, where communication flows not only in one direction but also forms a dynamic cycle between managers, community members, and tourist.

Technically, there are four key strategies that shape the overall communication pattern of the destination:

a. Social Media

The management utilizes platforms such as Instagram to share tourism activities, environmental education efforts, and the promotion of local products. However, due to limited human resources, this activity remains unstructured. Content management is still incidental and largely tied to on-site moments such as university visits or mangrove planting events.

b. Storytelling and Local Narratives

One of the strongest aspects of the communication strategy is storytelling. Local guides and community members frequently share stories about the area's history, its conservation journey, and the values of cooperation. This practice builds emotional engagement between visitors and the site, while also reinforcing the identity of the destination as a space for learning and conservation.

c. Word of mouth

Word of mouth remains the most active and far-reaching promotional channel. Visitor testimonials, social media postings, and informal interactions help shape a positive public perception of the site. WOM is considered effective in building trust, especially among local audiences who are more responsive to authentic experiences and direct recommendations.

d. Collaboration and Partnership

The managers collaborate with external partners such as universities, environmental organizations, and CSR programs. These partnerships include digital communication training, conservation activities, and co-promotional efforts. Media produced by these partners—shared through their respective platforms—organically expands the promotional reach of the destination.

4. Theoretical Reflection

The communication strategy implemented in Mangrove Ecotourism Cuku Nyi-Nyi can be interpreted through several theoretical lenses, each offering a different perspective on how messages are formed, delivered, and interpreted by various stakeholders.

From the perspective of Max Weber's Social Action Theory, communication in this context is not merely a technical activity, but a form of meaningful social action. The messages conveyed—especially those related to environmental conservation, local identity, and community values—are driven by purposive action (*zweckrational*) and value-oriented rationality (*wertrational*), where actors communicate not only to inform, but to influence behavior in line with shared values.

Through the lens of Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology, the communication that occurs between guides, visitors, and community members is deeply subjective and contextually constructed. Each actor interprets and assigns meaning to communication based on their own lived experiences. For example, a simple act of storytelling about the origins of "Cuku Nyi-Nyi" becomes a shared intersubjective experience that enhances emotional engagement and cultural understanding between hosts and guests.

Meanwhile, using the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), it is evident that although the communication strategy is still informal and underdeveloped, it already demonstrates early characteristics of IMC. The use of multiple channels (social media, interpersonal communication, collaboration with partners) shows an attempt to deliver a consistent message across platforms. However, due to limited planning and technical capacity, the integration is not yet optimized. The absence of a structured communication calendar and data-driven targeting suggests that the strategy remains in a formative stage and requires professional refinement to fully align with IMC principles.

Overall, the strategies implemented at Cuku Nyi-Nyi reflect a hybrid communication model—rooted in local participation and values, yet gradually moving toward integrated digital promotion. These strategies offer unique insights into how grassroots tourism actors negotiate meaning, trust, and engagement in resource-limited contexts, making them a valuable reference for both communication theory and practice.

Discussion

The communication strategy implemented by the managers of the Cuku Nyi-Nyi Mangrove Ecotourism shows effectiveness even though it is carried out simply and based on limited resources. The increase in the number of visits from year to year indicates that the communication approach taken—through community engagement, the delivery of local narratives, and word-of-mouth promotion—has successfully built a positive image in the community.

The main distinguishing factor of this strategy is the strength of social closeness. The narrative about the area's history, conservation values, and the role of local communities not only enhances tourism appeal but also creates an emotional connection between visitors and the environment they visit. This becomes a form of social capital that many other destinations do not possess.

Nevertheless, challenges remain. Social media management has not been conducted in a structured manner. The content being shared is still incidental and not accompanied by long-term communication planning. In addition, the capacity of the managers in terms of digital message design and audience management is still limited.

These results highlight the importance of strengthening human resource capacity in the field of tourism communication, particularly in digital media management. Guidance and training are needed so that managers can design more targeted, consistent, and relevant communication strategies for the audience. A combination of local values and a more professional digital approach is believed to expand promotional reach and sustainably increase the number of visits.

Conclusion

This research shows that the communication strategy applied in Cuku Nyi-Nyi Mangrove Ecotourism is participatory, community-based, and develops organically from the bottom up. This approach utilizes the power of local narratives, word of mouth promotion, and direct community involvement in conveying conservation-based tourism messages. Although not professionally structured and conducted with limited resources,

this strategy has proven effective in increasing tourist interest and building a positive image of the destination.

The success is inseparable from the strong local values and educational as well as emotional tourism experiences. The communication established does not only focus on promotion but also on creating meaning and relationships between visitors and the local environment and culture. This makes Cuku Nyi-Nyi an early example of an ecotourism destination that relies on social power and local narratives.

However, challenges remain, such as the lack of long-term communication planning, limitations in managing digital media, and inconsistent utilization of social media. Therefore, managers need to enhance communication capacity through more structured strategies, digital training, and maintaining public engagement during the closure through online and educational content. Support from the government, educational institutions, and private partners is also needed in the form of ongoing assistance. A synergy between local participation and professional communication management is expected to make Cuku Nyi-Nyi a leading and competitive sustainable ecotourism destination.

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