

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIGITAL PROMOTION IN MARKETING COMMUNICATION TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN TOURISTS IN TANA TORAJA REGENCY POST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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## Keyword

Digital Promotion, Marketing  
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## Abstract

*The diversity of tourism in Indonesia has a positive impact on the economic growth and development of the country. It was proved that tourism is the third largest foreign exchange contributor after CPO and coal. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of digital promotion of the Tana Toraja Tourism Office to increase the number of foreign tourists in Tana Toraja Regency after the Covid-19 pandemic. The research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach with observation, in-depth interviews with sources, and documentation. Data analysis uses three steps, such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of the research are as follows (1) the tourism office of tana toraja district builds a tourism image after the covid pandemic through social media, especially on Instagram and TikTok. (2) Tourism branding of tana toraja district is using ayo ke toraja. Ayo ke Toraja is made as a branding to attract tourists as well as making ayo ke toraja as the name of the official social media account of the tana toraja district tourism office. (3) Digital marketing is combined with STP marketing to branding tourism in Tana Toraja district. STP Marketing consists of Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning. The planning and implementation process consists of concept, idea, price, promotion, and distribution. STP model is a process in marketing. The implementation of the STP model in digital marketing has proved effective in attracting foreign tourists to visit the tana Toraja regency.*

## INTRODUCTION

The abundance of natural resources makes Indonesia one of the destination countries for tourists to travel. Indonesia has a diverse culture and tourism that is an asset to help the economic growth and progress of the country. Indonesian people (people) are known for their friendliness and easily interact with anyone and anywhere. Second, because of nature (natural heritage), Indonesia's diverse natural beauty is the main attraction of other countries, such as the mountains on most of its islands, beautiful beaches, unique caves, and vast and beautiful rice fields. Third, because of its culture (cultural heritage). These three potentials support Indonesia's tourism industry development (Sukoco, Sampir Andean, 2018).

One of the regions in Indonesia that has tourism potential and natural resources that are no less interesting than other regions in Indonesia is Tana Toraja. Located in the province of South Sulawesi and is one of the tourist destinations for foreign tourists visiting South Sulawesi. Tana Toraja is known for its local wisdom and culture that is still preserved for generations from their ancestors. Tana Toraja has various types of tourism that become selling points to attract tourists ranging from cultural, nature, historical, agro, and artificial. Cultural tourism is tourism that aims to recognize the culture of a region, social life, customs, cultural arts, and beliefs adopted by the place. In cultural tourism trips, tourists will broaden their horizons and outlook on life about the differences and diversity of existing cultures. Nature tourism is a

tourist trap that is carried out to see the beauty of nature which is used as a tourist attraction, examples of nature tourism in the tana toraja district are the sarambu assing waterfall and Ollon Hill. Historical tourism is carried out to visit historical places that are relics, have a history in the past, and are still preserved today, historical tourism in tana toraja district is Tampang Alo and Batu Lemo Graveyard. Agro-tourism is a tourist attraction that combines agricultural activities with tourism, agro-tourism found in Tana Toraja is pango-pango agrotourism. The last is artificial tourism, artificial tourism is usually made to attract tourists by utilizing natural resources and then developing them into tourist attractions. Artificial tourism found in Tana Toraja is the statue of Jesus Buntu Burake. The tourism potential of the tana toraja district is able to encourage economic growth through Regional Original Revenue. In addition to helping the government in increasing PAD, the tourism sector also has a positive impact on the income of the people of North Toraja, namely by opening business opportunities, as well as opening new jobs to reduce unemployment in North Toraja (Ika Kristianti, 2019).

At the end of 2019, there was a virus that spread throughout the world known as covid-19. The virus is spreading rapidly throughout the world including in Indonesia. The spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia began in early March 2020 and has significantly increased until early 2021. As a result of the spread of the virus, all activities have experienced obstacles in various sectors including the tourism sector. The government also decided to implement several measures to prevent the spread of the virus such as large-scale social restrictions (PSBB), working from home, and limiting all activities in crowded places to maintain health. The government also provides a policy for those infected with the virus to be quarantined so that the virus does not spread.. The government's latest policy is Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to stop the spread of COVID-19 (Dani & Yulianto, 2021). The implementation of PSBB in various regions has resulted in all activities outside the home being limited, even some transportation operations are limited, including airports which are the exit points for foreign tourists. The impact of PSBB on the tourism sector in tana toraja district has made tana toraja quiet, as evidenced by the number of foreign tourist visits which has decreased significantly.

Table 1.

Data on foreign tourist visits sorted by year from 2018-2021

No	Year	Number of Tourists
1	2018	19.422
2	2019	10.526
3	2020	830
4	2021	100

Source : Dinas Pariwisata Kabupaten Tana Toraja (2022)

The table above shows the adverse impact of covid-19 on the tourism sector, this is the reason for researchers to examine more deeply how the government's strategy in increasing the number of tourists after the covid-19 pandemic and what strategies applied by the tourism office of Tana Toraja district in building tourism love to foreign tourists. The government has the responsibility to regulate marketing strategies in increasing the number of post-pandemic tourists in order to turn the wheels of the economy for the survival and welfare of the people in Tana Toraja.. In implementing marketing, strategy and planning are needed to get good results. The right communication in attracting tourists is marketing communication. Marketing communication strategy is one of several factors that can build a tourism image in the eyes of tourists and attract tourists to visit. The target of marketing communication implemented by the government is to encourage economic revival through the tourism sector. Marketing carried out to attract domestic and foreign tourists is guided by Presidential Regulation Number 69 of 2015 concerning Visa-Free Visits for foreign tourists. This aims to increase the country's economy and local revenue

through tourism. the process of implementing a marketing communication strategy program to gather information, identify promotions, and prepare content and publications by utilizing social media, namely Instagram. The marketing communication strategy of the Budporapar Service was realized well because of inter-sectoral coordination and involved tribune, social, and electronic media or stakeholders (Dhipa & Abidin, 2023).

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is the qualitative method. qualitative research methods are known as naturalistic research methods because the research stages are carried out naturally or not contrived and based on facts in the field (Sugiyono, 2018). Qualitative research methods are methods that are applied in accordance with the philosophical basis of postpositivism, used to examine more deeply the conditions of natural objects, where researchers are the source of research instruments, then in collecting data the researcher uses a combination of data collection techniques carried out in triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative and the results of qualitative research focus more on meaning than abstraction. The meaning in question is the real data. definite data is a value behind the data that appears. Data collection is done by observing the condition of the object under study and taking pictures as documentation. This research is descriptive because it is associated with the development of marketing communication theory. This study will analyze more deeply the effectiveness of digital promotion of the tourism office in increasing the number of foreign tourists in Tana Toraja Regency.

The location of this research is at the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office on Jl. Pongtiku No.35, Pantan, Makale District, Tana Toraja Regency, South Sulawesi 91811 and Tana Toraja Tourism Destinations. To obtain data relevant to this study, researchers used data collection techniques consisting of primary data, namely data that needed to be analyzed and obtained directly through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation on all primary data sources obtained from the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office. Then secondary data is supporting data that is used as a basis or foundation for discussing the results of the analysis and is obtained from literature studies by studying, recording, and citing the facts of data sources and information related to this research problem as well as data obtained from the research location. The data analysis technique used in this research is qualitative data analysis as proposed by Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2013). The stages of data analysis consist of several steps, first data collection, then data reduction, data presentation, and the last is drawing conclusions.

## **RESULTS**

Tana Toraja has a wealth of tourism potential, which includes the rich cultural heritage and traditions, the famous architectural attraction in the form of traditional Tongkonan houses, a diverse culinary scene featuring authentic Toraja specialties, vibrant local arts including dances and handicrafts such as carvings, woven fabrics, and souvenirs, as well as renowned plantation products such as Toraja Arabica and Robusta coffee that have received international recognition. The number of tourists visiting is greatly influenced by marketing communication strategies; however, it is important to recognize that other factors at play can increase and decrease the influx of foreign and domestic tourists in Tana Toraja Regency.

The results of an interview with Marina, a foreign tourist from Germany whom the researcher met at Lemo tourist attraction said that "we are amazed with the culture here. We never found and seen before. It's more beautiful than the picture on Instagram. This is my first time coming to Toraja and I am automatically in love." Foreign tourists are very interested in the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia, especially in Tana Toraja. In addition, they are also amazed by the natural beauty that exists in Indonesia. Najwa aviah Octavia (2022) Cultural diversity makes foreign tourists captivated by the diversity of cultures in each different region. Many of them also learn Indonesian culture, starting with regional languages, dancing traditional dances, and tasting various kinds of regional foods.

### Tourism development after the pandemic

The management and development of tourism in Tana Toraja Regency is under the auspices of the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office. By utilizing digital media as a marketing strategy, positive results are expected in increasing foreign tourist visits, which in turn contributes to economic growth in Indonesia, especially Tana Toraja Regency. Strategic planning holds an important role in marketing communications, as it involves identifying problems that can be addressed through marketing communications, setting goals and objectives, devising strategies to achieve those goals, and implementing specific tactics to execute the plan. The abundant natural and cultural tourism potential in Tana Toraja Regency is well documented. The initial objective of the promotional efforts intensified by the tourism office was to inform the public about the ongoing tourism recovery in the area following the Covid-19 pandemic. An assessment of various tourist attractions has been conducted to identify the most prominent ones. The Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office has made it their primary responsibility to fulfill the mission and objectives of developing globally competitive tourism while also preserving the valued cultural heritage. The following is an excerpt from an interview with the Head of the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office, Adelheid Sosang said that "We are using several marketing strategies including using social media platforms for promotion, we believe that social media has a very strong role to help us in promotion. Currently, we manage Instagram and TikTok as a medium for distributing information on tourist attractions, events, and traditional ceremonies carried out by the community. We create branding by using ayo ke toraja as our official account name and the meaning of the name as tanatoraja's tagline in inviting tourists to come to tana toraja".

Cultural tourism is a special attraction and can attract the attention of foreign tourists. Not infrequently foreign tourists are amazed by the culture and local wisdom that exists in Tana Toraja. Starting from the habits of the community, then the preservation of customs such as sacred traditional ceremonies is a distinctive feature of Tana Toraja. Traditional ceremonies that are still preserved today are the traditional ceremony of love known as Rambo tuka, the traditional ceremony of grief known as rambusolo, and the manner of the ma'nene traditional ceremony which changes the clothes of their families, ancestors, and ancestors who have died for decades or even hundreds of years as a form of their respect and asking for blessings to God.

The tourism sector has experienced a very significant decline due to the co-19 pandemic. The number of foreign tourist visits has decreased, making Tana Toraja quiet and adversely affecting the community's economy. Accessibility was temporarily closed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Most tourist attractions are closed due to the implementation of large-scale social restrictions (PSBB) by the government. The results of an interview with the head of the promotion sector of the tana toraja district tourism office said that in early 2022, access to the tana toraja district was very tightly guarded due to the implementation of PSBB, and almost all tourist attractions were temporarily closed. The community is prohibited from being in crowds and activities outside the home as much as possible are limited.

Various efforts were made by the government to restore the tourism sector, ranging from implementing health protocols, and social restrictions to emphasizing people to do everything from home including school and work from home. The coronavirus has also changed people's lifestyles to become more aware of health and hygiene. From the results of the interview, the head of the tourism office of Tana Toraja district explained that the government always reminds the public to maintain health and hygiene by wearing masks, washing hands in running water using methamphetamine, and avoiding crowds. Efforts from the government continue to restore the tourism sector until the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy issued a policy to implement CHSE. CHSE stands for Cleanliness, Healthy, Safety, and Environment Sustainability.

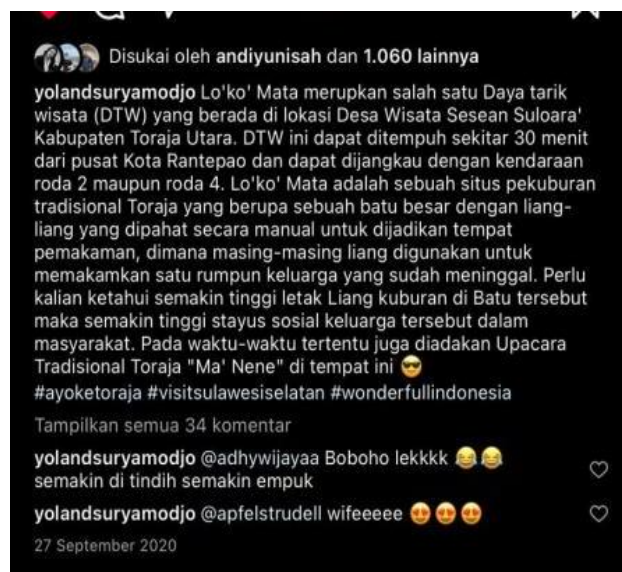
Utilizing digital media to build a post-pandemic tourism image.



Digital media has a big influence on the dissemination of information, it cannot be denied that everyone has depended on digital media to get and share information. The reach of digital media itself is very wide and fast spreading. During the covid-19 pandemic, everyone innovated in the use of digital media. Various social media platforms that are developed and used make digital media one of the needs of today. In the use of digital media, Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office used TikTok and Instagram as a platform for branding tourism in Tana Toraja Regency. According to the results of an interview with Bram, a foreign tourist from Brazil said that "we found tana toraja on instagram, we were type south Sulawesi then we found some options. Our choice goes to Tana Toraja because we saw in the instagram toraja is very unique and interesting to visit. The statement from tourists is proof that Instagram as a digital media has a big influence on attracting the attention of tourists in determining travel choices.

The power of Instagram in conveying information and attracting the attention of tourists is very influential, as seen from the uploading photos of tourism ambassadors who are promoters promoting tourism and culture in tana toraja. The tourist ambassador attended one of the attractions, namely loko' mata, which is the venue for the ma'nene traditional ceremony. Loko' mata is one of the cultural and historical attractions that has a lot of history. Loko' mata is a traditional toraja cemetery in the form of a large stone with manually hewn burrows and is used to bury deceased families. The higher the burrow, the higher the social status of the family in society.

Picture 1 & 2  
photo posts of tourism ambassadors of Tana Toraja regency in promoting tourist attractions and traditional ceremonies



Source : [Instagram.com/yolandsuryamodjo](https://www.instagram.com/yolandsuryamodjo), 2023

In the photo of the tourist ambassador above, we can see that the photo was liked by more than a thousand Instagram users and there are several comments. The utilization of digital media by the tana toraja regency tourism office is combined with the STP marketing model. The model is used to brand and build a post-pandemic image of tana toraja tourism to attract tourists. STP Marketing is a model in the development of marketing strategies that many companies use for specific audiences. This approach is known to be quite effective in the marketing process.

The implementation of STP Marketing in digital promotion

Tana Toraja offers a variety of tourist attractions, culture-based events, and traditional ceremonies for foreign tourists. The application of segmenting, targeting, and positioning strategies to attract tourists based on what was explained by the head of the Tana Toraja district tourism office:

**Segmentation:** the location of tourist attractions in Toraja is easy to reach and not far from the city center, so the tourist attractions in Tana Toraja target the target market of tourists from all walks of life and the middle economic class. Managers also take advantage of technology favored by millennials such as the use of online applications and non-cash payments.

**Targeting:** From the previous segmentation stage, we assess whether the classification in terms of age and economic status to domicile has the potential to generate benefits for the tourism sector or does it need to be done more specific filtering.

**Positioning.** Tourism and culture that has a unique and superior side is an important point to make it more prominent than other regions.

STP Marketing was used as an evaluation in tourism development after the three aspects of STP Marketing have been adjusted and then completed with branding on social media to build a tourism image in Tana Toraja Regency following what was planned.

## DISCUSSION

The Toraja people are famous for their funeral rituals, traditional Tongkonan houses, and various types of Toraja wood carvings. Torajan funeral rituals are important social events, usually attended by hundreds of people and lasting for several days. (Rilatupa, J., Siahaan, U., & Sudarwani, M. M. 2020) Burial ceremonies have become a very important icon for tourism in Toraja, especially North Toraja. All the attention of the people, including the local government of North Toraja will be centered on this ritual. Houses (Tongkonan) and rice barns (Alang) are maintained and preserved to carry out the ceremony so that the existence of these traditional houses is maintained.

In restoring the tourism sector, the Tana Toraja district government has made various efforts to break the chain of the spread of the coronavirus. The efforts made are by implementing PSBB, providing warnings related to 3M, and closed the access to Tanatoraja. According to the results of research from Khairani, M. S., & Adnan, M. F. (2023) In implementing the Covid-19 pandemic handling policy, Padang City prohibits all access from outside to enter the city of Padang to accelerate the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic both for business trips and to tourist destinations, with limited visits from people from outside the region or abroad, and the closure of several tourist attractions in the city of Padang. Therefore, it has an impact on the number of hotel visits and the number of hotel accommodations in the city of Padang.

After the government's efforts succeeded in reducing the spread of the coronavirus, tourism began to be allowed by implementing CHSE. CHSE is a new certification or policy issued by the Ministry of Tourism as a guarantee to tourists to feel safe while traveling. The application of CHSE is one of the efforts of Kemenparekraf in reviving Indonesian tourism during the covid pandemic. Quoted from Khairani, M. S., & Adnan, M. F. (2023) The target of this CHSE policy guide is aimed at entrepreneurs and facility managers, employees, local tour guides, and visitors. This CHSE has a positive impact on the world of tourism because tourism-related industries and tourists can carry out traveling activities comfortably and safely during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The role of the government is not only to cut off the spread of the coronavirus, but also to design strategies to rebuild the image of tourism. In building the image of tourism, the government utilizes digital media as an effective step to brand post-pandemic tourism. The use of digital marketing has various key benefits such as being easy to connect with consumers and providing product information to consumers is very easy, because these features cannot be seen in traditional marketing, which is more multinational but at the same time more intimate Hartanto, Y., Firmansyah, M. A., & Adhrianti, L. (2022). In the use of digital media, the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office chose Instagram and TikTok as platforms to explore tourism in the media to attract the attention of tourists. Instagram content can trigger Generation Y and Z tourists'

decisions to visit tourist destinations. Interesting Instagram content in terms of color, captions, and other people's comments can be one of the factors that attract tourists to visit tourist destinations Ismarizal, B., & Kusumah, A. H. G. (2023).

Before planning a marketing strategy, the Tana Toraja Regency Tourism Office uses STP marketing to evaluate tourism conditions before branding on digital media. Kotler (2012) defines market segmentation as the quantity of dividing the entire market of a heterogeneous product or service into several segments, where each segment is tilted homogeneous in all respects and can be selected as the target market for what the company has achieved through its marketing strategy. Successful segmentation means satisfying the needs of existing customers and clients in a clearly defined market. This includes the notion of customer attitudes and preferences and their benefits. The first step is to determine your target market and its demand is important in the segmentation process. In market segmentation, the tourism office of tana toraja regency conducts an evaluation first about the needs of tourists and then what can make tourists come back to visit. After conducting an evaluation with the STP marketing approach and branding through digital media, tana toraja regency is visited by foreign tourists again.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the research are as follows :

1. The diversity of tourism in Indonesia has a positive impact on the economic growth and development of the country. It was proved that tourism is the third largest foreign exchange contributor after CPO and coal.. Tana Toraja has a wealth of tourism potential, which includes the rich cultural heritage and traditions, the famous architectural attraction in the form of traditional Tongkonan houses.
2. The tourism office of tana toraja district builds a tourism image after the covid pandemic through social media, especially on instagram and tiktok.
3. Tourism branding of tana toraja district is using ayo ke toraja. Ayo ke toraja is made as a branding to attract tourists as well as making ayo ke toraja as the name of the official social media account of the tana toraja district tourism office.
4. Digital marketing is combined with STP marketing to branding tourism in tana toraja district. STP Marketing consists of Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning. The planning and implementation process consists of concept, idea, price, promotion and distribution. STP model is a process in marketing. The implementation of the STP model in digital marketing has proved effective in attracting foreign tourists to visit the tana toraja regency

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