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# **The Use of Online Social Media in Conducting Relationship Marketing on Tourist Decision to Visit (Case Study Tourism in the West Coast Regency of Lampung)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

To improve people welfare and national development, people can rely on the tourism sector. One of the areas that have a lot of tourism potential is the West Coast Regency of Lampung Province. Geographically, the location is stretching along the coast. The popularity of this tourist attraction can invite local and foreign tourists. This research will look at how the right marketing communication strategy to continue attracting the tourist's interest. One of them is by maintaining Relationship Marketing, especially in social media. This research aims at determining the form of Relationship Marketing, trust, and commitment to tourists, particularly in the use of social media in influencing tourist's decision to visit. The author uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, as well as digging information from the key informants on the West Coast Regency Tourism Office and the West Coast Regency Communication and Information Office. The author collects the data by conducting interviews, library research and documentation. As the analysis result and an in-depth study show that the right Relationship Marketing in developing tourism spot in the West Coast Regency is by developing trust and commitment to tourists. Social media is also needed to use actively to attract Millenials target.

**Keywords:** Relationship Marketing; Social Media; and The West Coast Regency Tourism.

## **1. Introduction**

The West Coast Regency of Lampung is a new administrative region just established for eight years. This regency is an area that has an international scale tourist destination in Lampung Province. The guide book tells that the West Coast Regency of Lampung is familiar with the name "ocean expanse and dense tropical forest." The West Coast Regency of Lampung has about 2,888.88 kilometers square or 8.3% of the total area of Lampung. It administratively consists of 11 districts with 118 villages. The West Coast has become a reference for the international surfing community for over the latest 20 years. The tourist destination is Tanjung Setia Beach that becomes one of the nominations for ten most popular surfing places in Indonesia according to "Anugerah Pesona Indonesia 2016." Geographically, this area stretches around the coastline that makes it a lot of unspoiled tourist locations.

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Decree of the West Coast Regent Number B/311/KPTS/IV.19/HK-PSB/2019 become the basis for tourist attraction in the West Coast Regency along with an attachment explains that there are 39 tourist villages in the West Coast Regency.

The number of tourist sites intersects with a tourist visit that keeps increasing every year. The tourists come from both domestic and international. The data about the number of visitors is available in the table below:

Table 1. West Coast Regency Tourist Data

No	Year	Foreign Tourist	Domestic Tourist
1	2016	15.389	31.589
2	2017	31.377	104.456
3	2018	37.947	128.338

Source: Tourism District Office, West Coast Regency October 2019

Based on the table above, the number of visitors has increased every year because West Coast Regency is one of the favorite tourist locations, especially foreign tourists. The coastal area is a favorite location for surfing where there are 17 surfing spots scattered in the West Coast Regency. Besides, there are also several other types of tourism. Some of the most visited tourist attractions in West Coast Regency include:

- Tanjung Setia (the Surfing Paradise)
- Muara Tembulih Turtle Conservation
- Matu Cave
- Way Keghamian
- Keramat Menula
- Labungan Jukung
- Pisang Island
- Batu Gukhi
- Dolphin Tours in Pulau Pisang

The number of tourism locations and facilities play an essential role in attracting people's interest in the West Coast Regency. One of them through the concept of relationship marketing. One of the massive means to take promotional opportunities is social media. Social media functionates as a marketing platform, social media also facilitate the delivery of information quickly and able to reach a wide area. Digital technology and the internet have penetrated much of contemporary life, changing the way people live, work and travel (Ling li

& Low, 2018). The role of social media in tourism promotion becomes vital. As time changes, as technology grows fast, social media has become a platform to express ideas such as the Blog, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, and others. By using social media, people have the opportunity of introducing and promoting products.

Ron Jones (Akmal, 2018) states that "social is one of the online media categories where people can talk, share information, network, and bookmark online." In term of development, Indonesia has entered the digital era, which has a direct impact on increasing the number of internet users. Indonesian Internet Service Providers or APJII has recorded that in 2017 there were 143.26 million people from the data of 2016, reaching 132.7 million people. Most users in Indonesia utilize the internet to access social media.

According to the background of the problem above, the author would like to learn profoundly about marketing communication concept, primarily Relationship Marketing conducted through social media in influencing tourist's decision to visit tourism site in the West Coast Regency of Lampung. This research will contribute to the development of marketing science, especially regarding marketing communication in the field of Relationship Marketing to develop tourist attraction. While practically, the results of this study will be beneficial for marketing/marketing departments.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1 Relationship Marketing*

Understanding Relationship Marketing (RM) according to Kotler (2006) is a marketing approach that emphasizes on building long-term relationships with consumers to build trust, commitment, and ultimately foster loyalty towards the company (Rahmiati, 2010). There are three main points in the concept of Relationship Marketing consists of to get, to maintain, and to improve the quality of the relationship between consumers and companies. According to Kivetz dan Simonson (2002) maintaining and managing a good relationship with the customers is a strategic goal to strive in maintaining long-term relationships with customers (Mufti, 2018).

States that marketing today has the same characteristics as Relationship Marketing, in term of prioritizing two-way communication between companies and customers. Relationship Marketing in communication studies aims to build a two-way relationship in forming and

maintaining the relationship between companies and customers (Oktaviani, 2015).

Relationship Marketing consists of:

- Trust
- Commitment
- Communication
- Conflict handling

## *2.2 Relationship Marketing Program*

The company can combine the ability to respond and provide a request for customers well. The company also can make a more intense relationship with customers by improving the quality of service following customer demand so that the company can retain its customers for the long-term (Oktavani, 2015). Relationship Marketing program consists of Customer Service, Loyalty Program, and Community Building.

Indicators of these variables will develop into statement items in the questionnaire. The operational definitions of the variables and indicators are as follows:

### *2.2.1 Customer Service or known as Customer Relations*

Customer Service is a customer-oriented activity consisting of tangible elements in the form of factors that can be touched, heard, and felt such as size, weight, color, and others (Fikri, et al, 2016). The non-tangible elements are more challenging to measure and often subjective because it depends on influential attitudes. However, it is hard to get them. For example, comfort, relax, trust, and others. Services are defined as economic activities that produce psychological time, place, shape and usefulness. Indicators of service quality include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and service quality. Therefore Customer Service can influence or convince people supported by some components, including guarantee, service quality, and empathy.

### *2.2.2 Loyalty Programs*

Mufti (2018) explains that to make customer shop more or more often means they have to return to repurchase. It means that retailers must give added value and satisfaction. A good royalty program must consist of three complementary components—first, rewards which can be in the form of vouchers, discounts, or points. Second, value-added benefits such as

exclusive offers, newsletters, and member events. It can also in the form of customer recognition (club database). The last, we have to understand customers through their names and know their needs, wants, and concerns (Wirtz et al., 2007). Customer loyalty is the loyalty customers represented in the purchase of a product or service at all times, and there is an excellent attitude to recommend others to buy the products (Harahap, et al, 2014). From some of the understandings above, to sum up, there are several components including the existence of additional services provided to increase customer satisfaction, provide stuff needed by the customers and be able to foster consistent customer desires to convey to others.

### 2.2.3 Community Building

Community comes from the Latin word "communitas" which means "similarity", then can be derived from "communis" which means "equal, public, shared by all or many" (Octaviani, 2015). Building cooperation with other parties is very influential in the delivery of information. One form of community that has close links with social media is a community according to Webs which is the most potent and stable form of community in which its members have a reasonably close relationship with each other. Community happens through the relationship between members with each other. Communities like this naturally occur quickly on the internet, especially with the existence of social networks such as Facebook, Friendster, Twitter, and others.

## 2.3 *Social Media*

Social media is relatively continuous innovation, and social media marketing is a relatively dynamic industry (Rina, 2017). Social media is an online media, with its users, can easily participate, share and create content including Blogs, social networks, wikis, forums and the virtual world. Blogs, social networks and wikis are the most common forms of social media used by people throughout the world (Cahyono, 2013).

### 2.3.1 The Use of Social Media in Building Relationship Marketing in Developing Tourist Attractions

Like selling a product needs the right marketing strategy, including marketing tourism products. One effort to improve marketing strategies to advance tourism is Relationship Marketing, especially for regions that have a focus on development and potential in the tourism sector. Marketing is essential in involving customers and service providers. The

means that are currently very relevant for reaching out in a wide area are social media. Social media plays a role in describing locations and travel experiences that have been carried out and can recommend to other parties.

### **3. Research Method**

This research uses qualitative method aims to get a comprehensive and in-depth picture based on the natural situation of the case study. The research method used by the author is a qualitative method with a single case study. It highlights the behavior of individuals or group of individuals with significant problems, and the researchers are an instrument of the research. The location determination is decided intentionally (purposive sampling) with consideration of a large number of tourism potentials in several tourists sites in the West Coast Regency and the vast opportunity for the utilization of tourism potential. This research is a descriptive case study that aims to find a picture of how Relationship Marketing in developing tourism objects.

This research will not generalize the events that occur in the ongoing process of Relationship Marketing of the tourist attraction. The author gathers the primary data by conducting direct observation of spaciousness by conducting several interviews and secondary data by collecting form filled by tourists who have visited tourist sites on the West Coast. The global problem has influenced the closure of tourist attractions. The problem is a limitation due to Covid-19 during the research completion process. The completion of the research is using Google form online for tourists who have visited the tourist attraction in the West Coast Regency.

Besides, this research also has been conducted directly through observation in the field before Covid-19 attack. The source of data is primary and secondary data. The data are potential material for the possibility of a tourist visit in the last five years. The collected data includes supporting research data such as the data of tourist visit in the last five years, social media of the tourism potential, the number of tourist sites in the West Coast Regency, facilities and infrastructure at the tourism sites. The secondary data in the form of study literature and tourist location documentation.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical basis used in this study refers to the various considerations that are owned by visitors to decide to visit or not. According to Henilia Yulita (2016, pp. 170), the decision to visit tourist attraction is a decision made by consumers influenced by culture, social class, family and reference groups that will form an attitude towards the individual, after that making a purchase. Before leaving for a trip, the tourists will have a rational process at deciding various things regarding the trip plan. It consists of when to travel, how long, where to, how, and others. The process of this decision making is vital for tourism building. It relates to various facts that influence the decisions. These factors can intervene in the promotion process (tourism marketing).

Several factors are influencing the decision-making process of tourist according to Pitama and Gayatri (2005), those factors include:

- Tourist characteristics, both social, economic characteristics (age, education, income and previous experience), as well as behavioral characteristics (such as motivation, attitudes and values adopted)
- Awareness of the travel benefit, knowledge of the destination to be visited, and destination image.
- The description of the trip includes distance, length of stay in the tourist destination, time and cost constraints, the shadow of the risk of uncertainty, and the level of confidence in the travel agency.
- The excellence of the tourist destination includes the type and nature of attractions offered, the service quality, the physical and social environment, the political situation, and the tourists. It is also crucial as one of the attributes of a tourist destination in its image.

#### **5. Result and Discussion**

The development of tourism objects in the West Coast Regency carries out activities in an effort to build Relationship Marketing efforts which are carried out in two directions from the manager to tourists and the response given by tourists to the manager in three forms, namely:



- Customer Service

It emphasizes on three variables. First, safety guarantee consists of security location, security guarantee, and not many crimes occur in the tourist location. Second, quality service consists of friendly service, cheap travel costs and availability of public services at the tourist location. The public services must have a parking location, canteen, bathing places, maternity places, worship room, and others. Third, the empathy that the tourist got after visiting the place. Those feeling should be a sense of satisfaction, a sense of comfort, and a sense of happiness.

- Loyalty Program

It relates to the satisfaction obtained by tourists. It also arises due to services provided by tour managers. It is in the form of additional services such as low cost, availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure. The infrastructure consists of guest huts, children's playgrounds, and rides such as surfing equipment, swimming, Banana Boat rides, and other facilities provided by the manager for the tourists. It also builds consistency for tourist to travel again. Those feeling are comfortable, fun with the rides provided.

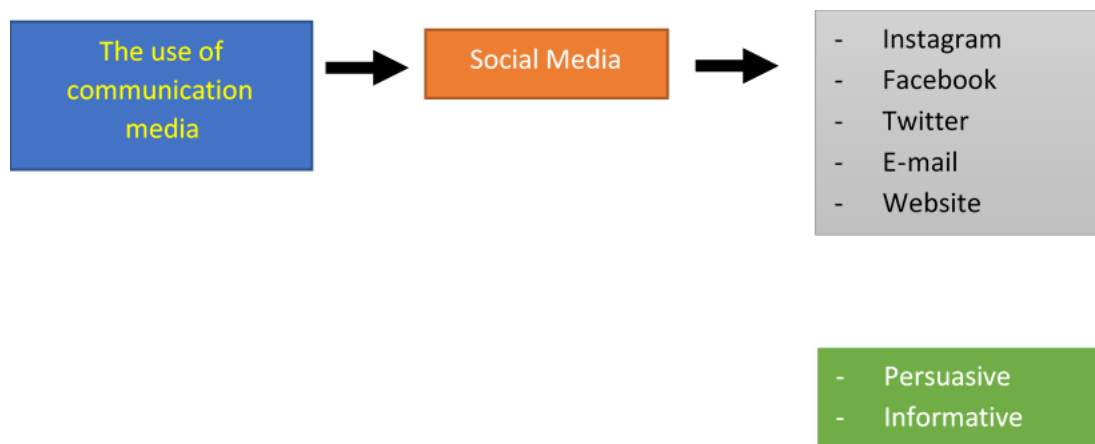
- Community Building

It is an effort to build communication made by the manager to the tourist to make them come back visiting the tourist attraction. They are awoken to involve in conducting socialization. The efforts by managers continue consistently hold a cultural festival with a tourism theme every year. It is familiar with a name the Krui Expo Festival. The government assigned the West Coast Regency Tourism Office to carry activities with several other parties such as the World Surf League (WSL), Asian Competition (ASC), and Persatuan Selancar Ombak.

Relationship Marketing socialization efforts carried out above by managers are the strategic effort that becomes differentiator from other tourism, especially in efforts to develop tourism potential in the West Coast. The effort aims at looking for support and improving market communication for the existence of attractions in the West Coast Regency so that it will continue to increase. The efforts of the government as the manager, especially the Tourism Office of the West Coast Regency have established trust with the tourists by recording the data of the visitors. The data will be useful to foster marketing relationship with tourists, such as offering unique tourist visits.

The use of communication media carried out by managers under the Department of Tourism in conducting relationship marketing, especially in using social media is a strategy that is certainly effective and efficient because of the current disclosure of information in the presence of social media as a conveyor of information. Several social media such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Website and Blog under the management of the West Coast Regency Tourism Office are the communication media for conveying information with a persuasive manner.

Social media is useful as an effort to convey information about activities in tourism development efforts in the West Coast Regency. The social media becomes an effective platform for interaction because the comment page of social media can become assessment in the form of constructive criticism for service efforts to the traveller. As promotional media through online social media, social media that are expressive in nature and collaborative social media such as Instagram (@kruitourism), Facebook (kruitourismdepartement), twitter (@krui\_tourism), Email (pariwisatapesisirbarat@gmail.com) and Website (pesisirbaratkab.go.id).



Social media has become one of the movements carried out by managers in continuing to promote tourism potential in the West Coast Regency, but this has not yet been carried out effectively due to limited human resource capabilities. This condition is usually circumvented by collaborating with private parties as shown on the pages blogs and hotel websites in the west coast district, institutions providing travel and restaurant services around Lampung, especially around the area of West Coast Regency.

The presence of social media helps in conveying information that will give rise to response for its users. Some changes are more effective and efficient in delivering information without being hindered by time, place and cost that is too expensive. Nowadays, in the world of social media, tourism is a step that can create profits in business (Cahyono, 2013). Our study reveals several pathways through which social media, specifically through the capture, exchange and analysis of various data, creates the ability to help to include initial influences in creating fundamental decisions in tourism.

Based on the results of interviews conducted by the majority of foreign tourists who come to get information from social media such as blogs and tour travel websites. Prospective tourist before visiting tourism site they tend to search for the information first. Social media offers and provides travel services by determining the visit period. The high-peak season consists of the long school holiday, during the wave season as the right time for sport surfing, during feast holiday and New Year holiday. The data show that the visitors come from all ages but mostly dominated by young people or Millennials who tend to be more active in using social media, tourist visit activities are usually widely used as a moment to take a tour and refresh.

The use of social media is essential because all visitors are usually done by capturing a vacation moment or travelling then exposing it to their respective social media pages. In some cases, the number of people who use social media to create personal profiling and satisfaction is more prominent than they who use social media for an invitation or referral media to recommend others to visit tourism in the West Coast Regency. Even though information searching conducted online, however, it turns out there are still many of the local tourists who get initial information on recommendations to travel to the West Coast from people to people orally instead of from social media.

## **6. Conclusion**

From the research, to sum up, effort in improving Relationship Marketing in tourism development in the West Coast Regency is by implementing Relationship Marketing in 3 forms (Customer Service, Loyalty Program, and Community Building). The development is supported by building comfort and the image of trust in tourists, using social media in the delivery of information to tourists as a form of service support and exploration of tourism locations in the West Coast Regency.

The use of social media is a movement that is carried out by managers who give socialization to visitors as a form of virtual socialization about the potential of tourism in the West Coast Regency. The broad implementation of efforts has started, starting with posting documentation taken at a tourism location in the social media accounts of each tourist by including the West Coast Regency tourism hashtags. Nevertheless, these efforts are not limited to spreading the not yet or less developed dynamic behaviors of tourists to invite and promote periodically, still not to be an active effort that makes tourists wake up to recommend to other parties such as friends, or family.

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