



SOCIAL MEDIA AND TOURISM IN EAST JAVA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has now become a media that plays a very close role in human life. Important issues are often known for the first time through this media. The issue of tourism in Indonesia is on the rise and at the same time receives support from the government. User generated content as one of the characteristics of social media provides flexibility to the digital native generation in creating content. A qualitative descriptive method is used in this study to find out the content that often receives support from the public about tourist places in East Java that are relatively new. The results of the study describe that tourist places in East Java are often made into content on Instagram social media. One of the accounts often updates content about the tourist spot and receives support from its followers so that it becomes a double benefit between the account owner and increases the tourism potential in a place that has not been widely known in the East Java area by uploading content on social media. UGC is an easy choice for tourism content uploaders, but the richness of thinking is still influenced by the values embraced by account owners as a digital native .

Keywords : (a) User generated content, (b) digital native, (c) tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

East Java is known as a province with abundant natural and cultural wealth. From the volcanoes that offer East Java is known as a province with abundant natural and cultural wealth. From captivating volcanoes, beautiful beaches, to rich cultural heritage, East Java offers travelers a wide selection of tourist destinations. Before the pandemic, tourism was one of the mainstay sectors of the East Java economy. Various popular destinations, such as Surabaya, Malang, Bromo, Banyuwangi, and Madura, have attracted millions of domestic and foreign tourists every year. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the tourism industry in this province faced tough challenges. n, beautiful beaches, to rich cultural heritage, East Java offers many tourist destination options for travelers. Before the pandemic, tourism was one of the mainstay sectors of the East Java economy. Various popular destinations, such as Surabaya, Malang, Bromo, Banyuwangi, and Madura, have attracted millions of domestic and foreign tourists every year. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the tourism industry in the province faced severe challenges.

The East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office said that the number of tourist visits to East Java plummeted drastically in 2020. The number of foreign tourist visits decreased by around 84.15%, from 1.12 million in 2019 to only 178,000 in 2020. Meanwhile, the number of

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domestic tourists also decreased by around 57.09%, from 41.84 million in 2019 to 17.93 million in 2020 (East Java Culture and Tourism Office, 2021).

This drastic decline has a major impact on tourism sector revenue. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) of East Java shows that the Gross Regional Domestic Product (GDP) of the accommodation and food and beverage sector in this province decreased by 11.02% in 2020 (BPS East Java, 2021). Efforts made by the government such as mass vaccination for various tourism destinations. This aims to increase tourist confidence and create a safe environment for tourism activities. As of July 2021, the East Java Provincial Government has vaccinated more than 12 million residents, including tourism business actors (East Java Health Office, 2021).

Development of Health Protocols and Destination Certification Local governments together with tourism associations have developed strict health protocols for tourism destinations, accommodations, and services. In addition, certification of COVID-19 safe destinations is carried out to ensure safety for tourists. The East Java provincial government's incentives and assistance for tourism business actors also provides various incentives and assistance, such as tax and levy relief, as well as capital assistance for tourism business actors affected by the pandemic.

New Tourism Development and Revitalization of Destinations In addition to recovery efforts, the government also continues to develop new tourist destinations and revitalize existing destinations. This aims to increase the tourism attractiveness of East Java. Efforts to increase the attractiveness of tourism according to the data section of the East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office have yielded results. The agency said that data showed an increase in tourist visits in 2021. The number of domestic tourists increased to 27.3 million, while foreign tourists reached 350,000 (East Java Culture and Tourism Office, 2022).

Reopening of Tourism Destinations Various tourism destinations in East Java have been reopened by implementing strict health protocols. Popular destinations, such as Mount Bromo, Alas Purwo National Park, Plengkung Beach, and Ijen Crater, have welcomed tourists back. Hotel occupancy rates in East Java are also starting to show an increasing trend. Based on data from the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHRI) East Java, the hotel occupancy rate in this province in 2021 reached 40-50%, an increase from 20-30% in 2020 (AHRI East Java, 2022)

Along with signs of recovery, investment in the tourism sector in East Java has also begun to increase. Several foreign and local investors have expressed interest in investing in various destination development projects and tourism infrastructure in the province. However, this also shows several challenges, including the uncertainty of the pandemic. The emergence of new variants of COVID-19 and the potential for a new wave of the pandemic is still a threat to tourism recovery. The government and stakeholders must remain vigilant and ready to face these possibilities. Restoring tourist confidence, and rebuilding tourist confidence to travel to East Java is an important challenge. Efforts to promote, certify, and implement health protocols must continue to be carried out consistently. Economic recovery of tourism business actors It is also an important effort to continue to be given attention and solutions in the future.

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The rapid development of technology and changes in consumer behavior due to the covid pandemic, tourism promotion must also adapt to take advantage of various digital platforms. Some trends and examples of tourism promotion in the digital age include the use of social media. Social media has become the main channel for tourist destinations to reach and interact with potential tourists. One of the popular social media platforms used for tourism promotion is Instagram. Instagram is one of the most effective platforms to promote tourist destinations. With attractive visual features, users can easily share beautiful photos or videos from tourist locations. Interesting and unique content will spark the curiosity and interest of potential tourists. The presence of tourism content creators on Instagram has had a significant impact on the tourism industry in Indonesia.

Important facts related to tourism content creators on Instagram in Indonesia such as the growth in number has increased rapidly in recent years. According to the latest data, there are at least 5,000 Instagram accounts that actively share content about tourism in Indonesia. Most of them are individuals or groups who have a passion for adventure and sharing their travel experiences. Diversity of tourism creator content on Instagram Indonesia generates different types of content that includes natural landscapes and beautiful landscapes (beaches, mountains, forests, etc.) Local culture and traditions (festivals, culinary, crafts, etc.) Adventure and outdoor activities (hiking, snorkeling, surfing, etc.) Recommendations for accommodation, restaurants and destinations, travel in less popular destinations. The presence of tourism content creators on Instagram has helped increase the visibility and attractiveness of various tourism destinations in Indonesia. Destinations that were initially less known, such as Labuan Bajo in East Nusa Tenggara or Wakatobi in Southeast Sulawesi, are now becoming more popular among tourists after being massively promoted by tourism content creators.

Tourism content creators on Instagram have encouraged a shift in tourism marketing patterns in Indonesia. Local governments and tourism business actors are now more active in collaborating with content creators to promote their tourism destinations and products. Influencer marketing strategies and engaging content have become the main focus in efforts to attract tourists. The existence of tourism content creators on Instagram has had a significant economic impact on the tourism industry in Indonesia. Some content creators have managed to build strong personal branding and become influencers who can influence travelers' decisions. This opens up opportunities for creators to earn income from various forms of cooperation, such as endorsements, destination promotions, and sales of tourism products. Challenges and regulations While the presence of tourism content creators on Instagram provides many benefits, several challenges and issues must be considered, such as the need to maintain the quality and accuracy of the information shared, the importance of maintaining ethics and responsibility in the content shared, potential conflicts of interest between creators, the government, and tourism business actors, and the need for clear regulations to regulate collaborative practices between creators and related parties.

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The presence of tourism content creators on Instagram Indonesia has had a significant impact on the tourism industry, both in terms of increasing destination visibility, shifting marketing patterns, and economic impact. However, some several challenges and issues need to be considered, so clear collaboration and regulations are needed between creators, the government, and tourism business actors to maximize the existing potential.

Quality and accuracy of information as one of the main challenges faced by Instagram tourism content creators in East Java. To maintain the quality and accuracy of the information they share in their content, sometimes tourism content creators use inaccurate or even misleading information related to destinations, accommodations, or other things related to tourism in East Java. This can impact travelers' perceptions and expectations, and can lead to their disappointment or dissatisfaction with the travel experience. In addition to the accuracy of information, another issue that is a challenge for Instagram tourism content creators in East Java is maintaining ethics and responsibility in the content they share. Some creators sometimes display content that is not in accordance with the cultural values and social norms that apply in East Java. This can cause conflicts with local communities and affect the reputation of tourism destinations. The potential conflict of interest between tourism content creators, the government, and tourism business actors in East Java is also an issue that needs attention. Some tourism content creators have collaborated with certain parties, such as destination managers or accommodation providers, which can affect the objectivity of the content they share. This can cause doubts among tourists about the credibility of the information presented. Related to the issues that have been mentioned, clear regulations are needed to regulate collaborative practices between tourism content creators, the government, and tourism business actors in East Java. Currently, there are no regulations that specifically regulate the activities of tourism content creators in this region. This can create confusion and potential violations that can harm all parties involved. To overcome the challenges and existing issues, close collaboration is needed between tourism content creators, the government (East Java Provincial Tourism Office), tourism business actors, and local communities. This collaboration can include the preparation of guidelines or codes of ethics for tourism content creators, the development of training and certification programs, and the periodic monitoring and evaluation of shared content.

Tourism promotion strategies in today's digital era are very important to do, tourist destinations need to consider the target audience, market trends, and the uniqueness or advantages they have. In addition, the implementation of various digital promotion channels in an integrated and measurable manner will be the key to success in attracting the interest of potential tourists and increasing tourist visits.

Instagram itself has become one of the most widely used social media applications in Indonesia. Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has continued to experience an increase in the number of users in Indonesia from year to year. Based on data from We Are Social and Hootsuite, in 2022 there were 94.2 million active Instagram users in Indonesia, placing Indonesia

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as one of the countries with the largest number of Instagram users in the world (Hootsuite & We Are Social, 2022).

The popularity of Instagram in Indonesia is inseparable from the characteristics of Indonesian people who like to share photos and videos on social media. In a survey conducted by APJII (Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association) in 2022, it was found that 97.7% of Indonesian internet users use social media, with Instagram being one of the most accessed social media platforms (APJII, 2022).

One of the factors that drives the high use of Instagram in Indonesia is the features offered by this application. Unlike other social media that focus more on text, Instagram emphasizes visual content in the form of photos and videos. Users can easily upload, edit, and share engaging visual content, as well as interact with other users through features such as likes, comments, and direct messages. In addition, Instagram also provides various features that support visual content sharing activities, such as filters, stickers, and special effects. These features allow users to produce more creative and engaging content, which can then become a special attraction for other users. The role of influencers and celebrities also contributes to the popularity of Instagram in Indonesia. Many users, especially young people, follow influencer or celebrity accounts that are considered capable of creating interesting and inspiring content. Their presence is not only entertainment, but can also influence people's trends and lifestyles. Instagram has also become an effective marketing channel for businesses and brands in Indonesia. With the ability to reach a wide audience and features that make it easy to interact, Instagram has become a platform that many businesses use to promote their products and services.

The success of the use of Instagram for tourism in East Java is also supported by the development of digital and internet infrastructure in the region. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of East Java Province, in 2024 it will be recorded that as many as 85% of areas in East Java already have stable and adequate internet access, making it easier for the public and tourists to access tourism information and content through Instagram (BPS East Java Province, 2024).

The use of Instagram to support the tourism sector in East Java is increasingly intensive and strategic. Based on data released by the East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office, in 2024 there will be a significant increase in the use of Instagram as a means of promoting and developing tourism in East Java (East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office, 2024).

One of the factors driving this trend is the increasing role of the millennial generation and Gen Z as the main target market for tourism in East Java. A study conducted by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy in 2023 shows that as many as 68% of tourists in East Java come from millennials and Gen Z, who are active users of social media, especially Instagram (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, 2023).

Local governments and tourism industry players in East Java have developed a variety of interesting strategies and content in utilizing Instagram as a social media that promotes tourism in East Java. The East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office, for example, already has an

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official Instagram account that actively shares information, photos, and videos about tourist destinations, culture, and interesting events in East Java (East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office, 2024).

Accounts on Instagram are not only a means of promotion, but also serve as a platform to build engagement with potential tourists. Through Instagram features such as Instagram Stories, IGTV, and Instagram Live, the East Java Provincial Culture and Tourism Office can provide the latest information, travel tips, and invite its followers to get involved in various interesting challenges and contests. One real example is the Instagram account owned by one of the 4-star hotels in Surabaya. Through their Instagram accounts, these hotels not only introduce their facilities and services, but also share information about attractive accommodation packages and hold various contests with prizes for their followers. Tourism industry players in East Java also use Instagram to facilitate online bookings and reservations for tourism products. Several online travel agent (OTA) sites and applications have integrated the direct booking feature through Instagram, so prospective tourists can easily book hotels, plane tickets, or tour packages with just a few clicks on Instagram (East Java Tourism Association, 2024).

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of human life. One of the important aspects that have been significantly affected is the use of digital media in the formation of self-identity and the practice of 'self-technology', as put forward by the philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault, in his thought of 'self-technology', views that human beings are not only shaped by external forces, such as social institutions and power, but also through practices carried out by oneself. According to him, individuals are involved in the process of self-regulation, self-supervision, and self-transformation to achieve certain goals (Foucault, 1988).

In the current digital era, the practice of 'self-technology' is increasingly seen through the use of digital media. Various social media platforms, one of which is Instagram, have become a space for individuals to express, build, and represent themselves. Through uploading photos, videos, and texts on social media, individuals can construct their desired identity, build an ideal self-image, and manage the impression they want to show to others. This practice is in line with what Foucault calls "self-technology", in which individuals engage in a process of self-supervision, discipline, and transformation to form a desired identity (Foucault, 1988).

The use of digital media also allows individuals to engage in more intensive self-monitoring and supervision practices. Features such as the number of likes, comments, and followers on social media are often parameters for individuals to assess and measure their success or popularity. Through this practice, individuals are involved in the process of self-regulation to achieve certain standards or targets that are considered ideal (Foucault, 1988).

The use of digital media also allows individuals to engage in more flexible and dynamic self-transformation practices. Through editing features, filters, and various other digital tools, individuals can manipulate, modify, and reconstruct their representations continuously. This



practice allows individuals to create the 'best version' of themselves following the standards and norms that apply in the digital environment (Foucault, 1988).

The practice of 'self-technology' through digital media does not only occur at the individual level, but also at a broader level, namely groups or communities. Various virtual communities formed on social media, such as hobby communities, activism, or professional communities, can also be seen as a space for individuals to engage in the practice of self-regulation, self-supervision, and self-transformation in accordance with the norms that apply in the community. Members of virtual communities often engage in self-monitoring practices, where they monitor and evaluate each other's behavior to ensure compliance with the standards or values embraced by the community. This practice can be seen as a form of collective 'self-technology' carried out to maintain cohesiveness and community identity (Foucault, 1988).

The implications of the practice of 'self-technology' through digital media are also inseparable from criticism. Some observers highlight the potential negative impacts, such as the emergence of anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders due to the pressure to meet unrealistic standards. In addition, excessive self-transformation practices can also trigger physical health problems, such as eating disorders and digital beauty addiction (Turtle, 2011).

The practice of 'self-technology' through digital media also has positive potential, such as opening up opportunities for individuals to explore, express and find authentic self-identity. In addition, virtual communities formed on digital media can also be a space for individuals to support each other, share experiences, and build meaningful relationships (Turtle, 2011).

Understanding Foucault's theory of 'self-technology' can be the foundation for individuals, communities, and governments to respond to the use of digital media wisely and responsibly. Efforts to build awareness, digital literacy, and balanced policies are important to maximize the positive potential and minimize the negative impact of the practice of 'self-technology' through digital media.

The practice of tourism promotion through Instagram social media in East Java has currently reached a significant number and can show that this media is very effective in supporting the recovery of the sector after experiencing a decline that has a major impact, especially in the economic sector. As explained in the previous paragraph, the use of social media cannot be separated from the media owner himself. Foucault's point of view has explained that it is very important to understand the goals and values possessed by individuals in using social media, especially to promote tourism in East Java. Moreover, the generation that is closely related to social media, namely digital natives, is a generation that has prominent characteristics, such as high technical skills, preferences for visual content, and multitasking habits, in line with Foucault's thinking about 'self-technology' in the context of social media use.

The contribution of digital natives in tourism promotion practices in East Java has reached a high number while being able to increase tourist visits after the pandemic. Their ability to create content using social media and the character of social media itself is user-generated content that provides facilities to create their tourism content even though they are not professionals or



official organizations. User-Generated Content (UGC) is content created and uploaded by internet users, not by media professionals or organizations. This concept emerged as a result of the development of digital technology and social media that allows individuals to actively participate in the process of content production and distribution. The emergence of UGC is inseparable from the evolution of the internet and social media. At the beginning of the development of the internet, the available content was dominated by professional providers such as media organizations, companies, and governments. However, along with the development of Web 2.0 technology, internet users are beginning to be given the ability to interact, collaborate, and actively contribute to creating content (Kaplan, 2010).

This fact cannot be separated from the concept conveyed by Faucault so that the effect of creating tourism content in East Java freely, is not just increasing visits but many things are challenges, one of which is related to moral ethics, and responsibility as a content creator. The accuracy of information so that tourists get the appropriate information is always connected to whether the content creator has enough 'value' to provide positive content as well as education about tourism.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The account studied is Instagram social media that discusses East Java tourism. It consists of three thousand video and photo uploads and has more than three hundred thousand followers. Video and photo observations are carried out for several days including a comment column that can explain the activeness of social media users as well as important values according to the concepts and theories used.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourism content in East Java through Instagram social media, according to statistical data, is quite in increasing the number of tourist visits so that the economic figures of this region also increase. The ability of social media to facilitate users to make uploads according to what they want to make has successfully attracted attention to continue to explore the ability of individuals to create content, especially about tourist destinations. User generated content is a characteristic of social media that is able to realize that someone is not a professional but is able to make their own videos. This fact then became interesting to be researched when a tourist video upload helped increase the number of tourist visits and of course the economic sector of the area around the tour. An account on Instagram about East Java tourism that has uploaded more than three thousand photo and video posts while having more than three hundred thousand followers is an account that is quite interesting to analyze using the 'self-technology' faucault theory.

The account, which lives up to its name, contains more than thousands of photos and videos uploaded about tourism content in East Java. But after observation, thousands of photos contain several advertisements about skincare and beauty. There are more than three pieces of content about tourism outside East Java that also advertise lodging places or hotels. Several other content also advertise children's vacation spots outside East Java.



This social media account, which has more than three hundred thousand followers, when viewed from its photo and video uploads, can attract engagement from its followers. Judging from the activity of the comment column, the account uploads are often followed by fellow social media users who comment. This is an attraction so that advertisers are willing to put advertising content on the East Java tourism account. The hope is that it can certainly increase the income of the account owner himself and also the advertiser. A content upload from ordinary people who are not professionals and not organizations can open up business opportunities through social media content.

Another fact of the East Java tourism account is that initially it did not just attract advertisers easily. As a result of the observations made, among the more than three thousand videos uploaded on Instagram about East Java tourism, there are at least six video uploads that contain tourism content but use a female model who wears tight clothes on several parts of the body, even one video uploads tourism content whose model uses open upper clothing. The activity in the comment column is a discussion about the negative connotation of the clothing user, no longer about the beauty of tourist attractions. Moreover, the content is embedded at the very top so that people who visit the account can easily see it.

Faucault said that technology is a tool that is not neutral. Media that carries value from its own users. This East Java tourism account defines how the power of social media is, especially in its users. Both those who make videos and their followers. A tourism video upload can increase public interest in tourist destinations in East Java but at the same time can provide benefits to the account owner himself and business people.

The effect of the activity of introducing tourism through Instagram also defines how our society is active in commenting, especially if the object of the viewing is a woman who wears clothes that are not 'ordinary' and looks under the norms agreed upon by the community. Comments by Instagram social media users on East Java tourism content containing female models wearing open clothes at the top, were recorded to have received more than four thousand comments not about the tour. But he comments more on the model, his clothes and how the words reflect negative connotations that demean the model. This comment is not only men but also women who give derogatory opinions. Social media is a tool that shows our society assesses something by the norms that apply in society but still carries the values of each individual. The activity of the East Java tourism video upload provides benefits to the account owner as well as for other part, namely business capital owners of hotels and vacation spots or souvenir sellers whose advertisements are made into content concepts on social media. However, the account also provides knowledge about how we as a society have moral ethics and responsibility to create content that is able to display in accordance with the positive goals that we want to achieve by not degrading one part.

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4. CONCLUSION

The study underscores the significant role of social media, particularly Instagram, in promoting tourism in East Java, highlighting the transformative impact of user-generated content (UGC) on tourism marketing and regional economic recovery post-pandemic. Digital natives, leveraging Instagram's visual platform, have contributed to an increase in tourist visits by sharing visually appealing and relatable content, thus elevating East Java's visibility as a travel destination. This research reveals how UGC allows non-professionals to influence tourism trends and attract public attention, showcasing the evolving dynamics of digital tourism promotion.

However, the research also identifies challenges, such as the ethical responsibilities and potential biases in content creation. While Instagram provides a powerful medium for tourism marketing, it reflects the values and intentions of content creators, necessitating responsible practices. This study advocates for a balanced approach that respects local cultural values and maintains information accuracy. Collaboration between content creators, local authorities, and tourism stakeholders is crucial for setting ethical standards that will maximize the positive potential of social media as a tool for sustainable tourism development in East Java.

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