

## **Digital Marketing Model for Sustainable Ecotourism Development in Kerinci Regency**

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### **Abstract**

Study This discuss implementation of digital marketing models in sustainable digital ecotourism development in the Regency Kerinci . Digital transformation in sector tourist demand the existence of a better marketing strategy adaptive , data -driven , and sustainability - oriented environment as well as social research This aim For analyze effectiveness digital marketing in increase visibility and power pull destination tour nature in the Regency Kerinci . The research method used is a mixed method with approach quantitative and qualitative . Quantitative data obtained through survey to tourists and actors tourism , while qualitative data collected through interview deep with stakeholders interest tourist local . Research results show that digital marketing through social media , destination websites , and visual content contributes significant to improvement visit tourism . In addition , integration mark ecotourism in digital marketing strategy to strengthen image destination sustainable research This recommend optimization of digital content strategies based on storytelling and strengthening collaboration between government area , perpetrator tourism and community local .

**Keywords** : digital ecotourism, digital marketing , sustainability , tourism , Regency Kerinci

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of digital technology has significantly transformed the structure of marketing communication in the tourism industry. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain that modern marketing no longer focuses solely on products, but rather on value creation through digital interactions that shape consumer experiences. In the context of tourism, this shift encourages destinations to build their image through digital platforms that can directly influence tourists' decision-making. Digital transformation has also strengthened the role of social media and content-based platforms in shaping perceptions of tourist destinations. Xiang and Gretzel (2010) emphasize that modern tourists rely heavily on digital information derived from user-generated content in their travel decision-making process. This condition makes digital marketing strategies a key element in enhancing the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

The concept of sustainable ecotourism places the balance between environmental conservation, local community empowerment, and economic

sustainability as its core principle. According to Weaver (2001), ecotourism is not only related to nature-based tourism visits, but also includes a management system that ensures ecosystem sustainability and economic benefits for surrounding communities. In recent developments, the integration of digital technology has increasingly been viewed as an important instrument for strengthening more adaptive ecotourism management.

Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City have high ecotourism potential in Jambi Province. Mount Kerinci, Lake Gunung Tujuh, and the national park area are major attractions that are nationally recognized. However, there remains a gap between tourism potential and the optimization of digital promotion. The phenomenon occurring in Sungai Penuh City indicates that most tourism actors still rely on conventional media-based promotion and word-of-mouth communication. The use of digital media, such as official destination websites, structured social media content strategies, and search engine optimization, remains limited and has not been systematically integrated.

This condition has resulted in the low visibility of local tourist destinations within the broader digital space. Several tourist attractions around Sungai Penuh have relatively low levels of digital exposure compared to other destinations that have implemented digital marketing more optimally. As a result, the potential increase in tourist visits has not been maximally achieved, despite the region's strong natural attractions. In addition, limited human resources in managing digital marketing have become one of the main inhibiting factors. Local tourism actors have not fully mastered digital marketing strategies such as search engine optimization, content marketing, and experience-based digital storytelling. This causes destination promotion to be less competitive within the increasingly competitive digital tourism ecosystem.

Based on these conditions, an integrated digital marketing model aligned with the principles of sustainable ecotourism is needed. This model is expected to improve the effectiveness of tourism destination promotion in Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City, while also strengthening the region's position as a sustainable digital-based ecotourism destination. This study is directed at examining the implementation of this model in the context of strengthening the competitiveness of tourist destinations in the era of digital transformation.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, with a dominant qualitative descriptive analysis combined with SWOT analysis techniques (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). This approach is used to examine the implementation of a digital marketing model in the development of sustainable digital ecotourism in Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City. The types of data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through

field observation, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires distributed to tourists, tourism business actors, and stakeholders such as the Tourism Office and tourism destination managers. Secondary data were obtained from official local government documents, scientific journals, tourism statistical reports, and digital data from social media platforms and tourism destination websites.

Data collection techniques were carried out in three ways. First, observation was conducted to identify the actual condition of digital marketing for tourism destinations in the field. Second, semi-structured interviews were used to explore in-depth information related to promotional strategies, obstacles, and opportunities for the development of digital ecotourism. Third, questionnaires were used to measure tourists' perceptions of the effectiveness of digital marketing in influencing their interest in visiting.

Data analysis was conducted using SWOT analysis. The analysis began by identifying internal factors consisting of the strengths and weaknesses of digital marketing for tourism destinations in Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City. The strengths include high natural tourism potential, destination diversity, and the increasing use of social media by tourism actors. Meanwhile, the weaknesses include limited human resources in digital marketing, lack of integration among promotional platforms, and low optimization of digital content.

Furthermore, external factors consisting of opportunities and threats were identified. The opportunities include the development of digital technology, the increasing interest in nature-based and sustainable tourism, and government policy support for tourism digitalization. The threats include competition with other tourism destinations that are more advanced in digital marketing, changes in digital platform algorithms, and the risk of environmental degradation due to uncontrolled increases in tourist visits.

The results of the SWOT analysis were then used to formulate strategies for the development of sustainable digital ecotourism. These strategies focus on optimizing internal strengths to take advantage of external opportunities, as well as reducing weaknesses to avoid existing threats. This approach is expected to produce a more adaptive, structured, and sustainable digital marketing model for tourism development in Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **SWOT Analysis**

#### **A. Strengths**

##### **1. Extraordinary Natural Wealth**

- Mount Kerinci, Lake Kerinci, and Kerinci Seblat National Park are unique and interesting main attractions for tourists.

- The high biodiversity makes this destination attractive to tourists interested in ecotourism.
- 2. The Existence of Tourist Villages
  - Lempur Tourism Village and other villages offer authentic local cultural experiences and natural attractions.
- 3. Local Government Support
  - The Kerinci Regency Government has demonstrated support for the development of the tourism sector through policies that support environmental conservation and tourism promotion.
- 4. Increasing Availability of Digital Infrastructure
  - Improved internet connectivity in several areas of Kerinci Regency facilitates digital marketing and interaction with tourists.

#### B. Weaknesses

1. Lack of Human Resources (HR) Skilled in Digital Marketing: Local communities and tourism industry players still have minimal knowledge about effective digital marketing.
2. Limited Facilities: Some tourist locations still lack supporting facilities such as adequate accommodation and transportation, especially in remote areas.
3. Lack of Integrated Promotion: Promotion of tourist destinations in Kerinci Regency is still fragmented and not optimal on various digital platforms.
4. Limited Accessibility: Despite improvements, some tourist areas are still difficult to reach by tourists from outside the region due to limited transportation infrastructure.

#### C. Opportunities

1. Growth of the Digital Tourism Industry: With the increasing popularity of digital technology and social media, Kerinci Regency can utilize digital platforms to introduce natural and cultural tourism to a wider audience.
2. Growing Interest in Ecotourism: The trend of sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism is increasingly popular among tourists, especially the younger generation who have a high awareness of environmental conservation.
3. Improving Cooperation with Third Parties: Collaboration with technology companies, online travel agents, and influencers can increase the digital marketing reach of Kerinci tourist destinations.
4. Funding Opportunities for Tourism Development: There are various funding programs available from the government and international institutions that support sustainable tourism development.

#### D. Threats

1. Competition from Other Tourist Destinations: The large number of tourist destinations offering similar natural beauty and experiences means Kerinci needs to work hard to differentiate itself and increase its appeal.

2. Climate Change and Environmental Damage: Climate change can affect natural conditions and the tourist environment, as well as environmental damage problems that can reduce tourist appeal.
3. Reliance on Technology: Reliance on digital marketing can be problematic if there are technical glitches or limited internet access in some areas.
4. Pandemic and Global Health Crisis: The uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the level of tourist visits and the development of the tourism sector.

#### 5. Strategy Based on SWOT Analysis

##### SO Strategy (Leveraging Strengths to Seize Opportunities)

- Using its natural wealth and biodiversity to introduce Kerinci tourism destinations to the global ecotourism market through digital platforms and social media.
- Developing collaboration with tourism institutions and online travel agents to increase the visibility and accessibility of Kerinci destinations.

##### WO Strategy (Overcoming Weaknesses by Utilizing Opportunities)

- Conducting digital marketing training for local communities and businesses so they can be more effective in promoting tourist destinations.
- Improving basic facilities such as accommodation and transportation through CSR programs and collaboration with private investors.

##### ST Strategy (Using Strengths to Face Threats)

- Develop a sustainable environmental management plan to preserve nature and reduce the negative impacts of tourism.
- Developing diversified tourism products that do not only rely on main destinations, but also cultural-based tourism experiences and outdoor activities.

##### WT Strategy (Overcoming Weaknesses and Avoiding Threats)

- Reduce reliance on one type of digital marketing by using multiple platforms and communication channels to reach a wider audience.
- Increasing tourist appeal by improving infrastructure and customer service to make destinations more attractive despite stiff competition.

Each quadrant can be mapped as follows:

1. Quadrant I - (SO Strategy): Utilizing strengths to take opportunities
2. Quadrant II - (WO Strategy): Overcoming weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities
3. Quadrant III - (ST Strategy): Utilizing strengths to overcome threats
4. Quadrant IV - (WT Strategy): Overcoming weaknesses to avoid threats

The next step is to weight each SWOT factor based on their importance and map strategies into SWOT quadrants according to the combination of those factors.

#### 1. Assess the Weight of SWOT Factors

To analyze the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, we will give weight and value to each factor with a range of 1 to 5. This weight will describe how significant the factor is to the development of digital ecotourism in Kerinci Regency.

- Internal Factors (Strengths and Weaknesses): Weights are assigned based on how much impact the factor has on the development of digital ecotourism.
- External Factors (Opportunities and Threats): Weights are assigned based on the likelihood of these factors to influence digital marketing strategies.

## 2. SWOT Quadrant Strategy Assessment and Selection

Here is a step-by-step process for calculating and mapping SWOT strategies into quadrants.

### SWOT Quadrant Calculation for Kerinci Regency

#### Internal Factors: Strengths and Weaknesses

Factor	Weight (1-5)	Value (1-5)	Total
Strengths			
Natural Resources (Mount Kerinci, National Park)	5	5	25
Lempur Tourism Village	4	4	16
Local Government Support	4	4	16
Availability of Digital Infrastructure	3	3	9
Weaknesses			
Digital Marketing HR Shortage	4	4	16
Limited Tourist Facilities	5	3	15
Lack of Integrated Promotion	4	4	16
Limited Accessibility	5	3	15
Total Internal Factors			108

#### External Factors: Opportunities and Threats

Factor	Weight (1-5)	Value (1-5)	Total
Opportunities			
The Growth of the Digital Tourism Industry	5	5	25
Growing Interest in Ecotourism	5	5	25
Increased Collaboration with Third Parties	4	4	16
Funding Opportunities for Tourism Development	4	4	16
Threats			
Competition from Other Destinations	4	4	16
Climate Change and Environmental Damage	4	4	16
Dependence on Technology	4	3	12

Factor	Weight (1-5)	Value (1-5)	Total
Pandemic and Global Health Crisis	4	3	12
Total External Factors			122

Determining the SWOT Quadrant

Step 1: Determine Strengths and Opportunities

- Total Internal Factors (Strengths and Weaknesses) = 108
- Total External Factors (Opportunities and Threats) = 122

Step 2: Weighting and Scoring SWOT Quadrants

We will map each factor into four quadrants by comparing internal strengths and weaknesses with the calculated external opportunities and threats.

Quadrant	Strategy	Strength (S) vs Opportunity (O)	Strength (S) vs Threat (T)	Weaknesses (W) vs Opportunities (O)	Weaknesses (W) vs Threats (T)
I	SO Strategy (Maximizing Strengths to Exploit Opportunities)	Using strengths (such as natural resources and government support) to capitalize on the growth opportunities of the digital tourism industry and the growing interest in ecotourism.	Using existing strengths to address the threats of competition and climate change		
II	WO Strategy (Mitigating Weaknesses by Exploiting Opportunities)	Improve HR training to take advantage of funding opportunities and collaboration with third parties in digital marketing.	Addressing weaknesses through opportunities in the digital tourism industry and funding opportunities	Develop HR training in digital marketing and tourism facilities	Reducing dependence on physical facilities by leveraging digitalization
III	ST Strategy (Using Strengths to Counteract Threats)	Harnessing the power of nature and tourism villages to address threats from other destinations and the	Leveraging natural resources and government support to address the		

Quadrant	Strategy	Strength (S) vs Opportunity (O)	Strength (S) vs Threat (T)	Weaknesses (W) vs Opportunities (O)	Weaknesses (W) vs Threats (T)
		impacts of climate change	threats of competition and climate change		
IV	WT Strategy (Minimizing Weaknesses to Avoid Threats)	Addressing weaknesses such as lack of infrastructure and accessibility to avoid threats from competition and the pandemic	Reducing dependence on digital technology that can pose a threat from global crises	Reducing reliance on technology to combat the threat of a pandemic	Improving infrastructure to address the threat of a pandemic

**DISCUSSION**

The analysis shows that the primary strength of digital ecotourism development in the research area lies in its abundant natural resource potential. Mount Kerinci, Lake Kerinci, and the Kerinci Seblat National Park are key assets, attracting strong appeal to both domestic and international tourists. These strengths provide a strong foundation for developing visual and storytelling-based digital content that can increase tourist engagement on digital platforms.

Furthermore, the existence of tourist villages like Lempur Village reinforces the experiential dimension of tourism, a key characteristic of modern ecotourism. Local culture-based tourism interactions add value to digital marketing strategies by creating authentic experiences that can be represented through social media content. Local government support is also a driving factor in tourism development, particularly in terms of regulation and destination promotion. Improved digital infrastructure in several regions has also increased the accessibility of online tourism information.

However, the research also revealed significant structural weaknesses. Limited human resources in digital marketing are a major obstacle to optimizing destination promotion. Tourism operators still lack a thorough grasp of digital marketing strategies such as search engine optimization, content planning, and digital audience analysis. This situation results in poor quality and consistency of the promotional content produced.

Another weakness lies in the lack of integration of digital promotion systems across tourist destinations. Each tourist attraction tends to conduct its own promotions without coordination within a single digital tourism ecosystem. This leads to fragmented information and low destination visibility in the broader digital space. Limited supporting facilities and limited accessibility to some tourist locations also exacerbate the challenges facing the sector's development.

Externally, opportunities for digital ecotourism development in Kerinci

Regency and Sungai Penuh City show enormous potential. The growth of the digital tourism industry provides ample opportunity for local destinations to increase exposure through social media, travel platforms, and official websites. Trends in nature-based and sustainable tourism have also seen significant growth, particularly among younger travelers with greater environmental awareness. Furthermore, collaboration opportunities with third parties such as influencers, online travel agents, and digital platforms are strategic factors that can increase marketing reach. Funding support from the government and external institutions also strengthens opportunities for infrastructure development and digital-based tourism destination promotion.

On the threat side, competition between tourist destinations is the most dominant factor. Other destinations that have already developed digital marketing strategies have advantages in visibility and branding. Furthermore, changes in digital platform algorithms, such as social media, can significantly impact the reach of promotional content. Another threat that requires attention is the risk of environmental damage due to increasing tourist numbers that are not balanced by sustainable management.

Based on the SWOT mapping results, the digital ecotourism development strategy in the research area is positioned in the quadrant indicating growth conditions with the need to strengthen internal capacity. This means that the strengths and opportunities are quite significant, but internal weaknesses still need to be strengthened to face external competition. **The SO strategy** indicates that the main strengths of natural resources and government support can be maximized through digital media optimization. The use of visual content, promotional videos, and storytelling based on tourism experiences can increase the attractiveness of the destination. This strategy is also in line with the findings in the research document that strengthening digital marketing through social media and destination websites contributes to increasing tourist visits. **The WO strategy** indicates that the main weakness of limited human resources can be overcome by utilizing digital marketing training opportunities and collaborating with external parties. Strengthening the capacity of tourism actors is a key factor in improving the quality of digital promotion. This approach is also relevant to the need to develop a structured and sustainable digital marketing model. **The ST strategy** shows that destination strengths can be used to face competitive threats. Developing destination differentiation through ecotourism branding based on environmental conservation is crucial for maintaining competitiveness. Meanwhile, **the WT strategy** emphasizes the need to strengthen infrastructure and diversify promotional channels to reduce dependence on a single digital platform.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the development of digital ecotourism in Kerinci Regency and Sungai Penuh City has very strong potential, particularly supported by the richness of natural resources, the existence of tourism villages, and local government support. This potential serves as an important foundation for

developing more targeted and sustainable digital marketing strategies.

The results of the SWOT analysis indicate that the main strengths lie in the high attractiveness of natural tourism and the increasing accessibility of digital infrastructure. Meanwhile, the main weaknesses are found in the limited human resources capacity in digital marketing and the lack of integration in promotional systems across destinations. This condition reflects a gap between tourism potential and the capacity for digital marketing management at the local level.

From an external perspective, the opportunities for developing digital ecotourism are highly promising, in line with the growing trend of nature-based and sustainable tourism, as well as the expansion of the global digital marketing ecosystem. However, threats such as competition among destinations, changes in digital technology, and environmental risks need to be anticipated through appropriate strategies.

Based on these findings, the most relevant development strategy is to optimize internal strengths in order to take advantage of external opportunities through the strengthening of social media-based digital marketing, creative content, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening human resource capacity is also a key factor in improving the effectiveness of digital marketing implementation in the tourism sector.

This study confirms that sustainable digital ecotourism does not depend solely on natural potential, but also on the ability to integrate digital technology into marketing strategies that are systematic, structured, and oriented toward environmental sustainability and the economic welfare of local communities.

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