

Strategy of the Tourism, Youth and Sports Office of Padang Pariaman Regency in Optimizing Tourism Promotion

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Abstract

Competition in the global tourism industry requires regions to create innovative and competitive promotional strategies. Padang Pariaman Regency, through the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports, utilizes the presence of tourism ambassadors as promotional agents to introduce the potential of local destinations. The purpose of this activity was to analyze the promotional strategies implemented through the role of tourism ambassadors and evaluate their effectiveness and contribution to increasing tourist visits. The method used was a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using a SWOT approach to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in strategy implementation. The results showed that tourism ambassadors have played an active role in promotions, both directly and through digital media, but their role is still limited to symbolic aspects and is less than optimal in creating informative promotional content. The conclusion of this activity indicates that the promotional strategy through tourism ambassadors has great potential for development by increasing communication capacity, content creativity, and stronger collaboration between the department and ambassadors. The impact of this activity is expected to improve the image of regional tourism, expand the reach of tourist destination information, and strengthen the role of the younger generation in sustainable tourism development.

Keywords

Promotion Strategy, Regional Tourism, Tourism Ambassador, Tourism Communication.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of increasingly competitive global tourism trends requires regions to innovate in promotional efforts, including leveraging the role of Tourism Ambassadors (Rival et al., 2022; Saputra et al., 2022). The Tourism Ambassador Program is expected to bridge the gap between the government and the public and tourists, creating awareness and interest in the destinations offered. However, this challenge is not without challenges such as limited human resources, inadequate promotional understanding, and difficulties in utilizing digital technology to disseminate information (Kanom et al., 2020).

Tourism human resources are defined as the full potential of an individual, both physical and mental, that can be utilized to meet the needs of an organization, including abilities, knowledge, skills, motivation, and work attitudes. Furthermore, tourism human resources can play a role in effectively promoting Indonesian tourism. Tourism human resources can serve as tourism ambassadors, able to explain existing tourist attractions, Indonesia's diverse culture, and various customs and traditions to tourists. Tourism human resources are expected to possess in-depth knowledge of tourism destinations and attractions to be able to assist. Support, market and expand the reach of Indonesian tourism to the international market.

Tourism ambassadors contribute significantly to promoting the tourism sector, particularly through their role as promoters who introduce Padang Pariaman Regency's tourist destinations to the public. Their personal image is highly influential, including aspects of intelligence, attractive appearance, positive attitude, and courage in shaping public opinion. The selection process uses the 4B1T criteria: Brain, Beauty, Brave, and Talent (Yakub and Herman, 2011). As symbols of tourism and culture, tourism ambassadors consist of a pair of young people selected through a competitive selection process similar to a beauty pageant (Satriawan, 2013). They are representative figures who serve as regional icons and support the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports in promoting tourist destinations. The involvement of young people, especially local youth, is essential to driving the progress of the tourism sector. Tourism ambassadors are expected to serve as tourism icons, promoters, and educators about the tourism potential of Padang Pariaman Regency.

The first role of tourism ambassadors is as icons, where they are expected to be a positive reflection of local youth who understand the world of tourism and are willing to actively participate when needed, such as when receiving tourists or official guests visiting their area. The selected tourism ambassadors will represent the image of regional tourism and provide information to tourists about tourist attractions in

Padang Pariaman Regency. Second, tourism ambassadors act as promoters who help encourage and inspire the community to participate in developing tourism. To fulfill this role, they must understand market segmentation so that their promotions are well-targeted. Third, as educators, tourism ambassadors have an obligation to convey the tourism knowledge and insights they have learned to the community as part of public education efforts.

Padang Pariaman boasts diverse tourism potential, including natural, cultural, and historical attractions, which are currently under development. Unfortunately, this potential has not been fully utilized. To increase tourism promotion, the local government has implemented various initiatives through print and electronic media. One strategic step is the selection of tourism ambassadors, who are expected to play a key role in introducing Padang Pariaman tourism to the wider community. The selection of tourism and creative economy ambassadors, titled "Cik Uniang Cik Ajo," is an annual event held in Padang Pariaman Regency. The primary objective of this activity is to select promising young men and women who will serve as government partners in promoting tourism and the creative economy. Their role is expected to increase the number of tourists visiting the region. This event also provides a platform for the younger generation to participate in introducing Padang Pariaman's tourism potential to the general public.



Figure 1. Cik Uniang Cik Ajo Padang Pariaman Regency Year 2024

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/cikuniangcikajo>

The strength of a tourism ambassador lies in their ability to execute communication strategies, particularly when acting as a mediator in tourism promotions or outreach activities. Paul and colleagues define communication as a process in which a message is conveyed from a communicator to a communicatee through a medium, with the goal of influencing and eliciting a response from the recipient. Previous research has shown that, despite the abundance of research on tourism promotion strategies, there is often a lack of a systematic approach to how Tourism Ambassadors specifically play their role in local contexts. For example,

research in Bukittinggi demonstrated strategy development using interviews and observations, but lacked a holistic and sustainable discussion of strategy implementation (Rival, 2022). Furthermore, a study of Tourism Ambassadors in Kendari City demonstrated positive results, but lacked clear measurements of the long-term impact of the promotions carried out by Tourism Ambassadors (Saputra, 2022).

Tourism ambassadors serve as a means of promoting tourism in a region. Typically, they are assigned to each region according to expectations regarding the role and character of a tourism ambassador. Through various activities, tourism ambassadors can promote tourism potential and raise public awareness of their region's riches. Therefore, the presence of tourism ambassadors is crucial because they function as promoters, considered effective in supporting tourism promotion. They are selected young people from the region who care about the advancement of the tourism sector. Tourism ambassadors are also expected to serve as role models and encourage the community to take an active role.

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JUMLAH WISATAWAN MANCANEGERA PER KEBANGSAAN


TAHUN 2024

No	Bulan	Jumlah Kunjungan Wisatawan Mancanegara	Tujuan Wisatawan																	Jumlah
			Tujuan Wisatawan			Kebangsaan														
			Bisnis	Berlibur	Pribadi	Malaysia	Inggris	Polandia	Brunei	Brasil	Hongkong	Singapore	Australia	Jerman	Tiongkok	Yaman	India	Amerika		
1	Januari	46				20			2			18	6					46		
2	Februari	21				20	2									4		27		
3	Maret	0																0		
4	April	21				21												27		
5	Mei	10								6				4				10		
6	Juni	16						2				6	2					16		
7	Juli	30							2			27				6		30		
8	Agustus	19				7			16						2			19		
9	September	14									10	4						14		
10	Oktober	13									10							13		
11	November	18					2				17							19		
12	Desember	62				13					6					4		62		
Jumlah		260				106	4	2	17	2	6	60	21	2	4	2	6	260		

Figure 2. tourist visit data per nationality per year 2024

Source: <http://disparpora.padangpariamankab.go.id/>

Based on 2024 visitor data, it appears that tourists from Malaysia and Singapore reside, but overall, the number of visits remains relatively low compared to the destination's potential. According to data from the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Office, 260 foreign tourists visited throughout 2024. The highest number of visits occurred in January (46 people) and July (30 people), while March recorded no visits at all. Most tourists came for personal and leisure purposes, primarily from Malaysia (106 people), followed by Singapore (26 people) and the United States (20 people). Tourists also came from various other countries such as Australia, Germany, India, and Hong Kong, but in smaller numbers. This indicates that foreign tourist visits to Padang Pariaman remain fluctuating and dominated by Southeast Asian countries.



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JUMLAH WISATAWAN NUSANTARA
TAHUN 2023

No	Bulan	Jumlah Kunjungan Wisatawan Nusantara	Tujuan Wisatawan			Jumlah
			Tahun N-1			
			Bisnis	Berlibur	Pribadi	
1.	Januari	33,090		33,090		33,090
2.	Februari	28,641		28,641		28,641
3.	Maret	28,960		28,960		28,960
4.	April	34,152		34,152		34,152
5.	Mei	23,063		23,063		23,063
6.	Juni	23,937		23,937		23,937
7.	Juli	18,745		18,745		18,745
8.	Agustus	8,044		8,044		8,044
9.	September	9,281		9,281		9,281
10.	Oktober	276,355		276,355		276,355
11.	November	270,379		270,379		270,379
12.	Desember	19,048		19,048		19,048
Jumlah		773,695		773,695		773,695

Figure 3. data on domestic tourist visits in 2024

Source: <http://disparpora.padangpariamankab.go.id/>

According to data from the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Office, the number of domestic tourist visits reached 504,807 in 2024. The highest number of visits occurred in August, with 333,540 tourists, while the lowest was June, with 6,423 tourists. Overall, tourist arrivals fluctuate throughout the year, with significant spikes during the holiday season.

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2. METHODS

The method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. The data analysis technique applied is a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), which is used to support promotional transformation and analyze obstacles and potential in designing further promotional strategies. This research was conducted from April to June 2025, located at the Department of Tourism, Youth and Sports of Padang Pariaman Regency as the center of research and community service activities. The determination of informants used a purposive sampling technique, namely based on the selection of informants relevant to the research topic. The informants involved included Cik Uniang and Cik Ajo (tourism ambassadors), ICUA Advisors, Head of Promotion and Creative Economy Division, and Coordinator of the Creative Team of the Tourism Office. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, using primary and secondary data. The validity of the data was confirmed through source triangulation techniques to ensure the credibility of the information obtained.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *The Department of Tourism, Youth and Sports of Padang Pariaman Regency is designing tourism promotions by involving tourism ambassadors as the main media.*

The role of tourism ambassadors as icons is crucial because they are expected to be positive representatives of the region's youth. They must understand tourism and be ready to carry out their duties at any time, both to welcome and accompany tourists and official guests. Individuals selected as tourism ambassadors will represent a communicative and informative image of tourism in promoting tourist destinations in

Padang Pariaman Regency. The Head of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office stated that tourism ambassadors are crucial because they are young people who are not only enthusiastic about tourism but also actively involved in tourism activities. Tourism ambassadors have even become an extension of the office in promotion and are considered an integral part of the institution.

According to Sigala (2020) and Prayag (2021), in the post-pandemic era, effective tourism promotion demands a strategic communication approach that involves local actors as authentic and trusted messengers. In this context, tourism ambassadors act as boundary spanners, connecting the government (formal institutions) and audiences (local communities and tourists) through local narratives, digital visuals, and direct interactions. Tourism ambassadors not only represent institutions but also serve as the face of the destination brand (Sigala, 2020).

The Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors are primarily responsible for advancing the tourism sector, culture, and other aspects of the region's rich heritage. Because of this role, many people, both within and outside the region, seek information about the tourism potential of Padang Pariaman Regency. The Head of the Tourism Office explained that the Tourism Ambassadors also serve as information centers for the public seeking more information about tourist destinations, culture, culinary delights, and Padang Pariaman's unique products. The Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office frequently supports various activities they organize, both in the form of physical assistance and in other forms. They also maintain close coordination with tourism ambassadors, both to share tourism knowledge and to exchange ideas for organizing events. This collaboration represents a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship.

To achieve their goals, tourism ambassadors must master good communication skills. This is crucial for effectively conveying information to the public, both within and outside Padang Pariaman Regency, thereby fostering a love for the region's rich tourism and cultural heritage. The Head of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office emphasized that communication skills are key to building public awareness and encouraging them to preserve and cherish Padang Pariaman's culture and tourism.

3.2. Strategy of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth and Sports Office in increasing tourism promotion through tourism ambassadors as regional promotion agents.

The primary task of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassador is to promote tourist destinations and their potential. Carrying out this task requires the

implementation of appropriate strategies and the use of marketing communication tools. Researchers describe the role of tourism ambassadors in promoting tourism in Padang Pariaman Regency using the promotional mix theory approach. This theory encompasses a combination of elements such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations, which are effective marketing communication tools in supporting promotional activities, including in the tourism sector. The research findings are presented below.

Tourism ambassadors play a crucial role as active agents in supporting the development of the tourism sector. As promoters, tourism ambassadors are expected to inspire and engage all levels of society to collaborate in developing regional tourism. As promoters, tourism ambassadors also need to understand market segmentation in order to implement effective promotional strategies at the district level. The Head of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office emphasized that the purpose of establishing tourism ambassadors is to introduce and promote the tourism potential of Padang Pariaman Regency. Based on promotional strategy theory, promotional activities are part of the interaction or communication carried out by companies with consumers, which includes providing information, invitations, and efforts to influence consumers towards a product. In analyzing the promotional strategies implemented by the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office, researchers used the promotional mix theory as the primary analytical tool. This theory, proposed by Kotler and Keller (2020), encompasses marketing communication elements such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing. Through this approach, it can be identified that the role of Tourism Ambassadors as regional promotional agents has been implemented through three main components:

Advertising; Advertising is a type of non-personal promotion conducted through mass media to attract consumer interest. In the context of tourism promotion in Padang Pariaman Regency, tourism ambassadors utilize various media as a means of communication with the wider community. Instagram is their primary platform, accompanied by active involvement in tourism-related events. Promotion is carried out both through personal social media accounts and the official accounts of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors on various digital platforms as a form of mass communication.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors implement marketing communications in the form of advertisements aimed at a wide audience, but limited to social media. Unfortunately,

these tourism promotion efforts have not shown optimal results. Several underlying reasons include: first, the role of tourism ambassadors in promotional content on social media is limited to appearing as talent; second, promotional posts do not provide comprehensive information, but rather consist of still images with background music; third, the variety of content produced is very limited; and fourth, most promotional materials are reposted from other accounts. These factors have caused the effectiveness of tourism promotions by the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors to not reach their maximum level. This form of impersonal communication is commonly used in product and service promotions to increase consumer insight into what is being offered.

Sales Promotion; The success of targeted promotions to an audience is greatly influenced by the content of the promotional message delivered. In the context of marketing communications, sales promotions serve the purpose of attracting potential consumers, introducing new products, encouraging increased consumption, and strengthening relationships with consumers. However, the impact of this type of promotion tends to be short-term. The role of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors in supporting tourism promotion is still limited, as evidenced by their involvement in activities such as the tourism ambassador selection process, welcoming important guests, and acting as guides at the annual exhibition. The most effective promotion is seen when they directly convey information about tourism potential to visitors to the Tourism Office's booth.

The role of the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassadors has not yet achieved established expectations, as evidenced by promotional activities that have not fully met the Tourism and Youth and Sports Agency's targets. This is due to the ambassadors' lack of initiative in promoting tourism. In every tourism activity or event, their presence tends to be merely symbolic or ceremonial, and they are not focused on substantial marketing communications activities.

Public Relations; Public relations (PR) is an effort to build positive relationships with various parties through various methods, with the aim of obtaining favorable publicity, establishing a positive image institution, and addressing negative issues, rumors, or narratives that could harm the tourism image of Padang Pariaman Regency. This form of promotion is non-personal and is carried out by conveying information or news regarding certain services or business activities. Based on the results of previous interviews, the Padang Pariaman Regency Tourism Ambassador carries out its public relations function by establishing partnerships with relevant agencies and parties to support tourism promotion. However, the implementation of

this collaboration has not been supported by an optimal communication process between the Tourism Ambassador and related parties.

Researchers continued the data collection phase through participant observation after interviews with informants, in this case the Tourism Ambassadors of Padang Pariaman Regency. Observations showed that the tourism ambassadors understand their important role as promoters in supporting regional tourism. However, promotional activities are still carried out individually and have not been facilitated collectively by the Tourism Ambassadors organization. Their promotional activities include creating vlogs, serving as tour guides, and collaborating with external parties such as by.U and Traveloka. In practice, individual tourism ambassadors utilize social media to disseminate content about tourism, including lesser-known destinations. They also provide additional information on local cuisine, public facilities, estimated travel costs, and suggested routes from one location to another.

3.3. Results and evaluation of the implementation of tourism promotion by the Department of Tourism, Youth and Sports through the role of Tourism Ambassadors in the Padang Pariaman Regency area.

The Padang Pariaman Tourism Ambassadors' activities, which contribute to increasing regional income, are evident in their involvement in various government activities and other events, which indirectly attract tourists to tourist destinations in Padang Pariaman Regency. From a socio-cultural perspective, the ambassadors also demonstrate active participation in various communities, enabling them to build social relationships with the community. Furthermore, they are also involved in direct social actions, such as participating in the Waste Awareness Day event held at Bukit Surowiti. Another equally important aspect is the use of technology. Along with the rapid development of technology, Padang Pariaman Tourism Ambassadors actively promote regional tourism through various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, with Instagram being the primary platform due to its current high level of popularity.

The knowledge gained in the strategy development process is referred to as a cognitive plan in planning theory. This cognitive plan serves as a guideline for developing and disseminating messages to achieve predetermined goals. In general, a cognitive representation is a mental representation of a series of actions to be taken. On the other hand, Padang Pariaman Tourism Ambassadors have a strong motivation to achieve their primary goal. This motivation is realized through promotional activities aimed at conveying information, using language calculated to be easily understood by all groups. In practice, the promotional strategy implemented is in

accordance with the principles and standards of planning theory. Planning strategies themselves are future-oriented, so their development requires consideration of social, economic, and technological factors that influence the direction of the organization.

To achieve their goals, tourism ambassadors participate in various social events and agendas, both organized with the assistance of the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports and independently through social media. All of these activities aim to expand the reach of Padang Pariaman Regency. However, the role of tourism ambassadors carries significant responsibility, as there are many factors to consider when interacting with the public. Tourism ambassadors' activities are certainly highly intensive, and throughout the implementation process, various forms of support and obstacles are addressed. This support reflects the public's recognition of the Padang Pariaman Regency tourism ambassadors and their ability to communicate clearly and understand the potential of regional information. However, obstacles are unavoidable. One frequently encountered obstacle stems from within the tourism ambassadors themselves. They stated that a lack of human resources leads to ineffective outreach or social activities. However, these obstacles do not diminish the tourism ambassadors' confidence in engaging with audiences, as they are equipped with effective mediation skills and adequate public speaking skills. Based on the analysis, the researchers found that Padang Pariaman tourism ambassadors have demonstrated high dedication in carrying out their roles. Despite facing challenges, they remain consistent and believe that with good communication skills, they will be able to attract tourists to come to Padang Pariaman Regency.

4. CONCLUSION

Referring to the research results entitled "Strategy of the Department of Tourism, Youth and Sports in Promoting Tourism through Tourism Ambassadors of Padang Pariaman Regency", it can be concluded that the promotion designed by the relevant Department through Tourism Ambassadors aims to expand the reach of information regarding regional tourism potential. This effort is expected to be able to make a positive contribution to the economic development of the community and region. 2. Promotion efforts are carried out by utilizing social media, where Tourism Ambassadors actively share content about tourist destinations that are not widely known to the public, as a form of contribution to introducing local tourism. 3. Based on the evaluation results, the Department of Tourism, Youth and Sports assessed that the Tourism Ambassadors had made maximum efforts in doing the same. Although there are still several obstacles that cause activities to be less than optimal, the tourism ambassadors continue to demonstrate a commitment to making improvements in the

future. Management of tourism promotion through Tourism Ambassadors has not been integrated with the overall regional promotion management system. Lack of coordination between stakeholders, as well as the absence of a regional branding system such as a strong slogan or logo, are major weaknesses. Therefore, further service needs to be directed at strengthening promotional institutions by forming a cross-sector creative team involving Tourism Ambassadors, related agencies, MSMEs, and local media to build a cohesive and easily recognizable tourism identity.

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