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Strategic Tourism Marketing for Natural Attractions: The Case of Goa Rang Reng Waterfall in Bali, Indonesia

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Abstract

The tourism sector at Goa Rang Reng Waterfall in Gianyar, Bali, faces challenges such as stagnant visitor numbers due to limited promotion, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of skilled human resources in marketing management. This study aims to develop effective marketing strategies to increase tourist visits while supporting sustainable tourism development. Employing qualitative field research, data were collected through direct interviews with site managers, local community leaders, and tourists, complemented by observational analysis. The findings reveal that enhancing physical facilities, optimizing digital marketing efforts especially via social media and fostering community involvement are critical factors to attract more visitors. Additionally, the site's unique natural beauty and cultural significance provide a strong foundation for sustainable tourism growth. The study concludes that a comprehensive marketing approach combined with sustainable management practices can significantly improve the destination's appeal and economic benefits for the local community. These results contribute to tourism management literature by emphasizing the integration of cultural preservation with modern marketing strategies and offer practical implications for similar emerging natural attractions.

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Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Marketing Strategy, Ecotourism, Visitor Management, Goa Rang Reng Waterfall, Tourism Development, Digital Marketing, Community Involvement

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of Indonesia's key sectors supporting the national economy. Its rapid development reflects not only the country's geographic and cultural potential but also its capacity to serve as a foundation for regional development when managed effectively (Han & An, 2022). As a multidimensional industry, tourism creates employment opportunities, stimulates local economies, and strengthens cultural identity (Pan et al., 2024). This aligns with the views of Ayu et al (2023), who emphasized tourism's role as a leading industry and strategic source of national revenue. In this context, Indonesia's tourism sector must aim not only to increase tourist numbers but also to ensure destination management quality and environmental sustainability.

Legally, Law No. 10 of 2009 on Tourism serves as the foundation that defines tourism as an activity involving the community, businesses, central and local governments, supported by appropriate facilities and services. However, uncontrolled tourism growth can lead to environmental degradation and cultural erosion. Therefore, tourism development must integrate sustainable approaches, including environmental protection and the preservation of cultural values (Kehbila, 2021). Ecotourism, as a part of sustainable tourism, offers a solution by emphasizing conservation and community empowerment, echoing assertion that ideal tourism must be grounded in ecological philosophy (Aprila et al., 2023).

One of the most promising forms of tourism in Indonesia is nature-based tourism, particularly waterfalls. In Bali, waterfalls are not merely natural attractions but also hold deep spiritual significance. One emerging destination is Goa Rang Reng Waterfall, located in Banjar Gitgit, Bakbakan Village, Gianyar Regency. This site features a unique cascading waterfall that flows gently over moss-covered rocks, accompanied by a sacred cave at the source. This cave holds high religious value as a site for melukat a Hindu purification ritual. The combination of natural beauty and spiritual significance makes this destination uniquely appealing compared to other waterfalls in Bali (Schuhmacher et al., 2018).

Despite its remarkable potential, tourist visitation to Goa Rang Reng Waterfall remains relatively low. According to data from the site's management, the highest number of visits was recorded in 2019, totaling 1,653 tourists. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a drastic decline in 2020 and 2021. While visits have gradually increased in 2022 and 2023, the growth has been modest (Suparmono et al., 2022). In 2024, total visits reached 1,666 a slight improvement from pre-pandemic levels. These figures suggest that the destination is not yet widely recognized, either by domestic or international markets, and still faces significant challenges in visibility and infrastructure (Garcia et al., 2021).

One of the main causes of this stagnation is the lack of an effective marketing strategy. Currently, promotion relies heavily on word-of-mouth marketing, with limited use of social media. Although the management has an Instagram account and a website, these platforms are underutilized due to limited human resources and inadequate technological support (Menon, 2022). Furthermore, the site lacks essential visitor amenities such as clean toilets, food vendors, and informational services, reducing overall visitor satisfaction. These limitations are compounded by the absence of professional staff trained in digital promotion and tourism marketing (Ric & Benazić, 2022).

Within the framework of marketing theory, the 7P marketing mix proposed by Kotler which includes product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence is a relevant tool for evaluating and enhancing the marketing of this destination (efendioğlu, 2024). Among these components, Goa Rang Reng already partially fulfills aspects such as product, pricing, location, and physical evidence, though further improvements are necessary. However, the most critical shortcomings lie in the people and promotion elements. The lack of skilled personnel in digital promotion and the absence of an integrated marketing system significantly limit the destination's reach in both domestic and international tourism markets.

The novelty of this research lies in the comprehensive application of the 7P marketing mix strategy to a developing nature-based tourism destination. Unlike previous studies focused on established or popular destinations, this research explores how marketing strategies can be tailored for lesser-known attractions with strong cultural and ecological elements. Goa Rang Reng, with its unique blend of nature, spirituality, and local wisdom, presents an ideal case for examining how digital marketing, community empowerment, and environmental preservation can be integrated into tourism development.

The main objective of this study is to formulate an effective and measurable marketing strategy to increase tourist visits to Goa Rang Reng Waterfall. This research aims to provide practical recommendations for destination managers, local governments, and tourism stakeholders to develop a more sustainable and competitive attraction. Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital media and improving human resource capacity as key elements in building a high-quality, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable tourism experience.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative field research approach, aimed at obtaining a deep and contextual understanding of the marketing strategies implemented at Goa Rang Reng Waterfall Tourist Attraction in Gianyar Regency, Bali. Field research, by definition, involves the direct collection of primary data from natural settings, allowing the researcher to interact intensively with the research subjects. Through this immersive process, qualitative methods facilitate exploration of complex social dynamics, community perspectives, and tourism management practices that cannot be adequately captured using quantitative measurements alone. As Sugiyono (2024) explains, qualitative research is particularly effective in exploring and describing social phenomena that are deeply embedded in context and cultural meaning.

The research was conducted at Goa Rang Reng Waterfall, located in Banjar Gitgit, Bakbakan Village, Gianyar Regency, Bali. This location was deliberately selected due to its status as a developing nature-based tourism site with significant potential but limited visitor infrastructure and promotional efforts. Despite its natural and cultural appeal, including sacred ritual sites and opportunities for ecotourism, the destination has not yet reached optimal visibility or tourist engagement. This makes Goa Rang Reng an ideal case study for investigating the effectiveness of existing tourism marketing strategies and identifying areas for improvement. The research was carried out over a seven-month period, from October 2024 to April 2025, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of seasonal tourist flows and operational dynamics.

The subjects of this study include key tourism stakeholders: site managers (pengelola), customary village leaders (bendesa adat), local residents, and visiting tourists. These groups were selected purposively to represent the full spectrum of interests and perspectives influencing the development and marketing of the tourist attraction. The object

of the study focuses on the implementation and effectiveness of marketing strategies in increasing tourist visits to Goa Rang Reng, especially in relation to Kotler's 7P marketing mix framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process, and Physical Evidence).

Data collection was carried out using multiple techniques to ensure richness and triangulation of findings. These techniques included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants to gain insights into their roles, perceptions, and strategies related to tourism development (Yentifa et al., 2023). Participant observation was employed during tourist activities and management operations to observe actual conditions, behaviors, and interactions in situ. Document analysis involved reviewing internal records, promotional materials, and social media platforms managed by the tourism site.

To maintain research rigor and validity, the data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach. Collected data were organized, coded, and categorized based on recurring patterns and themes relevant to the research objectives (Andriani et al., 2023). This process included open coding to identify initial categories, axial coding to connect related concepts, and selective coding to refine core themes. Triangulation between data sources and methods ensured the credibility and reliability of findings (Rosalina et al., 2022). Furthermore, the researcher applied member checking by confirming interpretations with key informants, and peer debriefing to reduce subjective bias. Ethical considerations were also carefully observed (Kuester et al., 2018). The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants, ensured anonymity, and respected cultural sensitivities particularly given the sacred nature of some elements within the site. Special attention was paid to ethical guidelines in engaging with the customary village authority and respecting religious protocols during field visits (Krishna Donthireddy, 2024).

Through this qualitative field research approach, the study aims not only to assess current tourism marketing practices at Goa Rang Reng but also to formulate strategic recommendations that are grounded in empirical realities, stakeholder perspectives, and contextual challenges. The expected outcome is a set of actionable insights for destination managers and local authorities to enhance promotional effectiveness, visitor satisfaction, and sustainable tourism development at Goa Rang Reng Waterfall.

RESULTS

This study reveals the fluctuating dynamics of tourist visits to Goa Rang Reng Waterfall over the past five years. Quantitative data from the site management shows the highest number of visitors was recorded in 2019, with a total of 1,653 tourists. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 caused a drastic decline in visits due to travel restrictions and the closure of tourist destinations nationwide, resulting in a low of 660 visitors in 2020. Recovery began in 2022 and continued into 2023 and 2024, with visitor numbers reaching 1,666. Despite this recovery, the figures remain far below the waterfall's full potential, given its rich natural beauty and cultural significance. This indicates that while post-pandemic tourism is rebounding, the growth is not yet sustainable or significant without strategic marketing interventions.

Interview Insights from Management

Site managers highlighted significant operational challenges. One interviewee stated:

> *"We are aware of the importance of social media to promote Goa Rang Reng. However, due to limited staff and lack of digital marketing skills, our social media accounts are rarely updated, leading to low online visibility and limited reach beyond local audiences."*

This confirms that while the waterfall has official web and Instagram pages, the lack of active management and professional content creation limits the effectiveness of these promotional tools.

Tourist Perspectives

Visitors generally appreciate the unique characteristics of the waterfall, particularly the gentle cascade and moss-covered rocks, which offer a distinct experience compared to typical waterfalls. Spiritual significance associated with the sacred Pura Beji temple on-site also attracts religious tourists.

A domestic tourist shared:

> *"The natural beauty here is incredible, and the spiritual atmosphere adds a special feeling. However, the facilities like clean toilets and food stalls are lacking, which makes the visit less comfortable."*

An international tourist echoed this sentiment:

> *"Goa Rang Reng is a hidden gem, but inadequate infrastructure discourages longer stays. Basic amenities such as restrooms and food vendors are necessary to improve the visitor experience."*

These comments highlight how inadequate infrastructure directly limits visitor satisfaction and length of stay, which in turn affects local economic benefits.

Community and Cultural Insights

Local traditional leaders emphasized the cultural and ecological importance of the site:

> *"Goa Rang Reng is a sacred place used for purification rituals. Any tourism development must respect these traditions to maintain harmony between visitors and the local community."*

Table 1. SWOT Analysis

Aspect	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Natural	Unique soft-flow waterfall, beautiful mossy rocks	Poor infrastructure (toilets, signage, parking)	Growing interest in ecotourism & spiritual tours	Competition with better-known waterfalls
Cultural	Sacred site with cultural rituals	Limited community tourism engagement	Collaboration with adat community and tour guides	Potential cultural degradation if unmanaged
Marketing	Presence on Instagram and website	Lack of active management & digital marketing skills	Increased digital marketing investment	Limited reach and visibility

Based on table 1, SWOT analysis derived from primary data highlights the destination's strengths in its unique natural beauty and religious significance, which are unmatched by other sites. The most pressing weaknesses include inadequate supporting facilities and a lack of professionally trained personnel in digital marketing. Opportunities lie in the growing demand for nature-based and spiritual tourism, as well as potential partnerships with local communities and businesses to develop sustainable tourism products. However, threats include strong competition from more well-known waterfalls in Bali and the risk of environmental damage if tourism is not managed responsibly.



Figure 1. Goa Rang Geng

Field observations further identified limited access infrastructure, insufficient signage, and inadequate sanitation facilities, all of which affect visitor comfort and contribute to an unprofessional image. Internal management data show that only 30% of planned infrastructure improvements, such as restrooms and parking areas, have been realized, highlighting an urgent need for increased investment.

Regarding promotion, reliance on conventional word-of-mouth marketing remains dominant, with social media and website usage still underdeveloped. The shortage of appropriate technology and qualified digital marketing personnel restricts the reach of promotional efforts. As a result, Goa Rang Reng Waterfall remains relatively unknown outside the local market, particularly among international tourists who depend heavily on online platforms for travel information.

Based on these findings, it is clear that improving human resource capacity, upgrading physical facilities, and implementing a comprehensive digital marketing strategy are essential priorities for increasing tourist visits to Goa Rang Reng Waterfall. A management approach that integrates sustainable tourism principles, fosters active collaboration with traditional communities, and enhances digital promotion capabilities will be crucial for the successful development of this destination in the future.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study reveal that while Goa Rang Reng Waterfall possesses unique natural and cultural assets, its potential as a leading tourist destination remains underdeveloped due to limitations in infrastructure, human resources, and marketing strategies. This aligns with prior research by Amertha et al (2021), who emphasized the importance of comprehensive destination management including physical infrastructure and stakeholder collaboration to boost tourism performance. Similar to Pitana's findings, our research indicates that inadequate facilities, such as limited restrooms and lack of dining options, directly diminish visitor satisfaction and reduce the duration and frequency of visits.

In terms of marketing, the reliance on word-of-mouth promotion and minimal digital engagement found in this study corroborates with the observations made by D. Green & Martinez (2018), who argued that insufficient use of online platforms and digital marketing tools results in limited destination visibility, especially among international tourists. The interviews with managers and tourists confirmed that the absence of a skilled marketing team and technological resources hampers the effective promotion of Goa Rang Reng, a situation comparable to many emerging tourist sites in Indonesia, as noted by Sari & Games (2024).

Furthermore, the cultural significance of the site adds complexity to the management of tourism activities. The presence of Pura Beji and the sacred river used for purification rituals imposes cultural constraints that require sensitive and sustainable tourism planning. This finding resonates with Green & Martinez (2018) concept of ecotourism, which emphasizes the balance between tourism development and cultural preservation. Maintaining the sanctity of the site is essential not only for respecting local beliefs but also for creating a unique tourism product that differentiates Goa Rang Reng from other waterfalls.

Visitor satisfaction, particularly regarding the natural environment and cultural experiences, matches findings from Amertha et al (2021), who highlighted that tourists increasingly seek destinations that offer both environmental beauty and authentic cultural immersion. However, dissatisfaction with facilities is a critical barrier echoed by Sari & Games (2024), who pointed out that inadequate supporting infrastructure often accelerates the decline phase of a tourist destination's life cycle. Thus, the stagnation in visitor growth at Goa Rang Reng might reflect a destination in need of strategic intervention to avoid decline.

The SWOT analysis in this study further supports the notion that while natural and cultural strengths exist, weaknesses in marketing and physical infrastructure are limiting factors. This balanced view is consistent with Amertha et al (2021) argument that tourism development should holistically consider product quality, accessibility, and promotional strategies to maximize competitive advantage. Therefore, improving promotional activities especially by expanding social media presence and employing digital marketing professionals is crucial.

Importantly, the role of local communities and adat leaders emerges as a significant factor in sustainable tourism development. The adat leaders' emphasis on cultural preservation highlights the need for inclusive management approaches that engage local stakeholders, a strategy advocated Sari & Games (2024). Incorporating community values into tourism planning not only safeguards cultural heritage but also fosters local ownership and support, which are critical for long-term success.

Moreover, the pandemic's impact on visitor numbers, with a sharp decline in 2020 and 2021, echoes global trends documented by Amertha et al (2021), underscoring the vulnerability of tourism to external shocks. The gradual recovery in 2022-2024 shows resilience but also reveals the urgency for adaptive marketing strategies that can quickly respond to changing conditions, including health crises and travel restrictions.

This study's implications extend beyond the immediate context of Goa Rang Reng. The findings suggest that other emerging natural tourism sites with similar characteristics such as limited infrastructure and marketing capacity could benefit from integrated strategies that combine infrastructure development, digital marketing, and community engagement. Such a model aligns with sustainable tourism principles and enhances destination competitiveness in the long term.

From a policy perspective, government and tourism authorities should prioritize capacity building in digital marketing for destination managers and provide technical support to develop necessary infrastructure. Additionally, fostering partnerships between public, private, and community sectors will ensure more coordinated and effective tourism development. This multi-stakeholder approach has been validated in previous studies Sari & Games (2024) as essential for sustainable tourism growth.

Finally, the study contributes to the growing body of literature by providing empirical evidence from a less-explored destination in Bali, enriching the understanding of challenges

faced by secondary tourist attractions. By addressing these challenges through tailored marketing and management strategies, Goa Rang Reng can transform from a hidden gem to a sustainable and thriving ecotourism destination, benefiting both visitors and local communities alike.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified several critical factors influencing the visitation rates at Goa Rang Reng Waterfall, particularly highlighting the site's unique natural and cultural assets alongside existing challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing efforts, and lack of skilled human resources in digital promotion. These findings align closely with the initial objectives of exploring effective marketing strategies to enhance tourist visits and provide a sustainable development framework for this emerging destination. The study demonstrated that improving physical facilities, optimizing promotional activities especially through active social media management and engaging local communities in tourism planning are key drivers for increasing visitor numbers and overall destination competitiveness.

From a scientific perspective, this research contributes to the body of knowledge on sustainable tourism development in secondary or less-explored destinations. It underscores the vital interplay between cultural preservation, ecotourism principles, and strategic marketing, expanding existing models by incorporating local socio-cultural dynamics unique to Bali's heritage sites. The integration of qualitative insights from both managers and tourists enriches the understanding of destination-specific challenges and opportunities, offering practical implications for similar natural attractions facing stagnation in visitor growth.

For future research, it is recommended to adopt a mixed-method approach combining quantitative visitor data analysis with qualitative community-based participatory research to deepen insights into tourist behavior and local stakeholder engagement. Additionally, longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impacts of implemented marketing strategies and infrastructure improvements on both tourism growth and environmental sustainability would provide valuable feedback for adaptive management. Exploring the role of digital innovation and emerging technologies in enhancing visitor experience and destination promotion also represents a promising avenue for further investigation.

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