

# Marketing Communication Strategy in Increasing Tangkahan Tourist

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out how the marketing communication strategy carried out by the Department of Tourism and Culture of Langkat District to increase the number of domestic and foreign tourists to visit Tangkahan Tourism Location, Langkat Regency, also to identify obstacles in carrying out tourism promotion activities at the Department Tourism and Culture in Langkat Regency, North Sumatra Province. The method in this study uses a descriptive approach through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation for understanding the communication strategies undertaken such as giving attention, growing interest, getting satisfaction (desire), making decisions, and taking action. The results of the study provide an understanding that the marketing communication strategies and efforts undertaken by the Langkat Tourism and Culture Office are still oriented towards disseminating information through traditional print media such as leaflets and booklets, which are limited in number and distributed, not yet maximally utilizing online media or new media, which has started to be developed by several tourist activity enthusiasts in Langkat District. Promotion through advertising is only done through personal sales activities, whereas the making of profiles and Tangkahan tourism advertisements have not been done and developed by the relevant agencies.

**Keywords:** Marketing Communication Strategy; Increasing; The Tourism and Culture Office.

## 1. Introduction

The development of tourism in Indonesia is in line with the government's program in promoting tourism and foreign exchange apart from the oil and gas sector. The tourism development program, which was launched in 1988, is expected to attract domestic tourists and foreign tourists, which will generate income for state finances. Expenditures by tourists are expected to increase the income of residents. Another advantage of tourism is to build supporting infrastructure towards these tourist sites including transportation, lodging, and even shops (Manafe, Setyorini & Alang, 2016). Tourism is one of the areas that need to be encouraged in development. Tourism is a sector that influences regional growth rates as a contributor to PAD (Region's Original Income) and can support economic improvement. Moreover, tourism can increase employment opportunities, improve living standards, and increase regional growth. Seeing this fact, tourism development needs to be well planned and marketed to achieve satisfactory results both economically and socially to compete with other developing countries.

Langkat Regency is a district in North Sumatra that consists of 23 districts. Langkat Regency has a relatively large natural tourism potential. Potential tourist nature such as the waterfalls, baths, river, whitewater rafting, tracking forest, natural cave (such as the area of Bukit Lawang, Gua Batu Rizal, Tangkahan and travel nautical ( like Tanjung Apek Kuala Serapuh and Tanjung Kerang). Langkat Regency has become one of the destinations for local and foreign tourists since a long time ago. One of the tourist destinations in this district is Tangkahan, known as Sumatra's hidden paradise. Likewise with Gunung Leuser National Park which is part of the Aceh province and North Sumatra Province. It has been known as the Hidden Paradise of Sumatra because Tangkahan offers a panoramic view of nature, flora, and wonderful fauna. Tangkahan is also in second place after Lake Toba in terms of the most visited tourist attractions by both domestic and international tourists (<http://www.pariwisatasumut.net2016> ). Tangkahan is famous for its beauty as a hidden paradise in Leuser, located in Namo Sialang, Batang Serangan langkat North Sumatra with extensive approximately 17,000 hectares. The presence is of patrols participatory using the elephant, making Tangkahan a favored destination trip by local and foreign tourists. The location Tangkahan can be reached from Medan City about 3 hours drive through Binjai City and Tanjung Pura. The road condition is good and has been paved. Another way to reach Tangkahan through Kota Stabat-Simpang Sidodadi with one hour faster travel times. However, these alternative roads are not good enough and not all of them are paved, especially in plantation areas. Facilities at Tangkahan include lodging Bamboo River Lodge, which has six double rooms with roomy shower. Costs ranges start from Rp. 75,000 up to Rp. 100,000/night. There are also have other inns with costs start from Rp. 15,000 up to Rp. 150,000/night.

Other available facilities are the visitor center, camping ground, and traditional food stalls that belong to the community of local (<http://gunungleuser.or.id>). Department of Tourism and Culture of Langkat Regency as executor Regional Government in the tourism and culture sector has the task of carrying out domestic affairs of the Regional Government in the tourism sector. The acting Tourism and Culture Office tries to increase tourist attractiveness that is expected to increase the number of tourist visits to contribute to Regional Original Income (PAD) according to the previously given target. The development of tourist attraction requires the support of publicity and marketing both in local, national and international, the success of development and improvement quality of tourism depends on the effectiveness of marketing activities and requires tourist information activity, in addition to the success in improving the quality of the object of tourist attraction depends on the seriousness of the Government Regional to promote of the tourist destination and public awareness, the severity of local governments from planning, developing and control. During the period 2013-2015 the number of tourists who come to Langkat Regency from foreign tourists significantly reduced. The number of tourists who come to Langkat in 2015, decreased 5.88 percent from 2013. This condition needs to get the attention and the seriousness of the Government of Regions more actively carry out the strategy of marketing to increase the number of travelers who visit specifically to Tangkahan District of Langkat.

**Table 1.** The Number of Tourist who come to Langkat Distric (person)

Description	2013	2014	2015
Domestic	46,709	40,433	47,139
Foreign	7,091	8,567	3.495
Total	53,800	49.000	50.634

**Source:** Kabupaten Langkat Statistic, 2016

Apart from the tendency of the number of travelers who reduced, the phenomenon of the lack of information related to Tangkahan as one of the destinations in Langkat regency can be seen on the Langkat's Regency Government website.



**Image 1.** Wbsite Langkat Regency display for Tourism

**Source:** <http://www.langkatkab.go.id>

The effort to increase the number of tourists visiting especially Tangkahan tourism, the existence of public relations at the Department of Tourism and Culture is indispensable. The existence of a special section that specifically handles public relations issues will further improve the implementation of effective communication which will support the implementation of the tourism marketing communication strategy of the Tourism and Culture Office, Langkat Regency.

The implementation of public relations function by the Tourism and Culture Office is under the responsibility of business development and tourism marketing. The field of business development and tourism marketing carries out various efforts including communication, marketing, management, and dissemination of information on tourism potential and building cooperation. Tourism is one of the areas that need to be encouraged in development. because it is a sector that influences the rate of growth in the area as well as one of the contributors to the PAD (Regional original Income) and to support the improvement of the economy, then the researcher conducted this research intending to know the strategy of marketing communication Tangkahan tourism at the Department of Tourism and Culture District langkat and to determine barriers in carrying out tourism promotion activities of the Department of Tourism and Culture of Langkat Regency.

## 2. Research Method

The research method in this study is a qualitative research method with a descriptive type of approach. The type of research carried out in this research is in the form of a field (field research), which means "a research that is carried out systematically and in-depth by raising data in the field" (Bah et al., 2020a; Bah et al., 2020b). The implementation of this research requires the writer to go to the field to explore data and facts that occur directly and objectively. Based on the selected research, it can be seen that the data in the study were collected based on the results of direct observations and interviews. The data raised from the field in the study are data about the marketing communication strategy of Tangkahan tourism at the Langkat Regency Tourism and Culture Office and to find out obstacles in carrying out tourism promotion activities of the Langkat Regency Tourism and Culture Office.

Following the purpose of this study, the characteristics of the selected informants are individuals who are authorized to carry out policies related to tourism development at the Langkat Regency Tourism and Culture Office as well as domestic and foreign tourists. The data sources used are primary and secondary data. Primary data is "data in the form of facts or information obtained directly from data sources for research purposes. Primary data is data that comes from the main data source (key informants), in the form of actions and words of the parties involved with the object under study" (Moleong, 2004).

Meanwhile, secondary data is information or knowledge that is indirectly obtained from reading materials obtained through literature studies, for example, documents, reports, or notes relating to the tourist attractions of Tangkahan, Langkat Regency - North Sumatra. Data collection techniques in research are tailored to the problem, research objectives, and the nature of the object under study. This study uses data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation.

Observation, Kriyantono (2009) suggests, the method of observation is the activity of observing an object directly without a mediator to look closely at the activities carried out by the object. With this method, the researcher not only observes verbal behavior but also non-verbal behavior of the research object. Starting from the language of the conversation to the various tools used by the object of research in their daily interactions.

Interviews, according to Berger (in Kriyantono, 2009) an interview is a conversation between a researcher (someone who hopes for information) and an informant (someone who is assumed to have important information about an object). The conversation in the interview is aimed at key informants and is intended as a conversation that aims to find out in-depth information about the data that has been observed, namely the role of da'wah messages in affective, cognitive, and behavioral. The method of collecting data is obtained from records (data) that are already available or have been made by other parties (Kriyantono, 2009).

This study also uses instruments such as writing and recording aids to conduct a question and answer interviews that will be conducted by the researcher. The instruments used by the researcher were question sheets, recording devices, and interview guides. The data analysis technique in this study used the interactive analysis model of Miles and Huberman (in (Sugiyono, 2009). This consists of three streams of activities that occur simultaneously, namely: Data

Reduction, Data reduction activities are activities to summarize, select the main things, focusing on important things, looking for themes and patterns; Presentation of data, This activity aims to organize data with brief descriptions and arranged in an interconnected pattern so that data is easy to understand and present; Verification, The next step is to conclude to get new findings that have never existed so far; Triangulation used in this study is a triangulation of sources and time, namely to interview informants at the right time so that the data provided by the informant is more valid so that it is more credible. As well as adjusting the data from interviews and observations of informants.

### 3. Result and Discussion

Langkat Regency is one of the regencies located in North Sumatra and holds various potential tourism such as natural and cultural tourism objects. Also, Langkat Regency continues to develop as a tourist destination. The potential for natural tourism involves several potential tourism objects, namely waterfalls, river baths, rafting, forest tracks, natural caves (such as the Lawang hill area, Batu Rizal Cave, Tangkahan), and marine tourism (such as Tanjung Apek Kuala Serapuh and Tanjung Kerang).

According to the research, the method is qualitative descriptive research. The data collection technique was used in this study, namely purposive sampling by selecting informants who were considered appropriate in providing data. In this study, the researcher chose 6 (six) informants consisting of; 1 Head of Culture and Tourism Langkat North Sumatra, 1 Head of Tourism Development Department of Culture and Tourism Langkat North Sumatera, 1 Section Head of Promotion Tourism Department of Tourism Culture Langkat North Sumatra, 1 rating local or domestic and 1 foreign tourist.

From the process of in-depth interviews and observations to the six informants, the following descriptions were obtained: Local Government (Pemda) through the Langkat Regency Tourism Office carried out various tourism promotion steps. The media used at the Langkat Regency Tourism Office are as follows: 1) Physical Media, the printed media used are publishing brochures, booklets, leaflets, CDs regarding tourist maps as well as information from the Tourism Office, regarding land travel; 2) Online Media, the online media used by the internet is the web and social media.

Based on the results of the interview, the Langkat Regency Tourism Office has carried out a modern promotion that did not use unconventional tourism promotion. The Agency has taken advantage of the development of science and technology (IPTEK) in supporting its duties and functions. This is certainly more effective and efficient in this era of globalization.

Regarding the communication process that is conducted by Langkat Tourism Office is not optimal. Department Pariwisata langkat just doing personal publicity, and sales just for the local community, while advertising regarding tangkahan tourism has not been done. The Langkat Regency Tourism Office does not work alone to promote tourism potential in Langkat Regency. They cooperate with various parties such as government and private agencies or institutions. This is done because there are so many tourism potentials in Langkat Regency that have not been managed properly.

In carrying out tourism promotion activities, the Langkat Regency Tourism Office, which has not been optimal, has encountered several obstacles, namely the lack of funds or budgets obtained from the local government for tourism promotion activities. This makes every tourism promotion event carried out by the Institution not being lively. This makes tourism promotions less attractive to tourists.

Promotion can be seen as a line of communication between entrepreneurs and passengers, which is the responsibility for effective communication. If the passenger doesn't understand the message, it is the entrepreneur's fault so it is very important to define an objective promotion. This object must be identified for the marketing targets to be achieved, what should be done, who is implementing it, and when it must be completed (Suharyanto et al , 2020; Sinuhaji et.al , 2019) . The promotion theme must be following the marketing plan which must be consistent with the objectives of the entrepreneurs, for example feeling that to achieve their financial targets emphasizing quality and service this concept is the mainstay of a marketing campaign as part of the plan, communication between service and quality for the public becomes an objective promotion. (Suharyanto et.al, 2019).

The price, targets, and strategies must be developed in such a way as to build an image to strengthen the strategy in the marketing mix while strengthening the flexibility of changing conditions and dynamically changing situations. As with other elements of the marketing mix, distribution is the main and important element in the tourism business. . In

the tourism business, intermediaries (Travel Agents, BPW, and other Tour Operators) are the Channel Captain for the tourism industry. Tjiptono, 2002; Zahro, 2012; Sahputra, 2020) .

Another element is promotion, without promotional activities, no matter how good the quality of the product is, no matter how cheap the tour packages are if it is not known by many people, everything will be meaningless. The promotion function is to communicate all kinds of information about all the tourist destinations can offer to potential tourists who are preparing their travel plans long before their leave or holidays arrive. Therefore, the promotion mix needs to be developed in a planned manner by using a promotional strategy following the nature of the product to be offered (Soemanagara. 2008; Sulaksana, 2003; Basuki. 2006).

The obstacles encountered by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office in carrying out tourism promotion activities need to be resolved so that they do not interfere with the tourism promotion program that has been made by the Langkat Regency Tourism Office. To overcome the problems that arise, efforts are made to overcome barriers to tourism promotion activities is to collaborate with various parties or agencies and institutions both public and private such as the Tangkahan Tourism Institute (LPT), especially the local community, and in the future strive to increase the budget for promotion.

According to data from the LPT in 2016, the number of tourists who came to Tangkahan dominance by local tourist as much as 58 895 people, while the international tourist who have been visited as much as 2,303 people. Local tourists who visit Tangkahan are groups or families to see natural beauty while enjoying river baths and seeing elephants. Generally, the Local tourists who visit Tangkahan make a round trip. Local tourists who stay overnight generally on holidays such as on Eid, Christmas, and New Year with a stay duration of 1-6 days.

Tangkahan is a natural tourist attraction that is still natural and its beauty is maintained. Tourists can visit Tangkahan and see the beauty of Tangkahan's tourism objects at a low cost of IDR 3,000 on weekdays and holidays tourists are charged IDR 5,000. The entrance fee that is charged to each tourist will later be used to pay the salary of the tourism object manager.

Travelers have an important role in every activity in the area of Tangkahan tourist object. Not only to support commercial activities but also to develop existing businesses in the tourist area of Tangkahan. The existence of food vendors, restaurants, tire rental, raft crossing services, bridge crossing services, and guide services.

Local tourists who visit Tangkahan tourism objects are groups or individuals who have a different kind of purpose, including seeing elephants, the beauty of various flora and fauna. Not a few local tours come intending to conduct research and at the same time exploring the forests of the Gunung Leuser National Park. As time goes by, the foreign tourist visits continue to increase. Most of the foreign tourists come from the Netherlands, Australia, Germany, and Spain, the foreign tourists who visit the area has an average stay of 1 (one) night to 1 (one) month.

Foreign tourists know about Tangkahan Tourism through the internet as a medium that can provide information about Tangkahan tourism, because a complete display and information are presented with images that attract attention. Through the information on the Internet, travel local read some of the reviews from the travel blog that have been visited Tangkahan object, and meet with some travel agents that facilitate to traveled to Tangkahan

With the beauty of nature and the fresh air, Tangkahan provides a combination of the tropical rain forest and hilly topography that makes Tangkahan an ideal place for travel. The River Buluh and Batang Serangan that divides forest is a type of typical tropical forests river, it has a different kind of variety color plant, and cliffs patterned along the river. The river has very clear and shades of green creating scenery and a natural atmosphere. Tangkahan becomes a good choice to hide from the hustle and bustle of a city polluted.

Tangkahan has many travel activities that tourists can enjoy, either adventure or just a swim and tracking in the tropical forest. The tourist will be accompanied by a local guide who has knowledge about forest and nature in Tangkahan so that tourists will know the treasure of nature hidden in the forest.

In this study, it can be described that Tangkahan tourism information is expected to generate interest or desire, decision, and direct action to visit Tangkahan tourism. The step of message acceptance by the public are as follows::

a. Attention

Tourism information designed through websites, business cards, travel agents, magazines, brochures, as well as word of mouth must be able to generate attention or attract public attention to tourism objects so that it can create conveniences and appeal to the public regarding Tangkahan tourism.

b. Interest

The audience's attention as a public hoped can generate intention or interest in Tangkahan tourism..

b. Desire

The desire to feel, to enjoy, to wear, and to witness directly must increase by generating interest in Tangkahan tourism, to make it a public need.

c. Decision

At this stage, the attraction has been successfully created into a necessity. The public must be convinced so that it can decide to enjoy and visit Tangkahan tourism immediately.

d. Action

This stage is the final stage which will be carried out by the audience after the step of attention, interest, desire, and decisions, namely by visiting tourist, Tangkahan, to see, enjoy, and witnessed object directly

Promotion is a key variable in a marketing strategy plan and can be view as an element for creating market domination opportunities. The use of Elements promotion provided by the environment, especially by the state or condition of request travelers. But promotion can be a function of connecting the strategies of marketing and the demand became one of the strengths that not supervised are all should be taken into account, then the sale is used to replace the demand and accelerate the process of the decision to undertake the trip travel (Lopez et.al, 2019; Siregar, et .al , 2020 ).

Strategy products industry of tourism is not only considered to be sensitive to demand but also the products that are offered should be ready to sell and not going to disappoint travelers who buy a package tour that is offered. The price factor is also very decisive in the marketing mix. Prices that are considered appropriate can really satisfy tourists. Sometimes the package tour only just expensive compared to others that sold, but the whole quality of the package tour is far more superior, for tourist, it is more memorable

#### 4. Conclusion

Strategic communications marketing tour that carried the Department of Tourism District Langkat only use billboard or banner, leaflets, booklet, and website local communities as media marketing communications that are supported by tourism, while the advertising department of tourism does not ever make advertising on tourism destination, promotions are through the agency of travel and lodging or homestay. Regarding the process of communication that made the Department of Tourism and the District Langkat, has not been optimal, the Department of Tourism and Culture District langkat just do publicity and personal selling for local people, while advertising, about Tourism Tangkahan, has not done yet.

Obstacles in carrying out promotion activities of Tourism and Culture office District Langkat encountered several obstacles, such as the lack of funding/budget which is obtained from government area ( local government ) for the activities of promotion of travel. It makes every activity promotional tour that carried the Department does not take place in a festive. It makes the promotion of travel is less able to attract tourist. To overcome the problems that arise, it takes efforts to overcome the obstacles of activities promotional tour. It is to establish cooperation with various parties or institutions and agencies both state and private such as the Institute of Tourism Tangkahan (LPT) mainly local community, and attempt to increase the budget for promotion.

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