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## **Tourism Potential in Medan City with an Inclusive Digital Marketing Approach**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Medan City's tourism potential stems from its natural beauty, historical heritage, diverse population, strategic location, diverse customs, culture, and adequate infrastructure. Medan has 26 tourist attractions grouped into five categories are natural, religious or spiritual, cultural, culinary, and recreational. Among these, four leading tourist attractions are developed and managed by the Medan City Government through the Medan City Tourism and Culture Office. These four leading attractions are Maimun Palace, Al-Mahsun Grand Mosque, Crocodile Park or Crocodile Breeding Park, and Tjong A Fie Mansion. This study uses descriptive and theoretical research. To help explain this descriptive and theoretical research, secondary data is used. The aim of this research is to explain the tourism potential of Medan City with an inclusive digital marketing approach. Research results show that inclusive digital marketing in Medan City tourism requires a marketing approach that ensures that everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels represented and respected in digital campaigns. Inclusive digital marketing involves creating inclusive messaging and visuals, ensuring accessibility, and a user-friendly experience for everyone, including people with disabilities.

*Tourism Potential, Inclusive Digital Marketing Approach, Digital Campaigns*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tourism economics is the study of the impact of tourism on the economy, including revenue, job creation, and its influence on local industries (Mariani et al., 2023). It involves analyzing how tourist spending on various services, such as accommodation, transportation, and attractions, drives economic growth. Tourism also plays a significant role in economic growth, particularly through service exports, exchange rate fluctuations, infrastructure development, and human resource development. The primary goal of tourism is to boost the economic growth of a region or country through various means, such as increasing foreign exchange earnings, creating jobs, and encouraging

infrastructure development. Furthermore, tourism also aims to preserve culture and the environment, as well as enhance a region or country's image in the eyes of the world.

The tourism industry is a collection of businesses and organizations that provide goods and services to meet the needs of tourists, including transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment, and other services. This industry plays a vital role in a country's economy, creating jobs and driving economic growth. The destination tourism industry refers to the collection of businesses and activities related to travel and visits by tourists to a destination. It encompasses various sectors such as accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, tourist attractions, and other related services. The primary goal is to provide a satisfying experience for tourists, whether for leisure, business, or other purposes (Tambunan et al., 2025).

Digital marketing is the activity of marketing products or services through digital media (Anshori, 2010). The goal is to reach a wider audience, build brand awareness, drive website traffic, and achieve other marketing objectives. Digital marketing utilizes various digital channels such as social media, search engines, email, and websites. A digital marketing strategy is a comprehensive plan for utilizing various digital channels to achieve business goals, such as increasing brand awareness, reaching a wider audience, or increasing sales. This involves using various tactics such as SEO, social media, content marketing, and paid advertising to connect with the target audience effectively (Joseph, 2011).

An inclusive digital marketing approach is a marketing strategy that ensures everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels represented and respected in marketing campaigns. This is not just about featuring diverse faces in advertising, but also about understanding and meeting the unique needs of various audience groups (Whalley, 2010). The goal of an inclusive digital marketing approach is to ensure that everyone, regardless of their background, ability, or identity, has equal access and can engage with products, services, and marketing messages. This includes recognizing the needs and preferences of various audience groups and creating campaigns that are relevant and inclusive for all.

E-commerce leverages digital marketing to reach consumers and increase sales. Digital marketing provides various platforms and strategies that enable online businesses to interact with customers, build brand awareness, and drive conversions (Pandiangnan, 2023). The main benefits of e-commerce include wider market reach, lower operational costs, ease of transactions, and time

efficiency. E-commerce allows sellers to sell their products or services to a wider audience, even worldwide, without geographical limitations.

A tourist is a person who travels to a place, primarily for recreation or vacation, outside their usual environment. They typically stay overnight, explore the place they visit, and interact with the local culture. The benefits of tourism encompass a wide range of positive aspects, both for individuals and the surrounding environment. Economically, tourism can increase regional income, create jobs, and stimulate growth in other sectors. Socially, tourism can strengthen intercultural ties, raise awareness of cultural heritage, and encourage environmental conservation (Pandiangan, 2024).

A digital business strategy is a comprehensive plan that leverages digital technology to achieve business goals. It involves the use of various digital channels such as websites, social media, and online tools to increase visibility, customer engagement, and business growth. A digital business strategy aims to leverage digital technology to achieve business goals. It involves integrating technology into all aspects of business operations, including marketing, sales, customer service, and internal management. The goal is to increase efficiency, expand market reach, enhance customer experience, and ultimately, increase revenue and profits (Pandiangan et al., 2024).

Medan's development strategy prioritizes tourism after industrial activities. Medan is generally considered a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, possessing significant tourism potential. Medan City's tourism potential stems from its natural beauty, historical heritage, diverse population, strategic location, diverse customs, culture, and adequate infrastructure. Medan has 26 tourist attractions grouped into five categories are natural, religious or spiritual, cultural, culinary, and recreational. Among these, four leading tourist attractions are developed and managed by the Medan City Government through the Medan City Tourism and Culture Office. These four leading attractions are Maimun Palace, Al-Mahsun Grand Mosque, Crocodile Park or Crocodile Breeding Park, and Tjong A Fie Mansion. The aim of this research is to explain the tourism potential of Medan City with an inclusive digital marketing approach.

## **RESEARCH METHODE**

This study uses descriptive and theoretical research. Descriptive research is a type of research that aims to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon being studied (Kurdhi et al., 2023). This research focuses on explaining what happens, not why it happens. Descriptive research seeks to provide a complete and detailed picture of the research object, both quantitatively and

qualitatively, and theoretically serves as a proposal for viewing a phenomenon in a certain way.

To help explain this descriptive and theoretical research, secondary data is used. Secondary data is data that has been collected, processed, and published by another party, not the researcher or the party conducting the current research (Kurdhi et al., 2023). This data is usually readily available in the form of reports, scientific articles, government statistics, previous survey data, or publications from specific institutions.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Tourism Development in Medan City**

Medan is the capital of North Sumatra Province and the third largest city in Indonesia after Jakarta and Surabaya. Medan boasts numerous resources that can be utilized for development, such as trade, hotels, restaurants, industry, ports, and more, making it a well-known industrial, hotel, and restaurant district. Beyond its business potential, Medan also possesses other equally attractive assets that can be utilized as a source of local revenue: its tourism, making Medan a highly suitable tourist destination.

Medan's development strategy prioritizes tourism after industrial activities. Medan is generally considered a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, possessing significant tourism potential. Medan City's tourism potential stems from its natural beauty, historical heritage, diverse population, strategic location, diverse customs, culture, and adequate infrastructure.

As the provincial capital, Medan boasts a wealth of attractive tourist attractions, offering a greater opportunity for tourism development than other cities in North Sumatra. Historical sites, ancient buildings, museums, places of worship, culinary tours, artificial lakes, and more are unique attractions that can be enjoyed by every visitor to Medan. If developed optimally, these tourism potentials will become a driving force in Medan's tourism development and can increase local income and regional revenue. However, tourism activities in Medan have not yet become a major factor in increasing regional revenue. This is evident in the dominance of trade and industry as the mainstay sectors driving Medan's economy.

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The tourism industry will thrive if supported by the availability of adequate facilities, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In 2024 there will be 344 hotels, consisting of 58 star hotels and 286 other accommodations. If we look at the hotel room occupancy rate, in 2024 it will increase to 51.59 percent compared to the previous year which reached 51.01 percent. The average length of stay in 2024 is 1.31 (Figure 1). Likewise, the development of foreign tourists visiting Medan City continues to increase from 2021 to 2024, the increase is 192,712 (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Hospitality



Figure 2. Foreign Tourists

### **Inclusive Digital Marketing Approach in Medan City Tourism**

Inclusive digital marketing in Medan City tourism requires a marketing approach that ensures that everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels represented and respected in digital campaigns. According to Hartley (2005), an inclusive digital marketing approach is achieved by:

1. **Creating Inclusive Messages and Visuals**

In today's digital era, digital marketing is a crucial aspect of marketing strategy (Stokes, 2013). Today, many brands prioritize creating content that educates, entertains, and helps explain issues to their target audiences through inclusive messages and visuals. Engaging in content marketing can help build long-term relationships and establish trust with audiences. Significant advantages in digital marketing lie in brands that are able to create compelling narratives and tell stories that resonate with their audience's experiences (Brunton, 2013).

2. **Accessibility**

Digital marketing accessibility refers to the practice of designing and delivering digital content and experiences to be accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities (Hermawan, 2012). This involves considering various types of disabilities such as visual, hearing, physical, and cognitive impairments when creating websites, apps, and other marketing materials.

3. **A User-Friendly Experience for Everyone**

A user-friendly experience for everyone is a crucial part of inclusive digital marketing to reach everyone, including people with disabilities (Chris, 2023). User-friendly digital marketing focuses on creating a positive and seamless experience for users when they interact with brands online. This involves various aspects, from user-friendly website design to relevant and personalized content.

### **CONCLUSION**

Research results show that inclusive digital marketing in Medan City tourism requires a marketing approach that ensures that everyone, regardless of background, identity, or ability, feels represented and respected in digital campaigns. Inclusive digital marketing involves creating inclusive messaging and visuals, ensuring accessibility, and a user-friendly experience for everyone, including people with disabilities.

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