

Presented in 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Vocational Innovation and Applied Sciences (ICVIAS). Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, 5 November 2019

**The Internet Use in Promoting Tourist Destination**  
**(Case of *Sharia* Beach, Santen, Banyuwangi)**  
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**Abstract:**

This paper aims to analyze the use of internet in promoting tourist destination, namely *Sharia* Beach, Santen, Banyuwangi. The branding as sharia beach in Santen Beach makes the beach becomes more interesting to discuss, especially in looking at how the management of the beach utilizes internet in order to support the beach's branding. The use of internet and website becomes the essential part of a tourist destination's marketing as the internet has become the main tool for customers to get information (Morissan, 2015). However, in fact, not all tourist destinations' management utilizes internet as their marketing tool. One of them is Santen Beach. The management of Santen Beach has been working partially, traditional, and does not coordinate with each other. These have become some of the reasons why the internet utilization in Santen *Sharia* Beach has not been optimal.

Keywords: Technology, Tourism, Tourism Promotion

**Introduction**

Tourism is one of Indonesia's mainstay sectors. According to *Badan Statistik Indonesia* (Indonesian Statistical Agency), the number of international tourists visit Indonesia is 12.27 million (Kemenpar, 2019). This number has increased by 2.63% on September 2019 (Kompas.com 2019).

One of tourist destinations in Indonesia is Santen *Sharia* Beach in Banyuwangi, East Java. Since 2017, the management of Santen Beach has branded the beach as *sharia* beach; the beach that

complies to Islamic values (Battour & Ismail, 2016). When it was just opened, the beach was full of visitors. The number of the visitors reached 90 visitors per day, with the income of Rp. 27.000.000/month. Unfortunately, the number of the beach's visitors has gradually gone down. In 2018, the number of the visitors was down to 75 people per day. Certainly, it affected the profits of the beach, which fell to only Rp. 9.000.000 per month (interviewed with the staff of the beach).

The decrease of the number of the visitors may indicate that there is a mistake in marketing and promotion management. A right publication certainly will support the development and promotion of the beach. Therefore, this paper discusses how the utilization of technology, in this case is the use of internet and website, in promoting Santen Beach. This research contributes in the development of local tourist destination as well as Islamic tourism in general.

## **Literature Review**

One of the functions of tourism promotion is sending messages about a destination (Morrisson, 2010). Promotion is needed by an organization to inform a new product, reminds if the product is available for the target consumer, and persuades them to buy (Yuksel and Akgul, 2007). Related to that, Butler noted that in a context of building and development of a tourist destination, tourism promotion will be affected by condition and situation of a destination and it will indicate what kind of phase the destination is. Information about destination is a factual representation of factors that affect tourism service business.

Interactive marketing is an online activity and program which is designed to involve customer or prospective customer and directly or indirectly ask for awareness, improve the company's image, or sell products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2009:174). The newest marketing communication channel is the electronic channel. The advance of technology, mainly the internet through the facility of World Wide Web (www), makes interactive communication through mass media possible. Internet provides market and consumers bigger chances to interact and individualize in a communication (Adisaputro, 2010:280). The usage of website and internet is essential in order

to promote tourist destination. Internet could be the main tool as the reference for getting information about a destination (Morissan 2015).

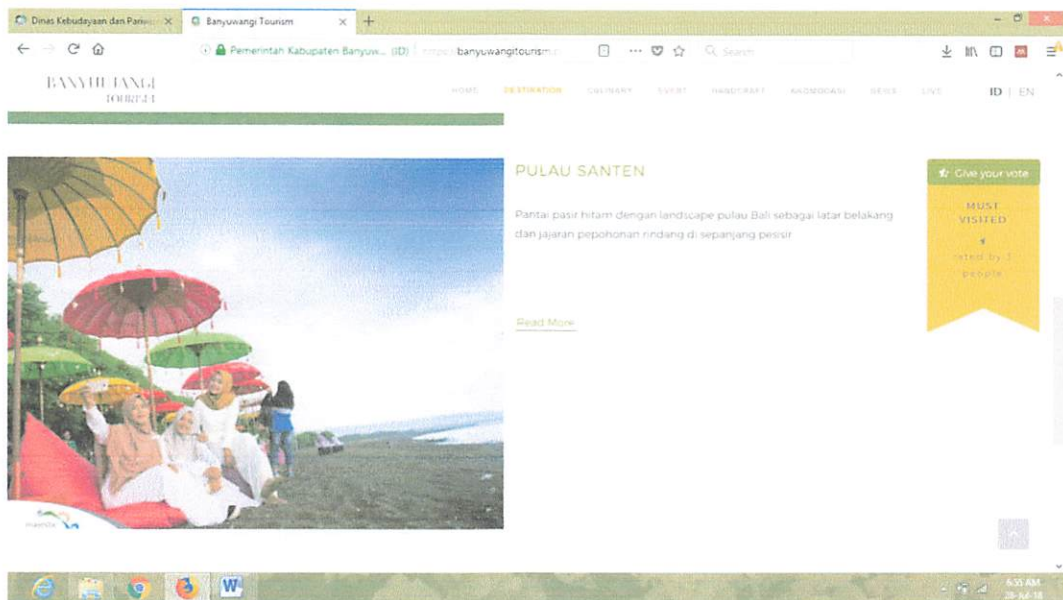
Besides as a promotional media, internet's function is also as an independent marketing communication instrument. Due to its interactive characteristic, internet becomes an effective means to communicate to the consumer. Marketing practitioner also uses internet to do a more effective and efficient direct selling, personal selling, and public relation activities. Nevertheless, advertisement in mass media still has important role as a means of inviting the consumer to visits the company's website (Morissan, 2010:23-25).

### **Research Methods**

This research employs qualitative approach. A variety of research methods combining semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were employed to provide triangulation of data. Interviews and observations were conducted on July 2018. Informants were chosen by purposive sampling, which concluded with 10 informants taken from bureaucracies, communities, and tourists. Data analysis involved transcription and reduction in Bahasa Indonesia, and then translated into English for presentation, interpretation, verification and conclusion.

### **Results and Discussion**

In this digital era, an interactive marketing is expected to give significant impact toward the development of tourist destination (Morissan, 2010). Unfortunately, the management of the beach has not fully applied the interactive marketing. The beach has not had particular and interesting website that provides complete information about Sharia beach. This is an unfortunate as the internet and the website can provoke positive perception about the tourist destination (Alcantara-Pilar, 2018). In addition, a website which should be functioned as the provider and link between consumer and producer becomes less optimal. The available web is only focusing on tourist destination of Banyuwangi in general. There is no such specific website for Santen Beach. The promotion of Santen Beach in the website only appears as a part of Banyuwangi tourism website (see Picture 1).



Picture 1. Web of Santen Beach

This situation creates disappointment amongst visitors as the website only provides little information about the destination.

I do not see any much information at the beach. They should create much more interesting web so we are interested to visit there. (Indah, visitor)

There is not much information at the web. We want to know more such as the history of the beach, what's on the beach, but not much info about it. Disappointed (Linda, visitor)

As the visitors used the word “should” indicates that they ask for more complete information. Also, the statements above show their confusion if the information is lacking. The voices of visitors above also provide input for the management as they should create better website that shows clear and complete information about the beach.

Even though there is no special website for Santen Beach, the promotion of Santen Beach has also utilized social media. The promotion has been conducted through social media like Instagram, WA, Facebook, Youtube and other social media. Some of the interviews confirm that.

“I advertise the beach by promoting it on my social media account. I don’t do that often. I do that once in a while” (interview with Yulian, Sharia beach management)

“I promote it by using WA (WhatsApp) group. I shared the information about Sharia beach to my friends in my WA group, like my senior high school group” (interview with Fendy, the Head of Karangrejo Village).

“I utilize my personal social media. My friends of Santen beach management also post (about Santen beach) to their social media“(interview with Yulian, management of Sharia beach).

Besides, the information of the beach also spreads by the visitors’ private blogs. Many visitors admitted that they read about the beach through someone’s blog and its reviews.

“I read the reviews on people blogs...the beach sounds nice..then I come here” (Nuri, visitor)

“Yes, I know this beach from Instagram and blog. There are also some online news which talk about this Sharia beach” (interview with Indah, Sharia beach visitor).



Picture 12. Sharia beach’s visitor’s posting.  
Source: Documentation of visitor Ms. Indah (2018)

The aforementioned quotations reveal that the information distribution effort about Santen Sharia Beach is still conducted partially; only through the management's or visitors' social media. There are no any massive and specific efforts from the side of the beach management to promote the destination. The promotions are only conducted by "someone"; they are not really managed by the management. This may bring difficulties as the content of promotions could not be controlled. Those who are happy with the experiences may share good experiences, but those who have negative experiences may share negative information.

The existence of an interesting website which provides complete information about the beach is a particular challenge for the management. However, the Government Cultural and Tourism Office as the management of the beach thinks that it is not important to create a special website dedicated to Sharia beach. This condition may be caused by some matters, such as lack of funding to maintain and build a website. Besides that, the absence of the website also shows that Santen Beach is not the priority of the government of Banyuwangi.

Many things for online promotion to think. Maintaning and cereating web needs money, right (Bandi, the management staff)

Besides, the Government Cultural and Tourism Office stated that Santen Sharia beach promotion effort is conducted more through billboards and magazines, rather than through online media.

"We advertise the beach by putting a big billboard at Blambangan Park about the list of tourism objects in Banyuwangi. Besides that, we also promoted the beach through magazines which exhibit the beauty of Sharia beach. Not so much using online" (Rofiq, the management staff).

Relying on manual and conventional as well as traditional marketing has made Santen Beach less known by wide community. The management should think to redesign the website of Santen Beach and improve its promotion through online media.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to analyze the use of internet in promoting Santen Island. The research found that Santen does not emphasize the use of technology or website as the means of



promotion. Lack of funding and the position of Santen Beach as a non-prioritized tourist destination have made Santen beach promotion through website does not become the main focus. Besides that, the position of tourist destination which is still in the phase of 'exploration' (Butler), makes Santen beach is relying more on the conventional tourism marketing. Sharia branding, however, is not something that attracts the attention from the local government and the management.

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