

ESCALATING THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OF GURU SEKUMPUL TOMB'S RELIGIOUS TOURISM THROUGH MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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Abstract: *Religious tourism holds a significant position in the global tourism industry, attracting visitors to culturally and spiritually significant pilgrimage sites. Indonesia, ranked second in The Global Travel Muslim Index 2022, has witnessed a rise in Muslim tourists exploring religious destinations. Ensuring the sustainability of religious tourism and enhancing the spiritual pilgrimage experience necessitates critical thinking, innovative approaches, and effective communication strategies. Promotion through social media is crucial for marketing religious tourism destinations. However, challenges persist in Indonesia's tourist development due to the absence of an integrated marketing communication strategy. Research emphasizes the importance of communication strategies and the preservation of cultural and religious diversity for the sustainability of religious tourism. In South Kalimantan, despite the potential for religious tourism, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decline in visitor numbers. Employing a qualitative approach, including interviews and SWOT analysis, this study formulates a strategic communication plan for promoting the Guru Sekumpul Tomb. The strategy focuses on product packaging, nuanced marketing communication, a serene pilgrimage ambiance, and leveraging digital media platforms, along with collaboration with local stakeholders and optimal use of natural resources. Ultimately, integrating innovative knowledge and skills is crucial for the success and sustained viability of religious tourist sites, concurrently elevating the spiritual pilgrimage experience.*

Keywords: *Guru Sekumpul; Marketing Communication Strategy; Religious Tourism; Spiritual Experience*

Introduction

Religious, cultural and pilgrimage destinations have attracted visitors for centuries. In many countries, this form of tourism is a significant industry component, with governments allocating significant funds to support it.¹ The significant presence of Muslim populations in different countries significantly

¹Štefko et al., 'Strategic Marketing Communication in Pilgrimage Tourism', *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 175 (2015): 423-30.

contributes to the tourism industry's revenue.² Indonesia, ranked second along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey in The Global Travel Muslim Index 2022,³ indicates a positive growth in the number of Muslim tourists visiting religious destinations. It is not surprising that *Menparekraf* Sandiaga Uno is optimistic about the potential of religious tourism in Indonesia. Due to this optimism, efforts to revitalize the tourism and creative economy sectors are expected to increase, leading to job creation through tourism.⁴

Fostering sustainability in religious tourism requires critical thinking to explore different viewpoints on tourist development, identify effective practices, and embrace innovative approaches.⁵ This endeavor emphasizes the significance of critical thinking in steering tourism towards sustainability.⁶ Furthermore, there are various alternative destinations for Muslim religious tourism. These include visits to notable Islamic historical sites, pilgrimages to the tombs of revered Muslim figures, Walisongo pilgrimages, and historic mosques characterized by impressive architecture. Pilgrims can visit these sites and experience the joy of worship.

The notion of religious tourism has transcended mere pilgrimages and site destinations. Studies on religious tourism have advanced from scrutinizing the motivations behind visitors' journeys to examining elements like religious convictions and individual religiosity.⁷ This transition highlights the significance of taking into account the infrastructure and activities surrounding religious sites to guarantee the sustainability of this type of tourism.⁸ Over time, religious tourism and pilgrimages can substantially contribute to the social and economic advancement of local economies and communities.⁹ Nevertheless, realizing these benefits fully requires effective marketing communications and enhancements in infrastructure.¹⁰

²TribunBekasi, 'Menparekraf Sandiaga Uno Sebut Wisata Religi Jadi Andalan Indonesia', 2022.

³Lida Puspaningtyas, 'Indonesia Raih Peringkat Dua Global Muslim Travel Index 2022', *Republika.Co.Id*, 2022.

⁴Indonesia CNN, 'Sandiaga Nilai Pariwisata Halal Dapat Ciptakan Lapangan Kerja', 2021.

⁵Roxas et al., 'Framework For Creating Sustainable Tourism Using Systems Thinking', *Current Issues in Tourism* 23, no. 3 (2020): 280-96.

⁶Roxas et al.

⁷Bona Kim, Seongseop Kim, and Brian King, 'Religious Tourism Studies: Evolution, Progress, and Future Prospects', *Tourism Recreation Research*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1664084>.

⁸Kim, Kim, and King.

⁹Roxas et al., 'Framework For Creating Sustainable Tourism Using Systems Thinking'.

¹⁰Kim, Kim, and King, 'Religious Tourism Studies: Evolution, Progress, and Future Prospects'.

A systematic promotional strategy is essential, leveraging all available social media platforms for the promotion of religious tourism.¹¹The common practice among national tourism organizations involves the promotion of religious tourism sites on Facebook, particularly emphasizing sites with a substantial count of UNESCO World Heritage designations.¹²The implementation of e-marketing strategies, encompassing social media, email marketing, and digital marketing techniques, plays a pivotal role in enhancing the performance of religious tourism in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, India.¹³This strategy reinforces the idea that cultural transformation is pivotal in shaping brand identity within the religious tourism sector.¹⁴Additionally, astute use of social media can propel these businesses to unforeseen horizons; nevertheless, improper utilization may result in adverse effect.¹⁵

The development of tourist destinations in Indonesia faces a significant challenge due to the absence of an integrated marketing communication strategy. Using integrated marketing communication (IMC) and destination marketing management can enhance the appeal of tourist destinations in Indonesia.¹⁶ The government and tourism stakeholders are still using a spatially focused integrated marketing communication strategy in their tourism marketing efforts. In order to enhance the global perception of Indonesian tourism, it is crucial to optimize information and communication technology.¹⁷ Ongoing promotional efforts, mainly through internet promotions, are essential to sustain visitation levels. Additionally, shifts in consumer behaviour regarding information-seeking practices can significantly impact perceptions of tourist attractions.

Research has been conducted to support the sustainability of religious tourism in Indonesia. For example, Heidari researched mapping and analyzing strategic business networks to promote religious destinations in the Middle East region.¹⁸ Pratiwi et al. state that the development of halal tourism in Bandung City requires a communication strategy to build awareness and concern among

¹¹Sabriana Oktaviana Gintulangi, 'Strategi Pengelolaan Wisata Religi Berkelanjutan Untuk Melestarikan Tradisi Masyarakat Islam Dan Meningkatkan Perekonomian Di Kabupaten Gorontalo' 5, no. 4 (2022): 563–78.

¹²Sonja. Zlatanov and Jovan. Popesku, 'Promotion of Religious Tourism Sites on Facebook by NTOs', *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 9, no. 3 (2021): 7.

¹³Koppala. Venugopal and D. Vishnu. Murty, 'Impact of E-Marketing Promotions on the Performance of Religious Tourism: In Case of Srikakulam District, AP, India', *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* 8, no. 6 (2019): 1289–92.

¹⁴Majid Mohammad Shafiee et al., 'E-Brand as a Strategic ICT-Based Leverage for Iranian Airline Companies in Religious Tourism's Industry.', *New Marketing Research Journal*, 2013, 1–12.

¹⁵Venugopal and Murty, 'Impact of E-Marketing Promotions on the Performance of Religious Tourism: In Case of Srikakulam District, AP, India'.

¹⁶Nunung Rusmiati, "INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE (Survey on Tourism Destination Development in Three Colors of Lake Kelimutu, Ende, East Nusa Tenggara Province)', *Communication* 5, no. 2 (2015): 63–79.

¹⁷Dhian Tyas Untari, 'The Role of Information Technology in Promotion Strategy. Case in Taman Mini Indonesia Indah and Ragunan, Indonesia', *Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism* 11, no. 4 (2020): 960–66, [https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.11.4\(44\).20](https://doi.org/10.14505/jemt.11.4(44).20).

¹⁸Ali Heidari et al., 'The Perspective of Religious and Spiritual Tourism Research: A Systematic Mapping Study', *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIMA-02-2017-0015>.

stakeholders, including the public.¹⁹ Noviyanti highlights the significance of introducing and preserving cultural and religious diversity in a cemetery tourism locality in Banjarmasin City, South Kalimantan Province.²⁰

Regarding the potential for religious tourism, which is quite promising in Indonesia, particularly in South Kalimantan, related institutions are implementing a program of gradual improvement for religious tourism.²¹ Government support can significantly impact the entrepreneurial environment and the pace of tourism development.²² The government should make strategic efforts to enhance regional religious tourism branding in South Kalimantan.

South Kalimantan has several potentials for religious tourism, including the *GuruSekumpul* Tomb and the fame of KH. Zaini Abdul Ghani or *Guru Ijai*. The grave of one of Allah's saints is located in the Sekumpul Martapura, which is a popular destination for pilgrims from various cities in South Kalimantan, as well as from Java and overseas. Regrettably, the potential for religious tourism has experienced a decline in visitor numbers because of pandemic effects, as indicated by tourist destination website records.²³ Please refer to the table below for further details.

Table 1 : *Sekumpul* Teacher Tomb Visitor

Year	<i>Sekumpul</i> Teacher Tomb Visitor
2019	5.876.106
2020	1.977.747
2021	6.729
2022	75.558
2023	109.787

Source: <https://destinasiwisata.banjarkab.go.id/utama/visitortahun>

The preliminary survey revealed that the number of visitors has declined due to the pandemic. Additionally, it was found that the management of these tombs has not been optimized. Drawing on all the arguments, the primary aim of this research is to evaluate and formulate the strategic communication promoting *Sekumpul* Teacher Tomb in South Kalimantan.

Method

¹⁹Soraya Ratna Pratiwi, Susanne Dida, and Nuryah Asri Sjafrinah, 'Strategi Komunikasi Dalam Membangun Awareness Wisata Halal Di Kota Bandung', *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi* 6, no. 1 (2018): 78, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v6i1.12985>.

²⁰Devi Noviyanti, 'STRATEGI PROMOSI WISATA RELIGI MAKAM SYEKH SURGI MUFTI Devi Noviyanti UIN Antasari Banjarmasin' 17, no. 34 (2018): 90-118.

²¹Mochammad Arif Budiman, 'Opportunity and Threat of Developing Halal Tourism Destinations: A Case of Banjarmasin, Indonesia', *International Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 7, no. 1 (2019): 7, <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijebo.20190701.12>.

²²Qun. Qin, Geoffrey. Wall, and Xiaohang. Liu, 'Government Roles in Stimulating Tourism Development: A Case from Guangxi, China', *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research* 16, no. 5 (2011): 471-87.

²³destinasiwisata.banjarkab.go.id, 'Rekapitulasi Kunjungan Wisata 6 Tahun Terakhir Dari Titik Pendataan Hingga Tahun 2023', 2023, <https://destinasiwisata.banjarkab.go.id/utama/visitortahun>.

To achieve a balanced synthesis of viewpoints on strategic communication evaluation, researchers employ a qualitative approach through field research in two locations: the Tomb of *Guru Sekumpul* and the Culture and Tourism Office of Banjar District. The study participants were selected using purposive sampling. They consisted of employees from the Culture and Tourism Office of Banjar District, visitors and residents of the Tomb of *Guru Sekumpul*.

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were performed with government employees and business owners from the municipal and county levels of tourism administration. Semi-structured interviews provide a solid foundation for comparing samples and expanding the range of evidence to validate substantive findings²⁴ on various tourism-related subjects, such as policy, planning, legislation, management, and development challenges. As a result of the fact that the study was centered on the functions of local governments, interviewees were selected from both county-level and town-level government staff.

Throughout the interviews, entrepreneurs and government officials were questioned about the current situation of tourism, the government's role, issues currently occurring, and obstacles that would arise in the future. Conversations of a more casual nature were also held with locals, visitors, and business owners. It was possible to acquire official documents and statistical data from the tourism agency as well as the township government.

The data analysis is based on a SWOT analysis. It is a useful tool for identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in tourism industry.²⁵ This analysis can provide valuable policy implications for sustainable development. This paper evaluates and formulates a communication strategy to promote the Tomb of *Guru Sekumpul* through a SWOT analysis to increase spiritual pilgrimage experience.

Results and Discussion

Martapura, situated in the Banjar District of South Kalimantan Province, is home of *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, a revered Islamic historical site. *Guru Sekumpul* was the eighth descendant of the renowned Banjar scholar Maulana Syekh Muhammad Arsyad bin Abdullah Al Banjari and was known as Muhammad Zaini bin Abdul Ghani al-Banjari,²⁶ a highly influential and charismatic religious leader. Over time, the number of followers grew, including individuals from Islamic boarding schools and the general public.

²⁴Enid. Schatz, 'Rationale and Procedures for Nesting Semi-Structured Interviews in Surveys or Censuses', *Population Studies* 66, no. 2 (2012): 183-95.

²⁵L. T. Tung, 'Tourism Development in Vietnam: New Strategy for a Sustainable Pathway.', *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites* 31, no. 3 (2020): 1174-79.

²⁶Siswoyo Aris. Munandar, 'Retracing the Spirituality of Tuan Guru M. Zaini Abdul Ghani: Study of Guru Sekumpul Sufism Thinking as Social Piety and Individual Piety', *Journal of Islamic History and Manuscript* 2, no. 2 (2023): 137-60.

Furthermore, to achieve the objectives set by the Culture and Tourism Office of Banjar District, it is crucial to formulate strategies that inform, persuade, and remind tourists about the Tomb of *Guru Sekumpul*. The first step in any enterprise is to create a marketing communication strategy. To promote the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, six communication tactics are utilized, enumerated as follows:

1. Advertising strategy through mass media, social media, outdoor media, and website.

An advertising strategy implemented through mass media, social media, outdoor media, and the website is at the forefront of the Banjar District's Culture and Tourism Office's efforts to enhance pilgrim awareness. Billboards and banners strategically placed in public areas and national/local events organized by the office to enliven *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb's activities constitute the critical components of the advertising message. The impact of advertising on the decision to embark on a pilgrimage is notable. The accessibility and exploration of advertising media present an opportunity for the Promotion section of the office to disseminate information about *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb more widely. Badi'ah, the Head of Tourism Marketing, emphasizes the promotion of *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb through traditional, outdoor, and social media channels.

The incorporation of advertising in religious tourism informs the public about upcoming events, influences visitors to undertake pilgrimages, and creates a contemplative atmosphere during their visits. The advent of social media, offering a convenient and cost-efficient avenue for promotion, has garnered significant enthusiasm within the tourism sector.²⁷ While social media is beneficial for various industries, its indispensability for tourism companies is particularly noteworthy. The utilization of social media has facilitated the promotion of travel destinations, travel packages, and tours, often featuring budget-friendly options. Several studies are advocating for the integration of social media into the operations of tourism companies, emphasizing its potential to enhance business activities.²⁸

This study establishes that advertising promotion effectively heightens the general public's awareness of the religious tourist site *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb. The tourism office effectively disseminates information about the site through the strategic deployment of billboards and banners in various locations and events, both national and local. This promotion attracts visitors from the local vicinity, regions, and countries.

The influential role of advertising in visitors' decisions to explore religious tourist areas underscores the potential for the Culture and Tourism Office of Promotion in Banjar District to leverage this promotional medium and make religious tourism more widely recognized. According to Ari Kusumawati,

²⁷Munandar.

²⁸Muhacir Murat Yeşil, 'The Social Media Factor in the Development and Promotion of Religious Tourism', *Turkish Studies (Elektronik)* 8, no. 7 (2013): 733-44.

the Head of Marketing and Brand Tourism Strategy at the Culture and Tourism Office of Banjar District, the department assists in promotion through advertising in various media and brochures. The Culture and Tourism Office should consistently employ media advertising that directly reaches the public to stimulate tourist visits, including through Instagram media @destinasikasel and @disbudporapar.banjarkab.

Social media platforms have witnessed an unprecedented surge in usage. In 2018, the global estimate of active social media users reached 4.62 billion.²⁹ Survey data indicates that 79% of companies maintain a presence on social media.³⁰ This paradigm shift towards digital marketing underscores the escalating significance of social media platforms in reshaping how retailers promote their products and engage with customers.

The findings of this research, derived from interviews with visitors to the religious site, highlight their desire for enhanced communication and advertising across diverse media channels. Specifically, visitors express the need for improved promotion of religious events within the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb complex to attract more visitors, particularly those from outside the region, along with their families, for a vacation.

Visitor feedback reveals a preference for broader and earlier distribution of information about upcoming religious events at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb complex. This strategy aims to raise awareness among people from outside South Kalimantan, encouraging them to attend these events with their families as a form of vacation. Additionally, the research underscores the need to address certain shortcomings in the current *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb website. While the website provides comprehensive information about packages, prices, facilities, history, location, photos, and testimonials from foreign visitors, it is deemed less user-friendly due to incomplete information, lack of visually appealing graphics, and infrequent updates. A suggested solution involves the creation of a Tourist Map strategically placed at critical locations like airports, terminals, and individual tourist sites to connect and inform visitors about nearby destinations and enhance their geographical orientation. Improving the quality of website design can boost visitor satisfaction.³¹

There is a call for systematic organization of historical data regarding *Guru Sekumpul's* genealogy in a dedicated data bank. Additionally, information

²⁹Roza Tsvetkova, '99 Amazing Social Media Statistics and Facts', <https://www.brandwatch.com/>, 2023, <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/amazing-social-media-statistics-and-facts/#section-2>.

³⁰Carolyn Heller Baird and Gautam Parasnis, 'From Social Media to Social Customer Relationship Management', *Strategy & Leadership* 39, no. 5 (2011): 30-37.

³¹Nicholas. Wilson, Keni. Keni, and Pauline Henriette Pattyranie. Tan, 'The Effect of Website Design Quality and Service Quality on Repurchase Intention in the E-Commerce Industry: A Cross-Continental Analysis', *Gadjah Mada International Journal of Business* 21, no. 2 (2019): 187-222.

about the *Guru's* life and miracles, currently transmitted orally, should be documented or recorded in a book. A website with historical data and links to religious portals is recommended to further promote religious tourism at *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb. This website should offer multilingual translation options to cater to a diverse audience.

2. Word of Mouth Communication Marketing Strategy.

A growing trend is to utilize social media platforms for consumer communication, brand endorsement, and product promotion through digital marketing campaigns and online word-of-mouth.³² The second approach is the word-of-mouth marketing (WoMM) strategy, which relies on providing superior and satisfying services at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, creating a positive spiritual atmosphere for visitors. Delighted by their experiences, visitors often share their encounters with others, contributing to the increasing number of visitors. Through firsthand observations and social media uploads, the community communicates their experiences, broadening the diversity of visitors to the tomb. These narratives shared in face-to-face and online interactions foster a sense of satisfaction, comfort, and the blessings associated with visiting the tomb of a revered figure. Consequently, individuals indirectly promote the religious tourist location to others.

The word-of-mouth marketing strategy is a consumer-dominated channel of marketing communication where the sender is independent of the market³³ directly impacts providing tangible evidence to visitors who undergo spiritual experiences at religious tourist attractions. These shared experiences contribute to a broader acknowledgement of the existence and significance of these religious tourist sites. According to Nanda Soraya, a staff member of the Cultural Division at the Department of Culture and Tourism in Banjar District, visitors who have previously explored a religious tourist attraction often share their experiences with family or acquaintances. This sharing behaviour will likely influence others to plan a visit when they have the time or desire.

Direct response marketing involves traditional promotional packages, such as letters, leaflets, or brochures distributed to target customers, to elicit direct marketing responses, and modern promotional packages with various multimedia options, websites, and e-commerce accessibility for future reference. Through this direct marketing promotion, visitors to the tomb gain direct insight into the tomb complex. Providing comprehensive information and quality service at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb has satisfied visitors. In direct marketing, the

³²Dhruv. Grewal et al., 'The Future of In-Store Technology', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 48 (2020): 96-113.

³³Jo. Brown, Amanda J. Broderick, and Nick. Lee, 'Word of Mouth Communication within Online Communities: Conceptualizing the Online Social Network', *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 21, no. 3 (2007): 2-20.

religious tourism manager at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb also facilitates stands selling Martapura's speciality products.

3. Personal Selling strategy through Exhibitions, Sales of Merchandise & Local Product Stands.

The preeminent facet of communication within business marketing unequivocally resides in personal selling, retaining its fundamental importance. Concurrently, it operates as a resource with a proclivity for expenditure. Evaluations within the industry suggest that notwithstanding the integration of sales automation, the expenditure incurred in executing a solitary sales call is projected to ascend to a noteworthy US\$212.³⁴ This financial condition underscores the inherently costly nature of deploying personal selling methodologies in the prevailing corporate milieu.

The government of South Kalimantan, along with other regions in Indonesia, organizes religious-themed tourism fairs, explicitly directing each regional government to participate actively in the event. The overarching theme revolves around culture, religion, and heritage cities. In response, the relevant department allocates unique stands to promote the tombs in South Kalimantan, including the stand of Banjar District. This national religious tourism fair in Jakarta bolsters various tourist attractions across Indonesia.

Personal selling is an oral or face-to-face promotional tool that generates swift reactions. This selling method prioritizes establishing personal relationships with customers to comprehend their needs and customize the sales pitch accordingly. Personal selling manifests in various forms, such as face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and email or text exchanges. One of its primary advantages lies in providing immediate feedback and an opportunity for the salesperson to address any concerns or objections raised by the customer. It also creates a platform for the salesperson to cultivate trust and build a lasting relationship with the customer, thereby increasing the likelihood of a successful sale.

The concept of face-to-face sales promotion is implemented by the Department of Culture and Tourism of Banjar District for streamlined promotion. Riza Kasransyah, SE, Head of Destination and Development of Tourist Objects of Banjar District, emphasizes the significance of personal selling in marketing, underscoring the ability to gauge people's interest and inclination to visit.

Innovative promotion techniques employed by the Banjarmasin City Cultural and Tourism Office include brochures and exhibition stands. These stands serve as effective channels for disseminating information about tourism in Banjarmasin, attracting visitors to express interest in visiting the sites showcased. Additionally, the office provides locations at the tomb sites for selling

³⁴Michele. Marchetti, 'What a Sales Call Costs', *Sales & Marketing Management* 152, no. 9 (2000): 80-82.

souvenirs, managed by residents. This initiative ensures visitors can readily acquire local products, contributing to an enhanced overall experience and the local economy. According to Andy Pahwanda, this approach aims to boost the interest of tomb visitors in undertaking pilgrimages while indulging in local products.

Under the leadership of Andy Pahwanda, the Department of Culture and Tourism in Banjarmasin has implemented diverse promotional strategies to attract visitors to the city's cultural and religious sites. Among these strategies is establishing exhibition stands and offering a convenient means of disseminating information about tourism in Banjarmasin to visitors. This approach stimulates interest among exhibition attendees and aims to drive them to explore the showcased sites. Furthermore, the department has introduced local souvenir sales points at the tomb locations, managed by the local community, ensuring easy access for visitors to acquire authentic local products. This multifaceted effort is anticipated to heighten the allure of visiting these sites for tourists while concurrently contributing to the local economy.

Tourism marketing serves as a means of promoting travel products and a competitive strategy in an industry heavily reliant on public appeal. Travel agencies employ personal selling to promote tourism in Banjarmasin, requiring a profound understanding of potential tourists' needs, preferences, and motivations and the specific requirements of individual travellers. Effective communication strategies emphasize clearly understanding the target audience and facilitating practical marketing efforts.

The personal selling strategy implemented by POKDARWIS is centred on disseminating *Sapta Pesona*. Spearheaded by the Department of Environmental Health, Hygiene, and Gardening, along with the Department of Tourism and Culture Promotion, this strategy aims to attract increased tourist visits. The collaboration with various youth organizations leverages their resources and time, emphasizing direct engagement in promotional efforts.

4. Public Relations Strategy

In promoting regional tourism, especially in religious tourism, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Banjar District employs a public relations strategy focused on cultivating and highlighting the potential and virtues experienced by visitors when exploring the tombs of scholars. As an advocate for religious tourism, the department endeavours to foster positive relationships with the media (media relations) and collaborates with the community and stakeholders as crucial partners in promoting religious tourism in Banjar District. Addressing human relations, Abdul Hamid, the Secretary of the Department of Culture and Tourism of South Kalimantan, has directed each region to promote and establish partnerships to elevate tourism promotion in South Kalimantan on a massive scale, with youth organizations like *Genpi Kalsel*

actively involved in socializing religious tourism to universities in Kalsel through data collection of historical and religious sites in South Kalimantan in 2019.

5. Strategy for Improving Human Resource Quality, Participation of POKDARWIS and Genpi.

Internal initiatives for enhancing the quality of human resources within the agency and external initiatives directed at the community involve the Department's commitment to improving the participation of the Religious Tourism Care Group (POKDARWIS) and the Indonesian Charm Generation (Genpi). This initiative includes training programs designed to equip POKDARWIS and Genpi with the necessary skills to promote religious tourism areas in general effectively. Developing a religious tourism strategy is further fortified through the active engagement of POKDARWIS and Genpi. These communities participate in various activities initiated by the Department, ranging from training sessions to hands-on activities such as cleanliness drives, community-building initiatives, and security enhancement efforts.

Simultaneously, in digitizing religious tourism marketing, the Department of Culture and Tourism of Banjar District, in collaboration with POKDARWIS and Genpi, should spearhead a digitalization movement for religious tourism at *Guru Sekumpul Tomb*. This strategy aligns with adapting marketing communication strategies to the digital era. Besides its efficiency, such digital promotional activities will be meticulously documented in the digital space. The impact of digital marketing on tourist visits has been significant at the national level. Enhancing the accessibility of information on social media platforms can augment users' comfort level with these platforms and their role in seeking travel references, thereby strengthening the appeal of religious tourism. Digital marketing applications encompass websites, social media channels, online advertisements, web forums, and mobile applications. The Department only needs to allocate budgets, secure expertise, and provide training for enthusiasts of religious tourism in the region.

6. Infrastructure Enhancement Plan

The sixth strategic thrust involves upgrading facilities and infrastructure within the tomb complex. Following field observations, the researcher has appraised *Guru Sekumpul Tomb* as excellent, well-organized, comfortable, and tranquil. The tomb buildings and facilities are comprehensive and efficiently arranged. Central government support is enlisted for improving facilities and infrastructure at the Tomb Complex, with additional contributions from external entities dedicated to maintaining and beautifying the *Guru Sekumpul Tomb* tourist attraction, thereby solidifying its status as a unique historical icon.

Drawing on the findings of the investigation, data has been acquired pertaining to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in the marketing communication strategy for religious tourism at the *Guru Sekumpul Tomb*:

Table 2. SWOT Key Factors

Category	KeyFactors
Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The substantial number of pilgrims visiting the <i>Guru Sekumpul</i> Tomb. 2. Significant economic support to the local community around the <i>Guru Sekumpul</i> Tomb. 3. Strategically located in proximity to the main provincial road. 4. Effortless access to religious tourism sites. 5. Well-maintained conditions, providing a comfortable and tranquil atmosphere for pilgrimage, dhikr, and tahlil. 6. Government support, granting autonomy to the management (<i>Guru Sekumpul's</i> family) for tomb and majlis activities. 7. Competent human resources proficient in managing religious-based activities.
Weaknesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack on technology proficiency for widespread information dissemination, currently limited in scope. 2. Limited government funding, posing challenges to ensuring optimal sustainability in tourism management. 3. Rely on voluntary community funding.
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alignment with the development of Conventional Tourism Destinations in Banjar District. 2. Popularity of shopping centers (<i>Permata, Intan, Berlian</i>) in <i>SerambiMekkah</i> 3. Comprehensive availability of land and air transportation. 4. Predominantly Muslim population in Banjar District.
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The impact of modernization on the lifestyle of Banjar District residents, necessitating the cultivation of a more religious social life. 2. Threat from modern gathering places (cafes, malls) influencing young individuals with worldly pleasures. 3. Technological advancements contributing to increased lethargy and reduced outdoor activity. 4. Emergence of new non-religious tourism destinations.

Sources: Processed data, 2023

The strategic framework applied in the marketing communication initiatives for the religious tourism destination Makam Sekumpul is meticulously devised through a comprehensive SWOT analysis. This strategic approach unfolds into four distinct alternative strategies, each meticulously tailored to navigate the intricate landscape of opportunities, challenges, strengths, and weaknesses. These strategies are delineated as follows: the Strength-Opportunities Strategy (SO), Weaknesses-

Opportunities Strategy (WO), Strengths-Threats Strategy (ST), and Weaknesses-Threats Strategy (WT).

The crux of the Strength-Opportunities Strategy (SO) revolves around an intensive focus on product packaging. This intricate approach employs a spectrum of sophisticated marketing communication techniques to leverage the inherent strengths of the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb and capitalize on the unfolding opportunities within the religious tourism domain. A pivotal aspect of this strategy involves curating an environment that is tranquil during pilgrimages and dedicated to fulfilling the intricate spiritual exigencies and aspirations of the diverse array of visitors.

The establishment of a tranquil and comfortable ambience during pilgrimages holds multifaceted significance. Primarily, it enriches the pilgrimage experience, especially for those driven by religious motives, fostering a more profound sense of reverence and transcendence. Additionally, by meticulously crafting an atmosphere that is soothing and peaceful, the strategy aims to mitigate the inherent stresses associated with travel to an unfamiliar destination, thereby enhancing the overall sacralized enjoyment of the pilgrimage experience.

The motivations and requirements of pilgrimages are inherently intertwined with the satisfaction derived from tourism experiences. Furthermore, the fulfillment of these needs through travel is the ultimate objective for all enterprises operating in this sector. Pilgrimages satisfaction, being inherently intricate, becomes a discernible process when aligning the symbolic attributes of a destination with the self-concept of the traveler, thereby influencing the satisfaction derived from the pilgrimages journey. Several scholars have endeavored to pinpoint factors associated with tourist satisfaction through a utilitarian lens.³⁵

Safety and security are integral dimensions influenced by creating a comfortable and serene pilgrimage atmosphere. A meticulously maintained and organized site minimizes the risk of accidents and untoward incidents, ensuring the safety of the visitors and the local community. Furthermore, a serene environment contributes to a reduced likelihood of criminal activities, thereby fortifying the safety and security parameters of the pilgrimage.

Sustaining a comfortable and tranquil pilgrimage atmosphere requires continuous investment in the maintenance of the site, coupled with the provision of indispensable facilities and services for visitors. These encompass immaculate restroom facilities, well-maintained food and beverage vendors, and other amenities to elevate the overall comfort and enjoyment of the pilgrimage. Providing robust security and emergency services constitutes indispensable components to ensure a safe and secure pilgrimage experience.

³⁵A. Pizam, Y. Neumann, and R. Arie, 'Dimensions of Tourist Satisfaction with a Destination Area', *Annals of Tourism Research* 5, no. 3 (1978): 314-22.

The pilgrimages services, constituting a spectrum of services encompassing transportation, accommodation, tours, and other tangible elements, undeniably impacts tourists' satisfaction and fosters their loyalty.³⁶ Nevertheless, more intangible spiritual experiences, such as adventures, cityscapes, and natural beauties, though significant, pose challenges in terms of measurement and control.³⁷ The strategy underscores the profound significance of fostering a palpable sense of attachment among visitors, as this emotional connection plays a pivotal role in visitor retention. Thus, maintaining the serene ambience around the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb complex and implementing innovative solutions for facility improvement become imperative components of this strategy.

Additionally, integrating cutting-edge digital technology through creative product packaging on diverse digital platforms related to the *Guru Sekumpul* pilgrimage is vital to augment awareness and interest among the broader public. Importantly, this digital media strategy is not confined to conventional social media platforms but extends to encompass widely used mediums such as YouTube, ensuring a more expansive and resonant reach both within Indonesia and internationally.

Formulating more efficacious programs and executing broader promotional initiatives for the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb represents an alternative strategy to surmounting constraints and maximizing opportunities within religious tourism. Such endeavours would not only augment the competitive standing of the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb as a pilgrimage destination but also contribute to elevating its overall appeal. Furthermore, initiatives to cultivate awareness and impart knowledge to the community and tourism managers on the significance of responsible tourism, particularly within the Pokdarwis of Kabupaten Banjar, can be instituted to address existing limitations and capitalize on emergent opportunities.

Moreover, implementing more expansive promotional efforts emerges as a pivotal strategy in augmenting the visibility and allure of the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb as a religious tourism destination. This objective can be achieved through various channels, encompassing conventional advertising modalities such as print and television campaigns and contemporary digital marketing techniques like social media, email marketing, and search engine optimization. Moreover, forging collaborations with local stakeholders and entities, including the Pokdarwis of Kabupaten Banjar, is indispensable to propagate the destination effectively and instil a communal sense of ownership and vested interest in the prosperity of the tourism sector.

In a broader context, executing more extensive promotional endeavours is a critical tactic for bolstering the renown and economic viability of the *Guru Sekumpul*

³⁶Milan. Ambrogi and B. Lotriani, 'Impact of a Mediating Role of Repurchase Intentions on Consumer Retention', *Traffic & Transportation* 21, no. 5 (2009): 341-48.

³⁷Milan. Ambrogi and Rok Ovsenik, 'Tourist Origin and Spiritual Motives', *Management: Journal of Contemporary Management* 16, no. 2 (2011): 71-86.

Tomb within religious tourism. It is imperative to formulate a comprehensive marketing plan delineating specific objectives, target demographics, and quantifiable outcomes to ensure the effective implementation of these promotional campaigns. Additionally, conducting thorough market research to comprehend the aspirations and inclinations of potential tourists becomes paramount for tailoring promotional initiatives that resonate with the target audience, thereby ensuring their efficacy.

Undertaking more expansive promotional initiatives is imperative to ameliorate inherent deficiencies and harness the latent potential of religious tourism at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb. This necessitates the establishment of strategic partnerships with the central government, particularly in streamlining access to pivotal public amenities such as transportation for tourists. Simultaneously, a concerted focus on educational endeavours is indispensable to augment awareness and appreciation of religious tourism. Additionally, optimizing the intrinsic natural resources and distinctive attractions within Kabupaten Banjar can significantly enhance the allure of the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, enticing a broader spectrum of tourists. These systematic efforts are geared towards augmenting the overall infrastructure of the religious tourism site, rendering it more appealing and accessible to a diverse range of visitors.

In implementing more comprehensive promotional endeavours for the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, fostering collaborative alliances with the central government remains pivotal to streamlining access to indispensable public facilities. This encompasses providing transportation services to facilitate seamless tourist travel and robust promotional and marketing endeavours targeting religious tourism destinations. Furthermore, elevating awareness and understanding of religious tourism is imperative to sustain a consistent influx of visitors to the site. Additionally, the strategic optimization of the intrinsic natural potential and distinctive features of other tourism destinations within Kabupaten Banjar augment the allure of the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb, fostering increased tourist interest. These strategic measures are aimed at fortifying the religious tourism site's overall infrastructure, making it more attractive and easily accessible to diverse tourists.

Transitioning to a Weakness-Threats strategy, implementing more extensive promotional efforts remains pivotal in addressing inherent limitations and capitalizing on potential opportunities within religious tourism at the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb. This necessitates fostering collaborative ties with the central government to facilitate access to critical public amenities, notably transportation services for tourists, while concurrently intensifying educational initiatives to promote religious tourism. Simultaneously, harnessing the potential of natural resources and other distinctive tourist attractions in Kabupaten Banjar heightens tourists' inclination to visit the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb.

Cultivating innovative knowledge and skills extends beyond management and administration, encompassing the local community and tourists. This synergy is essential for proficient site management, fostering global competitiveness, and

creating a positive visitor experience. Examples of innovative knowledge and skills include the integration of advanced technologies like virtual and augmented reality to enrich the visitor experience and enhance information accessibility. Implementing sustainable practices, such as eco-tourism and responsible tourism, in managing religious tourist sites mitigates tourism's environmental and community impact. Furthermore, robust human resource management, realized through comprehensive training and development programs, ensures that staff at religious tourist sites possess the requisite knowledge and skills to deliver superior services. In sum, incorporating innovative knowledge and skills in managing religious tourist sites contributes to their success and sustainability.

Moreover, the strategic marketing and promotion of religious tourism are perceived as pivotal elements for the efficacious advancement of tourism. Consequently, there has been a noteworthy escalation in tourism activities, encompassing both domestic and international visitors, across various objectives, with a notable surge in religious and spiritual pursuits.³⁸ The quest for spirituality is emerging as a significant driver for travel, with an increasing number of individuals viewing tourist journeys as a potent avenue for self-discovery. Consequently, there is a heightened demand for services within the realm of spiritual and mental rejuvenation tourism. Presently, every traveler harbors a desire to enhance their well-being and sense of self. In essence, the natural surroundings, wherein contemporary tourists engage with others, serves to facilitate their personal development, intensify their experiential depth, and expedite their spiritual convalescence.

Conclusion

The Strength-Opportunities Strategy devised for the *Guru Sekumpul* Tomb centers around strategic product packaging and marketing communication techniques. This approach aims to harness the inherent strengths of the site while capitalizing on opportunities within the realm of religious tourism. The strategy places paramount importance on cultivating a serene and comfortable pilgrimage ambiance to augment the overall visitor experience, ensuring both safety and security. Moreover, it underscores the significance of fostering a sense of attachment among visitors and leveraging digital media platforms for promotional endeavors. The strategy further advocates for the implementation of expansive promotional initiatives, forging collaborations with local stakeholders, and optimizing natural resources in Kabupaten Banjar. Additionally, the transition to a Weakness-Threats strategy is acknowledged, wherein the continued emphasis on extensive promotional efforts and collaboration with the central government persists. Ultimately, integrating innovative knowledge and skills into the management of religious tourist

³⁸Angelo, Nicolaides and Anton Grobler, 'Spirituality, Wellness Tourism and Quality of Life', *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure* 6, no. 1 (2017): 1-37.

sites is deemed indispensable for their enduring success and sustainability, culminating in a spiritually gratifying pilgrimage experience.

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