

Behaviour of Freelance Tour Guides in Promoting Ijen Crater Packages to French Tourists

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Abstract: This study aims to identify the behavior of French-speaking freelance tour guides in promoting tour packages to Ijen Crater, Banyuwangi, and measure the effectiveness of the digital marketing strategies used. The research methodology employs a descriptive qualitative approach with primary data sources consisting of in-depth interviews with 5 freelance tour guides and 5 French tourists. The results indicate that freelance tour guides specialize in adventure activities and possess deep cultural knowledge. French tourists are attracted to the "Blue Fire" phenomenon at Ijen Crater, as well as cultural experiences and outdoor activities. Effective digital marketing significantly impacts increasing tourist interest and visits. However, technical constraints and limited knowledge of digital marketing pose major challenges. This study provides significant contributions to the development of more effective and targeted tourism marketing strategies.

Keywords: Adventure tourism, blue fire phenomenon, tourist behavior, travel guides, marketing effectiveness

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi perilaku pemandu wisata freelance berbahasa Perancis dalam mempromosikan paket wisata ke Kawah Ijen, Banyuwangi, dan mengukur efektivitas strategi pemasaran digital yang digunakan. Metodologi penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan sumber data primer berupa wawancara mendalam dengan 5 pemandu wisata freelance dan 5 wisatawan Perancis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemandu wisata freelance memiliki spesialisasi dalam kegiatan petualangan dan pengetahuan budaya yang mendalam. Wisatawan Perancis tertarik pada fenomena "Blue Fire" di Kawah Ijen, serta pengalaman budaya dan aktivitas luar ruangan. Pemasaran digital yang efektif sangat berpengaruh dalam meningkatkan minat dan kunjungan wisatawan. Namun, kendala teknis dan keterbatasan pengetahuan dalam pemasaran digital menjadi tantangan utama. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam pengembangan strategi pemasaran wisata yang lebih efektif dan terarah.

Kata Kunci: Wisata petualangan, fenomena api biru, perilaku wisatawan, pemandu wisata, efektivitas pemasaran

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the economic sectors that significantly contributes to Indonesia's national income (Prabowo, 2009). Java, as one of the main islands in Indonesia, has a variety of attractive tourist destinations, such as Ijen Crater in Banyuwangi with its diverse culture and history. The Ijen Crater Nature Tourism Park management in Banyuwangi, East Java, reported that during the Christmas 2023 and New Year 2024 holiday period, from December 24, 2023, to January 2, 2024, there were around 15,000 tourist visits, averaging about 1,500 visitors per day.

Mount Ijen, also known as Ijen Crater, is one of the active volcanoes located within a conservation area, specifically a nature reserve. It has an elevation of 2,443 meters above sea level, with caldera walls reaching heights of 300-500 meters. The volcano has erupted four times in the years 1796, 1817, 1913, and 1936. Mount Ijen consists of the Ijen crater and its plateau. The Ijen crater is home to the largest acidic crater lake in the world, capable of producing 36 million cubic meters of sulphur and hydrogen chloride, covering an area of approximately 5,466 hectares. The lake has a zero degree of acidity and a depth of 200 meters, showcasing extraordinary beauty with its turquoise sulphur lake, adding a dramatic and elegant touch.

Another rare beauty is the phenomenon of blue fire, which only appears in the early hours between 2:00 and 4:00 AM. It is called blue fire because the flames emitted by the crater are blue in colour. This blue fire phenomenon makes Ijen a favourite tourist destination, attracting visitors from around the world (Ariwibowo, 2024)

A freelance tour guide is a professional who independently offers guided tours and travel experiences to individuals or groups. Unlike tour guides employed by travel

agencies or tour companies, freelance tour guides operate as self-employed entrepreneurs. They have the flexibility to design their own tour packages, set their schedules, and determine their pricing (Alazaizeh, Jamaliah, Mgonja, & Ababneh, 2019)

French tourists, one of the potential segments of international tourists, show high interest in destinations offering authentic cultural and natural experiences (Cohen, 1985). However, despite this high interest, the number of French tourists visiting Ijen crater, Banyuwangi is still not optimal and also high potential demand. One factor that can increase visits is effective promotion, particularly through French-speaking tour guides who can bridge communication and promote more effectively (Hansen & Mossberg, 2016).

Digital marketing has proven to be a powerful tool in promoting tourist destinations globally (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). However, how French-speaking tour guides utilize digital marketing to promote overland programs to Ijen crater has not been widely studied. This research is crucial to identify the behaviour of tour guides in using digital marketing, measure the effectiveness of the strategies used, and understand the challenges faced. This will provide valuable insights for developing more effective and targeted marketing strategies.

Freelance tour guides need to sell Ijen crater tour packages to French tourists due to the large market potential, the unique and attractive destination, and the opportunity to provide authentic cultural and adventure experiences (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Additionally, effective digital marketing strategies, contributions to the local economy, financial benefits, and opportunities to build an international reputation are strong reasons why promoting

these tour packages is crucial. By leveraging all these factors, freelance tour guides can enhance their business while supporting the development of tourism in Indonesia.

However, the promotion carried out by French-speaking freelance tour guides through digital marketing remains limited. Many of them have not fully understood the potential of digital marketing in reaching a broader French tourist audience. Moreover, technological constraints and limited knowledge of digital marketing strategies are also major obstacles.

Understanding the behavior of French-speaking freelance tour guides involves exploring their use of digital marketing to promote overland tours to Ijen Crater, focusing on the most commonly used digital platforms and the types of content they produce (Khartishvili et al., 2019). This also includes evaluating the effectiveness of these digital marketing strategies and determining their impact on attracting and increasing visits by French tourists to Ijen Crater. Furthermore, it involves identifying the challenges these freelance tour guides face in digital marketing and offering recommendations to overcome these obstacles, thereby improving their digital promotion capabilities (Jaminyasa et al., 2017; Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2019).

This research is expected to provide significant contributions to the development of more effective and targeted tourism marketing strategies and to help increase the number of French tourists visiting tourist destinations in Java, particularly Ijen crater.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Importance of Digital Marketing in Tourism

Digital marketing was first recognized in the early 1990s and began to become the main strategy that is widely applied in the

business world in 2014. Digital marketing is the embodiment of the application, use or utilization of technology in the marketing process, which occurs in several stages, as follows: New technologies emerge and are put into use, technology becomes known and prioritized in the world of marketing, and innovative marketers explore and make breakthroughs to improve the functionality or usability of technology in achieving the target marketing reach (Irfani et al., 2020)

Digital marketing has several digital marketing channels, namely: (1) marketing affiliation; (2) display marketing; (3) e-mail marketing; (4) search engine marketing; (5) social media marketing; and (6) online public relations. Digital Marketing has a very influential and beneficial effect on consumers and consumers producers. The use of digital marketing can increase customer loyalty (Gracia et al., 2019). Another benefit of digital marketing is product and service information to be transparent, easy to do product information updating, comparative analysis with more competitors easy, and cheaper in cost because the promotion is through digital media (Amalina, 2019).

2.2. French Tourists' Preferences

French tourists are particularly drawn to destinations that offer authentic cultural and natural experiences. The unique attractions of Ijen Crater, including its "Blue Fire" phenomenon, cater to this preference. However, the effective promotion of such destinations requires understanding and leveraging the cultural nuances and expectations of French tourists (Solomon, 2018)

Kotler and Keller (2009) state that there are three patterns of preference that can be formed: (1) Homogeneous preferences indicate a market where all consumers have almost the same preferences, markets do not

show natural segments; (2) Diffused preferences, consumers with this preference have very varied preferences. If there are several brands in the market, each wants to position themselves in the competition space and show real differences to adjust to differences in consumer preferences; (3) Group preferences are generated when natural market segments arise from groups of consumers with the same preferences.

2.3.Behaviour of Freelance Tour Guides

Freelance tour guides play a crucial role in promoting Ijen Crater. They employ various digital marketing strategies to attract French tourists, including: utilizing storytelling (Hansen & Mossberg, 2016), freelance tour guides share personal and unique adventure experiences at Ijen Crater through narratives that resonate well with their audience. This approach is complemented by the use of high-quality visuals, including photos and videos that showcase the natural beauty and cultural aspects of the destination. Additionally, testimonials from previous tourists are leveraged to build trust and credibility (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009). These strategies are implemented across multiple platforms such as websites, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to reach a broad audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

2.4.Promotion Obstacles

Despite the potential benefits, several obstacles hinder the effective promotion of Ijen crater by freelance tour guides, freelance tour guides face several challenges in promoting overland programs to Ijen Crater. One significant issue is unstable internet connections, especially in remote areas, which limit their ability to consistently upload and share content. This technical barrier can significantly hinder the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts.

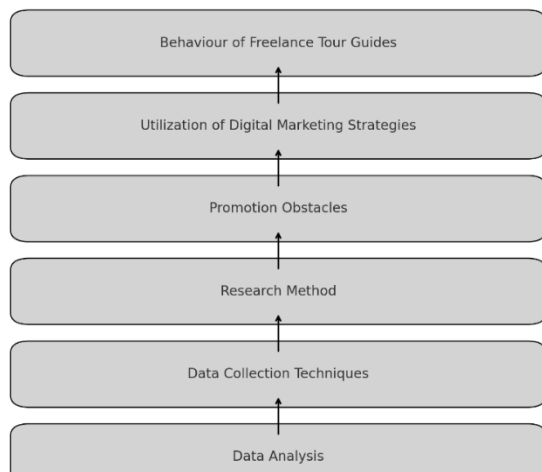
Additionally, many freelance tour guides lack adequate training in digital marketing strategies, making it challenging to fully utilize these tools. The need for proper training and skill development in digital marketing is crucial for enhancing their promotional capabilities.

Adapting promotional content to fit the cultural preferences and expectations of French tourists is another challenge. Creating culturally relevant content requires a deep understanding of the target audience. This involves not only linguistic adaptation but also an appreciation of the cultural nuances and interests specific to French tourists. Successfully addressing these challenges can lead to more effective and engaging promotional strategies, ultimately attracting more French tourists to Ijen Crater.

3. METHOD

Research approach on descriptive qualitative and data sources are primary using in-depth interviews with 5 French-speaking freelance tour guides who promote overland programs to Ijen Crater and 5 French tourist. Secondary is using analysis of digital marketing content used by these tour guides (Cohen, 1985).

Data collection techniques are in-depth interviews, observation and digital content analysis (websites, social media). Data Analysis are using coding interview data, thematic analysis and data triangulation to enhance research validity. Flow chart diagram of method



Source: authors, 2023

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Result

The informants for freelance French tour guides consist of 4 men and 1 woman, aged 29-38 years. Three are from Bali, one from Yogyakarta, and the woman is from Solo. Four of them hold a Bachelor's degree (S1), and one has an Associate degree (D3). They have self-taught digital skills. Three learned French through formal courses, one learned from friends, and another from a sibling. They specialize in adventure activities and possess deep cultural knowledge to explain tourist attractions. Freelance tour guides find their work more convenient than being employed by a travel agency due to several reasons:

a. Flexible schedules

"I enjoy the freedom to set my own working hours and choose the tours I guide, which allows me to balance work and personal life more effectively" (Sudarta, Male, 32 years guide)".

b. Control over itineraries

"Designing customized tours based on my expertise and clients' preferences leads to higher satisfaction and often repeat

business" (Wirawan, Male, 29 years guide)".

c. Higher earnings potential

"As a freelancer, I can charge higher rates for specialized, private tours and retain a larger portion of the fee since there's no middleman" (Setyaningsih, Female, 35 years guide)".

d. Direct client relationships

"Building direct relationships with clients not only leads to higher tips but also enhances client trust and satisfaction" (Prabowo, Male, 38 years guide)".

e. Skill diversification

"Managing various aspects of my business, such as marketing, booking, and customer service, helps me develop a broader skill set" (Ardana, Male, 35 years guide)".

f. Creative freedom

"Having the creative freedom to develop unique and innovative tour experiences sets me apart from standard travel agency offerings" (Sudarta, Male, 32 years guide)".

g. Reduced overheads

"Lower operational costs, as I don't have to maintain an office or pay agency fees, allow me to price my services competitively while maintaining profitability" (Setyaningsih, Female, 31 years guide)".

h. Job satisfaction

"The autonomy, flexibility, and personal connections I develop with clients contribute to higher job satisfaction and the ability to pursue my passion for guiding on my own terms" (Wirawan, Male, 29 years guide)".

4.1.1 Challenges and Considerations

While freelancing offers many benefits, it also comes with challenges such as inconsistent income, the need for self-promotion, and the responsibility of managing all aspects of the business. Freelancers must be proactive in acquiring new clients and maintaining high service standards to succeed in the competitive tourism industry.

The French tourist informants who purchased tour packages to Ijen Crater consist of 3 men and 2 women, aged 29-38 years, all holding at least a Bachelor's degree. Their occupations include two executives, a marketing manager, an engineer, a teacher, and a freelance writer. Their motivations for traveling include adventure and nature tours (3 people), cultural and culinary experiences (1 person), and educational trips to museums and historical sites (1 person). Three travel with family, while two prefer solo trips or traveling with small groups of friends.

4.1.2 Factors Motivating French Tourists to Choose Overland Programs to Ijen Crater

Based on in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, several key factors were identified that motivate French tourists to choose overland programs to Ijen Crater promoted by tour guides in Bali.

a. Unique Destinations

French tourists are attracted to the unique destinations offered in this overland program. Ijen Crater with its "Blue Fire" phenomenon is the main attraction.

Sophie Delacroix (2024): "I am very interested in the 'Blue Fire' phenomenon at Ijen which cannot be found anywhere else."

b. Authentic Cultural Experiences

French tourists seek authentic and profound cultural experiences. This overland program offers the opportunity to interact with local communities, understand their culture and traditions, and enjoy regional culinary delights.

c. Adventure and Outdoor Activities

Activities such as hiking at Ijen Crater are significant attractions. French tourists tend to seek physical activities and challenges that provide unforgettable experiences.

Isabelle Lefevre (2024): "Hiking at Ijen was one of my best experiences. The challenge of climbing and the breath-taking views were truly impressive."

d. Positive Reviews and Recommendations

Positive reviews from other tourists and recommendations from friends or family play a crucial role in motivating French tourists to choose this program.

Lucien Boudreaux (2024): "I chose this program because of the many positive reviews I read on social media and recommendations from friends."

e. Engaging Digital Content

Engaging digital content, including photos and videos depicting the natural beauty and activities involved, is very effective in attracting tourists' interest. The storytelling strategy used by tour guides also helps build emotional connections with potential tourists.

Camille Dupont (2024): "Beautiful Instagram posts and travel videos made me really want to experience this overland program myself."

4.2 Discussion

This research shows that the motivation of French tourists in choosing overland programs to Ijen Crater is influenced by various interrelated factors. The uniqueness of the destination, cultural experience, outdoor adventure, positive recommendations, and attractive digital content all contribute to shaping tourist decisions.

4.2.1. Effective Promotion Strategies

French-speaking tour guides in Bali can maximize the promotion of this overland program by emphasizing the uniqueness and authenticity of the experiences offered. Using storytelling to share previous tourists' experiences and visualizations showcasing natural beauty can enhance the appeal of promotions. It is also important to collect and display positive reviews from tourists who have participated in the program and encourage them to recommend it to friends and family (Sari, 2019).

4.2.2 Adaptation to Cultural Preferences

A deep understanding of the cultural preferences of French tourists allows tour guides to tailor promotional content to be more relevant and appealing. For example, using French in digital content and emphasizing specific cultural aspects that are interesting to French tourists.

4.2.3 Enhancing Tourist Experience

Ensuring that this overland program provides experiences that meet tourists' expectations is key to obtaining positive reviews and recommendations. Focusing on the quality of service, safety, and comfort will help increase tourist satisfaction. This research provides important insights for tour guides and overland program organizers about the factors that motivate French tourists. By leveraging these insights, they can develop more effective promotion strategies and attract more French tourists to tourist destinations in Indonesia.

4.2.4 Tour Guide Behavior in Digital Marketing

a. Content Strategies Used

French-speaking tour guides use narrative storytelling in their promotions to attract tourists' attention. They tell personal and unique adventure experiences at Ijen Crater. Example: "Following in the footsteps of climbers at Ijen Crater at sunrise is an unforgettable experience" . High-quality photos and videos of tourist destinations are an integral part of content strategy. Visuals showcasing the natural beauty and local culture are often used to captivate potential tourists . Tour guides also leverage positive reviews from previous tourists. These testimonials help build trust and credibility among potential tourists. For example, reviews about friendly service and in-depth knowledge of the destination .

b. Platforms Used

Websites are often used as information hubs providing comprehensive details about the overland program. This includes itineraries, prices, and contact information. Instagram is used to share photos and short videos, as well as stories highlighting daily activities and journey highlights. Facebook is used to reach a wider audience through

posts, events, and discussion groups. Longer travel videos are uploaded to YouTube to provide a more in-depth depiction of the overland experience .

c. Posting Frequency and Timing

The average posting frequency is three to four times a week. Tour guides strive to post at times when engagement tends to be high, such as in the evening when more people access social media .

4.2.5 Promotion Effectiveness

a. Engagement Rate

Tour guides report high engagement rates on their posts, with many likes, shares, and comments from potential tourists. For example, posts about the "Blue Fire" at Ijen Crater often receive thousands of likes and hundreds of comments .

b. Increase in Inquiries and Bookings

After intensively using digital marketing, there has been a significant increase in inquiries and bookings. Some guides report a 30% increase in inquiries after effective promotional campaigns on social media (Jaminyasa et al., 2017; Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2019).

c. Feedback from French Tourists

Feedback from French tourists is generally positive. They appreciate clear and comprehensive information as well as attractive visualizations. Some tourists mentioned that they decided to travel after seeing posts on social media.

4.2.6 Challenges Faced

a. Technological Barriers

Tour guides face technical challenges such as unstable internet connections, especially when in remote locations. This affects their ability to upload content consistently.

b. Limited Knowledge and Skills in Digital Marketing

Not all tour guides have adequate knowledge of digital marketing strategies. Many of them are self-taught and need further training to maximize their digital marketing potential.

c. Cultural Adaptation in Promotional Content

Adapting promotional content to fit the culture and preferences of French tourists is a challenge. Tour guides must ensure that their content is relevant and appealing to the French market, which has different tastes and expectations compared to tourists from other countries. French-speaking tour guides play an important role in promoting overland programs to Ijen Crater through digital marketing. They use various content strategies such as storytelling, visualization, and testimonials, and utilize platforms such as websites, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. However, they face technical challenges and limited knowledge in digital marketing (Jaminyasa et al., 2017; Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2019). With proper training and technological support, the effectiveness of promotions can be increased, which in turn can attract more French tourists to these destinations .

5. Conclusion

Based on in-depth interviews and qualitative analysis, several key factors were identified that motivate French tourists to choose overland programs to Ijen Crater promoted by tour guides in Bali. These factors include:

French tourists are attracted to the overland programs to Ijen Crater primarily due to the unique destinations offered, with the "Blue Fire" phenomenon at Ijen Crater being a major draw. This phenomenon, which is rare and captivating, significantly enhances the appeal of the destination (Priatmoko et al., 2023). Moreover, these tourists seek authentic and profound cultural experiences. The overland programs provide opportunities to interact with local communities, understand their culture and traditions, and enjoy regional culinary delights, thus offering a rich cultural immersion (Priatmoko et al., 2023).

Adventure and outdoor activities such as hiking at Ijen Crater are also significant attractions for French tourists. They tend to seek physical activities and challenges that provide unforgettable experiences, adding to the adventure appeal of the programs (Priatmoko et al., 2023). Additionally, positive reviews from other tourists and recommendations from friends or family play a crucial role in motivating French tourists to choose these programs. Testimonials featuring positive experiences instil trust and confidence in the quality of the program, making it more appealing (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009; Priatmoko et al., 2023).

Engaging digital content, including photos and videos depicting the natural beauty and activities involved, is very effective in attracting tourists' interest. The storytelling strategy used by tour guides helps build emotional connections with potential tourists, making the promotions

more compelling and appealing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Priatmoko et al., 2023). By leveraging these factors, tour guides can develop more effective promotional strategies to attract French tourists to Ijen Crater.

Recommendations and positive reviews

Positive reviews from other tourists and recommendations from friends or family play a crucial role in motivating French tourists to choose this program. Testimonials featuring positive experiences instil trust and confidence in the quality of the program.

Attractive promotion and digital content engaging digital content, including photos and videos depicting the natural beauty and activities involved, is very effective in attracting tourists' interest. The storytelling strategy used by tour guides also helps build emotional connections with potential tourists.

5.1. Limitations of the Research

While this research provides valuable insights into the factors motivating French tourists to choose overland programs to Ijen Crater, it is not without limitations. One significant limitation is the sample size and demographic. The study focuses on a small group of French tourists, which may not fully represent the broader population of French travelers. Additionally, the research primarily relies on qualitative data from in-depth interviews, which, while rich in detail, may lack generalizability to a larger audience (Priatmoko et al., 2023).

Another limitation is the geographic focus on Bali as the starting point for these overland tours. This focus might not capture the experiences and preferences of French tourists starting their journeys from other locations in Indonesia. The reliance on self-reported data from tour guides and tourists also introduces potential biases, as respondents might provide socially desirable

answers rather than fully accurate representations of their experiences and opinions (Priatmoko et al., 2023).

5.2. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should aim to address these limitations by including a larger and more diverse sample of French tourists to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the geographic scope to include tourists starting their overland tours from different regions in Indonesia could provide a more comprehensive understanding of tourist motivations and preferences.

Quantitative methods could complement the qualitative approach used in this study to validate and generalize the findings. Surveys with a broader sample size can help quantify the importance of various motivational factors and their impact on tourists' decision-making processes.

Additionally, future studies could explore the long-term impact of digital marketing strategies on tourist behavior and satisfaction. Investigating how different types of digital content influence tourists' decisions and experiences over time would provide deeper insights into effective marketing practices.

Furthermore, examining the role of other demographic factors such as age, income level, and previous travel experiences could offer a more nuanced understanding of what drives French tourists to choose specific overland programs. This comprehensive approach would help tour guides and program organizers develop more targeted and effective marketing strategies to attract French tourists to Ijen Crater and other destinations in Indonesia.

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