

Tourist Motivation and Viral Marketing as Determinants of Destination Interest: Evidence from Lambangan Pauno Beach

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Abstrak

This study aims to analyse the effect of viral marketing and tourist motivation on visiting interest, both partially and simultaneously. Conducted at Lambangan Pauno Beach in Banggai Laut Regency, the research adopts a quantitative approach with data collected through questionnaires. A total of 150 respondents were selected using the Cochran formula, and the data were analysed using multiple linear regression. The results show that viral marketing does not have a significant partial effect on visiting interest (sig. 0.412 > 0.05), while tourist motivation has a positive and significant influence (sig. 0.000 < 0.05). However, when examined simultaneously, both viral marketing and tourist motivation significantly affect visiting interest (sig. 0.000 < 0.05), with tourist motivation emerging as the more dominant factor. The study concludes that tourists' motivation is the primary driver behind interest in visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach, whereas viral marketing alone does not significantly influence visitation interest. The research is limited in scope, focusing only on viral marketing and tourist motivation without considering other potential influencing factors such as service quality, accessibility, or available facilities. Nonetheless, the findings offer valuable insights for tourism managers, marketers, and local government agencies by highlighting the importance of enhancing tourist motivation to increase visitation interest. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader fields of tourism market.

Kata Kunci: *Viral Marketing, Tourist Motivation, Interest in Visiting*

Abstract

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh pemasaran viral dan motivasi wisatawan terhadap minat berkunjung, baik secara parsial maupun simultan. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di Pantai Lambangan Pauno, Kabupaten Banggai Laut, dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 150 responden yang ditentukan menggunakan rumus Cochran. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan regresi linier berganda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara parsial, pemasaran viral tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap minat berkunjung (sig. 0,412 > 0,05), sedangkan motivasi wisatawan berpengaruh positif dan signifikan (sig. 0,000 < 0,05). Namun secara simultan, pemasaran viral dan motivasi wisatawan secara bersama-sama berpengaruh signifikan terhadap minat berkunjung (sig. 0,000 < 0,05), dengan motivasi wisatawan sebagai faktor yang paling dominan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa motivasi wisatawan merupakan faktor utama yang memengaruhi minat berkunjung ke Pantai Lambangan Pauno, sementara pemasaran viral tidak memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan jika dilihat secara terpisah. Adapun keterbatasan dalam penelitian ini adalah hanya berfokus pada pemasaran viral dan motivasi wisatawan, tanpa mengeksplorasi faktor lain seperti kualitas layanan, aksesibilitas, atau ketersediaan fasilitas. Meski demikian, hasil penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi yang berarti bagi pengelola pariwisata, pemasar, dan instansi pemerintah daerah, dengan menunjukkan pentingnya peningkatan motivasi wisatawan

dalam upaya meningkatkan minat kunjungan. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga memberikan sumbangsih terhadap pengembangan ilmu di bidang pemasaran pariwisata, perilaku konsumen, dan manajemen destinasi.

Keywords: *Viral Marketing, Motivasi Wisatawan, Minat Berkunjung*

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INTRODUCTION

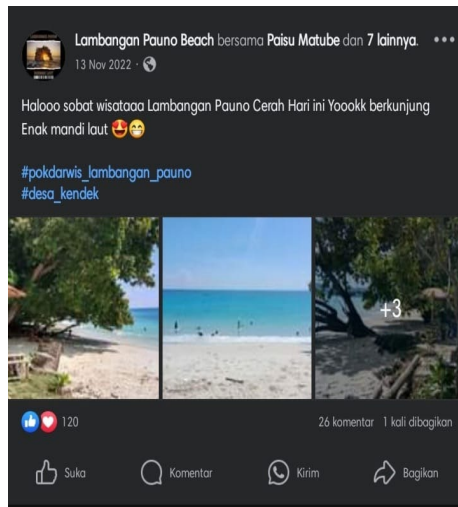
In the past four years, Indonesia's tourism industry has experienced a significant decline as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic in Indonesia has been brought under control over time. Post-pandemic, the national economy recovered with creative, adaptive, and collaborative strategies. The number of visitors according to BPS data, reached 1.14 million in December 2023, and cumulatively increased 98.30% compared to the previous year. This shows that the tourism industry is slowly starting to revive and remains a sector that consistently contributes to economic growth. Seeing this data, local governments began to aggressively manage and promote tourist destinations to become the main attraction. According to (Borden in Wolok et al. 2024), a strong marketing strategy is needed to face increasingly fierce competition, where promotion is one of the important strategies.

The development of information technology has changed perspectives and ways of working in various fields (Albert et al., 2023). In the tourism sector, this technology can be utilised to create more effective promotions. Promotion of tourism destinations through social media has increased significantly in the current tourism industry, a paradigm shift in tourism promotion driven by advances in information technology and the growing use of social media (Kusuma et al., 2025). One of the promotional approaches that can be used is through social media known as viral marketing. In the tourism industry, effective promotional efforts are needed to increase interest in tourist visits. The growth of technology is increasingly dynamic, to stay competitive with this rapidly developing technology, fast and precise action is needed (Malinta et al., 2024). According to (Hamdani & Mawardi 2018), viral marketing is a method of word-of-mouth marketing via the internet by spreading messages in the form of pictures or videos that are contagious to other tourists. In this era, destinations that provide simplified digital experiences have a greater chance of success, as visitors seek information online that is easily accessible and individual (Wolok et al., 2024).

In addition, it is also important to understand traveller motivations as a basis for developing marketing strategies. Traveller motivations are internal and external factors that influence the interest in travelling, such as the desire for relaxation, cultural exploration, and the search for new experiences. By understanding these motivations, tourism service providers can create experiences that suit the needs of the target market.

Banggai Laut is a district that is rich in agricultural products and marine beauty. Based on data from the Banggai Laut Tourism Office in 2021, the number of tourist visits reached 28,286 tourists. One of the developing tourist attractions in Banggai Laut is Lambangan Pauno Beach in Kendek Village, North Banggai District. With the beauty of long white sand and unique coral reefs that attract visitors to visit Lambangan Pauno Beach. To date, the beach is managed by a Tourism Awareness Group

(POKDARWIS) that actively promotes this destination through social media such as Facebook and Instagram. However, to date, few studies have specifically explored the influence of viral marketing and traveller motivation on visit interest, especially to local destinations such as Lambangan Pauno Beach.



Promotional image on Facebook social media account



Promotional image on Instagram social media account

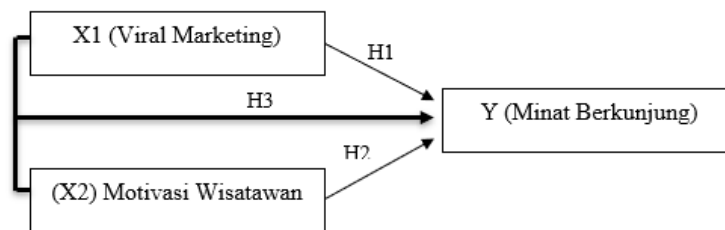
Previous research conducted by Rakhmawati et al. (2019) and Warman et al. (2024) have examined viral marketing variables and tourist motivation separately on visiting interest. However, there are not many studies that combine the two variables in one model to see their effect simultaneously, especially in natural tourist destinations that are not widely known.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted at Lambangan Pauno Beach, Kendek Village, North Banggai District, North Banggai Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. The approach used is quantitative with the aim of knowing the effect of viral marketing (X1) and tourist motivation (X2) on visiting interest (Y). The population in this study includes people who know Lambangan Pauno Beach through various media and tourists who have visited and plan to visit. The sample was determined using the Cochran formula with purposive sampling technique, resulting in 150 respondents aged at least 18 years and had accessed information about the destination. Data collection techniques included observation of Lambangan Pauno Beach's social media and distributing questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale. The Likert scale for this research allows ranking the data from the lowest level to the highest level. The author used five categories: Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Neutral, (N), Disagree (TS), Strongly Disagree (STS) in the research.

Operational definitions include: viral marketing (dissemination, credibility, and expressing positive feelings), tourist motivation (physical, cultural, social, and fantasy), and interest in visiting (curiosity, intention to try, consideration, and experience). Data analysis was conducted descriptively and inferentially, including validity, reliability, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity), and multiple linear regression using SPSS version 22. This method

was used to test the effect of each variable partially and simultaneously on interest in visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach.



Source: Researcher 2025

H1: Viral Marketing has a positive effect on Interest in Visiting

H2: Tourist Motivation has a positive effect on Interest in Visiting

H3: Viral Marketing and Tourist Motivation affect the Interest in Visiting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Viral Marketing

Viral marketing is a marketing technique using social networks to achieve certain goals through a chain communication process. *Viral marketing* is the latest marketing strategy that utilises interactive technology to spread information about products and services quickly and widely (Yanuar et al., 2021). *Viral marketing* is a promotional technique that utilises social networks to achieve certain marketing goals through a chain communication process that develops widely with (Ridho, 2022). Based on a number of these definitions, it can be concluded that *viral marketing* is a promotional technique through social networks and utilises the dynamics of online communities involving *influencers* or other people. Through social networks, marketing messages can spread quickly and widely, similar to the spread of a virus, especially when promoted by *influencers* who have a large follower base. This demonstrates the role of *viral marketing* in shaping public opinion and driving consumer behaviour.

Tourist Motivation

The study of tourist motivation has shifted and views tourist motivation as a brief process to look at travel behaviour. According to (Esichaikul, 2012) "Motivation is a state of need or condition that drives a person in a certain direction that is seen as providing satisfaction". Motivation is a condition that encourages a person to take an action that has the potential to provide satisfaction. From the statement that has been put forward above, tourist motivation is a person's urge to travel, which is influenced by several motivations in making a trip, namely physical motivation, cultural motivation, social and fantasy. From the explanation above, it can also be seen that tourist motivation is based on certain reasons, one of which is travelling.

Interest in Visiting

So that Schiffman and Kanuk explain that purchase interest is defined as a form of real thought from a reflection of the buyer's plan to buy a certain number of units of several brands available within a certain period of time. Purchase interest will form a perception that is firmly entrenched in the minds of consumers, this is because purchase interest is a condition that causes individuals to consider or make decisions to choose a product or service (Lahay & Wolok, 2020). Interest in visiting is a feeling of wanting to visit a place or area that is interesting to visit. Leung et al., (2021) explain

that visiting interest is an emotional reaction or behavioural response to marketing stimuli, such as social media content or digital advertising that influences tourists' intention to explore a particular destination. Based on the above understanding, we can explain that visiting interest is an encouragement from within the visitor as a result of an external stimulus to make a visiting decision.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Data collection was conducted through the use of the Google Form platform to distribute questionnaires online. The distribution was carried out using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Respondents were people from Banggai Laut Regency and outside the region who had heard of, seen, or visited Lambangan Pauno Beach. The survey was conducted over a period of five months starting from pre-survey, research, to the preparation process. The number of respondents in this study was 150 people using the Cochran formula.

Based on the demographic data in this study, it is known that most of the respondents are female, which is 57.33% of the total respondents, while male respondents were recorded at 42.67%, it shows that the participation of female respondents in this study is higher than that of men, which can reflect a greater interest or interest from women in the tourist destination of Lambangan Pauno Beach.

In terms of age group, most respondents were in the age range of 18 to 27 years old, which amounted to 88.67%. This indicates that the young age group is a dominant and potential segment in the context of tourism, especially in terms of exposure to digital promotions and social media usage. The next age group is 28-37 years old which accounts for 9.33% of the total respondents, and the last is the age group 38-47 years old at only 2%. Meanwhile, in terms of domicile, 66% of respondents live in the Banggai Laut Regency, which is the location of the tourist attraction studied, while the remaining 34% come from outside Banggai Laut Regency.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

In the viral marketing variable, the information indicator has the highest mean value of 4.24, proving that trust in social media information is a major component. While the information dissemination indicator has the lowest value of the average, namely 3.43, this indicates that viral information has not been too strong in influencing visiting interest.

The tourist motivation variable, the culture motivation indicator shows the highest mean value of 4.55, indicating respondents' strong interest in local culture, history and uniqueness. While the fantasy motivation indicator has the lowest mean value of 4.25, but this value is still categorised as very good.

Finally, the variable of interest in visiting shows the highest mean result in the indicator of being interested in visiting, namely 4.56, followed by the indicator of wanting to visit, which has a mean value of 4.51, which shows high interest from tourists in Lambangan Pauno Beach.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	10.097	1.671		6.043	.000		
	viral marketing	.041	.050	.067	.822	.412	.760	1.315
	traveller motivation	.496	.086	.470	5.761	.000	.760	1.315

Source: SPSS Data Processing, Author 2025

Based on the data above, the regression equation of this study can be arranged as follows:

$$Y = 10.097 + 0.041X_1 + 0.496X_2 + e$$

The regression coefficient value of variable X_1 (viral marketing) of 0.041 means that each one unit increase in the viral marketing variable will increase the desire to visit by 0.041 units, if all other variables do not change. While the regression coefficient value of variable X_2 (tourist motivation) of 0.296 means that each unit increase in tourist motivation will increase the desire to visit by 0.496 units.

T Test Results

The t statistical test shows how the dependent variable, namely visiting interest, is influenced individually or partially by the independent variables, namely viral marketing and tourist motivation. The t test results will show the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable with a significant level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$).

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Source: SPSS Data Processing, Author 2025

Based on the results of the data processing above, in the t statistical test, the t value for the viral marketing variable is $0.822 < t_{table} 1.65536$ and sig. 0.412 is greater than 0.05, so this variable has no significant effect on visiting interest. While the t value for tourist motivation is $5.761 > 1.65536$ with sig. 0.000 < 0.05, so it has a significant effect on tourist interest in visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach. So it can be concluded that hypotheses H1 and H2 are rejected.

F Test Results

Statistical testing aims to determine the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable simultaneously or simultaneously.

ANOVA^a

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	196.494	2	98.247	25.312	.000 ^b
Residuals	570.579	147	3.881		
Total	767.073	149			

a. Dependent Variable: interest in visiting

b. Predictors: (Constant), traveller motivation, viral marketing

Based on the data above, the calculated f value is $25.312 > f_{table} 3.06$ and sig. 0.000 < 0.05, then H3 is accepted. Which shows that viral marketing promotion and tourist motivation simultaneously have a big impact on tourist interest in visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach.

Discussion

The Effect of Viral Marketing on Interest in Visiting (H1)

Viral marketing is a marketing strategy that utilises electronic media to achieve specific marketing objectives through an irregular communication process (Farradina, 2024). Viral marketing can consist of word-of-mouth marketing supported by marketing activities and the impact of social networks (Putri O, 2021).

The use of viral marketing strategies certainly has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages of using viral marketing strategies is that the costs required are lower than other marketing strategies. This is due to the ability of viral marketing to be carried out at a relatively small cost but still effectively reach a large audience, while the disadvantage of viral marketing strategies is that there is no guarantee that the content that has been created or the message you want to convey will go viral.

The results of this study indicate that the Viral Marketing variable does not affect the Interest in Visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach, Banggai Laut Regency, so it can be concluded that the Viral Marketing hypothesis affects tourist interest is rejected. This is evidenced by the results of the t test calculation analysis, where the value of t count < t table, which indicates that there is no effect of Viral Marketing on Interest in Visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach, Banggai Laut Regency.

Although statistically insignificant, the regression coefficient of this viral marketing variable remains positive, at 0.041. This indicates that an increase in viral

marketing intensity can contribute to interest in visiting, although the impact is not strong enough. The descriptive results of the variables for viral marketing show that the highest value is obtained by the information credibility indicator, indicating that visitors actually feel interested in visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach because of the truth related to the information shared on social media.

Other indicators such as expressing positive feelings also have a fairly high mean value, namely 4.09. This indicates that tourists tend to share positive experiences related to Lambangan Pauno Beach on social media, although the level of influence on interest in visiting is not dominant. This aspect can be further utilised to create content that attracts the attention of more potential tourists. Indicators related to information dissemination get a mean value of 3.43, which indicates that promotion through digital platforms needs to be intensified in order to expand audiences and increase user engagement (Saputra et al., 2024) .

Overall, the results of this study illustrate that viral marketing as one of the promotional media through social media is not the main component that attracts tourists to visit Lambangan Pauno Beach. Perhaps this is due to the less than optimal marketing strategy carried out, such as the lack of exploration of the beauty of the beach in the media used or the limited promotional reach that only focuses on local audiences.

The results of this study are different from research conducted by Sari et al. (2024) which examines tourist interest in visiting tourists at Alam Caldera Kintamani, Bali where the results show that Viral Marketing has an effect on tourist interest.

The Effect of Tourist Motivation on Interest in Visiting (H2)

Motivation arises because there are basic human needs that must be met, and when a person discovers where to go to meet his needs, the motivation to travel (Puspawigati et al., 2024) . The situation that encourages a person to travel to a tourist spot to take a break from the work routine is also referred to as motivation (Anggraeni, 2020) .

The results of the study show that Tourist Motivation affects the Interest in Visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach, Banggai Laut Regency, so it can be concluded that the hypothesis regarding Tourist Motivation affects the Interest in Visiting is accepted. This is evidenced by the analysis of the t test calculation which shows that there is an effect of Motivation on Interest in Visiting Lambangan Pauno Beach.

Based on the descriptive results of the variable for Tourist Motivation, of the four indicators used to measure this variable, it is known that the highest value is obtained by the cultural motivation indicator which means that tourists feel most attracted to visit Lambangan Pauno Beach because of the uniqueness of the beach and the history that exists at Lambangan Pauno Beach.

Other tourist motivations, such as physical and social motivations also show significant contributions with mean values of 4.52 and 4.53 respectively. This shows that tourists are not only interested in the physical beauty of the beach, but also in social experiences, such as interactions with local residents and activities with friends or family. Fantasy motivation has the lowest mean value among the motivation indicators, indicating that imagination exploration or the search for unique experiences is not a top priority for Lambangan Pauno Beach tourists.

This study is in line with a study conducted by Pratiwi & Urip (2023) where the results of their research say that the Tourist Motivation variable affects the interest in

visiting, in line with Lahay & Wolok (2020), who say that the higher the motivation, the stronger the intention is formed to visit a place. However, the results of this study differ from the study conducted by Anggraeni et al. (2020) whose results say that there is no significant effect on the tourist motivation variable on visiting interest.

The Effect of Viral Marketing and Tourist Motivation on Interest in Visiting (H3)

Visiting interest is defined as a person's desire to buy a good or service (Rakhmawati et al., 2019). Interest is a drive, a strong internal stimulus that encourages action, stimulus and positive feelings towards goods, places, or services affect this drive. Apart from internal factors, a person's interest in visiting is also influenced by external factors including social factors, promotional efforts, and socio-cultural factors (Yandi et al., 2023). Viral marketing and tourist motivation will further encourage tourists to create interest in visiting.

Based on the research results obtained, simultaneously viral marketing variables and tourist motivation have a positive and significant impact on visiting interest in Lambangan Pauno Beach, Banggai Laut Regency. This is indicated by the results of the value of $f_{count} > f_{table}$ with a significant probability value obtained smaller than the alpha value of 0.05. Analysis of viral marketing variables and tourist motivation has a positive and significant effect on visiting interest. The variable of interest in visiting, namely interested in finding information, considering to visit, interested in visiting, want to know the destination, and want to visit, is used as an indicator.

Based on the results of the regression analysis, it can be seen that tourist motivation has a greater influence on interest in visiting than viral marketing. This means that although viral marketing and tourist motivation have a combined effect, the intrinsic attraction that drives tourists to visit is more dominant than external promotion through social media. These results also suggest that marketing strategies to increase tourist visits need to focus on increasing tourist motivation, for example by highlighting the cultural aspects, uniqueness, and social experiences that Lambangan Pauno Beach offers. On the other hand, improving marketing strategies still needs to be a concern for the local government and beach managers so that information related to Pauno Lambangan Beach can reach potential tourists, especially tourists from outside the Banggai Laut area.

The theory used in this study is the *Theory of Planned Behaviour*, proposed by Ajzen and Amheest (1985). This theory explains that the three main factors that influence a person's desire to perform an action are attitude towards behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In this context, attitude towards behaviour is closely related to tourist motivation, where tourists' desire to visit Lambangan Pauno Beach is influenced by expectations of the experience they will get when visiting the destination.

Furthermore, subjective norms include the influence of the social environment as well as promotions received by individuals, including those related to viral marketing. Widespread information through social media can shape tourists' perceptions of social norms and increase their interest in visiting. Meanwhile, perceived behavioural control refers to the extent to which tourists find it easy to access the location and obtain related information, which in turn also influences their decision to visit Lambangan Pauno Beach.

This research is in line with research conducted by Ernawati (2020), which examines the effect of viral marketing and tourist motivation on interest in visiting

tourist destinations. In her research, Ernawati found that both variables, namely viral marketing and tourist motivation, have a significant influence in increasing public interest in visiting various tourist destinations in the Bima Regency area. The findings strengthen the assumption that an effective promotional strategy through social media and the internal drive of tourists, such as the desire to gain new experiences and enjoy natural beauty, can create high interest in a tourist attraction.

Thus, the results of Ernawati's (2020) research are an important reference in supporting the understanding that the success of tourism promotion does not only depend on the quality of the destination, but also on how the information is widely disseminated and attractive through social media, and how the destination is able to meet the expectations and desires of tourists. This is relevant to the conditions at Lambangan Pauno Beach, where the role of viral marketing through social media accounts and tourist motivation are important factors in attracting interest in visiting the beach

CONCLUSION

Kesimpulan

This study aimed to examine (1) the influence of viral marketing on the intention to visit Pantai Lambangan Pauno, (2) the influence of tourist motivation on the intention to visit Pantai Lambangan Pauno, and (3) the combined effect of viral marketing and tourist motivation on the intention to visit Pantai Lambangan Pauno, Banggai Laut Regency.

The findings reveal that viral marketing, when assessed individually, does not have a significant effect on the intention to visit. In contrast, tourist motivation has a positive and significant effect on the intention to visit Pantai Lambangan Pauno. Simultaneously, viral marketing and tourist motivation together exert a positive and significant influence on the intention to visit, with tourist motivation having a stronger impact compared to viral marketing.

Thus, the objectives of the study have been achieved, confirming that while viral marketing alone may not substantially drive visit intention, tourist motivation plays a crucial role in influencing tourist behavior toward visiting Pantai Lambangan Pauno.

Recommendations

In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed for relevant stakeholders. First, the management of Lambangan Pauno Beach is encouraged to strengthen effective communication strategies with tourists in order to remain competitive in the increasingly dynamic tourism industry. Second, social media platforms should be optimally utilized as strategic marketing tools to enhance tourist interest and engagement. Finally, future researchers are advised to include or apply similar variables in studies conducted at other tourism destinations to broaden the understanding of effective marketing strategies and contribute further to the development of tourism promotion efforts across Indonesia.

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