

## Research article

# The Role of Social Media in Strengthening the Conservation Movement as a Sustainable Trend in Indonesian Tourism

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**Abstract.**

The digital era has inspired new trends in the world of tourism, in which environmental and sustainability issues, the travel experience, and social media are barometers for the selection of tourist destinations. This research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of (1) tourism development, (2) strengthening conservation activities, and (3) the use of mass media in conservation-based tourism activities at Bangsring Underwater Beach in Banyuwangi Regency. This research was conducted with a qualitative approach and data were obtained from discussions and in-depth interviews. Secondary data such as literature about social media and tourism were used to support this research. The results showed that the development of Bangsring Underwater Beach tourism was able to accommodate changes in tourism trends.

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## 1. Introduction

The development of technology and communication in the current digital era is very rapid. The flow of information becomes very unstoppable. This causes the internet to play an important role in all sectors of human life today. This phenomenon also occurs in Indonesia, where in 2020 it is recorded that 64% of the population in Indonesia has actively used the internet. The growth in the number of internet users brings changes to people's lifestyles.

One of these pattern shifts is manifested in the rapid development of social media in Indonesia. Social media is one of the products of technological progress which is currently the main mecca for the community, including in the tourism sector. In the past, tourism was a tertiary need for the community. Along with the incessant dissemination of information through social media, some circles make tourism a secondary need and has even become a primary need. Social media is easy, economical, efficient and effective in disseminating information[1]. Content in the form of photos and videos containing offers, experiences or comments makes communication through social media very attractive[2].

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The popularity of Indonesian tourism is currently also experiencing rapid development. This movement was able to shift the government's focus in determining the source of state revenue which previously relied on mining. The development of the tourism industry is the largest industrial sector in this century that is able to contribute to the economy in all sectors. Tourism is the third largest foreign exchange earner for the country[3]. Indonesia was able to achieve the title as the country with the 9th fastest tourism growth in the world, 3rd in Asia and 1st in Southeast Asia.[4].

Indonesia's abundance of natural wealth places Indonesia on the 3rd rank of the country with the highest biological wealth in the world. This asset is a special attraction for tourists[5]. This natural wealth becomes its own strength for the components of tourism products and creates its own motivation for tourists. This also applies to conservation-based nature tourism[6].

As we know that tourism development is like two sides of a coin. Where when an object is developed to the fullest, it will have a positive impact on the economy of the surrounding community or country. On the other hand, the development process that is carried out without good planning will actually cause damage to tourism objects. This damage is able to stop the sustainability of the tourism object. Therefore, in order to be able to provide maximum impact, the development of tourism objects really must be done carefully so that it can run in a sustainable manner[7].

The use of technology is one of the strategies in developing tourism in the current digital era. Technology is able to make a big contribution to society in every aspect of life. In the world of tourism, technology in the form of social media can be used as a medium for disseminating information and effective promotion. On the other hand, social media can also be a source of learning and even an invitation for all tourism stakeholders to carry out conservation activities. Social media that are currently often used include the use of Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and others[8].

This research will discuss about this research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of (1) tourism development, (2) strengthening conservation activities, and the use of mass media in conservation-based tourism activities at Bangsring Underwater Beach, Banyuwangi Regency, which is one of Indonesia's tourism destinations. The success of managing conservation objects cannot be separated from the use of social media as a medium capable of disseminating information related to existing conservation movements. One of the effective uses of this technology is implemented by the Bangsring Underwater manager in Banyuwangi Regency, East Java.

## 2. Method

This study is an effort to apply technology in conservation-based nature tourism principles in Banyuwangi Regency. The application of sustainable tourism principles is implemented through economically feasible, environmentally feasible, socially acceptable, and technologically appropriate. The application of sustainable tourism theory is an important issue for the world, especially for local communities. The utilization of the huge tourism potential is regulated by the conservation utilization regulations applied by the manager.

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach, because this study aims to trace the process of adaptation to the use of technology carried out by the tourism industry players. The adaptation process is implemented in the concept of conservation-based sustainable tourism. In this study, the primary data used came from discussions and interviews with several resource persons who are managers of the Bangsring Underwater Beach conservation area. As a support, secondary data in the form of literature and publications carried out on social media for tourism objects.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Tourism Development Based on Bangsring Underwater Beach Conservation

Bangsring Underwater Beach is located in Bangsring Village, Wongsorejo District, Banyuwangi Regency. The beach is 596 meters long, stretching from  $-8.049611^{\circ}\text{N}$  and  $114.430222^{\circ}\text{E}$  in the north to  $-8.054747^{\circ}\text{N}$  and  $114.431086^{\circ}\text{E}$  in the south. This beach is 10 km from Ketapang Harbor with a travel time of about 20 minutes.

The natural potential of Bangsring Beach is very diverse. The many species of ornamental fish and coral are potential that deserve to be developed. This natural wealth becomes something of a dilemma for the local residents. As the Head of the "Samudra Bakti Group, Mr. Sukirno gave an illustration that at first the residents of Bangsring Village depended on their lives and became ornamental fish fishermen. The fishermen catch ornamental fish and cut corals in ways that are not environmentally friendly. Fishermen use potash and fish bombs as a way of catching fish. As a result, a decrease in the number of fish and coral reefs that exist. even in the 200s, this beach suffered serious damage.



**Figure 1:** Bangsring Underwater Beach and Floating House.

This damaged natural condition is the point where people feel aware of the actions they are taking. The fishermen with the help of NGOs started to make a change. Starting with several fishermen, they took the initiative to form the “Samudra Bakti” group which has the aim of improving the coast through a conservation movement. Group members started to replant coral reefs in the Bangsring Underwater Beach area. These activities are carried out by members of the “Samudra Bakti” group and the local community on an ongoing basis. People even donated some of their land to support the movement.

Since 2009, Bangsring Underwater Beach has been designated as a marine protected area. This provision is stated in PERDES Bangsring No. 02/429.205.01/2009 of 2009 concerning the Joint Protection Zone (ZPB). The total area of this ZPB is 15 ha[9]. Conservation efforts are carried out by managers in order to apply the principles of sustainable tourism implemented through economically feasible, environmentally feasible, socially acceptable, and technologically appropriate. The implementation of these principles is expected to be able to maximize the achievements of the tourism development process, especially for local residents.

All the efforts made by the “Samudra Bakti” group slowly showed significant results. Slowly marine life has recovered. The coral reefs have started to regrow and have an impact on the number of fish that thrive in the area. The return of various types of marine life has again opened up positive opportunities for the growth of Bangsring Underwater Beach tourism. The beauty of this tourist attraction can be enjoyed by visitors through snorkeling attractions. Active involvement in the conservation process can be the biggest attraction for this tourist attraction.

In 2014, the manager took the initiative to build a floating house. This attraction was initiated so that tourists can enjoy the natural beauty of Bangsring Underwater Beach with more fun. The uniqueness of Bangsring Underwater Beach is that tourists can enjoy the beauty of various ornamental fish only through this floating house. Visitors only need to sit on the edge of the floating house and some of the tourists feed the fish to invite schools of fish to come closer.

The development of a tourist area also presents its own challenges for managers to increase the attractions offered to visitors. In 2018, the manager again opened a new attraction, namely diving. This attraction was opened as a manifestation of the volunteerism of one of the members of "Samudra Bakti". Mr. Busairi participated in a self-help diving certification for the development of Bangsring Underwater Beach. This attraction was added with the aim that tourists can enjoy the underwater beauty more closely. Spot diving is only 5 meters from the beach and diving about 50 cm, divers can enjoy the beauty of the marine biota ecosystem and coral reefs of Bangsring Underwater Beach.

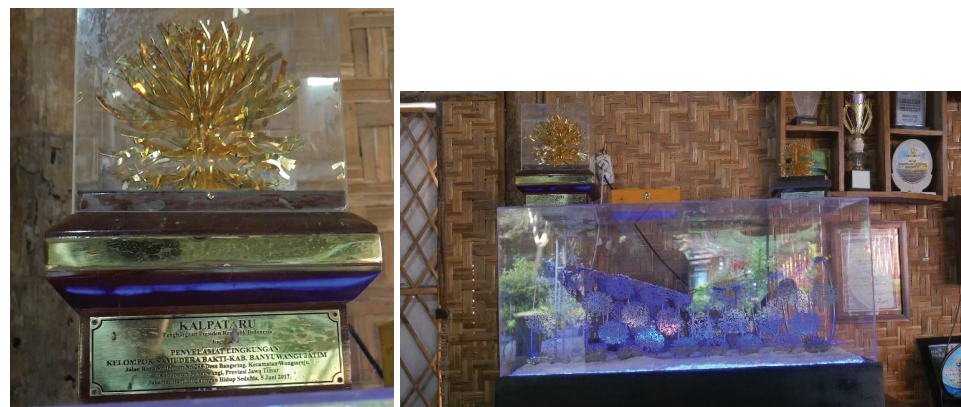


**Figure 2:** Tourist Attractions Offered by Bangsring Underwater Beach.

The development of attractions continues to be carried out by the managers seriously. The involvement of local communities further accelerates existing progress. The availability of human resources available around tourist destinations as well as the quality and qualifications are important supporting factors. Tourism development really needs to involve the participation of the surrounding community[10]. This is because the surrounding community is the party that best understands the condition of the tourism object so that the development process is expected to be in line with existing thoughts and values.[11]. This condition is felt to be able to increase the sense of commonality

to seek knowledge, responsibility, share ownership, want to participate, and care for others[12].

In addition to the increasing complexity of the attractions that exist in this tourist attraction, the achievement of various awards is also evidence of the hard work of the manager. Various awards, such as Kalpataru, which is dedicated to environmental activists, have been successfully awarded by the fishermen group “Samudra Bakti. There were also many invitations for talk shows and sharing sessions from television media or other parties. Some of the awards won can be seen in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3:** Awards Won by the “Ocean Bakti” Group.

### 3.2. Strengthening the Bangsring Underwater Beach Conservation Movement

Natural damage is a major issue for all countries, including Indonesia. Various parties want to try to improve this condition through various means. Most people have also realized the need to preserve the environment, one of which is through conservation activities. The conservation model is not only carried out by volunteers. Today this activity has become a big magnet for tourists to carry out tourism activities.

The participation of tourists in conservation activities can lead to their own satisfaction. Therefore, the conservation movement has become one of the trends in tourism activities in Indonesia[13]. The tendency of the Indonesian people is a positive impact on the dissemination of existing information. Being directly involved in a conservation movement is a big attraction for tourists. In theory, this change is driven by the massive coverage of new social movements such as the environmental care movement. These reasons further strengthen the characteristics of New Tourism which is indeed focused on the environment and sustainability as well as the high experience gained during traveling[14].

The Bangsring Underwater Beach conservation movement is caused by changes that are influenced by several factors. The factors that influence the emergence of this movement are:

1. There is a social failure in society. This is correlated with the destruction of nature at Bangsring Underwater Beach due to the unlawful acts of ornamental fish fishermen.
2. The existence of individual dissatisfaction in community groups. Due to natural damage that has an impact on the loss of livelihoods for the surrounding community as ornamental fish fishermen, the fishermen realize that their attitude has been able to close their source of income. Therefore, the community is moved to return their land of work.
3. The emergence of social unrest and anxiety in society is shown in public. This factor can be seen from the efforts echoed by the members of "Samudra Bakti" regarding the consequences that will arise if the process of destroying nature continues.

There is an opportunity to form a new order that can meet the expectations of society in the future. After feeling the positive impact of the change in attitude from "destroyer" to "preservation", the members of "Samudra Bakti" and the community around Bangsring Underwater Beach felt a lot of changes. The return of marine life and the improvement of the economy and community welfare are the answers to all the hopes of tourism actors at Bangsring Underwater Beach.

These experiences and the spirit of conservation are disseminated by the members of "Samudra Bakti" continuously. At first, the managers visited schools or companies to introduce their conservation movement. The use of media such as video is used to give a real picture of the movement. Participation in conservation activities is an offer given by the management to the institutions they visit and also to the general public.

The perseverance of the "Ocean Bakti" volunteers was not in vain. Public interest or institutions that want to participate in the conservation activities offered are quite high. This can be seen by the increase in the value of visits that occur every year. In 2015 there were 156,940 tourists who came to visit Bangsring Underwater Beach. The average visit rate increases by 100% from year to year[15].

In this conservation activity, tourists are invited to participate in the coral reef conservation movement. Various methods are applied by the managers in making planting media. The use of PVC or waste such as plastic as a planting medium for coral reefs is



Figure 4: Fish Apartment Pictures.



Figure 5: Fish Compartment Made on Institutional Participation.

an alternative developed by the volunteers. The tourists can tie pieces of coral and pin



their names as a sign of their participation in this conservation activity. After the binding process, the fish apartment or fish compartment will be sunk into the sea. Over time, the manager will provide a report to the party on the growth of the corals they plant.



**Figure 6:** Fish Apartment Overgrown with Coral.

Conservation activities carried out by managers and the participation of the wider community have a very significant impact. Various marine biota returns to life under the sea at Bangsring Underwater Beach. Various types of coral as a home for fish are increasing. The number of ornamental fish populations that were once almost extinct also increased. The beauty of Bangsring Underwater is getting better day by day.

### **3.3. The Impact of Using Social Media for the Development of Conservation and Tourism of Bangsring Underwater Beach**

Along with advances in technology in the field of communication and information, innovations related to media are also growing rapidly. Dissemination of information and promotion of tourism objects has a very significant impact. This is due to a shift in the pattern of tourists in collecting information related to tourism objects. Social media is used as a source of information seeking tourist destinations for tourists[1].

This change makes the readiness of information technology and telecommunications a top priority for tourism managers. The availability of infrastructure and the readiness of human resources at tourist destinations in using the internet or the latest telecommunication tools have become a strategic role for tourism development. Online services and the use of the internet in tourism businesses are a must at this time. Regarding tourist destinations, the internet is used by tourists to plan trips, find accommodation, and book trips including tourist destinations. The readiness of information technology and telecommunications is measured through two aspects, namely the presence of physical infrastructure and the capacity of businesses and individuals to use and provide online services.

The existence of physical infrastructure includes, among others, a broad and strong cellular network coverage, a wide and reliable internet network coverage, and a stable quality of electricity supply. Meanwhile, the capacity of businesses and individuals to use and provide online services, such as the availability of online business transaction services such as purchasing entrance tickets, as well as access to complete information about tourist destinations, as well as the number of internet usage by individuals around tourist destinations. The more use of the internet by individuals shows the wider availability of information technology and telecommunications in these tourist destinations.

The results of the study show that there is still a lot of homework to be done to make the Thousand Islands an international tourist destination [16]; [17]. The homework includes improving the quality of physical facilities and improving the quality of marketing communication activities carried out. Although the number of tourist visits increases every year, the marketing communication activities carried out must be increased considering the competition in the international tourism industry is very tight.

The managers of Bangsring Underwater Beach are also facing the same problem. "Samudra Bakti" members adapt to the digital era through the use of several social media accounts such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and also websites. These accounts can be managed easily via smartphones, computers, laptops, or tablets. Tourists also get the same facilities.

Management of social media is expected to increase the number of tourist visits. As an information expansion strategy, social media content is also a separate thought for managers. Information in the form of events, promos, or all activities that take place at tourist objects can become a magnet for attracting tourists. The manager uploads various important events and activities that are on the Bangsring Underwater Beach agenda, in order to invite visitors to be able to participate in these activities. Making promo packages such as giving discounts during the new normal era or in certain seasons is expected to increase the number of visits from tourists.

In addition, uploads from visitors are also one of the supporting digital content for the development of tourism objects. The content can be in the form of photos, videos, expressions of experiences, reviews or comments of tourists when visiting these tourist destinations. Destination selection based on visitor reviews is a characteristic of New Tourism. Where tourists focus their attention on the abundance of media coverage (TV, Internet, Instagram), travel experiences, new products or new methods and new technologies.[14].

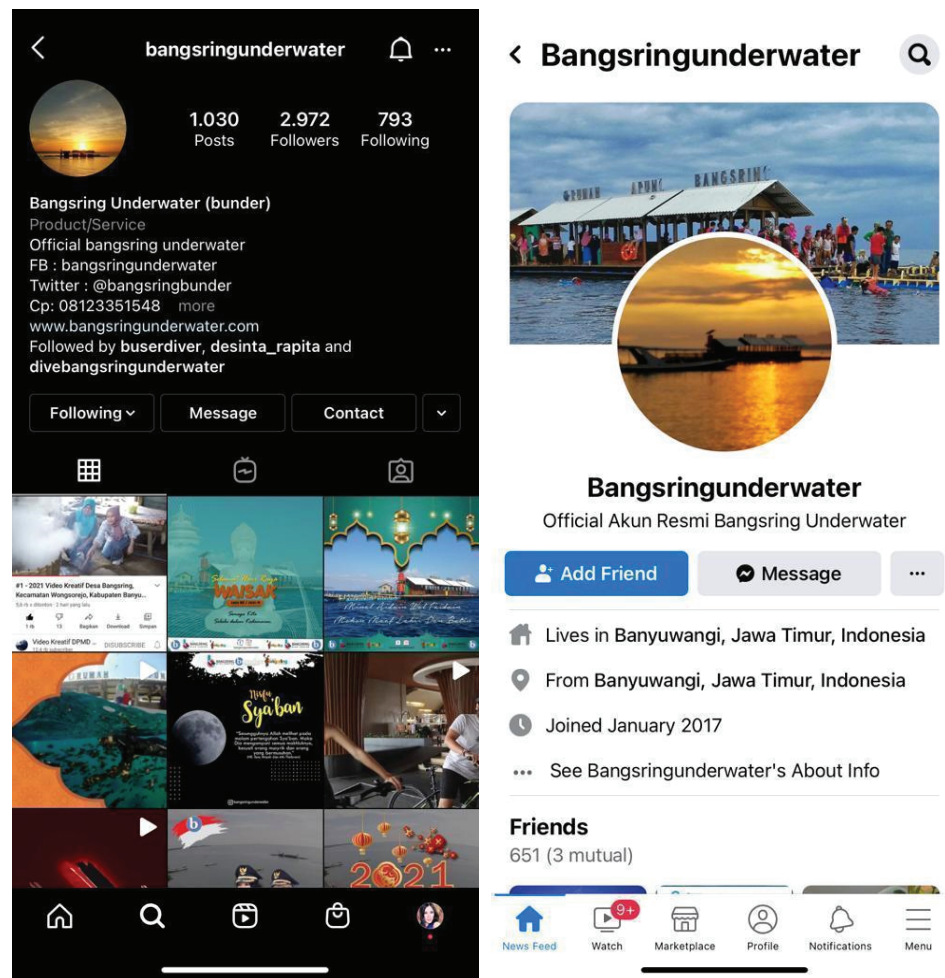


Figure 7: Bangsring Underwater Beach Instagram and Facebook Accounts.

Support and reinforcement from other media are also very helpful in efforts to increase tourist interest. Coverage of activities such as in both offline and online newspapers, TV stations, news through local government websites, the ministry of tourism, the ministry of marine affairs, and others. The involvement of managers in events or competitions organized by other parties, including government agencies, is also able to increase the existence and popularity of Bangsring Underwater Beach.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research above, it can be concluded that Bangsring Underwater Beach is able to capture the New Tourism Trend. Where tourists focus their attention on the environment and sustainability, the travel experience, the use of media in disseminating information, and the application of other technologies. As one of the supporters, social media has an important role in strengthening the Bangsring

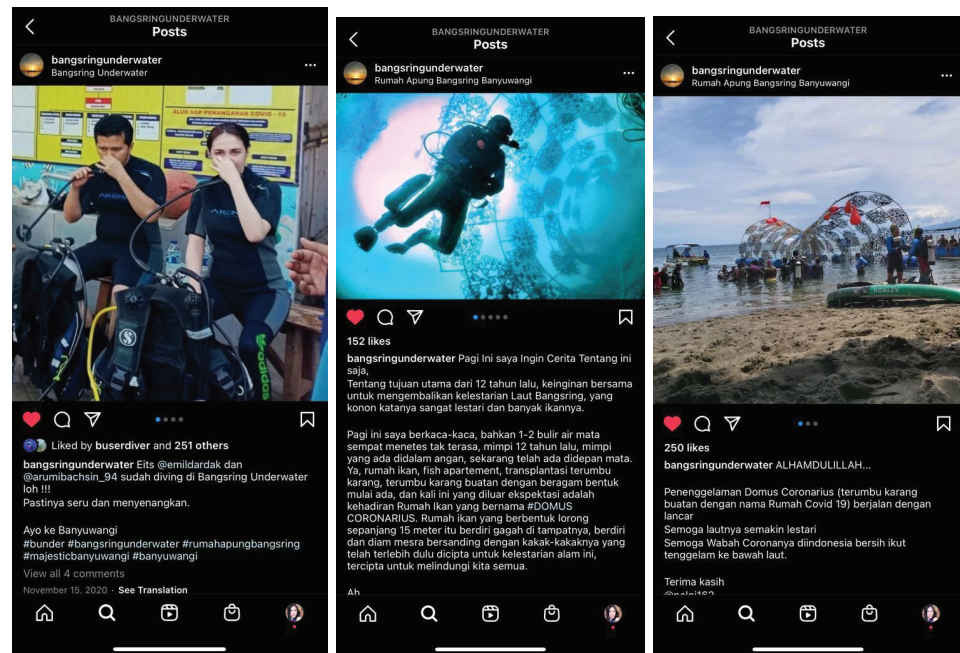


Figure 8: Bangsring Beach Underwater Instagram Upload Content.



Figure 9: Newspaper Publications.

Underwater Beach conservation movement. This can be seen from the information dissemination activities carried out by managers through social media accounts such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and websites that are able to expand



**Figure 10:** Management Participation in the Competition.

the impact of information dissemination. In addition, strengthening through news from other parties through tourist social media, mass media, TV stations.

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