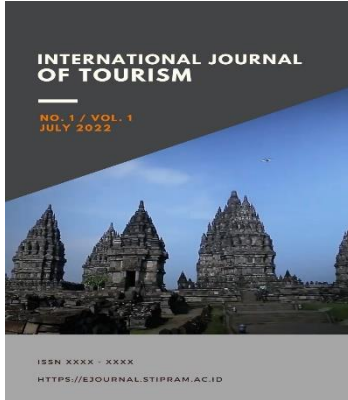


# Application of Digital Marketing in Developing Khao Garos Natural Tourism Potential in Krabi Thailand

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## Article History

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**Abstract:** Khao Garos nature tourism is one of the tourism

potentials in Nai Nang village, a Community Based Tourism village in Krabi Province, Thailand. Khao Garos offers natural tourist attractions going along the river on a long tail boat while enjoying the beauty of the limestone mountain range. Apart from that, Khao Garos natural tourist attraction also offers kayaking experiences, which add the value to this tourist attraction. However, Khao Garos tourism still has some weaknesses, among them are the lack of information regarding its natural tourism potentials and also its marketing.

**Purpose:** This study tries to answer the question of why digital marketing should be applied to Khao Garos tourist destination, and how to implement the digital marketing.

**Research methods:** The method used is descriptive qualitative using primary data in the form of observations and interviews, as well as secondary data in the form of literature and document studies related to Khao Garos tourism.

**Results and discussions:** The results that digital marketing can provide more complete information about the natural tourism potentials of Khao Garos to potential tourists. Besides that, digital marketing can attract tourists to visit Khao Garos. Meanwhile, the application of digital marketing that can be done is through creating an informative website and through various social media platforms such as: Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

**Conclusion:** Social media is considered very effective as a tool for promoting Khao Garos tourism. By using social media, the number of tourist visits can increase. Tourists can also search for complete information and interact easily on various platforms. Not only that, social media can also be used as an opportunity for tourism because social media is a digital tourism promotion platform that is in harmony with the digital world. Furthermore, social media is also used as a source of reference regarding traveling for tourists. They are very active in using social media as a means of seeking information and promotions. The role of digital marketing will also make it easier to find information, form visitor interest, search for tourist references, and as a promotional tool for tourist attractions while still paying attention to several factors in developing tourism potential such as tourist attraction, visitor interest, visitor satisfaction, and tourist attraction infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, Khao Garos, Nature Tourism Attraction

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has developed into a travel industry with great potential with the largest foreign exchange earnings for a country. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) states that tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that involves someone who is carrying out activities, namely traveling outside their area of origin and outside of their daily habits. Tourism can be interpreted as an activity of moving or traveling from a certain point and returning to the starting point, so that this activity has the value of a circular movement (Wirawan and Octaviany, 2022).

Efforts in developing tourist destinations must of course pay attention to factors that greatly influence the tourist destination. Providing complete information to a wider community is one of the factors that must be considered (Waluyo and Santoso, 2018). The large number of foreign tourist visits is often a measure of the government's success in the tourism sector. It was recorded from United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) data that in 2017 more than 1,323 billion people traveled to various countries.

Thailand is one of the countries in Southeast Asia with a very large number of tourist visitors every year and it is the main tourist destination for foreign tourists who want to visit the Southeast Asia region. This can be seen from the data graph of Thai tourist visits which increase every month. Foreign tourist visits to Thailand throughout 2023 generally increased from 2,144,948 in January 2023 to 3,161,934 in December 2023 ([www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com)). The complete number of foreign tourist visits to Thailand can be seen in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Number of Foreign Tourist Visits to Thailand Throughout 2023  
(in 1.000)

| Jan. 2023 | Feb. 2023 | Mar. 2023 | Apr. 2023 | May 2023 | Jun. 2023 | Jul. 2023 | Aug. 2023 | Sep. 2023 | Oct. 2023 | Nov. 2023 | Dec. 2023 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 2.144,9   | 2.113,5   | 2.219     | 2.182,1   | 2.013,9  | 2.241,2   | 2.490,6   | 2.468     | 2.130,6   | 2.197     | 2.637     | 3.161,9   |

Source: [www.ceicdata.com](http://www.ceicdata.com), 2024

The many types of tourism and tourist attractions in Thailand make tourists happy and enthusiastic about coming to the country, even repeatedly. Meanwhile, according to the Mastercard Global Cities Index (GDCI), there are 3 cities in Thailand that are included in the 20 popular global destination cities. One of them is the city of Bangkok which is the first global city destination for visitors to go on night trips and beats the city of London in England. Another popular destination city is Phuket, which is located in Phuket Island of Thailand.

Phuket is a tropical island that is greatly depend on international tourism where the majority of its income is generated from the reception of tourist arrivals. Phuket is a province located in the southern part of Thailand and has become one of the most famous tourism areas in the world. Moreover, Phuket has experienced a rapid tourism balance and has also become a tourist destination for the last 30 years. Phuket can be used as an example of successful tourism because it is a tourist destination that has been successfully balanced by the government and its people so that it can attract many locals and foreign tourists. Furthermore, Phuket City is located 867 kilometers from the capital city of Bangkok and it is located in the largest island in Thailand which has many tourism potentials. Another name for Phuket is Thalang, which consists of approximately 39 small islands and its area reaches 570 km<sup>2</sup>. Phang Nga and Phuket Provinces are some of the provinces located in the south of Thailand.

Krabi is one of the provinces in Thailand which is targeted as a travel destination for tourists who are looking for a relaxing place in southern Thailand. Krabi offers stunning views both on land and at sea. Krabi has more than 150 islands with 150 km of coastline (many of which have fantastic white sand beaches and turquoise waters). Krabi has mainstay tourism types, namely cultural tourism, nature tourism, artificial tourism, night tourism and educational tourism. Krabi is more famous for its nature tourism, especially beach tourism and also culinary tourism. Krabi Province has many tourist attractions such as island shopping, snorkeling, rock climbing, kayaking, jungle trekking, scuba diving, beautiful limestone cliffs, caves, water and waterfalls.

Krabi has many international tourist destinations, such as Phi phi Islands, which is a nature tourist destination. Phi phi islands are often become a shooting location for international films, making the destination increasingly more popular. The nature tourist destination in Krabi has made tourists often call it a tourist paradise in Thailand. Balancing tourism activities in tourist destinations must have supporting components such as attractions, transportation and infrastructure, accommodation, restaurants, as well as other supporting services such as tourist travel agents, souvenir shops, foreign money exchange and tourist information centers.

Having many tourist destinations in Krabi Province is an important point in making it easier for tourists to choose the places they want to visit. Krabi Province also has one of the most interesting educational and nature tourist attractions, such as the tourist attraction in Nai Nang village. The village is located in Moo 3, Ban Nai Nang, Khao-Kram Sub-district, Krabi,

Thailand. This place has a superior nature tourist destination that offers very beautiful views and is different from other places.

One of the nature tourist destinations located in Nai Nang Village in Krabi Thailand is the Khao Garos tourist attraction, which is around 120 km from Phuket International Airport and takes approximately 1 hour 52 minutes by car on land. The journey to Nai Nang Village will be treated to beautiful natural views at every corner of the road. Khao Garos is a nature tourist destination located in Krabi Province, Thailand. Khao Garos is classified as a tourist destination that still maintains its natural wealth and is still pristine because there are almost no decorations or other buildings and is very suitable as an ecotourism destination. The word Garos, the nickname given to this island, comes from the Yawi language which means not beautiful or ugly. The waste of two demonic emotions from the large-sized natural carvings on the rock cliffs of Mount Garos which have long been eroded by wind, rain and water has resulted in the cliffs taking on the shape of a demon. Every moment the devil's face will also change as if in the morning the devil's face will have a sad facial expression. However, when the bright sunlight shines in the afternoon, the expression on the devil's face will return with a beautiful and beautiful smile. Apart from the devil's face, if you look closely you can see the figure of Phi Ta Khon and the image of a black witch on a large rock that looks like she is looking at guests visiting Khao Garos. However, behind the natural beauty that has been created, there are still many tourists who have not yet known about this tourist destination.

From initial observations, it was found that Khao Garos was not very busy, even though it was proven that the tourist attractions on offer were very interesting. This is due to limited information about this tourist attraction. The lack of information regarding the attractions found at this destination makes it difficult for tourists and travelers when they want to visit Khao Garos. Therefore, many local and foreign tourists are looking for information about these tourist destinations via internet. Based on initial observations, the application of digital marketing is considered very important to make it easier for tourists to obtain the information they need. Digital marketing is one of the most effective ways to develop and promote the potential of natural tourism. This study tries to answer the question why digital marketing needs to be applied to the Khao Garos tourist destination, and how to implement digital marketing.

## **LITERATUR REVIEW**

Some of the literature presented were taken from several literature sources originating from previous research. Then these references are compared and used as a reference in data

collection, so that data collection is more effective and focused on the problem formulation. Several research results related to digital marketing in balancing tourism potential will be presented in conclusion.

Feirnándeiz-Díaz, et.al. (2022) pointed out that digital tourism accessibility is important to support a smart tourism city, innovative, easy to access and sustainable. Meanwhile, Wikanta and Pinasti (2021) discussed the strategy and background for developing tourist destinations and the impacts they have. The expected result is to increase local original income as well as improve the welfare of regional communities. The digital tourism business is an important marketing strategy in the coming years (Saura, et.al., 2020). Meanwhile, according to Charli (2020), social media is used as a means of information technology via the internet. The use of the internet encourages and facilitates users to stay connected to anyone. Tsourgianni and Valsamidis (2019) explored tourists' attitudes towards digital marketing applications related to temporary housing rental services. The results identified several factors that make tourists use the Airbnb application in digital marketing.

Technological advances and internet accessibility can facilitate digital marketing and thus customers have direct access to all types of information (Gupta, 2019). Meanwhile Shafieiei, et.al. (2019), discussed the prerequisites and strategies for developing smart and sustainable tourist destinations. The use of e-Tourism as a digital tourism marketing strategy has resulted in the tourism industry developing rapidly (Koalasari, 2019). Meanwhile, according to Warmayana and Geidei (2018), tourism promotion using digital marketing makes tourism promotion easier.

Based on the literature reviews above, it can be concluded that digital marketing plays an important role in increasing the tourism potential of a tourist destination. Digital marketing also plays an important role in making it easier for tourists to search for and obtain the information they need. This is because many local and foreign tourists use digital applications as a means of searching for information when going on a tour. In this way digital marketing has a big influence in balancing tourism potential.

Furthermore, a theoretical study is carried out which refers to all forms of information that have been written down, as well as various forms of research results which will become considerations related to variables and research problems as a reference for determining problems and frameworks related to thought and research concepts or research bases. There are several theories that will be reviewed and all of them are related to this research.

a. Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing is the application of digital technology which has several terms for marketing products/services, such as: internet marketing, web marketing, and online marketing. Digital marketing aims to gain profits and retain consumers by conveying messages through online-based communication activities that are integrated and focused on meeting specific customer needs. According to Rumondang (2020), digital marketing is the latest technological innovation where the marketing process for services or products is carried out via internet and digitally. Meanwhile, according to Deidi (2017), digital marketing is basically marketing that uses digital media as a tool by means of using internet by utilizing such media; websites, social media, e-mail and so on with the aim of increasing consumer targets to inform consumer profiles, products and loyalty as well as consumer targets in achieving marketing goals. It can be concluded from the above explanations that digital marketing is the marketing of products or services where the application uses internet connections with the aim of utilizing websites, social media, e-mail, mobile/wireless, and digital TV in increasing marketing and achieving consumer targets. Digital marketing can make it easier for organizations to see how marketing is working by seeing consumer response.

Furthermore, digital marketing is a marketing and promotion model carried out through digital media and requires an internet network. According to Wati, et.al. (2020) digital marketing is targeted, measurable and interactive marketing of goods or services using digital technology. The main goal is to promote the brand, form preferences and increase sales traffic through several digital marketing techniques. Digital marketing can also be called online marketing or internet marketing. Basically, digital marketing is almost similar to marketing in general. However, what is different is the device used, such as phrasebook, Instagram, TikTok, website and so on.

b. Development of Tourism Potentials

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 10 Year 2009, a tourist attraction can be described as anything that has uniqueness, convenience and value in the form of diversity, natural wealth, culture and man-made products which become facilities and infrastructure for tourist visits and cause tourists to visit. When visiting a place or area, these tourist objects are usually objects that rarely occur and are seen every day. Attraction has 10 factors that make a region attractive so that it can become a tourist attraction, namely: 1) the climate of a region, 2) the intensity of promotional efforts, 3) the

products and services in a region, 4) special interest, 5) price discount incentives, 6) invitations to friends, 7) visiting relatives and friends, 8) tourist attractions, 9) culture, and 10) natural and man-made environments. Tourist attraction is an important component in tourism activities and is the main element in attracting tourists to come to a tourist destination (Ridwan & Windra, 2019).

c. Khao Garos Nature Tourism

According to the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 5 of 1990 regarding the Conservation of Biological Natural Resources and Ecosystems, nature tourism is the conservation of regional nature which is used primarily for nature tourism and recreation. Nature-based tourism is nature tourism activities that utilize the potential of natural resources and environmental management (Utami, 2017). Khao Garos nature tourism in Desa Nai Nang, Krabi, Thailand offers various tourist attractions such as cruising along the river with a long tail boat while enjoying the beauty of the limestone mountain range and views of the green mangrove forest. Apart from that, the Khao Garos natural tourist attraction also offers kayaking tourism which adds to the attractiveness of this tourist attraction. It can be concluded that natural tourism must be balanced in its potential so that many tourists can experience the beauty of natural tourism as a tourist destination. In this way, the application of digital marketing is necessary in balancing the potentials of Khao Garos nature tourism so that this tourist destination can be known to the wider community.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research was carried out using descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive means that the results of the research are described as clearly as possible. Qualitative research examines the existence of natural objects from real conditions that are not regulated or in experimental conditions in which the researcher is the key instrument. This is possible because qualitative research provides research results from the ability to describe, analyze, synthesize and evaluate the research itself, not from statistics produced by research instruments such as quantitative research (Sugiyono, 2018). Qualitative research is descriptive in nature and tends to use inductive analysis, so that the process and meaning are based on the subjective perspective (Fadil, 2020). In other words, descriptive qualitative research is carried out to investigate an object, a situation, a group of people or other phenomena with natural or real conditions without research to create a detailed systematic or factual picture and accurate information.

The research location is Nai Nang village in Krabi Province, Thailand and it was chosen because it offers a superior nature tourist destination called Khao Garos. As primary data, several informants related to the management of Khao Garos nature tourism were selected, namely the Head of Nai Nang village, the manager and guide of Khao Garos nature tourism, the local community of Nai Nang village, and 2 foreign tourists who were visiting and taking part in the Khao Garos nature tourism package. The informants were chosen carefully so that they could answer the problems in this research. All informants selected were very suitable for obtaining the required information.

In this qualitative research, the writer is the researcher and at the same time being the main instrument in collecting data. The main method used by the researcher during data collection process are field observations and in-depth interviews. Another source of data used by the researcher is study of documents related to digital marketing and increasing tourism potential. Another secondary data source is several reviews from tourists' experiences when visiting Khao Garos. These reviews are to help in analyzing and interpreting data and also to formulate conclusions. In this way, researchers will get a very clear picture of current digital marketing in relation to balancing the potential of Khao Garos natural tourism as a tourist destination. All of this data is authentic data related to digital marketing and balancing tourism potential.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

All primary and secondary data collected is then presented, analyzed and interpreted. It involves typing field notes, transcribing interviews, scanning documents, and organizing data into different types, depending on the source of the information. Once presented, the data is categorized and analyzed. Analyzing the data will involve interpreting all the data presented to obtain valuable and important findings to answer the problems in this research.

Field notes from observations at Khao Garos were then transcribed to provide a clearer picture of the tourism conditions that existed at that time, as well as the activities and interactions that occurred at Khao Garos, a famous natural tourist destination in Krabi, Thailand. This observation is focused on tourists who come to visit Khao Garos by looking for information obtained through social media and digital information.

Next, the observation data collected will be examined and used to design several open questions as a guide for conducting in-depth interviews. The aim is to reveal hidden information regarding the application of digital marketing in developing the potential of natural



tourism. This hidden information may not be visible through observation. Apart from that, the interview aims to reveal the problems that exist in the Khao Garos natural tourist attraction. Because interviews are based on observational data, the interview questions for five informants will of course be different for one participant from the other participants. Nonetheless, the interviews focused on answering the same research questions.

Observation results show that in a fun trip to the Khao Garos nature tourism carried out by foreign tourists together with local tour guides in Nai Nang village, Krabi, Thailand, several safety preparations were made by using life jackets before the activity of following the river by long tail boat while enjoying the forest views. mangrove, followed by exploring the karst mountain rocks and followed by kayaking activities. These tourists really enjoy the views and tourist attractions. They were also enthusiastic about the tour guide's explanation of the history of the tour and also captured many of their tourist activities. During tourist activities, the signal and internet network are very good, so tourists have no difficulty using the social media they have. This proves that there are no obstacles in realizing digital marketing in the Khao Garos tourist area which is full of tourism potential, in fact, in general, the signal and internet network in the tourist village of Nai Nang, Krabi, Thailand is very good.

From an interview with the Head of Nai Nang Village, Krabi, Thailand, it is known that he has a problem with the lack of dissemination of information regarding the potential and marketing of Khao Garos natural tourism. In several follow-up interview questions, he explained that there were already several plans in an effort to increase tourist visits, especially to Khao Garos. Among these plans, one of them is a digital marketing plan. In fact, there is great hope that promotion and optimization of digital marketing will increase information and promotion and optimize the natural tourism potential of Khao Garos. In line with the Village Head, the local tour guide of Nai Nang tourist village also has plans to increase tourist visits through digital marketing. Apart from that, based on the interviews that have been conducted, the tour guide will promote and optimize the natural tourism of Khao Garos through the characteristics of visiting tourists, as a reference. Therefore, it is very likely that increasing information and promotion from social media can optimize tourism potential and increase the number of visits.

Furthermore, the local community has tried to carry out promotions by utilizing Facebook as the platform used. In this way, the power of social media is felt to be very influential in promoting tourism and can optimize the potential of tourism. Meanwhile, according to tourists who visited Khao Garos, they said that the use of social media in promoting a tourist destination was good. Social media is very influential in optimizing promotions in a tourist

destination. Not only that, they also said that the power of social media Instagram and Tiktok is very large in optimizing promotions. In line with this, other tourists informed that social media such as Facebook is very influential in optimizing the promotion of a tourist destination and is the main platform for searching for information related to the potential and activities that can be carried out at the tourist destination.

Based on several reviews given by several tourists who have visited and participated in activities at the Khao Garos natural tourist attraction, in general they think it has met expectations. These tourists agreed that during their visit to Khao Garos, they had a wonderful experience. In fact, several reviews also explain that Khao Garos has a very authentic view with a unique combination of karst mountains, mangrove forests stretching along the river, and very beautiful coral caves. Khao Garos is a natural tourist attraction that is highly recommended by tourists because of all the natural potential it has. From these reviews, it can also be concluded that tourists get good experiences and impressions during their visit to Khao Garos and the host can share their experiences via digital platforms. Thus, promotional efforts must be managed well so that they have greater quality in increasing the potential of the Khao Garos natural tourist attraction.

Thus, there are two main findings regarding the need for digital marketing to be applied in an effort to further develop the natural tourism potential of Khao Garos, namely: 1) limited information on Khao Garos, so digital marketing is needed, and 2) the need for complete Khao Garos natural tourism information through the media social.

#### 1. Limited Information of Khao Garos as a Nature Tourism Potential

Based on field observations in Khao Garos and the results of interviews with several informants, it is known that the information available regarding Khao Garos natural tourism is very lacking, starting from the absence of signage, no brochures and limited information about this tourist attraction on social media. The signage currently available is not only very limited in number, but is also written in Thai, making it quite confusing for visiting tourists. Apart from being equipped and increasing in number, the presence of road signs in English will be very helpful for tourists, especially for tourists who are visiting Nai Nang village for the first time and are not accompanied by a tour guide.

#### 2. The Needs of More Information of Khao Garos on Social Media

Field observations and documentary studies regarding Khao Garos natural tourism prove that this tourist destination is a very suitable place to see and enjoy its natural beauty. The results of reviews written by several tourists who visited Khao Garos show that the majority

of them were very satisfied, and these reviews were dominated by tourists who were amazed by the beauty of the views and atmosphere on offer, as has been illustrated previously. However, information on social media about Khao Garos is very limited, so tourists who come must be accompanied by a tour guide from Phuket and cannot come alone.

Therefore, the need for information on social media is very important to increase tourist information and so that tourists who come will get information easily. Tourists who come to China often use the social media Facebook to search for information related to the tourist destinations they intend to visit. This is also in line with the results of interviews with informants from Indonesia and Thailand who stated that social media has an influence on people's search for travel information. Information shared through various types of platforms for marketing such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, websites, and reviews on Online Travel Agents (OTA) will really help potential tourists who will visit Khao Garos. Usually, prospective tourists will look for information on more than 2 platforms, so that they can compare and strengthen their decision to visit or not.

## **CONCLUSION**

Khao Garos in Nai Nang village, Krabi, Thailand is a nature tour package which offers a long tail boat tour along the river by enjoying views of the peat forest on the left and right of the river. The journey along the river by long tail boat continues to the Andaman Sea with even more amazing views, namely the presence of several very beautiful karst mountain groups. The tour package trip is then continued with kayaking experience at one of the karst mountain spots and ends with a buffet lunch on one of the islands where tourists can enjoy the gentle waves and play in the sea water with satisfaction.

The lack of tourist visits to Khao Garos is due to the lack of information about Khao Garos itself, especially on social media, so this potential tourist destination of Khao Garos is not widely known by potential tourists. In general, Khao Garos is known not only for its natural beauty, but also for its sunsets and photo spots and kayaking experience. So, in order that Khao Garos tourist destination be better known and visited by more tourists, digital marketing has an important role in providing complete information to potential tourists who will visit, especially foreign tourists, so that Khao Garos can be better known in the world.

Digital marketing in the Khao Garos tourist destination has various roles which will have an impact on increasing information as well as increasing visits to Khao Garos. The application of digital marketing in increasing the tourism potential of Khao Garos that tourists need is considered very important, especially now that prospective tourists who want to visit Khao Garos only depend on Facebook and several reviews from Online Travel Agents. For this reason, the application of digital marketing on other platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and informative websites is highly recommended to make it easier for tourists to get the information they need, before they decide to visit Khao Garos. The application of digital marketing will also give more meaning to traveling, because if more tourists know about the Khao Garos tourist attraction, more people will know the potential that exists in this natural tourist attraction, so they can spread this good information to their friends and family. decided to visit Khao Garos. Social media will be very helpful in promoting and providing information when you want to travel to Khao Garos. Digital marketing on social media makes it easier for tourists to find out information about these tourist attractions.

Social media is considered very effective as a tool for promoting Khao Garos tourism. By using social media, the number of tourist visits can increase. Tourists can also search for complete information and interact easily on various platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. This has resulted in a drastic increase in digital tourism opportunities. Not only that, social media can also be used as an opportunity for tourism because social media is a digital tourism promotion platform that is in harmony with the digital world. Internet users who actively use social media are very beneficial for tourism industry players in providing exposure and increasing awareness of these tourist attractions to the world. Furthermore, social media is also used as a source of reference regarding traveling for tourists. They are very active in using social media as a means of seeking information and promotions. The role of digital marketing will also make it easier to find information, form visitor interest, search for tourist references, and as a promotional tool for tourist attractions while still paying attention to several factors in developing tourism potential such as tourist attraction, visitor interest, visitor satisfaction, and tourist attraction infrastructure.

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