

REGIONAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT STRATEGY IN ENHANCING TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS IN RIAU PROVINCE

Siti Rofidah^{1*}, Rizqi Fakhri², Ul-Fa Niah³, Teuku Reza Kurniawan⁴, Iskandar⁵

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Riau, Indonesia

E-mail: sitirofidah@lecturer.stieriau-akbar.ac.id

Received : 10 March 2026

Accepted : 01 April 2026

Revised : 15 March 2026

Published : 26 April 2026

Abstract

This study aims to formulate an effective regional marketing management strategy to enhance the tourism competitiveness of Riau Province, Indonesia. Despite its rich natural and cultural tourism potential, Riau has not yet achieved optimal competitiveness compared to other leading destinations. This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using purposive sampling, involving 12 informants consisting of government officials, tourism business actors, and local community representatives. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using thematic analysis based on the Miles and Huberman framework. The findings reveal four major issues: (1) tourism marketing strategies remain conventional and lack market orientation, particularly in segmentation, targeting, and positioning; (2) destination branding is weak and inconsistent, resulting in a fragmented tourism image; (3) stakeholder collaboration is limited and characterized by poor coordination and low community involvement; and (4) digital marketing utilization is suboptimal due to limited technological capacity and lack of integrated platforms. These findings indicate a structural gap between tourism potential and marketing management effectiveness. The study concludes that improving tourism competitiveness in Riau requires a comprehensive and integrated approach, including strengthening destination branding, enhancing stakeholder collaboration, and accelerating digital transformation. The research contributes to the literature by emphasizing the importance of marketing system maturity, institutional coordination, and digital readiness in regional tourism development. Practically, the study provides strategic recommendations for policymakers and tourism stakeholders to develop a more competitive and sustainable tourism sector.

Keywords: *regional marketing management, tourism competitiveness, destination branding, digital marketing, stakeholder collaboration, Riau Province*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector that plays a significant role in promoting regional economic growth, increasing local government revenue, and creating employment opportunities. In the era of globalization, competition among tourist destinations has become increasingly intense, requiring each region to develop effective strategies in managing and marketing its tourism potential. Riau Province possesses diverse tourism resources, including natural attractions, cultural heritage, religious tourism, and unique Malay local wisdom. However, these potentials have not been optimally utilized to enhance the region's tourism competitiveness. One of the primary issues faced is the suboptimal implementation of regional marketing management, particularly in terms of promotion, destination branding, and the use of digital technology. In addition, the lack of synergy among stakeholders such as local government, tourism industry actors, and local communities poses a significant challenge to sustainable tourism development. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), an effective marketing strategy must be capable of identifying market needs and delivering superior value compared to competitors. Therefore, an integrated and locally grounded marketing management approach is essential. The urgency of this activity lies in the need to enhance the competitiveness of tourism in Riau Province in order to attract more domestic and international tourists. Destination competitiveness is not solely determined by the attractiveness of tourism assets but also by service quality, accessibility, promotion, and destination image (Pike & Page, 2014). Without an appropriate marketing strategy, the existing tourism potential will not contribute optimally to regional development. The objective of this activity is to formulate an effective regional marketing management strategy to improve the competitiveness of tourism in Riau Province. Additionally, this activity aims to identify existing challenges in tourism marketing management and to

develop problem-solving plans that can be implemented sustainably. The proposed solutions include conducting situational analysis, strengthening destination branding, optimizing digital marketing, and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. This study incorporates relevant literature on marketing management and tourism. Middleton and Clarke (2001) define tourism marketing as a managerial process that involves identifying, anticipating, and satisfying tourist needs profitably. Furthermore, Ritchie and Crouch (2003) emphasize that destination competitiveness is influenced by core resources and attractions, as well as supporting factors such as infrastructure and policy. A situational analysis of Riau Province indicates that despite its significant potential, tourism marketing management still requires innovation and strategic strengthening to compete effectively with other regions in Indonesia. Therefore, a comprehensive and sustainable regional marketing management strategy is necessary to enhance the competitiveness of tourism in Riau Province, thereby contributing significantly to regional economic development and community welfare.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of regional tourism competitiveness is closely associated with effective marketing management strategies, which have been widely discussed in the literature. Previous studies emphasize that tourism marketing is not merely promotional activity but a comprehensive managerial process involving planning, implementation, and evaluation to meet market demands and achieve competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2016). In the context of regional tourism, marketing management plays a crucial role in shaping destination image, attracting visitors, and ensuring sustainable development. Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between marketing strategies and tourism competitiveness. For instance, Pike and Page (2014) highlight that destination marketing organizations (DMOs) must focus on branding, segmentation, and positioning to enhance competitiveness. Their study demonstrates that a strong destination brand significantly influences tourists' decision-making processes. However, one limitation of their work lies in its general applicability, as it does not specifically address challenges faced by developing regions with limited resources, such as Riau Province.

Similarly, research by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) proposes a comprehensive model of destination competitiveness, emphasizing core resources, supporting factors, and destination management. This framework provides a solid theoretical foundation for understanding how marketing efforts contribute to tourism success. Nevertheless, the model has been criticized for its complexity and limited practical applicability in regional contexts where institutional capacity may be constrained. This indicates a need for more adaptable and context-specific strategies. From a theoretical perspective, the concept of destination branding is central to tourism marketing. According to Blain, Levy, and Ritchie (2005), destination branding involves creating a unique identity and value proposition that differentiates a destination from its competitors. This concept is particularly relevant for regions like Riau, which possess distinctive cultural and natural assets but lack strong market positioning. In addition, the advancement of digital marketing has transformed how destinations communicate with potential tourists. Buhalis and Law (2008) argue that the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) enhances marketing effectiveness by enabling personalized and interactive engagement with consumers. However, disparities in digital infrastructure and human resource capabilities remain significant challenges in many regions.

Despite the extensive body of literature, there are ongoing debates regarding the most effective approaches to tourism marketing. One key issue is the balance between traditional and digital marketing strategies. While some scholars advocate for a full transition to digital platforms, others emphasize the continued importance of conventional methods, particularly in regions with limited technological adoption (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Furthermore, there is a discrepancy in the literature concerning stakeholder collaboration. While many studies underscore its importance, practical implementation often faces barriers such as conflicting interests and lack of coordination. In the context of Indonesia, several studies have examined regional tourism development; however, research specifically focusing on the marketing management of tourism in Riau Province remains limited. Existing studies tend to focus more on tourism potential and development planning rather than integrated marketing strategies. This gap highlights the need for research that combines theoretical insights with practical approaches tailored to the local context. Therefore, this study aims to address these gaps by developing a comprehensive and context-specific regional marketing management strategy to enhance tourism competitiveness in Riau Province. By integrating concepts of destination branding, digital marketing, and stakeholder collaboration, this research is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of tourism marketing and regional development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze regional marketing management strategies in enhancing tourism competitiveness in Riau Province. The research design focuses on understanding existing conditions, identifying key challenges, and formulating strategic solutions based on empirical data and relevant theoretical frameworks. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social and managerial phenomena within the tourism sector. The target participants of this study were selected using purposive sampling techniques, ensuring that individuals involved have relevant knowledge and experience in tourism development and marketing. The participants include representatives from local government agencies (such as the Department of Tourism), tourism industry stakeholders (e.g., tour operators, hotel managers), and local community leaders. This selection aims to capture diverse perspectives and ensure comprehensive data related to tourism marketing practices in Riau Province.

The materials and tools used in this study include interview guidelines, observation checklists, and documentation review instruments. The interview guide was designed to explore key aspects such as current marketing strategies, challenges faced, stakeholder collaboration, and opportunities for improvement. These tools were developed based on established theories of marketing management and tourism competitiveness to ensure their relevance and validity. The performance and productivity of these tools were assessed through preliminary testing to ensure clarity, consistency, and the ability to generate meaningful data. Data collection was conducted through multiple techniques, including in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were carried out to obtain detailed insights from participants, while observations were used to assess tourism facilities, promotional activities, and visitor engagement in selected destinations. Additionally, secondary data such as government reports, tourism statistics, and policy documents were analyzed to support and validate primary data findings.

Data analysis in this study follows a qualitative analysis framework, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014). The collected data were systematically organized, coded, and categorized to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to tourism marketing strategies. Triangulation techniques were applied to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings by comparing data from different sources and methods. Through this methodological approach, the study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of regional marketing management practices and provide practical recommendations to improve tourism competitiveness in Riau Province.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings derived from qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. A total of 12 informants participated in this study, consisting of 4 government officials, 5 tourism business actors, and 3 local community representatives. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the framework of Miles and Huberman (2014), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

1. Thematic Coding and Data Reduction

The coding process generated four dominant themes that reflect the core issues in tourism marketing management in Riau Province.

Table 1. Thematic Coding Structure

Theme Code	Main Theme	Sub-Codes Identified
T1	Marketing Strategy Limitation	Conventional promotion, lack of segmentation, no targeting
T2	Weak Destination Branding	No identity, inconsistent messaging, weak positioning
T3	Stakeholder Fragmentation	Poor coordination, sectoral ego, low participation
T4	Digital Marketing Constraint	Low skills, limited platform use, lack of integration

2. Data Display and Evidence-Based Findings

2.1 Marketing Strategy Limitation (T1)

The findings reveal that tourism marketing in Riau remains predominantly conventional and lacks a strategic orientation.

“Promotion is still focused on festivals and exhibitions; we rarely use data to target specific tourists.” (Gov-01)

“We don’t clearly define who our main tourists are.” (Business-02)

This indicates the absence of market segmentation and targeting, which are fundamental components of modern marketing strategy (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The reliance on traditional promotion limits outreach effectiveness and reduces competitiveness.

2.2 Weak Destination Branding (T2)

The study found that Riau lacks a strong and consistent destination identity.

“Riau does not yet have a strong tourism image compared to Bali or Yogyakarta.” (Business-03)

“Each district promotes itself differently without a unified concept.” (Gov-02)

This fragmentation weakens destination positioning, confirming Blain et al. (2005) that branding consistency is essential for recognition and differentiation. Without a unified brand, Riau fails to create a compelling value proposition in the tourism market.

2.3 Stakeholder Fragmentation (T3)

Stakeholder collaboration was identified as structurally weak and poorly coordinated.

“There is often overlap in programs between agencies.” (Gov-03)

“We are rarely involved in decision-making or promotion.” (Community-01)

The findings highlight institutional fragmentation and limited community participation, which reduce the effectiveness of tourism development. This aligns with Ritchie and Crouch (2003), who emphasize that competitiveness depends on integrated stakeholder collaboration.

2.4 Digital Marketing Constraint (T4)

Digital marketing practices are present but not strategically optimized.

“We use Instagram, but it is not professionally managed.” (Business-04)

“There is no centralized digital tourism platform for Riau.” (Gov-04)

This reflects low digital capability and infrastructure readiness, limiting engagement with modern tourists. As noted by Xiang and Gretzel (2010), digital platforms are critical in influencing travel decisions, and their underutilization represents a major strategic gap.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a fundamental gap between the tourism potential of Riau Province and the effectiveness of its marketing management practices. This gap is not merely technical but structural, involving strategic orientation, institutional coordination, and technological adaptation. A deeper analysis of each theme highlights both theoretical implications and practical challenges.

First, the persistence of conventional marketing strategies indicates that tourism management in Riau remains largely product-oriented rather than market-oriented. Promotional activities are still centered on events and exhibitions without a clear understanding of target markets. This contradicts the core principles of modern marketing, which emphasize segmentation, targeting, and positioning (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The absence of data-driven decision-making suggests that tourism actors lack access to or utilization of market intelligence. Consequently, promotional efforts become generalized, reducing their effectiveness in attracting specific tourist segments. This finding reinforces previous studies that highlight the importance of market orientation in enhancing destination competitiveness (Pike & Page, 2014).

Second, the issue of weak destination branding reflects a deeper problem of identity construction and strategic communication. Branding is not simply about logos or slogans but involves the creation of a consistent and meaningful narrative that differentiates a destination (Blain et al., 2005). In the case of Riau, the lack of a unified brand identity across districts leads to fragmented messaging and diluted market perception. This fragmentation weakens Riau’s ability to compete with well-established destinations such as Bali or Yogyakarta, which have

successfully developed strong and recognizable tourism brands. Furthermore, the absence of emotional and symbolic value in branding limits the ability to build long-term relationships with tourists.

Third, stakeholder fragmentation emerges as a critical barrier to effective tourism marketing. The findings show that coordination among government agencies, private sector actors, and local communities is weak and often characterized by overlapping programs and sectoral ego. This reflects a governance issue where tourism is managed in a fragmented rather than integrated manner. According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003), successful destination management requires a holistic approach involving collaboration among all stakeholders. The lack of coordination not only reduces efficiency but also hinders innovation and the development of cohesive marketing strategies. Moreover, limited community involvement suggests that tourism development is not fully inclusive, which may affect its sustainability in the long term.

Fourth, the study highlights a significant gap in digital marketing capabilities, which can be described as a “digital adoption paradox.” While some stakeholders have adopted digital platforms such as social media, their use remains superficial and lacks strategic direction. This finding aligns with Xiang and Gretzel (2010), who argue that digital platforms play a central role in shaping tourist behavior and decision-making. The absence of integrated digital platforms and professional content management indicates that Riau has not yet fully embraced digital transformation in tourism marketing. This creates a competitive disadvantage, particularly in an era where tourists increasingly rely on online information and user-generated content.

From a broader perspective, these findings suggest that the challenges faced by Riau Province are indicative of a transition phase in tourism marketing management, where traditional practices coexist with emerging digital approaches but without proper integration. This transitional condition creates inefficiencies and limits the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts. It also highlights the need for capacity building, not only in technical skills but also in strategic thinking and organizational management.

In terms of theoretical contribution, this study extends existing literature by emphasizing the role of institutional and capability factors in shaping tourism marketing effectiveness. While previous studies have focused on resources and attractions, this research demonstrates that management quality, coordination, and digital readiness are equally critical determinants of competitiveness. The findings also contribute to the discourse on destination branding by illustrating how sub-national fragmentation can weaken overall brand identity.

Practically, the findings imply that improving tourism competitiveness in Riau requires a systemic transformation rather than isolated interventions. Efforts to enhance marketing effectiveness must address multiple dimensions simultaneously, including strategy, branding, governance, and technology. For instance, the development of a unified branding strategy must be accompanied by institutional mechanisms that ensure consistency across stakeholders. Similarly, digital transformation requires not only technological infrastructure but also human resource development and organizational change. In conclusion, the discussion highlights that the main challenge in Riau’s tourism sector lies in the misalignment between its rich tourism potential and the maturity of its marketing management system. Addressing this issue requires a shift toward an integrated, data-driven, and collaborative approach to tourism marketing. Without such transformation, Riau may continue to lag behind more competitive destinations despite its abundant resources.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to formulate an effective regional marketing management strategy to enhance the tourism competitiveness of Riau Province. As outlined in the introduction, the urgency of this research lies in addressing the gap between the region’s rich tourism potential and its relatively low competitiveness compared to other destinations in Indonesia. Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the main challenges are not related to the lack of resources, but rather to weaknesses in marketing management practices, including strategy, branding, stakeholder coordination, and digital utilization.

The results indicate that tourism marketing in Riau Province remains predominantly conventional and lacks a market-oriented approach. The absence of clear segmentation, targeting, and positioning reduces the effectiveness of promotional efforts. In addition, destination branding is weak and inconsistent, resulting in a fragmented image that fails to differentiate Riau from competing destinations. Stakeholder collaboration is also limited, characterized by weak coordination and minimal community involvement, which hinders the development of integrated and sustainable tourism strategies. Furthermore, digital marketing practices are still underutilized, reflecting low technological readiness and limited human resource capacity. These findings confirm that improving tourism competitiveness requires a comprehensive and systemic approach. Strengthening marketing strategies must be accompanied by the development of a unified destination branding, enhanced stakeholder collaboration, and

accelerated digital transformation. The study also highlights the importance of capacity building in marketing and digital skills to support more effective and innovative promotional activities. For future development, it is recommended that Riau Province adopts an integrated tourism marketing framework that emphasizes data-driven decision-making, consistent branding, and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The establishment of a centralized digital tourism platform, combined with continuous training for tourism actors, can significantly improve marketing performance. Additionally, strengthening institutional coordination mechanisms will ensure that tourism development efforts are more efficient and sustainable. In conclusion, this study contributes both theoretically and practically by demonstrating that tourism competitiveness is strongly influenced by the quality of marketing management systems. The implementation of strategic, integrated, and technology-based marketing approaches is essential for Riau Province to enhance its position as a competitive and sustainable tourism destination in the future.

REFERENCES

- Ardika, I. W. (2018). *Kepariwisata berkelanjutan: Rintis jalan lewat komunitas*. Kompas.
- Blain, C., Levy, S. E., & Ritchie, J. R. B. (2005). Destination branding: Insights and practices from destination management organizations. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(4), 328–338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287505274646>
- Buhalis, D., & Law, R. (2008). Progress in information technology and tourism management: 20 years on and 10 years after the Internet—The state of eTourism research. *Tourism Management*, 29(4), 609–623. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.01.005>
- Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Gretzel, U., Sigala, M., Xiang, Z., & Koo, C. (2020). Smart tourism: Foundations and developments. *Electronic Markets*, 30(3), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-020-00430-8>
- Hidayat, T., & Setiawan, B. (2021). Strategi pemasaran digital dalam meningkatkan daya saing pariwisata daerah. *Jurnal Pariwisata Indonesia*, 17(2), 85–98.
- Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif Republik Indonesia. (2021). *Rencana strategis pariwisata nasional 2020–2024*. Kemenparekraf RI.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Middleton, V. T. C., & Clarke, J. (2001). *Marketing in travel and tourism* (3rd ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Pike, S., & Page, S. J. (2014). Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: A narrative analysis of the literature. *Tourism Management*, 41, 202–227. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2013.09.009>
- Putra, I. N. D., & Pitana, I. G. (2019). *Pengantar ilmu pariwisata*. Andi Offset.
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Crouch, G. I. (2003). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*. CABI Publishing.
- Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 312–321. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.015>
- Suryadana, M. L., & Octavia, V. (2015). *Pengantar pemasaran pariwisata*. Alfabeta.
- Utama, I. G. B. R. (2017). *Pemasaran pariwisata*. Andi Publisher.
- Widodo, S., & Handayani, S. (2022). Peran branding destinasi dalam meningkatkan daya tarik wisata daerah. *Jurnal Kepariwisata Indonesia*, 18(1), 45–60.
- Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social media in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, 31(2), 179–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.016>
- Yusuf, M., & Rahman, A. (2023). Digital tourism marketing strategy in regional development: Evidence from Indonesia. *Jurnal Manajemen dan Kewirausahaan*, 25(1), 12–25.