

## Exploring Ecotourism Concept In Social Media For Students At Smk Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2

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### Abstract

*This study aims to explore the strategy of implementing social media in introducing the concept of ecotourism to students of SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2. This research is descriptive with a qualitative approach, with the research location at SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2. The research used an online questionnaire with Google Form. The results showed that social media proved to be an effective tool to reach students and convey information about ecotourism. Facebook is the social media platform that they often use. Social media can raise awareness about the importance of environmental conservation and encourage student participation in ecotourism activities. This study provides several suggestions to improve the effectiveness of using social media in ecotourism education. These suggestions include utilizing social media platforms that are popular among students, developing interesting and informative content, using relevant hashtags to expand reach, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of social media. Thus, it is hoped that students can gain a better understanding of the concept of ecotourism and actively participate in environmental conservation efforts.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is an industry that utilizes natural resources. The constant goal of the tourism industry is to protect the environment and improve the welfare of local communities. This is known as ecotourism. According to Honey (2008:33), Ecotourism is a form of responsible tourism to natural areas that protects the environment and improves the well-being of local communities. Furthermore, Newsome et al. (2013:45) stated that ecotourism can have a positive impact on nature conservation and empowerment of local communities. One branch of tourism known as ecotourism focuses on these aspects by promoting responsible travel to natural areas, preserving the environment, and improving the welfare of local communities. Ecotourism emphasizes the importance of appreciating and preserving nature and cultural heritage, making it a sustainable form of tourism.

Despite its many benefits, ecotourism faces various challenges in its implementation, especially in raising awareness and understanding among potential participants, such as students. According to Ceballos-Lascuráin (1996:20), lack of understanding of ecotourism principles can lead to environmental degradation due to unsustainable tourism activities. This is supported by Weaver's (2020:67) findings that a lack of ecotourism literacy among tourism participants can threaten environmental sustainability. Therefore, educating the younger generation on the principles of ecotourism is crucial to ensure they contribute positively to environmental preservation and community development.

In today's digital era, social media plays an important role in disseminating information and education to the wider community, including students. Van Dijk in Setiadi (2016), states that social media is a platform media that focuses on the existence of users which facilitates them in activities and collaboration. In this case, social media is media taht is used online for activities and collaboration. Meanwhile, according to Kietzmann et al., 2011, social media is a honeycomb of seven functional building blocks: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships,

reputation, and groups social media includes various platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and many more. Social media is made up of various user-driven platforms that facilitate diffusion of compelling content, dialogue creation, and communication to a broader audience. It is essentially a digital space created by the people and for the people, and it provides an environment that is conducive for interactions and networking to occur at different levels for instance, personal, professional, business, marketing, political, and societal (Kapoor et al. 2018)

The main objective of this research is to explore the strategy of using social media in introducing the concept of ecotourism to students at SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2. By capitalizing on the popularity and interactive nature of social media platforms (Newsome et al., 2013:112), the main objective is to increase students' understanding and appreciation of ecotourism, thereby creating a generation that values and actively participates in environmental conservation. Furthermore, effective use of social media can help build awareness and ownership of environmental issues among students (Xu, 2019:92).

This research proposes the use of social media as an educational tool to teach ecotourism concepts. By developing engaging and informative content tailored to students' preferences, social media can be used to raise awareness of the importance of environmental conservation. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the social media campaign will help in refining the strategy to ensure maximum impact. This approach aims not only to educate students, but also encourage their active involvement in ecotourism activities. Therefore, based on the researcher's research data, the introduction of ecotourism at SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2, has a relationship that through social media, students are encouraged to engage in ecotourism activities that support environmental conservation. This is expected to motivate them to actively participate in nature conservation efforts. Second, environmental awareness. Social media is used to spread information about the importance of environmental conservation. Research shows that these platforms are effective in reaching students and increasing their awareness of ecotourism. Furthermore, the use of social media in ecotourism education provides students with a better understanding of the concept of ecotourism, as well as its impact on environmental conservation and the well-being of local communities. Thus, this study shows that the application of social media as an educational tool can improve students' understanding of ecotourism and encourage their active involvement in environmental conservation.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research will use a descriptive method research design with a qualitative approach to explore strategies and comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of using social media platforms in introducing the concept of ecotourism to students at SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2. Descriptive research describes the findings with as much accuracy as possible from the research that has been completed, but it is unable to draw any conclusions from the research findings; this is also referred to as creating only broad conclusions.

According to Moleong (2008: 6) qualitative research is research that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by the subject research for example behavior, perception, motivation, action, holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, in a context specifically natural ones and by utilizing various natural methods. Meanwhile, according to Sugiyono (2019) qualitative research is research used to examine the conditions of natural objects and the data obtained tends to be qualitative data with qualitative data analysis techniques.

Moleong (2008) and Sugiyono (2019) defines that qualitative research has the same goal to comprehend the phenomena experienced by study participants in their natural environment. Moleong promotes a comprehensive and descriptive approach using words and language, as well as the utilization of natural approaches. Sugiyono likewise emphasizes study on natural object circumstances and prefers to employ qualitative data and qualitative analytic methodologies. Both

theories highlight the significance of a thorough and contextual understanding of the topic being studied.

Data collection was carried out using an Online Questionnaire through a google form whose link will be distributed to students and fill in the questions that have been provided in the form of multiple choice. This questionnaire is widely used in quantitative research, but can also be used in qualitative research on the condition that the researcher must understand the research. Because researchers cannot explore freely as well as during direct interviews. In qualitative research, questionnaires usually contain open questions that must be answered by respondents with detailed explanations.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 3.1 Results

From the retrieval of data, 20 respondents were students in SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2, with ages ranging from 15 to 20 years. Then for the most widely used social media platform by students, 13 respondents of 20 respondents use the Facebook Social Media Platform, then Whatsapp 9 respondents, Tiktok 6 respondents and the last Instagram 3 respondents . With averages are 4, 95 hours of respondents using social media per day (Table 1).

Table 1. Social Media Use

Names	Ages	Most Preferred Social Media by Student	Time spent using Social Media per day
KN	17	Whatsapp & Facebook	5
RSZ	16	Whatsapp & Tiktok	6
SLL	16	Tiktok	3
SAKZ	16	Tiktok	3
NPDNB	17	Facebook	11
BL	15	Tiktok	1
SYSPB	15	Facebook	24
HYZ	16	Facebook	10
LN	17	Whatsapp & Facebook	5
DRG	18	Whatsapp, Tiktok, Instagram & Facebook	1
KG	19	Whatsapp & Facebook	1
JNW	18	Instagram	5
NJB	16	Instagram, WhatsApp & Facebook	3
AL	20	WhatsApp & Tiktok	3
ASZ	16	Facebook	5
RPN	16	Facebook	1
OCG	16	WhatsApp	2
SZ	17	WhatsApp & Facebook	4
SDAKT	16	Facebook	4
IKT	16	Facebook	2

Figure 1. Social Media Use

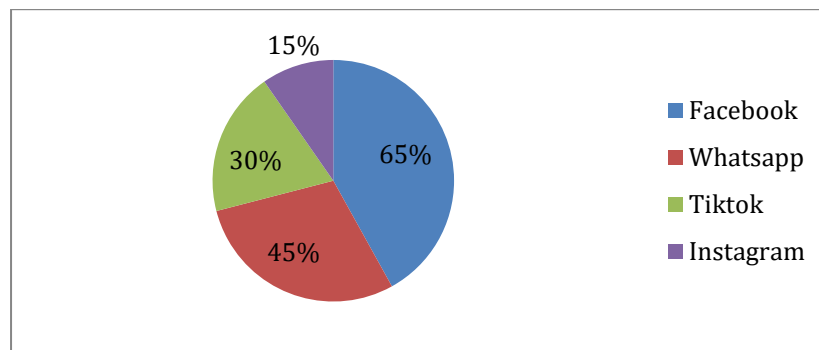
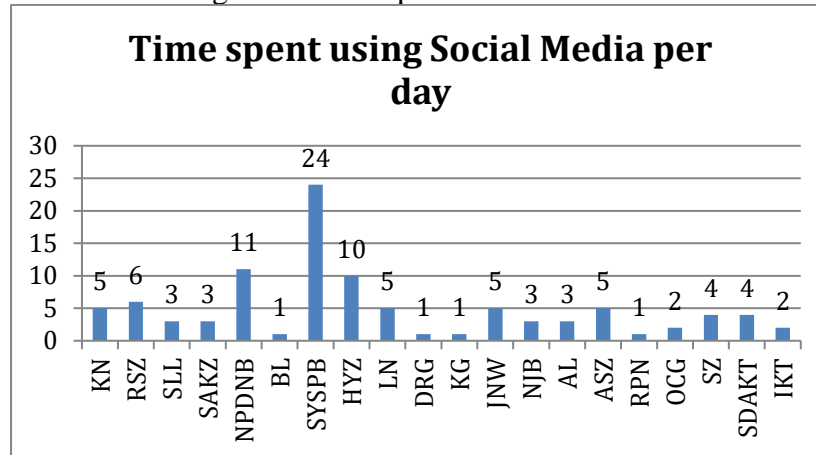


Figure 2. Time spent of social media



Then for the respondent's understanding of ecotourism, results were obtained, from 20 respondents, 10 respondents didn't know about the understanding of ecotourism, 9 respondents knew well, and 1 respondent who doesn't care. Data analysis then continued by knowing the activities they normally do by students at tourist attractions. From the data obtained provided that respondents can choose more than one, it is known that most students prefer to look exist by taking photos at tourist attractions (Table 2).

Table 2. Understanding of Ecotourism and Activities

Names	Understanding of Ecotourism	Activities
KN	Don't understand	Enjoy the view and grab some picture
RSZ	Understand	Enjoy the view and grab some picture
SLL	Understand	Enjoy the view and grab some picture
SAKZ	Understand	Enjoy the view
NPDNB	Understand	Playing with sand
BL	Don't understand	Enjoy the view
SYSPB	Don't understand	Enjoy the view
HYZ	Don't understand	Grab some picture
LN	Understand	Protect and preserve nature
DRG	Understand	Learning and grab some picture
KG	Understand	Learning
JNW	Understand	Swimming and grab some picture
NJB	Understand	Enjoy the view

AL	Don't understand	Nothing
ASZ	Don't understand	Recognize the tourims place
RPN	Don't understand	Grab some picture
OCG	Don't understand	Enjoy the view
SZ	Careless	Enjoy the view
SDAKT	Don't understand	Enjoy the view
IKT	Don't understand	Enjoy the view and grab some picture

Figure 3. Understanding of Ecotourism

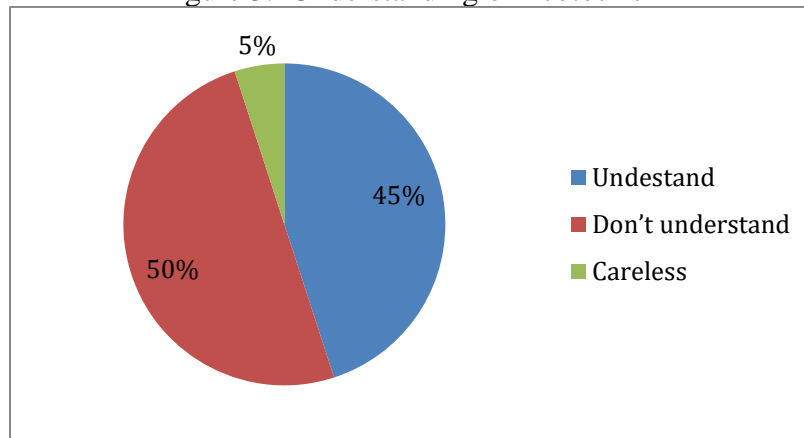
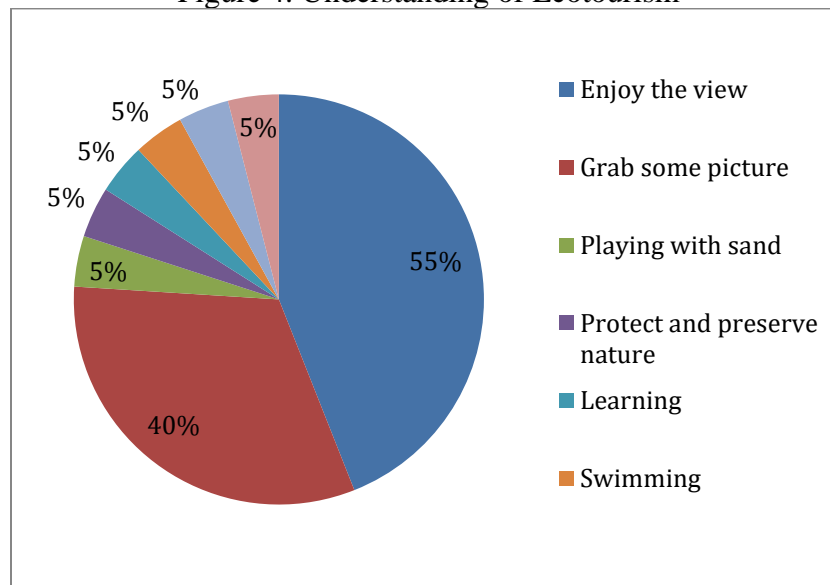


Figure 4. Understanding of Ecotourism



### 3.2. Discussion

This research focuses on the strategy of introducing the concept of ecotourism to students of SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2 by utilizing social media. With the increasing use of social media among students, this method was chosen to increase their knowledge and awareness of ecotourism, which aims to preserve the environment while improving the welfare of local communities. Ecotourism not only involves traveling to natural places, but also educating travelers on the importance of protecting the environment and supporting local communities. Therefore, understanding how students can accept and practice the concept of ecotourism

through social media is important in the context of environmental education (Kvasov, D., 2020: 78-82; Bell, T., 2021: 45-52).

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of using social media platforms in teaching ecotourism concepts. This study aims to measure the increase in students' knowledge of ecotourism before and after participation in a social media-based education program, as well as assess students' engagement with ecotourism content on social media. In addition, the study also aims to identify the most effective social media platforms and the types of content that are most engaging for students. Thus, this research can provide practical guidance for educators in designing and implementing effective social media-based education programs.

This study used a descriptive research method design with a qualitative approach. The results showed a significant increase in students' knowledge of ecotourism after participating in the social media-based education program, as measured through an online questionnaire. Analysis of social media data showed that students actively interacted with ecotourism content, with content formats such as videos. These results suggest that social media can be used as an effective tool to deliver educational information in a way that is engaging and easily understood by students. In addition, the findings also suggest that varied content formats can sustain students' interest and participation over a longer period of time.

The results of this study imply that using social media as an educational tool can increase students' knowledge and awareness of ecotourism especially Facebook application usage. This suggests that an interactive and engaging approach through social media can be an effective strategy in environmental education. This research also provides recommendations for improving ecotourism education programs in the future, such as expanding content formats and increasing student engagement. By using social media, educators can reach more students and deliver educational messages more effectively. In addition, students' active engagement with educational content can also help them develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of ecotourism.

This study has several limitations, including student access to digital devices, and adequate content creation processes. These limitations need to be considered in future research to improve the effectiveness of social media-based ecotourism education programs. Some students may face barriers in accessing the necessary technology, which may affect their participation and engagement. Therefore, it is important to consider alternative solutions, such as providing adequate access to digital devices and the necessary technical support to ensure all students can fully participate in the educational program.

Thus, this study shows that social media is an effective tool to teach ecotourism concepts to students, increase their knowledge, and encourage active involvement in environmental conservation. The recommendations put forward in this study can assist educators and policy makers in developing more comprehensive and effective ecotourism education programs, which can be implemented in various schools and communities. Thus, it is hoped that this program will not only increase students' knowledge, but also shape a young generation that cares and is responsible for the environment.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study found that the use of social media proved effective in introducing the concept of ecotourism to students of SMK Swasta Kristen Tomosa 2. The results show that social media platforms, especially Facebook, are effective tools to reach students and convey information related to ecotourism. Through social media, students' level of awareness regarding the importance of environmental conservation can be increased, and their participation in ecotourism activities can be encouraged.

To increase the effectiveness of using social media in ecotourism education, this study provides several suggestions. These include utilizing social media platforms that are popular among students, developing interesting and informative content, using relevant hashtags to expand reach, and conducting regular monitoring and evaluation. By implementing these strategies, it is hoped that students can gain a better understanding of the concept of ecotourism and be actively involved in environmental conservation efforts.

## 5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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