



Tourism Human Resource Competency Development in Supporting Digital Destination Branding in Serang Regency

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to analyse the development of tourism human resource competencies in supporting digital destination branding in Serang Regency and to identify factors that influence the effectiveness of digital tourism promotion. **Methodology:** The study used a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation related to digital tourism promotion. Analyse followed data reduction, data display, and conclusion verification procedures. **Results:** The study found that Serang Regency possesses significant tourism potential supported by natural, cultural, and religious attractions. However, the effectiveness of digital promotion remains influenced by varying levels of tourism human resource competencies, particularly in digital communication and social media management. **Findings:** Tourism stakeholders have begun utilising digital platforms for destination promotion, although the level of digital literacy and strategic branding capability remains uneven. **Novelty:** This study highlights the strategic role of tourism human capital development in strengthening digital destination branding at the regional level. **Originality:** The research provides a contextual analyse of tourism human resource competency development in supporting digital tourism promotion in Serang Regency. **Conclusion:** Strengthening tourism human resource competencies through training and collaborative programs is essential for improving digital destination branding and enhancing tourism competitiveness. **Type of Paper:** Research article.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of the tourism industry in the digital era has significantly transformed how destinations are promoted and managed (Wahyuningrat & Harsanto, 2025). Rapid advancements in information and communication technology have shifted tourism marketing from conventional promotional methods toward digital platforms that allow destinations to reach wider audiences more efficiently. Digitalisation enables tourism stakeholders to disseminate information quickly, interact with potential visitors, and create compelling narratives about tourist destinations (Rodrigues et al., 2023). As a result, digital platforms have become essential tools for enhancing the

competitiveness of tourism destinations in an increasingly global and interconnected market (Bratić et al., 2025).

In this context, tourism development is no longer solely dependent on physical infrastructure or natural attractions, but also on the ability of stakeholders to manage information and communication technologies effectively (Firdaus et al., 2025). Digital innovation has encouraged tourism destinations to adopt more strategic approaches to promotion and branding. Destinations that are capable of integrating digital technology into their marketing strategies tend to gain greater visibility and recognition among tourists. Consequently, the integration of digital technology into tourism management has become an important factor in strengthening the sustainability and competitiveness of regional tourism development (Febrianty et al., 2025).

One of the important strategies in digital tourism development is the implementation of digital destination branding (Sokhimano & Pranoto, 2025). Destination branding refers to the process of building a distinctive identity and image of a tourism destination in the minds of potential visitors. Through digital platforms, destinations can communicate their uniqueness, cultural values, and tourism experiences to global audiences (Paramita et al., 2025). Effective digital destination branding helps create positive perceptions and emotional connections between tourists and destinations, which ultimately influence travel decisions and tourist loyalty (Hardiyanto et al., 2025).

Digital destination branding also plays a crucial role in differentiating a destination from competing tourism areas. In the highly competitive tourism industry, regions must develop strong and unique brand identities to attract visitors. Digital technology enables tourism managers to present visual storytelling, multimedia content, and interactive communication that highlight the distinctive characteristics of a destination (Nugroho et al., 2025). Therefore, digital branding strategies are increasingly viewed as essential components of modern tourism marketing and destination management.

Social media platforms have become key instruments in implementing digital destination branding (Asshagab, 2024). Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok allow tourism managers to promote destinations through visual content, storytelling, and real-time engagement with potential tourists. Social media provides opportunities for destinations to reach broader audiences while maintaining relatively low promotional costs compared to traditional marketing channels (Ariana et al., 2025). The interactive nature of social media also allows tourists to share their travel experiences, which further strengthens destination visibility through user-generated content.

The effectiveness of social media promotion is closely linked to the competencies of tourism human resources who manage these digital platforms (Nanda et al., 2023). Tourism managers must possess adequate digital skills, including content creation, social media management, digital communication, and online branding strategies. Without competent human resources, digital platforms cannot be utilised optimally to promote tourism destinations. Therefore, the development of tourism human resource competencies becomes an important element in ensuring the successful implementation of digital tourism promotion.

Serang Regency, located in Banten Province, possesses considerable tourism potential that can be further developed through digital promotion strategies (Amrulloh et al., 2024). The region offers various types of tourism attractions, including natural tourism, cultural tourism, and religious tourism. Natural attractions such as beaches, mountains, and waterfalls provide unique experiences for visitors, while cultural traditions and religious heritage sites enrich the tourism diversity of the region. These tourism assets provide strong opportunities for Serang Regency to strengthen its position as an attractive tourism destination in the region.

Despite the significant tourism potential, the development and promotion of tourism destinations in Serang Regency still face several challenges. One of the major challenges is the limited capacity in managing digital tourism promotion effectively. Many tourism destinations are still promoted through conventional methods, while the utilisation of digital platforms has not yet

been optimised (Litianingsih et al., 2025). As a result, the visibility and competitiveness of local tourism destinations remain relatively limited in the broader tourism market.

Another challenge is the limited digital competence among tourism destination managers. Many tourism managers, particularly at the local or community level, still lack the skills required to manage digital platforms effectively (Mutohhari et al., 2025). Competencies related to social media management, digital storytelling, and online branding strategies are often not fully developed. This limitation affects the ability of tourism stakeholders to design and implement effective digital promotion strategies that can attract wider audiences.

Furthermore, the professional utilisation of digital branding strategies has not been fully implemented in many tourism destinations in Serang Regency. Tourism promotion activities are often conducted in an unstructured manner without clear branding strategies or consistent digital communication. As a result, the identity and image of tourism destinations are not effectively communicated to potential visitors. This situation highlights the need for a more systematic approach to digital destination branding supported by competent tourism human resources.

The development of tourism human resource competencies at the regional level also remains suboptimal (Darsana & Sudjana, 2022). Training programs, capacity-building initiatives, and digital literacy development for tourism stakeholders are still limited in scope and frequency. Without continuous efforts to improve human resource competencies, the implementation of digital tourism promotion strategies will face difficulties. Strengthening the competencies of tourism human resources is therefore essential to support sustainable tourism development in the digital era.

Previous studies have extensively discussed digital tourism marketing and the use of social media in tourism promotion (Tina et al., 2024). However, relatively few studies have specifically examined the development of tourism human resource competencies in supporting digital destination branding, particularly within the context of regional tourism management. This gap indicates the need for further research that focuses on the role of human resource competency development in enhancing digital tourism promotion strategies.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyse the development of tourism human resource competencies in Serang Regency. The research also examines how these competencies support the implementation of digital destination branding strategies in promoting regional tourism destinations. In addition, the study seeks to identify supporting factors as well as obstacles in the development of tourism human resource competencies in the context of digital tourism promotion. The findings of this research are expected to provide insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders in strengthening human resource development strategies to support digital tourism branding.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a case study method. The qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the development of tourism human resource competencies in supporting digital destination branding. The case study focuses on tourism management practices in Serang Regency, particularly related to the utilisation of digital platforms in promoting tourism destinations.

The research was conducted in Serang Regency, Banten Province, Indonesia. This area was selected because it possesses diverse tourism potential, including natural, cultural, and religious tourism destinations, which provide an appropriate context for examining the development of tourism human resource competencies and the implementation of digital destination branding strategies.

The research informants consisted of several stakeholders involved in tourism management and promotion in Serang Regency. These included officials from the Serang Regency Tourism Office, managers of tourism destinations, and tourism business actors such as local entrepreneurs and

service providers. These informants were selected purposively based on their involvement, knowledge, and experience related to tourism development and digital promotion activities.

Data were collected through several techniques, including in-depth interviews with tourism stakeholders, direct observation of digital promotion activities carried out by tourism destination managers, and documentation studies. The documentation review included relevant policies, tourism development reports, and digital promotional content published through social media platforms related to tourism destinations in Serang Regency.

The data analyse in this study followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of three main processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. This approach allowed the researcher to systematically organise, interpret, and draw meaningful conclusions from the qualitative data collected during the research process.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings, several validation techniques were applied. These included triangulation of sources by comparing information obtained from different informants, triangulation of techniques by using interviews, observations, and documentation simultaneously, and member checking to confirm the accuracy of the information provided by the research participants.

The research informants consisted of stakeholders involved in tourism management in Serang Regency, including officials from the Tourism Office, tourism destination managers, and tourism business actors. These informants were selected purposively based on their knowledge and involvement in tourism development and digital promotion activities. A total of 12 informants participated in this study, representing key stakeholders to ensure comprehensive and relevant data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

Serang Regency, located in Banten Province, has considerable tourism potential that can support regional economic development. The region is known for its diverse tourism resources, including natural, cultural, and religious tourism attractions. Natural tourism destinations such as beaches, mountains, waterfalls, and coastal landscapes attract both local and regional visitors. In addition, the cultural richness of local traditions and historical heritage sites contributes to the uniqueness of tourism experiences offered in the region. These various tourism resources provide a strong foundation for the development of competitive tourism destinations in Serang Regency.

The development of tourism in Serang Regency has increasingly been supported by the utilisation of digital technology, particularly in promotional activities. Tourism stakeholders have begun to adopt digital platforms as communication and marketing tools to introduce destinations to a broader audience. Official tourism websites, social media platforms, and online travel content have been used to provide information about tourist attractions, travel routes, and visitor experiences. Although the adoption of digital promotion is still developing, it demonstrates a shift from conventional promotion methods toward more technology-based marketing strategies.

Tourism human resources play an essential role in managing and promoting tourism destinations effectively. The competencies of tourism human resources generally consist of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support professional tourism management. In Serang Regency, tourism managers at the destination level typically possess basic knowledge related to tourism services, visitor management, and local tourism attractions. These competencies help them provide basic services and maintain the operational activities of tourism destinations.

In addition to basic competencies, tourism human resources are also required to develop digital competencies to support the implementation of digital destination branding. Digital competencies include skills in managing social media platforms, creating digital content, and communicating tourism information through online channels. Several tourism destination managers in Serang Regency have started to utilise digital tools such as Instagram, Facebook, and other online

platforms to promote their destinations. These efforts indicate an increasing awareness of the importance of digital promotion in the tourism sector.

However, the level of digital competency among tourism managers varies significantly. Some destination managers have demonstrated the ability to produce attractive promotional content, including photos, short videos, and promotional narratives that highlight the uniqueness of the destination. On the other hand, many tourism managers still face limitations in understanding digital marketing strategies, content planning, and audience engagement. This variation in competency levels influences the effectiveness of digital promotion carried out by tourism destinations in the region.

Efforts to improve tourism human resource competencies have been implemented through various training and development programs. These programs are generally organised by the regional government through the tourism office, as well as through collaborations with tourism organisations, educational institutions, and community groups. Training activities often focus on hospitality services, tourism management, and basic digital promotion skills aimed at improving the capacity of tourism managers.

The role of the regional government is particularly important in facilitating the development of tourism human resource competencies. The Tourism Office of Serang Regency has initiated several capacity-building programs, including workshops, technical training, and tourism awareness campaigns. These programs are designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders so that they can participate more actively in promoting and managing tourism destinations.

In addition to government initiatives, other stakeholders such as tourism communities, tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis), and local entrepreneurs also contribute to the development of tourism competencies. These groups often collaborate in organising tourism events, managing destination activities, and promoting tourism through digital platforms. Such collaboration strengthens the network of tourism actors and supports the collective development of tourism management capacities.

The utilisation of social media has become one of the main strategies in promoting tourism destinations in Serang Regency. Social media platforms allow tourism managers to share visual content, travel information, and visitor experiences with a wider audience. Through digital platforms, destinations can reach potential tourists more efficiently and interact directly with audiences. The use of hashtags, location tags, and visual storytelling has also become common in promoting tourism attractions.

Digital destination branding strategies are implemented through the creation of visual identities and consistent promotional messages that represent the uniqueness of tourism destinations. Some tourism destinations in Serang Regency attempt to highlight their natural beauty, cultural traditions, and local experiences through digital content. These efforts aim to build a positive image of the destination and attract tourists who seek authentic travel experiences.

Several supporting factors contribute to the development of tourism human resource competencies in the region. These include government support through training programs, the availability of digital platforms that are easily accessible, and the growing awareness among tourism stakeholders about the importance of digital promotion. The increasing involvement of tourism communities and youth groups also contributes to the development of creative promotional content. Despite these positive developments, several obstacles remain in the implementation of digital destination branding. Limited digital literacy among some tourism managers, inadequate training opportunities, and limited financial resources are among the main challenges faced. In addition, inconsistent promotional strategies and limited coordination among tourism stakeholders sometimes reduce the effectiveness of digital tourism promotion. These challenges indicate the need for more systematic efforts to strengthen tourism human resource competencies in order to support sustainable digital tourism development in Serang Regency.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the development of tourism human resource competencies plays a crucial role in supporting digital destination branding in Serang Regency. From a human capital management perspective, human resources are strategic assets that determine organisational performance and competitiveness. In the tourism sector, competencies such as knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes directly influence the effectiveness of destination management and promotion.

Human capital theory emphasises that investment in training and capacity building can enhance productivity and innovation. In Serang Regency, several initiatives such as workshops and tourism training programs have been implemented to improve the competencies of tourism actors. However, these efforts are not yet evenly distributed, resulting in varying levels of competency among tourism stakeholders.

From the tourism human resources perspective, the ability to deliver quality services and manage destinations effectively is highly dependent on the competence of tourism actors. The findings show that most tourism managers already possess basic knowledge of tourism services and local attractions. Nevertheless, their digital competencies, particularly in content creation and social media management, still require further development.

The increasing reliance on digital platforms in tourism promotion highlights the importance of digital literacy. Tourism managers are now required not only to manage physical destinations but also to engage with potential tourists through online platforms. This shift demands new competencies related to digital communication, creativity, and audience engagement.

In terms of digital destination branding, the study finds that several tourism destinations in Serang Regency have begun to utilise social media to promote their unique attractions. Visual storytelling, cultural narratives, and natural landscapes are commonly used to attract visitors. These efforts contribute to improving destination visibility, although they are not yet supported by consistent and strategic branding approaches.

The effectiveness of digital branding is closely linked to the competencies of the human resources managing these platforms. Without structured strategies and adequate skills, promotional activities tend to be sporadic and less impactful. This condition indicates the need for systematic competency development, particularly in digital marketing and branding strategies.

Supporting factors identified in this study include government initiatives, increasing awareness of digital promotion, and the involvement of tourism communities. These elements provide a foundation for improving tourism human resource competencies and strengthening collaboration among stakeholders.

However, several obstacles remain, including limited digital literacy, insufficient training opportunities, and financial constraints. In addition, the lack of coordination among stakeholders often results in inconsistent promotional strategies, which weakens the overall branding of tourism destinations.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasise the importance of human resource competencies in digital tourism development. Research has shown that effective digital marketing depends not only on technology but also on the capability of human resources to utilise it strategically.

Compared to previous studies, this research offers a more specific focus on the role of human resource competency development in supporting digital destination branding at the regional level. It highlights that strengthening human capital is a key strategy for enhancing tourism competitiveness in the digital era.

Table 1. Analyse of Tourism Human Resource Competencies in Serang Regency

Competency Dimension	Description of Competency	Empirical Findings in Serang Regency
Knowledge	Refers to the understanding of tourism management, destination characteristics, visitor services, and tourism promotion strategies.	Tourism destination managers generally possess basic knowledge of local tourism potential and visitor services, but knowledge of digital tourism marketing and branding strategies remains limited.
Skills	Refers to technical and managerial abilities such as communication skills, hospitality services, content creation, and digital platform management.	Some tourism managers have begun using social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to promote destinations. However, skills in digital content production, storytelling, and social media analytics are still developing.
Attitude	Refers to professional behaviour, hospitality orientation, creativity, and openness to technological innovation.	Tourism actors generally show positive attitudes toward tourism development and digital promotion, although adaptation to digital technology still varies among different destination managers.

Source: Processed Data, 2026

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the development of tourism human resource competencies is a key factor in supporting effective digital destination branding in Serang Regency, where significant tourism potential can be better leveraged through improved digital capabilities. The findings highlight that while initial efforts in digital promotion and competency development have been undertaken, disparities in digital skills, limited strategic branding implementation, and uneven training access still hinder optimal outcomes. However, this study is subject to several limitations, including its reliance on a single case study design in Serang Regency, which may limit the generalisability of findings to other regions, as well as the potential for researcher bias inherent in qualitative interpretation despite efforts to ensure data validity through triangulation. Therefore, future research is recommended to adopt comparative approaches across different regions to enhance external validity, incorporate quantitative methods to measure tourism human resource competency levels more objectively, and conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of training and capacity-building programs. Practically, these findings imply that local governments and tourism stakeholders should prioritise structured, continuous, and data-driven human resource development strategies to strengthen digital destination branding and improve tourism competitiveness in the digital era.

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