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## LEBAK DISTRICT'S STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING BADUY TOURISM DURING THE PANDEMIC

By

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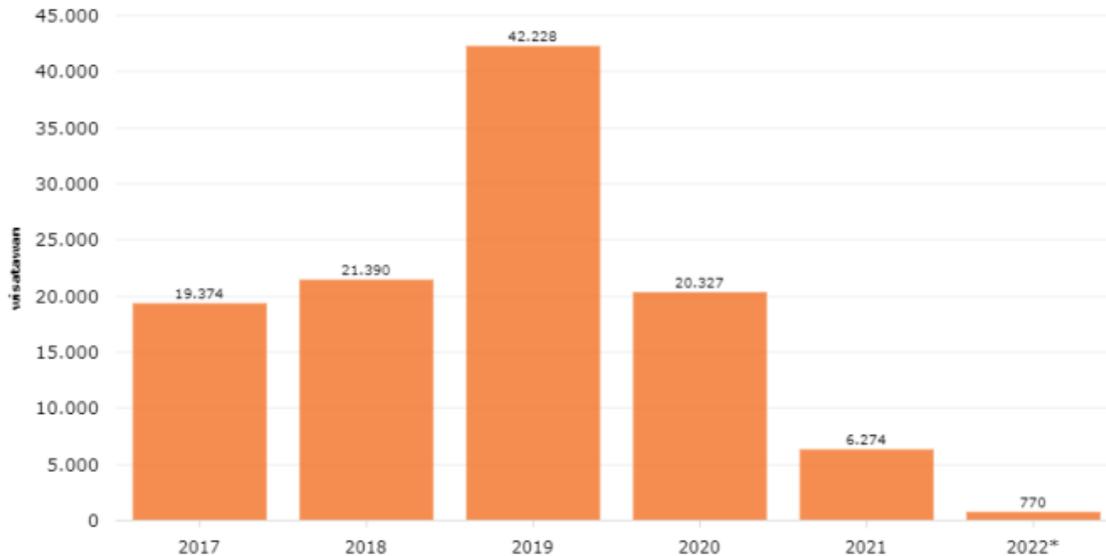
**Abstract:** *The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various sectors, including tourism, which is a vital sector for generating foreign exchange and contributing to economic development. Tourism plays a crucial role in creating and expanding business opportunities, increasing community and government income, and fostering environmental and cultural preservation. This study applies John December's Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory, focusing on the marketing communication mix. The aim is to evaluate the promotional strategies employed by the Culture and Tourism Office of Lebak Regency for tourist destinations and the creative economy during the pandemic. This qualitative research utilizes data obtained through observation, interviews, literature reviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the Culture and Tourism Office of Lebak Regency has not fully optimized the use of digital media in promoting Baduy cultural tourism and its creative economic impacts.*

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## INTRODUCTION

According to the online platform kemdikbud.go.id, the Baduy tribe is an indigenous group that practices self-isolation from external influences and is situated in Lebak Regency, Banten Province. The Baduy tribe is categorized into two distinct groups: the Inner Baduy and the Outer Baduy. As reported by the online outlet Banten.antaranews.com, a traditional Baduy elder and the Head of Kanekes Village, Jaro Saija, stated that the current population of the Baduy tribe stands at 11,620 individuals, comprising 5,870 men and 5,570 women.

The primary occupations of the Baduy community are agriculture and craftsmanship. Their agricultural products include rice, durian, black honey, and palm sap, which is used as a key ingredient in producing palm sugar or brown sugar. In addition to farming, the Baduy people also create handicrafts such as woven fabrics, Baduy batik, and Koja bags. Given the cultural richness and uniqueness of the Baduy tribe, it would be unfortunate if they remained largely unknown to the broader public. According to online media reports, data on visits to Baduy cultural tourism has significantly declined since 2020.



**Figure 1. Number of Baduy Tourist Visits in 2017–2022**  
Source: databoks.katadata

The Lebak Regency Government is making efforts to revitalize its declining tourism sector through the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office, which serves as the primary entity responsible for managing and promoting tourism destinations in the region, with a particular focus on Baduy Cultural Tourism. The Culture and Tourism Office has implemented various promotional programs and strategies, all while maintaining strict adherence to health protocols. Moreover, the Office leverages advancements in technology, specifically Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), as part of its promotional strategy.

According to December (1997, as cited in Nasrullah, 2016), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) refers to the process of human interaction facilitated by computers, involving participants within a specific context, where communication is mediated by technology for particular purposes. CMC examines how human behavior is influenced or altered through the exchange of information via computer-based media.

According to McQuail, as cited in Pratiwi Aprilianti and Madancaragni (2020), Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) refers to communication that occurs between two or more individuals through the use of computer technology. McQuail's discussion of CMC suggests a transformation in the nature of communication between individuals or groups, which traditionally took place face-to-face but has evolved with technological advancements to occur through computer-mediated channels without direct physical interaction. Moreover, CMC is not limited to computers alone; other devices such as laptops, smartphones, tablets, and various other technologies also serve as mediums within this framework (Pratiwi Aprilianti & Madancaragni, 2020). Rice, as cited in Budiargo (2015), further elaborates that the technology underpinning CMC, which operates via computer devices, facilitates the exchange of messages between individuals.

Kotler and Keller (2016) identified approximately 12 promotional methods that can be combined in practice. These methods include: (1) Advertising, (2) Sales Promotion, (3) Public

Relations, (4) Publicity, (5) Personal Selling, (6) Interactive Marketing (via the Internet), (7) Direct Selling, (8) Event Marketing, (9) Word of Mouth, (10) Sponsorship Marketing, (11) Social Media Marketing, and (12) Mobile Marketing. The evolution of technology and information media has transformed promotional strategies in the digital era. Common forms of digital media promotion include the use of social media platforms, websites, search engines, and other online channels. According to Widayati and Augustinah (2019), digital media promotion offers several advantages, including lower costs, easier and faster implementation, and the ability to reach internet users globally.

Strategy can be regarded as the art of utilizing intellectual capabilities to effectively mobilize available resources with the aim of achieving objectives while maximizing efficiency and gains (Hafied, 2017). Additionally, strategy is defined as a comprehensive, future-oriented plan designed to navigate competitive environments in pursuit of organizational goals (Ruslan, 2018).

This study examines the issue of how the Culture and Tourism Office of Lebak Regency promoted Baduy cultural tourism destinations during the pandemic, as well as how it promoted the creative economic products of the Baduy cultural tourism community during the same period. The objectives of this research are: (1) To explore the promotional strategies employed by the Culture and Tourism Office of Lebak Regency for Baduy cultural tourism destinations during the pandemic; and (2) To analyze the strategies used by the Culture and Tourism Office of Lebak Regency to promote the creative economic products of the Baduy community during the pandemic.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, an approach characterized by an inductive reasoning process, progressing from specific observations to broader generalizations, and from concrete experiences to abstract concepts (Gilang, 2021). The research employs a qualitative methodology.

The case study method is used in this research, which involves the exploration of a specific phenomenon (case) within a defined context and timeframe, focusing on activities such as programs, events, processes, institutions, or social groups. This approach facilitates the collection of detailed and in-depth information using multiple data collection techniques over an extended period (Wahyuningsih, 2013).

Data for this study were collected through direct observation to gain insights into the promotional strategies for Baduy cultural tourism destinations and the outcomes of the creative economy related to Baduy cultural tourism, as implemented by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office during the pandemic. The observations were conducted transparently by visiting the Baduy Cultural Tourism site and observing current tourism activities, with a clear disclosure of the ongoing research process. Additionally, the researchers examined the publication media utilized by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office.

Structured interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information from key informants, with a total of five participants interviewed. The study applied source triangulation to validate the data by cross-checking the information obtained from various sources. To assess the credibility of data regarding the promotional strategies of Baduy

cultural tourism by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office during the pandemic, data collection and validation were conducted with all interview informants.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In promoting Baduy cultural tourism destinations, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office engages in advertising through local radio, Facebook ads, and Google ads. These advertisements are implemented only when an event is scheduled and are typically conducted one month prior to the event.

The promotional efforts by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office to market Baduy cultural tourism destinations and the creative economic products resulting from Baduy cultural tourism differ significantly from expectations set by previous researchers. These researchers suggested that advertising would streamline the marketing process; however, the promotion by the Culture and Tourism Office has not yet been fully optimized. Additionally, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office does not apply Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) theory in its advertising efforts for Baduy cultural tourism destinations and the related creative economic outcomes.

The Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office has not fully optimized its use of social media, as evidenced by its absence from currently popular platforms. TikTok, a social media application that has gained significant traction in Indonesia due to its novel trends and impactful presence in the digital era, is particularly noteworthy. Its potential as a marketing tool is increasingly recognized, given its ability to engage users effectively. However, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office does not utilize TikTok, as it lacks an account on this platform, thus failing to capitalize on contemporary social media trends and technological advancements from a computer-mediated communication (CMC) perspective.

In terms of personal sales promotion strategies, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office has engaged in showcasing the creative economic products of Baduy cultural tourism by participating in the Investment, Trade & Tourism 2022 exhibition. This event featured a Baduy tribesman who demonstrated the craft of making *koja* bags directly at the office's stand, thereby providing visitors with an experiential insight into the production process. This strategy proved effective, as evidenced by the office receiving the Best Stand Award at the Jakarta Investment Trade & Tourism Expo 2022. The award was granted based on evaluations of stand decoration, visitor engagement, and sales performance.

The personal selling conducted by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office mirrors prior similar studies, primarily involving the organization of exhibitions. However, this office also enhances visitor experience by including direct participation from the Outer Baduy Tribe, who engage in handicraft activities observable by exhibition attendees.

Regarding Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), trade exhibition events traditionally do not incorporate CMC, as these exhibitions do not employ technological advancements or computer-based devices. In other words, the Department of Culture and Tourism does not rely on CMC as a foundation for its Investment Trade events in Tourism for 2022.

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic prompted the government to implement PSBB and PPKM policies, which have impeded promotional activities. In response, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office has had to adapt by becoming technologically literate and shifting

its promotional strategies towards digital platforms. This adaptation includes leveraging current technological advancements by conducting online events via Zoom, such as virtual gatherings with the Regent and stakeholders to commemorate World Tourism Day in 2021 and 2022.

According to Magfira's journal on promotion strategies for Goa Lia Balano based on online media, the Government of Lauwon Village in East Luwuk District, Banggai Regency (2022) highlights that tourism promotion is facilitated through village, regency, and provincial government events. This approach aims to disseminate the potential of Lia Balano tourism to the residents of Banggai Regency and the broader Indonesian public. The promotional strategy utilizes the promotional mix theory—encompassing advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity, public relations, and direct marketing—to enhance brand image and attract tourists.

In comparison to similar previous studies, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office's approach is distinctive. This research indicates that, unlike earlier methods, the office has integrated contemporary technological advancements by hosting online events via Zoom meetings. From a CMC perspective, this indicates that the Department of Culture and Tourism has incorporated CMC theory in the organization of its online events.

## CONCLUSION

The promotional strategies for Baduy cultural tourism destinations used by the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office are advertising, publication, public relations, social media marketing, mobile marketing, sponsorship marketing, personal selling, event marketing, sales promotion, interactive marketing.

Promotion strategies for the creative economy results of Baduy cultural tourism during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 - 2022 are publication, public relations, social media marketing, mobile marketing, sponsorship marketing, personal selling, event marketing, , interactive marketing.

The findings in this research are that the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office has not yet optimally advertised Baduy cultural tourism destinations and the results of the creative economy of Baduy Cultural Tourism, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office has not used social media optimally, the success of the marketing communication concept by providing experience to exhibition visitors, the Lebak Regency Culture and Tourism Office is starting to adopt digital advances in organizing events.

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