

## Communication Strategies for Developing the Mount Rinjani Sembalun Tourist Destination, Lombok

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to examine communication strategies in the development of Mount Rinjani as a tourist destination via the Sembalun route in East Lombok by involving various stakeholders, namely tourism managers, hiking guides, local communities, vendors, and tourists. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with informants selected through purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which encompasses data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, while data validity was tested through source and method triangulation. The results of the study indicate that communication strategies in the development of the Sembalun destination are implemented through the comprehensive dissemination of information regarding tourism potential, the utilization of social media as the primary promotional medium, and the application of interpersonal communication characterized by a friendly and familial approach. In addition to focusing on promotion, the communication strategy also emphasizes education, climbing safety, and the preservation of local cultural values. However, challenges remain, including weak communication coordination among stakeholders and low levels of community involvement in formal tourism development programs. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen communication strategies that are more collaborative, participatory, and sustainable in order to enhance the image and competitiveness of Sembalun as a tourist destination.*

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism not only contributes to increasing the country's foreign exchange earnings, but also creates jobs, drives the creative economy, and strengthens national identity through the preservation of local culture. Communication serves as a bridge between tourism managers, local communities, and potential tourists; therefore, conveying messages that are engaging,

creative, and informative is key to building a positive image of the destination. Therefore, implementing effective communication strategies that adapt to advancements in information technology is crucial for enhancing the competitiveness of Indonesia's tourist destinations amid increasingly fierce global competition.

Through a well-planned communication strategy, destination managers can convey the right message to their target audience, including both domestic and international tourists (Morrison, 2023). An effective communication strategy can attract tourists by presenting engaging information, building a positive image of the destination, and creating an emotional experience that encourages repeat visits (Duarte, 2025). In addition, the communication strategy is not solely focused on promotion; it also serves to strengthen the involvement of the local community as part of the tourism ecosystem. Communities that are actively involved in promotional activities and tourism services will feel a shared sense of responsibility for the sustainability of the destination (Chilufya et al., 2019). Therefore, the success of tourism development essentially depends on the extent to which communication strategies are tailored to the target audience, taking into account the characteristics of tourists, the region's potential, and the ever-changing landscape of communication technology. West Nusa Tenggara. This region is known for its stunning mountainous landscapes, as it lies at the foot of Mount Rinjani.

Semalun, East Lombok, offers soothing natural beauty with rolling green hills, strawberry fields, and cool, clean air, making it a major draw for tourists seeking nature-based travel experience. In addition to its natural potential, this region also boasts a rich local culture that remains well-preserved. The potential for ecotourism is also enormous, given that this region boasts biodiversity and natural landscapes well-suited for sustainable tourism activities. Dengan berbagai keunggulan tersebut, Semalun memegang peran strategis dalam peta pengembangan pariwisata Lombok, karena fierce competition at both the national and international levels.

In addition to its rich natural and cultural resources, Semalun also serves as one of the main access points for climbing Mount Rinjani, a premier natural tourist destination in Indonesia and even internationally. The Semalun hiking trail is a popular choice among tourists because it offers vast savanna landscapes, the iconic sunrise view from Semalun Hill, and relatively direct access to the summit of Mount Rinjani (Jasthin, 2025). Mountaineering activities involving trekking organizers, porters, and local guides demonstrate that this tourism sector is in dire need of structured, systematic, and informative communication channels (Rinjani & di Deswita Non, 2024). Information regarding hiking trails, weather conditions, permit procedures for Mount Rinjani, regulations issued by the Mount Rinjani National Park Office (BTNGR), and safety standards are important details that must be clearly communicated to prospective hikers. Therefore, the development of Mount Rinjani as a tourist destination via the Semalun route requires a specialized communication strategy that focuses not only on promotion but also on education, risk management, and coordination among stakeholders, including the Rinjani Tanggulang National Park (BTNGR), local governments, local communities, and tourism industry stakeholders.

Although it has enormous tourism potential, Semalun still faces various challenges in its development as a premier tourist destination in East Lombok (Wahyulina et al., 2018). One of the main challenges lies in the fact that promotional efforts have not yet been fully optimized. Information about Semalun's tourism potential has not yet been widely and consistently

disseminated, either through traditional or digital media (Auliyasari, 2024). In addition, limitations in supporting infrastructure particularly in terms of accessibility, tourist information facilities, and public transportation also hinder tourists' comfort and ease in obtaining information and enjoying their travel experience. The lack of communication and coordination among local governments, local communities, and tourism stakeholders also poses a challenge in creating effective synergy to promote this destination (Suhardiyo, 2025). These conditions indicate that the development of Sembalun requires a more targeted, integrated, and collaborative communication strategy so that tourism messages can reach their intended audience and help enhance the destination's image at both the national and international levels.

A review of previous research on tourism communication strategies is a crucial step toward understanding the patterns, successes, and weaknesses in destination development practices across various regions. Through a review of relevant literature, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of how communication strategies have been implemented in different contexts, as well as the extent to which they are effective in enhancing the appeal and image of a tourist destination. This approach also allows for the identification of key factors influencing the success of tourism communication, such as the use of digital media, community engagement, and the role of collaboration among stakeholders (Roedjinandari, 2024). In the context of this study, this approach is highly relevant because it enables researchers to systematically and rigorously review, analyze, and synthesize various research findings. Through this method, it is hoped that the most effective and appropriate communication strategies can be identified for implementation in the development of the Sembalun tourist destination, thereby ensuring that promotional efforts and community empowerment initiatives can proceed in a more optimal and sustainable manner (Maghfi, 2023).

A review of the existing literature indicates that studies on communication strategies in the context of community-based tourism destination development in Sembalun remain scarce. Most existing research tends to focus on general aspects of tourism promotion, such as the use of social media or destination marketing activities, without delving deeper into how the communication process unfolds in an integrated manner among local governments, local communities, and tourism stakeholders. In fact, the success of sustainable tourism destination development heavily depends on the ability to build communication synergy among these stakeholders. Community involvement in communication strategies serves not only as recipients of information but also as active participants who can act as promoters while simultaneously safeguarding local culture and the environment. Therefore, more in-depth and targeted research is needed to understand how collaborative communication strategies can be effectively applied in developing community-based tourism destinations such as Sembalun, in order to strike a balance between economic, social, and environmental conservation interests. Based on the results of a review of various previous studies, it was found that there was a research gap in the study of tourism communication strategies, especially in the context of developing community-based tourist destinations in Sembalun. Most previous research focused more on promotional aspects, such as the use of social media, digital marketing strategies, and destination image formation, without examining in depth the communication process that involves collaboration between local governments, local communities, and tourism actors. In fact, the success of developing sustainable tourist destinations does not only

depend on promotion, but also on the effectiveness of communication between stakeholders. In addition, the community is often positioned only as a recipient of information, not as an active actor in disseminating tourism messages and cultural preservation. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the implementation of communication strategies by various parties in developing the Sembalun destination using a descriptive qualitative approach to understand communication phenomena according to the social, cultural and economic context of the local community. It is hoped that the research results will provide an empirical understanding of the forms, patterns and effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented, as well as identifying supporting and inhibiting factors. Thus, this research contributes to enriching the literature and provides a theoretical and practical basis for the development of collaborative, participatory and sustainable communication strategies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative, descriptive approach, as the researcher aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the communication strategies used by the community and relevant stakeholders in developing a tourist destination in Sembalun Village, East Lombok. The research was conducted in Sembalun Village, Sembalun Subdistrict, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, which is known as one of the leading community-based tourist destinations. Research informants were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of six individuals considered to have a deep understanding of and direct involvement in tourism activities, namely PWR, PL, PDW, ML, WPL TO, PP, and PW.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews to gather information on communication strategies, direct observation of tourism activities and social interactions, as well as documentation in the form of archives, photographs, and other supporting data.

Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing results from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as conducting member checks with informants. The research phases included preparation—involving the development of interview guidelines and research permits—fieldwork through data collection in Sembalun, data analysis using the Miles and Huberman technique, and the preparation of the research report as the final output.

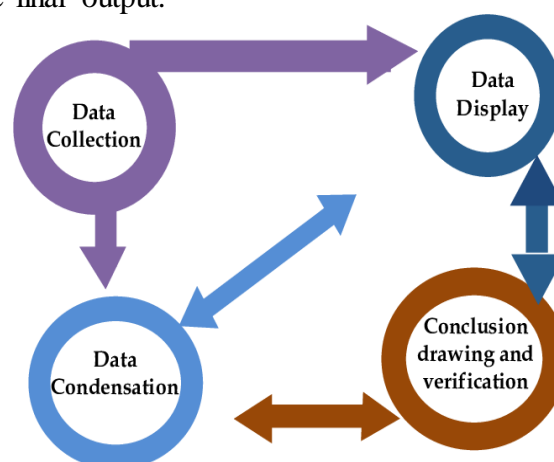


Figure 1: Miles & Huberman's data analysis model

In Figure 1, data analysis was conducted by following the stages outlined by Miles and Huberman, namely data reduction, presentation of data in the form of narratives, tables, or diagrams, and inductive conclusion-drawing by verifying the symbolic meanings and social interactions that emerged during the ritual. To ensure data validity, this study employed triangulation of sources, methods, and theories, including comparing information from various informants, combining data collection techniques, and relating findings to symbolic interactionism theory. This study also adhered to research ethics by obtaining informant consent, maintaining the confidentiality of identities, and respecting customs, norms, and religious practices throughout the research process.

## RESEARCH RESULT

A tourist destination is an area that has a certain appeal, encouraging an individual or a group of people to travel there (Bulan et al., 2021). From a broader perspective, a tourist destination encompasses all the elements that enable tourism activities, ranging from attractions and accessibility to supporting facilities and interactions with the local community. A destination is not merely understood as a geographical location, but as a system that integrates natural and cultural potential, services, and the experiences that visitors can enjoy during their stay (Dewi, 2023).

In the development of the modern tourism sector, a tourist destination is defined as a space capable of providing a comprehensive experience through a combination of management, information, and service (Wijaya & Sudarmawan, 2019). A destination must be able to offer unique features that set it apart from other regions and provide various infrastructure to support tourist comfort, such as transportation, accommodation, security, and information services. Therefore, destination management requires integrated planning so that the region's appeal can be sustained and provide benefits to the surrounding community.

When the concept of a tourist destination is applied to a more specific context, such as a natural destination, the focus shifts to leveraging the potential of the environment, which holds aesthetic, ecological, and educational value (Hidayatullah, 2024). Nature tourism offers adventure-based experiences, scenic beauty, and activities that allow travelers to interact directly with nature. Destinations such as mountains, forests, and national parks are top choices for travelers seeking tranquility, unspoiled natural environments, and challenging activities. More specifically, Mount Rinjani is one of Indonesia's premier natural tourist destinations, renowned for its scenic beauty and the cultural and spiritual significance associated with it. As part of Mount Rinjani National Park, the area offers a variety of attractions, including hiking trails, the Segara Anak crater lake, hot springs, and captivating views of savannas and tropical forests (Jannah et al., 2016).

Therefore, Mount Rinjani is recognized as a concrete example of a natural destination managed professionally and sustainably. Rinjani offers a combination of geographical features, ecological elements, local culture, and a management system that enables tourists to enjoy a high-quality travel experience. As such, Rinjani is not only viewed as a natural tourist attraction but also as a space for interaction that harmoniously connects nature, the local community, and tourism activities.

## Communication Strategies of Tourism Managers in Developing the Mount Rinjani Sembalun Destination

Based on interviews with tourism managers, the communication strategy for attracting tourists to Sembalun was developed through a comprehensive approach to destination promotion. Managers emphasize that providing comprehensive information regarding the area's potential and characteristics is a crucial aspect of the communication process. This promotion includes explanations of the mountainous landscape, the Mount Rinjani hiking trails, the uniqueness of the Sembalun savanna, and the growing agrotourism potential stemming from Sembalun's identity as a region with strong agricultural activity. Additionally, historical elements and local identity are viewed as strategic components in conveying tourism messages, for example, through the presentation of the origin story of Sembalun linked to the kipur flower. This narrative approach is considered capable of enhancing tourism appeal because visitors not only enjoy natural beauty but also gain cultural and historical insights that enrich their visit experience.

In the implementation of promotional strategies, social media is positioned as the primary communication channel, considered the most effective way to reach tourists. Managers assess that changes in tourist behavior, particularly among the digital generation, have made platforms like Instagram and TikTok more relevant than the official website. Social media is seen as faster, more concise, and capable of displaying engaging visuals, making it effective in generating interest in visits. Nevertheless, the website remains in use as a medium for disseminating large-scale information, such as official announcements or hiking regulations. Social media management is carried out by a dedicated team that produces informative and educational content regarding hiking activities, environmental conservation, and the moral and ethical values of tourism. Thus, social media is not only used as a promotional tool but also as an educational resource for tourists to understand the principles of responsible travel. In addition to leveraging digital media, tourism managers also employ an interpersonal communication approach to build rapport with tourists. They explain that these relationships are built through warm, personal, and family-like communication. This approach is considered effective in creating a sense of safety and comfort for tourists and strengthening trust in local services. This interpersonal communication pattern also contributes to word-of-mouth promotion, which remains one of the most influential promotional strategies to this day. Informal interactions fostered through social networks, hiking communities, and other social connections reinforce Sembalun's reputation as a welcoming and friendly destination.

Nevertheless, tourism managers acknowledge that a number of challenges still exist in the communication process, particularly regarding the differing backgrounds of local tourists, domestic tourists from other regions, and international tourists. Each group of tourists has distinct communication styles, expectations, and interaction patterns. Managers emphasize that communication styles need to be adapted so that information can be effectively received by various groups. Another challenge that arises is the limited proficiency in foreign languages, particularly English, among some tourism practitioners. This often hinders the process of conveying information regarding hiking regulations, trail conditions, and safety procedures. Therefore, improving cross-cultural communication skills is considered essential to support the professionalism of tourism services in Sembalun.

To maintain a positive image of the destination, tourism managers focus on three key aspects: cleanliness, safety, and the quality of community service. They emphasize that a destination's image is greatly influenced by environmental conditions and the behavior of

local residents when interacting with tourists. Efforts to maintain the cleanliness of the area, improve the safety of hiking trails, and encourage the community to remain friendly and professional are priorities in destination management. Additionally, managers actively address tourist complaints through social media and direct communication channels. This prompt response is implemented to prevent the spread of negative issues that could potentially damage Sembalun’s reputation as a premier tourist destination.

In line with the evolving needs of tourists, tourism managers have also developed a number of innovations to enhance the visitor experience. One such innovation is the implementation of the Zero Waste concept through a “pack in, pack out” system, which requires hikers to carry out all trash they bring into the hiking area. This policy is expected to reduce the impact of environmental pollution and preserve the natural environment of Mount Rinjani. Additionally, international tourists are required to use the services of porters and local guides as part of efforts to ensure safety while also strengthening the economic empowerment of the Sembalun community. Management also implements a policy of differentiated entrance ticket rates for domestic and international tourists in accordance with the regulations of Mount Rinjani National Park. Furthermore, improvements to emergency services, mapping of accident-prone areas, and updates to hiking trail information are continuously being implemented to strengthen tourism safety. Overall, the interview findings indicate that the communication strategies of Sembalun’s tourism managers focus not only on promotion but also on building relationships, maintaining service quality, understanding tourist profiles, and implementing sustainable management innovations. A multidimensional communication approach encompassing digital promotion, interpersonal communication, and the conveyance of cultural and historical values serves as a crucial foundation for strengthening Sembalun’s position, particularly the Mount Rinjani hiking trail, as a premier tourist destination in Lombok. The researchers' findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Findings on Tourism Managers’ Communication Strategies in the Development of the Mount Rinjani Sembalun Destination

Category of Findings Destination Communication Strategy	Indicator Introduction to Tourism Potential	Interview Results	Interpretation
The Use of Digital Media	Promotional materials	The management highlights the natural landscape, hiking trails, savanna, agritourism, and the local history and culture of Sembalun.	Communication is conducted through an informative and narrative approach to enhance the destination’s appeal.
Interpersonal Communication	Relationships with tourists	Instagram and TikTok are the primary platforms for promotion, while the website is used for official information.	Social media was chosen because it can reach tourists quickly and visually.
		Managers foster warm, personal, and family-like communication.	An interpersonal approach enhances tourists' comfort and strengthens word-of-

			mouth promotion.
Communication Challenges	Differences in tourist profiles	There are differences in communication needs among local, domestic, and international tourists.	Managers need to tailor their messages and communication style to suit the audience's characteristics.
Language Barriers	Kemampuan bahasa asing	Some tourism industry professionals still have limited English proficiency.	There is a need to improve cross-cultural communication skills.
Destination Branding	Cleanliness, safety, and service	The management strives to maintain a clean environment, ensure the safety of the routes, and provide high-quality public services.	A destination's positive image is built through the quality of its environment and tourism services.
Innovations in Sustainable Tourism	Zero Waste Program and Tourism Safety	The implementation of a pack-in, pack-out system, the use of local guides, and improved safety measures.	Innovation supports environmental sustainability and the quality of the tourist experience.

### Initial Communication and Guidance from a Hiking Guide in Preparing for a Tourist Trip

Based on interviews with climbing guides, the communication process between guides and prospective climbers generally begins well before the day of departure. Guides explained that prospective climbers usually contact them first after receiving a recommendation from friends or relatives who have previously used climbing guide services. During this initial stage, prospective climbers share their planned departure date and inquire about the essential equipment they need to prepare. This initial communication is a crucial step, as it serves as the foundation for the guide to ensure that the hiker understands the technical requirements and physical readiness needed before embarking on the journey to Mount Rinjani via the Sembalun route. During the pre-climb preparation phase, the guide provided information regarding the personal gear that must be brought, such as warm clothing, rain jackets, personal medications, and sleeping gear to ensure comfort during the trip. The guide also explains the terrain characteristics, estimated travel times for each stage, and the rules that must be followed during the climb. Interestingly, the guide emphasizes that the information is presented in a simple, non-technical manner. This strategy aims to prevent anxiety or overthinking among prospective climbers regarding terrain conditions and weather changes, while maintaining their motivation and mental readiness.

Regarding communication style, the guide explained that during his shifts, he most often accompanies beginner hikers. Therefore, he adopts a communicative approach aimed at boosting morale, such as describing the natural beauty and captivating views they will

encounter, as well as sharing positive experiences from previous hikers. This approach is considered effective for maintaining the hikers' psychological stability throughout the rather exhausting journey. Furthermore, the guide mentioned that during his time as a guide, he has never experienced any misunderstandings or conflicts with tourists. This indicates that the communication established is smooth, warm, and conducive. Additional findings were obtained through interviews with tourists who used the services of a Trekking Organizer (TO). The tourists explained that they first obtained preliminary information about the Sembalun route climb on Mount Rinjani through social media. They then verified this information by asking friends who had prior experience climbing the mountain. Regarding communication with the TO, tourists assessed that communication services—from before the climb through the entire journey—were well-managed. The TO was deemed responsive, friendly, and prioritized climbers' safety above all else.

Nevertheless, tourists still found some aspects of the information to be unclear, particularly regarding transportation services from the TNGR Office to Kandang Sapi or Bukit 3. The inconsistent changes in motorcycle taxi fares were considered confusing, so a more transparent and standardized system for communication and information delivery is needed. Nevertheless, tourists still felt that the guides' explanations during the hike were very helpful in making them feel safe and prepared, as the guides were considered polite, communicative, and informative. In addition, tourists provided feedback on strengthening communication strategies to make the hiking experience more enjoyable. They suggested that communication during the trip should be casual and occasionally laced with humor to create a more relaxed atmosphere. Guides are also expected to be more proactive in asking about hikers' physical condition and comfort to demonstrate care and concern. A light, warm, and humanistic communication approach is considered to enhance tourists' comfort and make the journey more enjoyable.

Overall, the findings in this section indicate that communication between guides and hikers plays a central role in building both physical and psychological readiness. The combination of clear technical information, a soothing communication style, and responsive support throughout the journey forms the foundation for creating a safe, comfortable, and memorable hiking experience for tourists. The researchers' findings are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Findings of the Study on Communication Between Hiking Guides and Tourists

Category of Findings	Interview Results	Interpretation
Pre-Hike Communication	We will communicate with you before departure to explain the equipment and preparations for the climb.	Early communication helps improve travelers' preparedness.
Communication of Information	The information is presented in a simple, non-technical manner.	The communication strategy aims to reduce tourists' anxiety.
Climber Guidance	The guide provides encouragement and support throughout the trip.	Persuasive communication helps maintain the climbers' mental well-being.
Tourists' Perceptions	The tour operator and guide	The quality of

	were rated as friendly, responsive, and safety-conscious.	communication contributes to tourist satisfaction.
Information Barriers	Information regarding transportation and motorcycle taxi fares is considered unclear.	Transparency of information is essential for tourists.
Tourists' Expectations	Communication is more relaxed, interactive, and attentive.	A humanistic approach can enhance the quality of the travel experience.

### **The Role of Local Merchants and the Dynamics of Interaction in Tourism Activities in Sembalun**

Interviews with local vendors revealed that the growth of tourism has a significant impact on the sustainability of their businesses. Informants stated that sales are heavily influenced by the number of tourists visiting the Sembalun area. During holiday periods or when the hiking season is in full swing, vendors' income increases drastically because many visitors purchase local food and souvenirs. However, when the number of tourists declines, vendors' income also experiences a sharp drop, making it difficult to sustain their businesses. This situation demonstrates that vendors are highly dependent on tourism activities, so fluctuations in tourist visits have a direct impact on their economic stability. To attract tourists, vendors employ various strategic measures, including offering local specialty dishes and maintaining high-quality service. Informants emphasized that hospitality, cleanliness, and polite behavior toward visitors are key factors that influence tourists' comfort and encourage them to try local products. In addition to relying on service quality, communication during transactions is adapted to the vendors' language proficiency. If tourists speak a foreign language that is difficult to understand, vendors typically ask for help from a more fluent colleague or use the Google Translate app to ensure transactions proceed clearly and without misunderstandings. Although local merchants play a significant role in supporting tourism activities, they report that, to date, they have never received training, mentoring, or guidance from the tourism office or destination managers. The entire business development process is carried out independently, ranging from improving service quality to managing the products sold. Informants also emphasized that government support for small vendors remains minimal, whether in terms of organizing trading locations, providing supporting facilities, or empowering micro-enterprises. These limitations force vendors to adapt on their own to the dynamics of tourism without adequate structural support.

The primary challenge vendors often face when communicating with tourists is the language barrier. Foreign tourists, particularly those speaking English or Arabic, often speak at a rapid pace, making it difficult for vendors to understand them. This language barrier not only hinders the smooth flow of transactions but also affects vendors' ability to explain information about the products they sell. Nevertheless, vendors continue to seek solutions to ensure optimal service delivery. On the other hand, relationships among local vendors are strong. They help one another in various situations, such as watching each other's stalls, sharing information, and assisting with communication with foreign tourists. This solidarity serves as an important social capital for the sustainability of their businesses. During the off-season, vendors employ several strategies to ensure the sustainability of their businesses.

These include reducing production volumes to minimize unsold inventory, opening their stalls earlier to attract morning visitors, and serving the local community as an alternative market. Informants also noted that tourists' responses to local products tend to be positive. Many visitors are interested in sampling local specialties or purchasing souvenirs as gifts, which serves as motivation for vendors to continuously improve the quality of the products they offer.

Furthermore, local vendors have high hopes for the future development of tourism in Sembalun. They hope that the government and tourism managers can provide tangible support to small business owners, particularly in the form of tourism area planning, adequate facilities, skills training, and business management guidance. Such support is considered essential to ensure vendors have equal opportunities to capitalize on the economic opportunities arising from tourism growth. With more targeted and collaborative management, vendors believe their businesses can thrive and contribute significantly to the well-being of the local community. The researchers' findings are summarized in Table 3

Table 4. The Role of Local Merchants and the Dynamics of Interaction in Tourism Activities in Sembalun

Category of Findings	Interview Results	Interpretation
The Impact of Tourism on Small Businesses	Sales and revenue for merchants increase when tourist numbers are high, especially during the hiking season and holidays. Conversely, revenue declines when tourist visits decrease.	Tourism is a key factor influencing the economic viability of local merchants.
Strategies for Attracting Tourists	Vendors offer local specialties, maintain a clean business environment, and provide friendly and courteous service.	Product quality and service are key strategies for attracting tourists.
Communication with Tourists	Sellers adapt their communication to the language skills they possess. If they encounter language barriers, they seek help from colleagues or use translation apps.	Communication adjustments are made to ensure smooth interactions and transactions with tourists.
Support from the Government and Management	The vendors have never received training, mentoring, or empowerment programs from the relevant authorities.	The involvement of the government and destination managers in supporting vendors' businesses remains limited.
Communication Challenges	Language barriers, especially with foreign tourists, pose a challenge	Foreign language proficiency is essential for supporting tourism-related

	when explaining products and conducting transactions.	economic activities.
Solidarity Among Merchants	Vendors help each other look after their stalls, share information, and communicate with foreign tourists.	Social solidarity is a key factor in ensuring the sustainability of local businesses.
Strategies for Dealing with the Off-Season	Vendors are reducing production volumes, opening their businesses earlier, and expanding their market reach to the local community.	Business strategies are diversified to maintain revenue stability when tourist visits decline.
Tourists' Perceptions of Local Products	Tourists show a strong interest in local specialties and souvenirs.	Local products have great potential to serve as a key attraction for tourism in Sembalun.
The Hopes of Merchants	Vendors are hoping for training, business mentoring, support facilities, and better development of the tourist area.	Collaboration between the government, tourism operators, and the community is needed to support sustainable local economic development.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the communication strategy for developing the Sembalun route of Mount Rinjani as a tourist destination involves the use of digital media, interpersonal communication, and the promotion of local cultural and historical values, with the aim of enhancing the destination's appeal and the quality of the tourist experience. Social media serves as the primary and effective promotional tool for reaching tourists, while interpersonal communication conducted by managers and hiking guides plays a role in building trust, comfort, and a sense of security during the tour. This study also indicates that local communities and vendors play a significant role in supporting tourism activities through service provision, information sharing, and direct interaction with tourists, although their involvement in tourism development programs remains limited. Additionally, several challenges were identified in implementing communication strategies, such as variations in tourist characteristics, limited proficiency in foreign languages, and a lack of training and guidance for local tourism stakeholders. Therefore, there is a need for more collaborative and participatory communication among tourism managers, the government, the community, guides, and business operators to support sustainable destination management, enhance the area's positive image, and expand economic and social benefits for the Sembalun community.

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