Digital Marketing and Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) Tourism Post COVID-19

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze and determine the role of digital marketing and Electronic Word-Of-Mouth carried out by the SETIGI Nature Tourism manager (Selo Tirto Giri) after the COVID-19 pandemic. The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques used by literature review, observation, interviews and documentation. The informants in this study were BUMDes Sekapuk, Selo Tirto Giri Manager and Village Development and Empowerment Staff, the selection of informants was based on purposive sampling technique. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman triangulation technique where the stages in this study were data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing. The results show that digital marketing in the use of the internet and social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and the Internet plays an active role. Electronic Word-Of-Mouth is the main key in marketing SETIGI Nature Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) through the internet and social media, so as to create two-way communication that can influence consumer behavior in choosing SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourist attractions. Viral marketing as a very powerful tool in attracting the attention of visitors about SETIGI Nature Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) must be done consistently and continuously. Tourist behavior in choosing tourist destinations is determined by positive eWOM which is formed by visitors themselves.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing; E-Wom; Tourism; Covid-19; Selo Tirto Giri*

Introduction

Tourism is a bridge that can be developed and promoted for the economic growth of Indonesia and developing countries. Tourism infrastructure can be in the form of beaches, mountain views, rice fields, fishing and handicrafts which have low initial costs (Cole, 2008). In 2020 the number of tourist destinations in Gresik Regency will increase from 14 destinations to 24 destinations (Gresik, 2021). Based on the results of measuring the performance of strategic targets in increasing the number of domestic tourists in Gresik Regency in 2017 by 9%, in 2018 by 0.41%, in 2019 by 28.60% and in 2020 by 21.7%. In 2020, the number of tourists decreased by 6.83%. Comparison of the number of tourist visits in 2019 was 4,570,483 people while in 2020 it was 2,098,995 people. The decline in tourist achievements

occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic which caused several tourist attractions to temporarily close (Gresik, 2021).

Based on the results of the Gresik Regent Regulation Number 22 of 2020 regarding guidelines for the transition period to the new normal order in the conditions of the *Corona Virus Disease* 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in Gresik Regency in article 15 paragraph 2 (a) limit the number of visitors to a maximum of 50% (fifty percent) of the capacity of public places/facilities (Perbub 2020). Regulations made as an effort to deal with natural disasters that occurred due to COVID-19. The enactment of the transition period has greatly impacted various sectors, including the tourism sector. COVID-19 cases were found in Indonesia in March 2020, the total cases that occurred until April 2, 2021 reached 1,677,274 cases, as many as 45,796 died (Covid19, 2021). *World Health Organization* (WHO) urges you to take several preventive measures due to the spread of COVID-19, such as maintaining physical distance, wearing masks, keeping the room, avoiding crowds and cleaning hands. The effect of keeping a distance and avoiding crowds has resulted in a decrease in visitors in the tourism sector. The Minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, accelerated the recovery of tourism through the 2021 Tourism Village Award program which aims to improve the local economy for the welfare of rural communities (Rantung, 2021).

Marketing activities that exist in tourism destinations cannot be separated from the strength of the organization in managing and regulating the object (Sunaryo, 2013). Managers need to make various efforts in branding and forming a positive image about the given destination. The Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes) Sekapuk developed the former mining area to make it a tourist attraction. The tourist destination is named Wisata SETIGI or Selo Giri Tirta. This study begins with initial observations at the research location where Sekapuk Village, Gresik Regency is included in the poorest and disadvantaged village, but currently the village income reaches 4.5 billion in 2.5 years due to Setigi Tourism which is processed by the village government (Didi, 2020). The SETIGI tour has been started since May 7 2018, by cleaning up the waste contained in the mine. The land is the result of reclamation and conversion of former limestone or limestone land that is no longer used by PT. Polowijo Gosari, the tour has the theme Geo Karst Tourism (Wardhana et al., 2019). Regional Tourism Enchantment Award *"Indonesian The Most Potential Destination Awards 2020"* in the category *"The Best Potential Destination On Artificial"* alongside international tourism such as Borobudur, Labuan Bajo, Lake Toba (Salim 2020). In addition, Sekapuk Village won first place as a brilliant village in Indonesia in the *BRIncubator Goes to Brilliant Village* In addition, Sekapuk Village won first place as a brilliant village in Indonesia in the *BRIncubator Goes to Brilliant Village* incubation program (Ana, 2020). SETIGI Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) has also been used as a shooting location for the soap opera Tukang Ojek Pengkolan (TOP) RCTI (Ana 2020). The soap opera had a great influence in introducing SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourism to the audience, not only the local community, but also the Indonesian people.

This article is a review of digital marketing similar to (Sharma et al., 2020), (Melović et al., 2020) dan (Labanauskaitė et al., 2020). A study conducted by Sharma et al. (2020) related *digital platforms* used by travel agencies to assist digital marketing and management of travel services. A study conducted by, Sharma et al. (2020) related *digital platforms* used by travel agencies to assist digital marketing and management of travel services. Meanwhile, Melović et al. (2020) discusses digital transformation affecting the use of digital marketing in business to determine the concept of promotion and brand positioning in Montenegro which results in many companies relying on the use of digital marketing in their business to improve promotion and brand positioning. A study conducted by Labanauskaitė et al. (2020) on the use of new technology or *e-marketing* in offering tourism services to customers in Lithuania. Media selection as a process of communication strategy needs to find out the target audience and frequency (Percy, 2018). According to (Kotler, 2012) social media is a means for consumers to disseminate information in the form of text, images, audio, and video that occurs between companies and their consumers. In a digital environment can post reviews of products, services, brands, websites, social networks to reach more potential customers (Kannan & Li, 2017).

The rapid internet and digital technology in Indonesia encourage creative and productive activities in the digital space (Wisnubroto, 2021). The impact of using digital marketing tools moves very quickly and at relatively low costs (Rosokhata et al., 2020; Puthussery, 2020) . The influence of technology and globalization affects consumer behavior in making decisions, before choosing the product they want they seek information through social media and the recommendations contained therein (Ayutiani & Satria Putri, 2018; Cahyono, 2016).

In 2017, a third of the world's population 71.0% used social networks, 60.9% used Facebook and the rest 10.1% used Twitter (eMarketer, 2017). The growth and use of world-leading social network services (SNS) are becoming an integrated part of consumers' lives, making social media advertising such as Facebook very effective (Lee & Hong, 2016). The growth and use of world-leading social network services (SNS) are becoming an integrated part of consumers' lives, making social media advertising such as Facebook very effective (Wearesocial, 2021). An today's modern era technology has an important role in everyday life (De Mooij, 2019). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes in people's behavior in internet use increased by 443% (Cindy, 2021). At the beginning of the pandemic SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) was closed during April and May, this resulted in a very drastic decrease in the number of visitors.
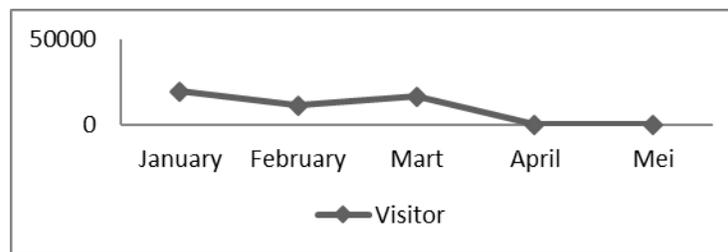
Picture 2. Graph of the number of visitors to SETIGI Tourism
(Source : BUMDes Sekapuk)

SETIGI tourism objects are known by the public through digital media, one of which is very clearly visible through *electronic word of mouth communication* (eWOM). Word-of-mouth can be a very important form of promotion. The recommendations contained in the google maps review of SETIGI Nature Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) have attracted the attention of the public. Seen in the review has a number of 4.4 out of 5 with a total of 2,521 reviews. According to (Middleton & Clarke, 2001) that the experience of visitors who are interested in buying a product will affect consumer attitudes, the positive influence of wor-of-mouth will create a natural feeling for consumers and an ongoing relationship. The growth of online marketing is changing consumer buying decisions, consumer decisions based on digital marketing are having a bigger impact. Consumers change the way they research and buy the products they want. Marketing through social media has a much bigger impact than through social networks (Umair Manzoor et al., 2020). So this research is to find out how to use digital marketing and *electronic word of mouth communication* (eWOM) to increase the quantity of visitors.

The purpose of this research is based on the concept of using digital marketing and *electronic word of mouth communication* (eWOM) as a form of promotion used by the Sekapuk Village-Owned Enterprises in managing SETIGI tourism (Selo Tirto Giri). This study also continues the article written by (Jannah & Moh. Moefad, 2019) in which in his study found that the promotional strategy carried out by SETIGI Tourism was through print media, social media and electronic media. Social media and electronic media are included as digital communication networks; they are very related in the current era where the use of technology is very high so that researchers are interested in choosing digital marketing as the main concept in research. The main concept used in this research is to analyze the communication used through *Digital Marketing* and eWOM.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative descriptive study related to the role of digital marketing and eWOM. Qualitative research is very sensitive to the possibility of various values (Moleong, 2004). he purpose of qualitative descriptive research is to find the truth of the facts by describing all the events studied. The results of qualitative research emphasize meaning (Sugiyono, 2017). The object of this research was conducted at SETIGI Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) Sekapuk Village, Kec. Panceng, Gresik Regency, East Java.

Sources of data collected in this research are secondary data and primary data. Data collection techniques in this study were literature review, documentation, interviews and direct observation. The process of collecting data through literature review comes from news releases in the mass media, scientific journals, relevant documents related to marketing and digital marketing. Literature review as a way of collecting data through scientific journals, books and the internet (Setyorini & Irwansyah, 2018). Interview technique used *interviews* was carried out in depth. Meanwhile, the informant retrieval technique uses a *purposive sampling technique* where the researcher selects the right informants and understands the conditions that occur in SETIGI Tourism. The informants selected were BUMDes Sekapuk, Manager Selo Tirto Giri and Village Development and Empowerment Staff**.** Informants selected in this study who have the authority and in-depth understanding of the Selo Tirto Giri tourism object.

The unit of analysis in this study comes from the results of observations, interviews and documentation that have been carried out by researchers. Data analysis used qualitative analysis with Miles and Huberman's interactive model where the stages in this study were data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Qualitative data collected to strengthen and emphasize the findings of the data that has been obtained. This qualitative analysis focuses on further exploration of the unique and specific findings associated with the role of digital marketing and eWOM in increasing visitor numbers after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Literature Review

Digital Marketing

Definition of digital marketing according to the *American Marketing Association* (AMA) is the activities, institutions, and processes facilitated by digital technology in creating, communicating, and delivering value to consumers and other interested parties(Kannan & Li, 2017). Media selection as a process of communication strategy needs to know the target audience and frequency (Percy, 2018). Target audience relationships are very important to relationships with social media that can help see the world. An understanding of the personal relationship to media practice helps maximize the potential of media selection in marketing. *Digital media* as a new way of sending messages to determine a target audience to stimulate the formation of a brand in marketing programs. According to Kotler (2012) social media is a means for consumers to disseminate information in the form of text, images, audio, and video that occurs between companies and their consumers.

Digital platforms function to distribute various industries such as entertainment (Waldfogel, 2018). The marketing process and digital strategy have a very significant impact, the digital environment produces clickstream data, customer rating reviews, blog tags, interactional data and customer feedback. In a digital environment, one can post reviews about products, brand services, websites, social networks to reach more potential customers (Kannan & Li, 2017). Social media is a new set in the field of collaborative communication, which can give birth to a lot of interaction or two-way communication (Brogan, 2010). Digital marketing, social media and mobile have affordable high-speed connections, digital transformation is facilitating new markets for behavior, interactions and experiences (Lamberton &

Stephen, 2016). Given the speed of development of digital technology, it affects business opportunities. Activities through Internet marketing can provide opportunities to realize new activities in traditional marketing from non-electronic shifts to electronic platforms (Sutejo, 2006). The use of digital tools can be adapted to the product promotion that will be carried out (Rosokhata et al., 2020).

Electronik WOM

According to Swani et al. (2014) in his study found different uses of WOM through social media twitter that can motivate customers to engage with the messages they send. To attract tourists to post on social networking sites, operators must emphasize the emotional bond and connection with the customer about their experience (Yen & Tang, 2015). Using social media platforms, eWOM is becoming a popular source for reliable information and influencing the interests of other consumers (Gauri et al., 2008).

Instagram also has a likes and comments feature so that a photo can be assessed for exposure. Instagram is now one of the tools that form eWOM, providing a place for customers to have discussions about products and learn from other customers about how to use these products (King et al., 2014). There are three dimensions to see electronic word of mouth, namely; a) eWOM *quality* , b) eWOM *quantity* , c) *Sender's Expertise* (Pranata & Darma, 2014). Some indicators of eWOM are source credibility, attractiveness, identity disclosure, similarity in geographic location, social attachment and *social homophily* (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Result and Discussion

The results of the research conducted by the author are based on the interpretation of the data that has been collected by the researcher. Setigi Tourism or Selo Tirto Giri is located in Sekapuk Village, Ujungpangkah District, Gresik Regency. It is an ex-limestone mining area of 4.6 hectares. In 2003 the limestone hill was no longer used as a mining area, but changed its function into a garbage dump. In 2018, with the help of funds from the community, the place began to be cleaned under the leadership of the Sekapuk Village Head, Mr. Abdul Halim and became a tourist spot that was in demand by the community. Initially SETIGI Tour (Selo Tirto Giri) was built to preserve the existence of limestone hills which are decreasing due to mining. The ex-mining area was previously managed by PT. Polowijo Gosari, however, has been taken over and managed as a tourist spot by the Sekapuk village government. SETIGI Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) has the concept of nature and civilization education. The ticket price is IDR 30,000 for adults and IDR 15,000 for children. Meanwhile, the villagers themselves are free of charge. This area has a variety of unique photo spots and other attractions such as museums, lakes and swimming pools.

Digital Marketing Selo Tirto Giri

Digital marketing is the use of a form of promotion through social media for the tourism industry which is very important, where the network of consumers it gets is wider. Utilization of social media as the main key to show the advantages of tourist destinations to the public. The development of information technology is very fast so that people who want to travel can find out various information. Traditional promotion efforts in introducing a tourist destination This can be done through conventional mass media, *face to face, door to door* and so on. The influence of the speed of information makes changes in the introduction of a tourist destination or its marketing. Previously, marketing efforts carried out by tourism managers used billboards, banners, brochures and collaborated with traditional travel owners or came directly to market products. The existence of technological developments resulted in the way of marketing carried out by tourism managers with online and internet media. Based on the media used, the information obtained by tourists can determine decisions in choosing tourist destinations.

Digital marketing activities carried out by SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) in marketing tourist destinations to tourists via the internet and social media. The promotion process through social media is very important to disseminate information about the destinations in it. In this case SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) uses several social media and the internet to promote its place including Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, and websites. Each use of social media has a different influence and communication style, so it is very important to know the social media standards used in order to create effective communication. Utilization of social media as an effective social marketing communication channel (Elwani & Kurniawan, 2020)

The use of Facebook and Tiktok social media is currently very busy being used by tourists and potential SETIGI visitors (Selo Tirto Giri) in seeking information. The selection of social media used in promotion has several reasons, including; 1) Social media as a network that can expand the reach of consumers, 2) social media promotion creates trust in potential tourists who intend to travel in SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) by viewing pictures, videos and stories displayed, 3) the role of tourists who share his experience directly on social media affects people's trust in the image of SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). Social media currently functions as a communication tool for people, not only in one direction, but can also be used as a two-way communication tool to more. SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) uses social media as a tool for interaction with tourists so that there is an emerging relationship between tourists and the wider community, that SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) is very open and always provides fast information services.

Social media is a medium that is very popular with the public. The development of technology such as cellular phones causes changes in people's behavior patterns, the features contained in cellular phones such as the internet and various social media applications can be accessed anywhere and anytime. The existence of these technological developments has led to the importance of information disclosure and the wide dissemination of information. The general public can freely disseminate information without going through a *gatekeeper*. Social media has such a great influence in influencing society, the use of social media is used as an excellent material in marketing or introducing tourist destinations.

Communication created between managers and visitors is a two-way communication, where there is a good response in answering all visitor questions either directly or through social media. *Digital marketing* as a way of communication to create *awareness* and *engagement* with the product or brand (Purwana, 2017). Digital marketing as a form of promotion in marketing SETIGI tourist destinations (Selo Tirto Giri) uses various media such as social media, internet which is assisted by technological advances. In doing digital marketing SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) uses Instagram and Tiktok media which are updated every day by showing the SETIGI atmosphere (Selo Tirto Giri) followed by interesting captions to create the interest of potential tourists. *Digital marketing* is also used to market, convey and disseminate a tourist destination so that it can influence the wider community to visit Selo Tirto Giri.

Utilization of Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok and others are used to display images, photos and videos. In addition to content such as images that must be interesting, *captions* in it must also be unique and good so that potential tourists are attracted to SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). The use of hashtags used on Instagram can affect SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) audience reach. The SETIGI manager (Selo Tirto Giri) also makes regulations for all Selo Tirto Giri employees and staff to upload content about SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) at least once a day, this effort is to show the wider community about the atmosphere in Selo Tirto Giri so that they are interested visits.
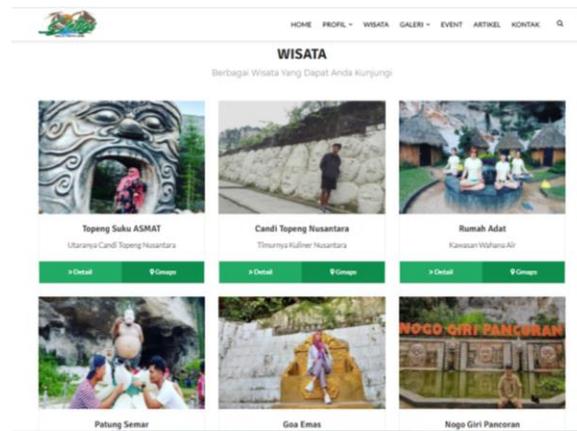
Picture 3. Website SETIGI
(Source : *https://wisatasetigi.com/wisata*)

Apart from social media SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) also has *website* that is used to introduce tourist spots contained in it. The use of *website* is expected when people want to do a search on the internet, they can see the SETIGI website (Selo Tirto Giri) regarding the various forms of tourism contained therein. On the website there is an explanation and history of each photo spot so that when visitors want to visit SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) they are not surprised about the number of photo spots or desired tours. In practice *websites* are not as popular with the public as social media, but these efforts must still be made to help a number of people who still access the internet in finding information.

Electronic Word of Mouth Selo Tirto Giri in Increasing the Quantity of Tourists

The use of digital media as an application of very rapid technological developments, affects tourists in accessing information about the tourist destinations they want to visit. Tourist trust can be influenced by reviews found on the internet and social media. According to (Dewi & Darma, 2019) eWOM plays an important role in decision making, tourists will come back based on positive review results. So SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) must try to make tourists feel comfortable and calm while in SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). The use of eWOM and social media as the dominant factors that can determine consumer adoption from all industrial domains (Dewi & Darma, 2019). The platform on the internet is a place for consumers to discuss and exchange information about a product (King et All, 2014).

According to Pranata & Darma (2014) there are three dimensions *of electronic word of mouth* , namely *eWOM quality*, *eWOM quantity* and *Sender's Expertise*. *eWOM quality* as the content of a review seen by the public regarding information about SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). which can be obtained through the internet, *search engines* and the use of *SEO* on *websites*. The influence of the online media covering Selo Tirto Giri is able to stimulate the public to want to visit SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). *eWOM quantity* where the quantity of a popularity review regarding information on the quantity of visitors at tourist destinations is informed to public. SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) not inform the number of tourists who visited, but the disclosure of billionaire villages was appointed as an effort to attract public attention. The influence of the media that was interested in what used to be a poor village now a millionaire village shows that the large quantity of visitors (Selo Tirto Giri) is able to change the village economy.

Sender's Expertise where visitors have confidence in people who are more knowledgeable and expert about this matter, source credibility is the main key to trust in information. Reviews on Google Maps and Social Media such as Instagram help convince the public that the SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourist attraction is indeed interesting and does not disappoint. In a study conducted (Hendro and Keni 2020) that eWOM has a positive and significant effect on brand image but not significantly on purchase intention. That SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourism is able to form a good brand image for visitors.
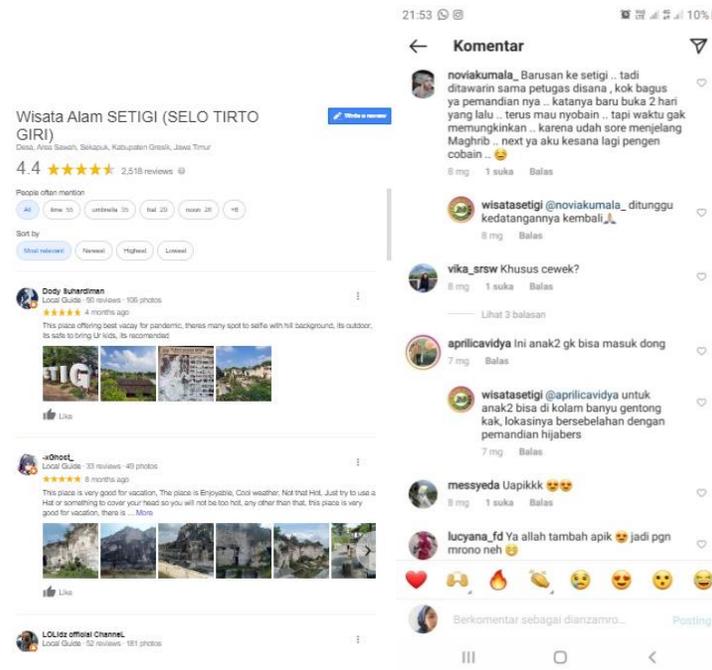
Picture 4. ScreenShoot Comments on the Internet and Social Media
(Source: *www.instagram.com*)

One of @noviakurnia_'s reviews said *"Barusan ke setigi ... tadi ditawarin sama petugas disana, kok bagus pemandian nya .... Katanya baru buka 2 hari yang lalu .. terus mau nyobain tapi waktu gak memungkinan .. karena uda sore menjelang Maghrib .. next aku kesana lagi pengen nyobain .."* and also @lucyana_fd said *"Ya Allah tambah apik, jadi pengen mrono neh".* eviews conducted by @noviakurnia_ and @lucyana_fd expressed their desire to return to visit Selo Tirto Giri again, this proves that SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourism is indeed very interesting to visit and does not get bored to be visited again. Manager SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) hopes that new experiences and the addition of tourist objects that have been felt by visitors can attract the wider community and introduce SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) to those who have never been to Selo Tirto Giri or have been. The influence of reviews made by visitors is considered very effective in marketing SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri). eWOM is said to be very effective because people tend to trust the information shared by visitors in disclosing the products or services provided (Nieto et al., 2014).

Viral marketing is designed to create a wave of interest through eWOM to generate very rapid media coverage and influence in society (Hackley 2014). The use of viral marketing by SETIGI managers has a very significant effect on increasing the number of visitors. Although during the emergence of the SETIGI pandemic, it was closed in August 2020, SETIGI experienced a very high spike due to the influence of the media. COVID-19 made people want to go on tours and entertain themselves so that the number of visitors increased during the four months. After the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2021 to April 2021, the number of visitors has decreased.
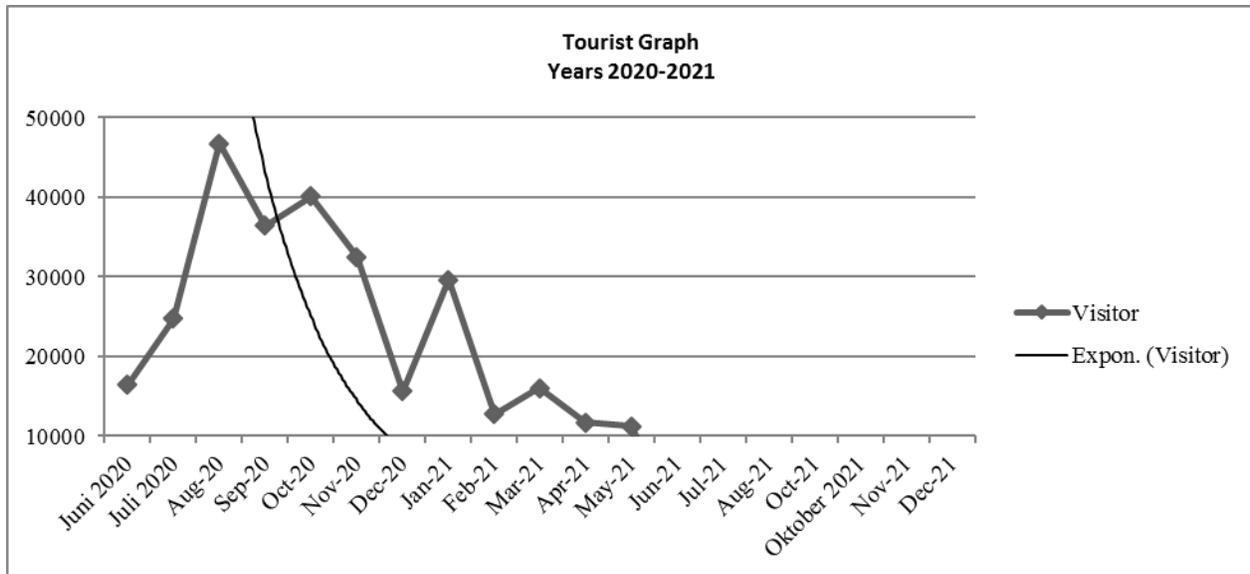
Gambar 5. Graph of the number of visitors to SETIGI Tourism
(Source : BUMDes Sekapuk)

After COVID-19, the number of SETIGI visitors (Selo Tirto Giri) has decreased steadily, efforts are needed to increase the number of visitors to increase regional income and promote local tourism. Efforts through digital media are very effective if they are carried out consistently and continuously. SETIGI can also use viral communications such as what was done during the COVID-19 pandemic to increase the number of visitors. In addition to promotional efforts through digital media and internet, SETIGI Tourism (Selo Tirto Giri) also provides facility updates to improve the services they provide.

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn in this study is that SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) in the use of digital marketing uses social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and the Internet, namely websites. Meanwhile, the use of *eWOM quality*, *eWOM quantity* and *Sender's Expertise* are fully utilized in attracting people to visit. Viral marketing carried out by the SETIGI manager (Selo Tirto Giri) who is assisted by various media has a very significant role. The implications of research that can be applied to SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourism after the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased, then managers must be consistent in the use of *digital marketing,* eWOM. Viral marketing is not only done once to introduce people to SETIGI (Selo Tirto Giri) tourism and increase community visits.

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