

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC COMMUNICATION BY THE NORTH SUMATRA TOURISM OFFICE ON THE "SUMUT TOURISM FESTIVAL 2024" EVENT CALENDAR TO STRENGTHEN TOURISM IN NORTH SUMATRA AMONG STUDENTS OF POLITEKNIK NEGERI MEDAN

An Nisa Dian Rahma¹, Putri Sosanti Sembiring², Dyah Seruni Rizqiana³

^{1,2,3}Politeknik Negeri Medan, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: annisadianrahma@polmed.ac.id

Article Info

Article history:

Received :
 Revised :
 Accepted :
 Available online
<http://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/analytica>

E-ISSN: 2541-5263

P-ISSN: 1411-4380



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Tourism Office at the "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024" event in strengthening the tourism sector in the province, with a focus on the perceptions of students of the D-IV MICE Study Program at the Medan State Polytechnic. The specific target to be achieved is to identify effective public communication strategies in increasing student participation and interest in visiting North Sumatra tourism, as well as providing recommendations for improving future communication strategies. The research method used is a quantitative approach with a survey using a questionnaire distributed to students. The data obtained will be analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results of the study indicate that public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Provincial Tourism Office through the "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024" has proven effective in strengthening the regional tourism sector. This effectiveness is seen from the positive and significant influence between public communication (X) on strengthening tourism (Y), evidenced by the calculated t value (9.825) > t table (1.974) and Sig. 0.000 < 0.05. This means that the more effective the public communication is, the greater the strengthening of public interest and participation, especially MICE students at the Medan State Polytechnic, in the tourism sector.

Keywords: Effectiveness of Public Communication, North Sumatra Tourism, North Sumatra Tourism Festival 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a strategic sector in economic and socio-cultural development, leveraging regional growth and preserving local values. According to a 2023 report by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the tourism sector's contribution to Indonesia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached 4.1%, with a positive growth trend following the COVID-19

pandemic. In this context, North Sumatra Province boasts promising natural and cultural riches, including Lake Toba, the Karo highlands, and the well-preserved diversity of Batak culture.

As a strategic effort to boost the regional tourism sector, the North Sumatra Provincial Tourism Office launched an annual calendar titled "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024," which serves as a means of promoting tourist destinations, providing a space for cultural expression, and supporting the creative economy ecosystem. This festival aims to strengthen North Sumatra's image ahead of the 21st Aceh-Sumut National Sports Week (PON) and is expected to be a catalyst for attracting both domestic and international tourists.

In organizing this festival, public communication strategies play a crucial role in conveying messages to the target audience. According to Bonaraja Purba et al. (2020), public communication is a planned effort by institutions or individuals to effectively disseminate information through various channels, including mass and digital media, so that it can be understood by the wider public and support the success of institutional goals such as education, persuasion, or building a public image. In the digital era, communication effectiveness is greatly influenced by an institution's ability to manage messages through interactive, data-driven digital media (Nasrullah, 2015).

Mulyana (2023) emphasizes that the success of public communication is determined by three main elements: message quality, delivery medium, and audience profile. With the development of digital technology, the use of social media, interactive platforms, and collaborative approaches across sectors are becoming increasingly important for reaching diverse audiences, especially the digital-native generation, accustomed to fast and visual information.

The effectiveness of public communication can be seen from the results of public services received by the community. The principles of accessibility and time efficiency are among the criteria. The effectiveness of public communication is said (Supriyanto, et al., 2024) to also be assessed from the level of accuracy that the public receives from a message, the level of ambiguity that exists in a message, and public understanding.

Social media platforms are considered powerful for disseminating important information and reaching a wider audience. Reflecting on the delivery of information in the business sector, for example, the success of informing and marketing their products and services to customers is broader and more effective. Politicians utilize social media platforms not only in business but also in political campaigns and information dissemination. Politicians are engaging more audiences through social media because it is considered more effective and efficient, bringing politicians closer to their target audiences, and mediating political communication with a broader audience.

The use of digital media for public communication is considered more effective in providing services to the public (Guritno et al. 2022). The large number of digital media users among Generation Z is one reason why public communication is more effective through digital media. The nature of digital media, which is needed by the public, includes interaction and information seeking, as well as public participation (Arianto, 2022).

In Indonesia, tourism is a profitable and promising source of income for national development (Aliansyah & Hermawan, 2019). The tourism sector is considered a strategic sector for driving economic growth, as evidenced by 2024 statistical data, which recorded

more than 13 million international tourist arrivals in Indonesia (Ministry of Finance, 2025). Research by Aponno (2020) supports the assertion that the tourism sector is capable of increasing foreign exchange, creating jobs, and stimulating regional economic growth. Tourism development, as a driver of regional economic growth, must be accompanied by a specific strategy for the development of the tourism sector itself (Yakup, 2019).

The concept of events as a catalyst for tourism development in Indonesia is evident in the use of tourism events, which are frequently used by the Indonesian government to develop and promote tourist destinations to potential tourists (Kurniawan, G., Mirza, M., & Ukon., 2024). Events are designed to attract attention, inspire, and provide unique experiences for audiences, ultimately fostering interest in visiting a destination. Events in this context include cultural festivals, art exhibitions, music concerts, sports competitions, and various other events that reflect the richness of culture.

Holding events as a tourism development strategy is supported by Higgins' (2018) statement, which states that tourism events are linked to a positive destination image, more equitable tourism development, and the ability to attract both international and domestic tourists. These events, in turn, influence the decision to visit (Pakarti et al., 2017). The variety of events that can be used to attract tourists is currently being widely used by tourism stakeholders to develop these destinations. This relationship will continue to be intertwined and evolve as event terminology evolves, encompassing various creative industry domains to boost the Indonesian economy.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the author used a quantitative research method. According to Sugiyono (2018:14), quantitative research is a research method based on the philosophy of positivism to examine a specific population or sample. Sampling is conducted randomly, with data collection using instruments and statistical analysis. The quantitative research paradigm considers causal relationships between research variables (Sugiyono, 2018). This study employed an associative research technique. The author used a survey method for data collection. A survey is a research method that uses questionnaires as a data collection tool. A questionnaire is an instrument in the form of a list of questions or written statements that respondents answer or complete according to instructions (Sanjaya, 2015:255). The questionnaire was distributed using Google Forms (GF). This study aims to determine the effect of work experience, work discipline, and job training (independent variables) on employee performance (dependent variable).

The scaling technique used in this study was the Likert scale, developed by Rensis Likert and often referred to as the Summated Rating Method, which means the rating value of each answer or response is summed to achieve a total score (Ruslan, 2010: 198). The Likert scale is used to measure the attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of an individual or group of people regarding social phenomena (Sugiyono, 2016: 107). The sampling technique used was random sampling. In this study, the sample will be students of the Diploma IV MICE Study Program at Medan State Polytechnic, with the following characteristics:

- 1) Active students of the Diploma IV MICE Study Program at Medan State Polytechnic for the 2021-2024 academic year.

- 2) Active students of the Diploma IV MICE Study Program at Medan State Polytechnic who are familiar with the North Sumatra Provincial Tourism Office's event calendar.

To determine the sample size, the researcher used the Slovin formula with a 95% confidence level (5% margin of error). The calculation is as follows:

$$N = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$$

Description:

n = number of samples

N = population size

e = margin of error (usually 0.1, 0.05, or 0.01)

Based on the formula above, the sample size is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{297}{1 + 297(0,05)^2} \\ &= \frac{297}{1 + 297(0,0025)} \\ &= \frac{297}{1 + 0,7425} \\ &= \frac{297}{1,7425} \\ &\approx 170,4 \end{aligned}$$

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

According to Sugiyono (2017), hypothesis testing aims to determine whether the researcher's hypothesis is accepted or rejected based on the results of empirical data analysis. In this study, testing was conducted to determine whether there is an influence of Public Communication Effectiveness (X) on Tourism Strengthening (Y) among students in the MICE Diploma IV Study Program at Medan State Polytechnic. The hypotheses proposed in this study are as follows:

- 1) H_0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant influence between Public Communication Effectiveness and Tourism Strengthening.
- 2) H_1 (Alternative Hypothesis): There is a significant influence between Public Communication Effectiveness and Tourism Strengthening.

The testing criteria used a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$):

- 1) If Sig. (p) < 0.05, then H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, indicating a significant influence.
- 2) If Sig. (p) > 0.05, then H_0 is accepted and H_1 is rejected, meaning there is no significant effect. In addition, the results of the t-test are compared with the t-table (df = n - 2 = 170 - 2 = 168), where t-table = 1.974

Based on the results of the hypothesis test above, the folloing values were obtained:

- 1) t-count = 9.825 > t-table = 1.974, and
- 2) Sig. (p) = 0.000 < 0.05.

Thus, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted, which means there is a positive and significant influence between the Effectiveness of Public Communication (X) on Tourism Strengthening (Y). This means that the higher the effectiveness of public communication carried out by the North Sumatra Tourism Office includes message clarity, source credibility, appropriate communication media, and message relevance. This means that if all public communication indicators starting from source credibility, message clarity, media effectiveness, message relevance, attitude change, to participation are carried out in an integrated manner, then the greater the strengthening of tourism among students of the D-IV MICE Study Program at the Medan State Polytechnic.

Credibility and Trust in the Tourism Office

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Credibility and Trust in the Tourism Office indicator obtained an average score of 4.12, which falls into the "Very Good" category. This result indicates that the majority of MICE students have high trust in the North Sumatra Tourism Office as an official source of information regarding the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. To clarify the distribution of respondents' responses, the following are the frequency and percentage distributions.

A total of 84.7% of respondents (combined categories of "very trust" and "trust") stated that they considered the North Sumatra Tourism Office a credible and trustworthy institution in providing tourism information. Meanwhile, only 4.7% of respondents had a low level of trust.

These results indicate that the North Sumatra Tourism Office has successfully established an image as a trusted source of information, both in terms of data accuracy, message consistency, and professionalism in delivering information regarding tourism events. This finding aligns with Ohanian's (2015) perspective, which updated the concept of source credibility in the context of modern communication. He explained that source credibility encompasses three main dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. These three aspects determine the extent to which a message is received and influences audience attitudes. In the context of this research, the North Sumatra Tourism Office is considered to possess high expertise and integrity in conveying information openly and accurately, thereby increasing audience trust in the message.

Clarity, Accuracy, and Appeal of Event Calendar Content

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Clarity, Accuracy, and Appeal of Event Calendar Content for the "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024" obtained an average score of 3.98, which falls into the "Good" category. This indicates that the information presented by the North Sumatra Tourism Office was deemed clear, accurate, and engaging by the majority of MICE students. To illustrate the trend in respondents' responses, the following are the frequency distributions and percentages from SPSS:

A total of 80.6% of respondents (combined strongly agree and agree categories) stated that the content of the Sumut Tourism Festival 2024 was clear, accurate, and engaging. Meanwhile, 6.5% of respondents considered the information unclear or insufficiently engaging. These results indicate that the public communication of the North Sumatra Tourism Office has been effective in compiling tourism promotional content, but there are

still opportunities to improve the visual appeal and presentation style to better suit the characteristics of the younger generation.

Types of Media Used and Effectiveness of Communication Channels

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Media Type and Effectiveness of Communication Channels indicator obtained an average score of 4.05, which falls into the "Very Good" category. These results indicate that the North Sumatra Tourism Office is considered to have used appropriate and effective communication media to disseminate information about the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. To clarify the distribution of respondents' responses, the following are the frequency distributions and percentages from SPSS:

84.7% of respondents (combined as very effective and effective) assessed that the communication media used by the Tourism Office to promote the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival were appropriate and capable of reaching the target audience. Only 3.5% of respondents considered the communication media ineffective. This demonstrates that the Tourism Office has successfully utilized a variety of communication channels, including digital social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) and conventional media (television and billboards) to simultaneously reach young audiences and the wider community.

Content Relevance to Audience Characteristics (MICE Students)

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Content Relevance to Audience Characteristics (MICE Students) indicator obtained an average score of 3.90, which falls into the "Good" category. These results indicate that the public communication content delivered through the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival is considered quite appropriate to the interests, needs, and characteristics of MICE students, who are young, active, creative, and digitally-oriented.

81.1% of respondents (combined categories: very appropriate and appropriate) assessed that the content presented by the North Sumatra Tourism Office was relevant to their characteristics and needs as MICE students. Only 4.7% of respondents considered the content less relevant. This indicates that the Tourism Office has successfully adapted its communication style, content, and themes to the characteristics of a young audience who are critical, active on digital media, and interested in event-based tourism experiences.

Changes in Understanding, Attitudes, and Participation Towards Events

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Changes in Understanding, Attitudes, and Participation towards Events indicator obtained an average score of 4.08, which falls into the "Very Good" category. This indicates that the public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Tourism Office through the "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024" event calendar has had a positive impact on increasing respondents' understanding, changing attitudes, and their desire to participate in regional tourism activities. To illustrate the distribution of respondents' responses, the following frequency and percentage distributions are presented. The majority of respondents, 87.7%, agreed or strongly agreed that after learning more about the "Sumut Tourism

Festival 2024," they experienced an increased understanding and interest in tourism activities in North Sumatra. Meanwhile, only 4.1% of respondents reported no significant changes.

Level of Knowledge About Tourism Destinations/Events in North Sumatra

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Level of Knowledge indicator regarding Tourism Destinations/Events in North Sumatra obtained an average score of 4.00, which falls into the "Good" category. These results indicate that the public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Tourism Office through the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival has contributed positively to increasing respondents' knowledge of tourist destinations and tourism activities in the region. To examine the distribution of respondents' responses,

82.4% of respondents (combined "very knowledgeable" and "aware") stated that they had a good level of understanding about tourism destinations and events in North Sumatra after receiving information from the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. Meanwhile, only 4.7% of respondents reported not being very familiar with them. These results demonstrate that the Tourism Office's public communication can function as an educational tool in increasing tourism literacy among MICE students. The information conveyed through the event calendar is not only promotional but also increases insight into the region's tourism potential, types of events, and the benefits of tourism activities for the local community.

Interest and Concern for Regional Tourism Issues

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Interest and Concern for Regional Tourism Issues indicator obtained an average score of 3.95, which falls into the "Good" category. These results indicate that the majority of MICE students exhibited a high level of interest and concern for local tourism issues after receiving information and activities from the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. To illustrate the distribution of respondents' responses in detail, the following distribution results are presented.

A total of 85.3% of respondents (combined categories: very interested/concerned and interested/concerned) expressed interest and concern for regional tourism issues after receiving information about the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. Meanwhile, only 4.7% of respondents stated they were not interested in tourism activities or issues. These results indicate that the public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Tourism Office through the festival has successfully fostered interest and social concern among students. This means that the communication messages conveyed not only increased knowledge but also sparked awareness of the important role of the younger generation in supporting local tourism development.

Active Participation in Tourism Events

Based on the analysis of a questionnaire conducted with 170 respondents, the Active Participation in Tourism Events indicator obtained an average score of 4.06, which falls into the "Very Good" category. These results indicate that MICE students have a high level of participation in tourism events organized or promoted by the North Sumatra Tourism Office, such as the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival. A total of 87.6% of respondents

(combined between the very active and active categories) demonstrated significant involvement in tourism activities. Meanwhile, only 3.6% of respondents were classified as inactive. These results demonstrate that the North Sumatra Tourism Office has successfully encouraged public participation, particularly MICE students, in various tourism activities such as cultural festivals, exhibitions, and regional creative events.

Interest in Professional Involvement in the Tourism Sector

Based on the analysis of 170 respondents, the Interest in Professional Involvement indicator obtained an average score of 4.07, which falls into the "Very Good" category. These results indicate that the North Sumatra Tourism Office's public communication activities, particularly through the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival, have been able to spark the interest of MICE students in contributing professionally to the tourism sector. To further illustrate the distribution of respondents' responses,

87.7% of respondents (combined between the very interested and interested categories) expressed a strong interest in working or pursuing a career in the tourism sector. Meanwhile, 4.1% of respondents admitted to not yet having a professional interest in the field. These findings demonstrate that the public communication efforts of the North Sumatra Tourism Office not only serve to promote the event but also successfully foster professional orientation and career motivation among MICE students. This demonstrates that the 2024 North Sumatra Tourism Festival has had a positive impact on the development of tourism human resources.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that public communication conducted by the North Sumatra Provincial Tourism Office through the "Sumut Tourism Festival 2024" has proven effective in strengthening the regional tourism sector. This effectiveness is seen from the positive and significant influence between public communication (X) on strengthening tourism (Y), evidenced by the calculated t value ($9.825 > t_{table} (1.974)$) and Sig. $0.000 < 0.05$. This means that the more effective the public communication is, the greater the strengthening of public interest and participation, especially MICE students of the Medan State Polytechnic, in the tourism sector.

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