

Marketing strategy with marketing mix for Lake Toba tourism destination

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to identify effective and targeted policy strategies to improve the quality of Lake Toba. Lake Toba, a popular tourist destination in Indonesia, faces global competition and needs continuous development to maintain its appeal to domestic and international travelers. This study incorporates marketing mix policy theory to guide the design of these strategies.

Objective: The objective of this study is to identify effective and targeted policy strategies to improve the quality of Lake Toba, a popular tourist destination in Indonesia.

Scope: The scope of this study includes various aspects related to marketing strategy and marketing mix in the context of Lake Toba as a tourist destination.

Research Methodology: Qualitative research included field studies, stakeholder interviews, and secondary data analysis.

Results: This study provides a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Lake Toba tourism area that encompasses positioning, market analysis, product development, market penetration, and market development.

Limitations: The strategy discussed in this study concerns a marketing strategy in which the marketing mix is included.

Contributions: The results and recommendations of this study will be valuable for local governments, tourism entrepreneurs, and communities involved in addressing challenges and improving the tourism sector in the Lake Toba area.

Novelty: This study explores the development of appropriate marketing strategies to promote Lake Toba as a tourist destination.

Keywords: *Marketing Strategy, Marketing Mix, Lake Toba, Tourism Destination*

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1. Introduction

Lake Toba, located in North Sumatra Province, Indonesia, is a prominent and popular tourist destination known for its extraordinary natural beauty, rich culture, and welcoming local community. The lake has attracted domestic and international travelers seeking unique and immersive experiences. However, in the face of global competition and the ever-changing demands of the tourism industry, it must continue to develop and improve its quality to maintain its allure and competitiveness with other tourist destinations (Bappenas, 2020; O. M. J. Simanjuntak, 2019).

Adopting effective policy strategies to pursue sustainable tourism development is crucial in the Lake Toba region. Sustainable tourism development emphasizes the integration of economic, social, cultural, and environmental considerations, ensuring sustainable tourism growth that preserves the local environment and culture. Therefore, any policy strategy implemented in the Lake Toba area must consider these aspects and strive for sustainable tourism development (Awaritefe & Ejemeyovwi, 2019; Pardosi, Bangun, & Putra, 2021).

When formulating marketing strategies to promote Lake Toba, it is essential to employ a well-designed marketing mix. This policy encompasses product, price, promotion, and distribution, and must be tailored and adjusted according to market conditions and the unique characteristics of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. By implementing an appropriate marketing mix policy, tourist visits to Lake Toba are expected to increase, positively affecting the local economy and surrounding communities (V. C. Simanjuntak, 2016).

The primary research problem addressed in this study was the need for effective and targeted policy strategies to enhance the overall quality of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. As a popular tourist spot in Indonesia, Lake Toba faces global competition and requires continuous development to sustain its appeal to domestic and international tourists. The research objectives were as follows:

1. Identifying effective and targeted policy strategies to enhance the quality of Lake Toba.
2. Develop appropriate marketing strategies to promote Lake Toba as a tourist destination.
3. Incorporate marketing mix policy theory to guide the design of these strategies.
4. Encompass various aspects of marketing, such as positioning, market analysis, product development, market penetration, and market development, within a comprehensive marketing strategy for Lake Toba tourism.
5. Provide valuable results and recommendations to the local government, tourism entrepreneurs, and communities involved in addressing challenges and improving the tourism sector in the Lake Toba area.

This study aims to identify effective and targeted policy strategies that can improve the quality of Lake Toba, a popular tourist destination in Indonesia. The purpose is to enhance Lake Toba's appeal to domestic and international travelers and to maintain its competitiveness in the face of global competition. This study incorporates marketing mix policy theory to guide the design of these strategies.

The scope of this study includes various aspects related to marketing strategy and marketing mix in the context of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. It encompasses market analysis, product development, positioning, penetration, and development. This study aims to provide a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Lake Toba tourism area, considering the unique characteristics of the destination and the market conditions.

2. Literature Review

This study incorporates a marketing strategy and marketing mix to ensure a comprehensive approach that considers all the relevant aspects of marketing. This study ensures that market analysis, positioning, product development, market penetration, and market development are considered and addressed. This comprehensive approach allows for a more effective and targeted strategy to improve the overall quality of Lake Toba (Wichmann, Uppal, Sharma, & Dekimpe, 2022).

2.1. Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix

Marketing strategy and marketing mix are fundamental concepts in marketing, although they differ in their meaning, scope, and objectives.

A marketing strategy refers to a company's broader plan to achieve long-term marketing goals, encompassing product development, target market identification, and brand building. On the other hand, the marketing mix focuses on the specific elements of a product, price, promotion, and distribution that a company utilizes to market its products or services.

The scope of the marketing strategy is wider, covering various areas of marketing such as market segmentation, positioning, competitive analysis, and market trend analysis. In contrast, the marketing mix focuses on products, prices, promotions, and distribution. The marketing strategy objectives include establishing a strong brand image, identifying the appropriate target market, and developing

products or services that meet consumer needs. On the other hand, the marketing mix's objectives revolve around effectively promoting products or services, increasing sales, and maximizing profits.

While marketing strategy is a long-term plan that remains relatively stable but may require adjustments to adapt to changing market conditions, the marketing mix is more flexible. This can be adapted to address evolving market situations.

Marketing strategy and marketing mix are interrelated concepts in achieving a company's marketing goals. The marketing mix provides a framework for determining how products or services are marketed. In contrast, a marketing strategy provides the direction and objectives to be achieved using the appropriate marketing mix. Although interconnected, it is advisable to establish a clear marketing strategy before developing the marketing mix to ensure the alignment of objectives and effective execution of marketing efforts (Işoraitë, 2016).

2.2. The Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a general plan or approach used by a company to achieve its long-term marketing goals. This involves a series of plans and actions designed to promote products or services to the right target market to increase sales, revenue, and business profitability. A good marketing strategy should incorporate various marketing elements that support each other, such as products, prices, promotions, and distributions. The marketing strategy involves market analysis, segmentation, target market selection, and positioning (product positioning in the market). The marketing strategy objectives are to create a strong brand image, identify the right target market, and develop products or services that meet consumer needs (Purcarea, 2019).

There are several stages in developing a marketing strategy.

1. Market analysis: The company must conduct a market analysis to understand consumer needs and desires and comprehend competition in the market. The analysis includes the study of market trends, consumer needs, and competitor advantages.
2. Market segmentation: After understanding the market, the company must divide the market into smaller segments based on consumer characteristics and needs. Each segment should have unique characteristics, and the company must tailor its products or services to meet the needs of each segment.
3. Target market: After dividing the market into segments, the company must select which segments will be its target market. The company must choose segments with high potential for growth and good profitability.
4. Positioning: After determining the target market, the company must consider positioning its products or services and creating a strong brand image. The company must identify its products or services' most important attributes and benefits, and emphasize those in its marketing messages.
5. Marketing mix: The company must develop an appropriate marketing mix after determining its target market and positioning. The marketing mix included products, prices, promotions, and distribution. A company must ensure that its marketing mix fits the needs of its target market and supports its marketing strategy objectives.
6. Implementation and control: The company must execute its plans and regularly monitor its marketing performance after planning the marketing strategy. A company needs to evaluate and adjust its strategies, if necessary, to ensure its long-term marketing goals.

In conclusion, a marketing strategy is a general plan or approach used by a company to achieve its long-term marketing goals. It involves market analysis, segmentation, target market selection, positioning, and an appropriate marketing mix. A good marketing strategy will help a company effectively and efficiently achieve its marketing objectives (Al Badi, 2018).

2.3. The Marketing Mix

Marketing mix refers to the fundamental concept in marketing that encompasses the combination of four main elements used to promote products or services: product, price, promotion, and distribution. These four elements interact with and influence each other to achieve the company's marketing objectives (Thabit & Raewf, 2018).

The following is a detailed explanation of each element of the marketing mix.

1. **Product:** The product element in the marketing mix includes all products or services that the company offers to the market. This element encompasses product design, quality, branding, features, and everything related to a product or service. To build quality products, the company needs to understand consumer needs and create products that meet these needs.
2. **Price:** The price element in the marketing mix involves determining the price of the offered product or service. The company needs to consider various factors in determining the price, such as production costs, competition, market demand, and other factors that influence pricing. Appropriate pricing can affect sales volume, profitability, and brand image.
3. **Promotion:** The promotion element in the marketing mix includes activities used to introduce the product or service to the market. This element includes advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and other communication strategies to build brand awareness, promote products or services, and influence consumers' purchasing decisions.
4. **Distribution:** The distribution element in the marketing mix involves how a product or service is delivered to the market. This element includes distribution strategies, channel selection, supply chain management, inventory management, and consumer product or service deliveries. Effective distribution can facilitate consumer access to products or services, and enhance business efficiency and effectiveness.

Companies must consider these four elements holistically to build an effective marketing mix and ensure that each element supports the other. Each element should be tailored to market and competitor characteristics, while meeting consumer needs and desires.

2.4. Marketing Strategy and Marketing Mix in the Context of Lake Toba Tourism Area

A marketing strategy for a tourist destination involves developing plans and implementing actions to promote the destination to the target market effectively. In Lake Toba, the marketing strategy aims to attract more visitors and generate higher revenue from tourism by implementing appropriate marketing initiatives. A marketing strategy for Lake Toba is crucial for positioning the destination and creating awareness in the target market. It involves understanding the unique selling points of Lake Toba, such as its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and friendly local communities. By highlighting these strengths, the marketing strategy aims to differentiate Lake Toba from other tourist destinations and to attract the attention of potential tourists. Furthermore, the marketing mix plays a significant role in Lake Toba's overall marketing strategy. The marketing mix includes product, price, promotion, and distribution, which are key elements in shaping the perception and experience of tourists visiting the destination (Marpaung, Hutabarat, & Ginting, 2016; Nainggolan, Turnip, Tampubolon, Saragih, & Turnip, 2020; Sianipar, 2019; V. C. Simanjuntak, 2016).

Some commonly used marketing strategies to promote tourist destinations are as follows.

1. **Identify the target market:** Study and understand the potential target market that fits a specific tourist destination. This can be done based on age, gender, income level, interests, and traveler preferences.
2. **Branding:** Building a strong, attractive, and recognizable brand for Lake Toba as a tourist destination. This can be achieved by creating a distinctive logo and slogan depicting the area's uniqueness and attractions.
3. **Social media promotion:** Utilize social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to promote Lake Toba as a tourist destination by creating engaging content, such as photos, videos, and stories of travel experiences.
4. **Collaboration with travel agencies:** Partner with travel agencies and provide appealing, affordable, and easy-to-book travel packages to attract more tourists to Lake Toba.

5. Infrastructure improvement: Enhance facilities in tourist destinations, such as hotels, restaurants, transportation, entertainment venues, and other tourist attractions, to improve visitor comfort and satisfaction.
6. Events and festivals: Regularly organize events and festivals in Lake Toba to attract the attention and interest of tourists, such as culinary festivals, music festivals, and cultural festivals.
7. Quality enhancement: Improve the quality and safety of a tourist destination by optimizing infrastructure, enhancing service quality, and improving environmental safety and cleanliness.
8. Collaboration with the media: Attract media attention to write news and articles on Lake Toba as a tourist destination to reach a wider target market.

By implementing the right marketing strategies, the tourist destination is expected to attract more visitors and increase the tourism sector's revenue in the Lake Toba Tourist Area. The marketing mix in the Lake Toba Tourist Area comprises seven important elements known as the 7Ps. The following is an explanation of each element:

1. Product: The Lake Toba Tourist Area is a unique and diverse tourism experience. These products can include nature, culture, culture, and historical tourism. To enhance the product, the Lake Toba Tourist Area can add tourist attractions, such as water rides, games, or sports activities that are attractive and suitable for the targeted tourists' characteristics. Marketing strategy focuses on developing and improving Lake Toba's tourism products and services. It involves enhancing the quality of accommodations, facilities, and attractions to meet the expectations and preferences of tourists.
2. Price: The price offered should be aligned with the quality and services provided. The price should also be adjusted to the target market to attract tourists with different budgets. The Lake Toba Tourist Area can provide competitive pricing to enhance competitiveness in the tourism market. The pricing strategy was designed to offer competitive rates for various tourism offerings in Lake Toba, ensuring that they are perceived as valuable and affordable by the target market.
3. Promotion: Promotions should be well integrated and target specific market segments. The Lake Toba Tourist Area can be promoted by participating in tourism exhibitions and utilizing social media, advertisements, and brochures. Cooperation with local and international media can also enhance the promotion of the Lake Toba tourist destination. Marketing strategy includes promotional activities to create awareness and interest in Lake Toba. It may involve advertising campaigns, digital marketing initiatives, public relations efforts, and collaboration with travel agencies or online platforms.
4. Place: The location of the Lake Toba Tourist Area should be easily accessible and meet tourists' comfort and safety standards. The area should have adequate infrastructure such as transportation, accommodation, restaurants, and other facilities needed by tourists. Distribution channels through which tourists can access information and book their trips to Lake Toba. This may involve partnerships with travel agencies, online booking platforms, and the effective utilization of digital channels.
5. People: Lake Toba Tourist Area employees should have sufficient skills and knowledge to serve tourists. They should also have the ability to communicate effectively with international tourists.
6. Process: Providing services to tourists should be well-executed, considering tourists' comfort. The Lake Toba Tourist Area should have clear and systematic procedures to provide tourist services.
7. Physical Evidence. The physical evidence or appearance of the Lake Toba Tourist Area should also meet tourists' comfort and safety standards. The area should have an attractive and adequate design to provide a memorable tourism experience to visitors.

Therefore, the Lake Toba Tourist Area has seven essential elements in its marketing mix. These include products, prices, places, promotions, people, processes, and physical evidence. The products offered by the Lake Toba Tourist Area encompass unique and diverse tourism experiences such as nature, culture, culinary tourism, and historical tourism. Implementing an effective marketing strategy and optimizing the marketing mix aims to attract more tourists to Lake Toba, increase their satisfaction, and generate economic benefits for the local community and region. The marketing strategy for Lake Toba in the context of tourism aims to promote the destination, attract the right

target market, and increase visitor numbers and revenues. It highlights the importance of understanding the unique attributes of Lake Toba, implementing appropriate marketing mix elements, and positioning the destination effectively to achieve the desired marketing goals (Hajar, Supriyono, Muluk, & Said, 2021; Putranto & Astuti, 2022).

3. Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative method through field studies involving direct observations in the Lake Toba area and interviews with relevant stakeholders, such as policymakers and tourism managers. The research also incorporates secondary data such as reports and statistics from relevant government sources. The qualitative research design aimed to better understand the conditions, situations, issues, and challenges faced in the Lake Toba tourism area (Setiawan, Arief, Hamsal, Furinto, & Wiweka, 2020). Therefore, the qualitative research method used for policy research in the Lake Toba area included the following:

1. Research Design. The research design employed was qualitative descriptive research. This study aims to describe and analyze the conditions and situations in the Lake Toba tourism area and identify the problems and challenges faced in meeting the expectations and satisfaction of tourists.
2. Data-collection techniques
 - a. The interviews with relevant stakeholders included tourism managers, business operators, local government officials, and tourists. Interviews were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the situation in the Lake Toba tourism area and the challenges it faces.
 - b. Observations participate in Lake Toba tourism by observing the area's conditions, interactions, and activities.
 - c. Documentation involves collecting data through official documents, literature studies, or other sources of information.
3. Data Analysis. Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed. This analysis was conducted to identify the main themes that emerged from the data and to connect these themes to the research objectives.
4. Data Interpretation. The results of the data analysis were interpreted by comparing the findings with the previous analysis. We conclude with the proposed policy strategies to meet the expectations and satisfaction of tourists in the Lake Toba tourism area.
5. Data Verification. The research results were verified through data triangulation using different data sources. Interviews, observations, and documentation were utilized as forms of data triangulation to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data.
6. Discussion of Findings. The analyzed results are discussed and evaluated to determine policy strategies that can be proposed to meet the expectations and satisfaction of tourists in the Lake Toba tourism area.
7. Conclusions and recommendations. In this stage, qualitative research conclusions are formulated and elaborated. The conclusions should be based on valid and accountable data. The final step is to provide recommendations to relevant parties, such as the local government, tourism entrepreneurs, and local communities, which can be taken as strategic steps to address the problems and challenges in the Lake Toba tourism area.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1. Marketing Strategy for Lake Toba Tourism Area

The marketing strategy for Lake Toba involves a comprehensive plan to promote and position Lake Toba as a desirable and competitive tourist destination. By implementing a well-defined marketing strategy that focuses on differentiation, effective communication, and collaboration, the Lake Toba tourism area can position itself as a sought-after destination, attract more visitors, and contribute to sustainable growth of the local tourism industry. Here are the key elements of the marketing strategy for Lake Toba.

4.1.1. Positioning

(Bappenas, 2020; Hajar et al., 2021; Putranto & Astuti, 2022; V. C. Simanjuntak, 2016; Tambunan & Alamsyah, 2022) Lake Toba is considered strategically located due to its proximity to Singapore, a major transportation hub. This proximity could benefit Lake Toba by attracting tourists. However, this also means facing competition from other destinations that are easily accessible from Singapore.

Despite competing destinations, Lake Toba remains a top priority for tourism. The government recognizes the importance of tourism as an economic contributor and aims to strengthen national and regional economies through tourism. Lake Toba is seen as a valuable asset in achieving these goals.

Other destinations are currently at different stages of development. Some destinations are still being explored or in their early stages, while others are domestically and internationally well-known. Among these destinations, Lake Toba is considered a super-priority destination, on par with Lombok, which is undergoing rapid development. At the same time, Borobudur-Yogyakarta-Prambanan is ready to receive tourist visits.

The government's strong support positively impacted Lake Toba as a tourist destination. This indicates progress and improvements in the area, which can enhance its quality and attractiveness. This discussion highlights Lake Toba's unique features, such as being the world's largest caldera formed by a massive eruption, its rich cultural heritage as the second-largest ethnic group in Indonesia after Java, and its breathtaking landscapes. These features should be the main strengths emphasized in marketing Lake Toba as a tourist destination.

As a super-priority tourist destination, Lake Toba offers a wide range of attractions, including its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and the hospitality of its people. Combining these elements makes Lake Toba appealing to domestic and international tourists.

Therefore, as a highly strategic tourist destination, Lake Toba must continue to develop innovative and attractive products. This includes improving service quality, developing infrastructure, and implementing effective promotional strategies. By doing so, Lake Toba can attract more tourists, become a highly desirable destination, and contribute to the growth of the national and regional economies.

4.1.2. Market

(Astuti, 2021; Bappenas, 2020; Lumbanraja, 2012; Sianipar, 2019) The Lake Toba region has great potential for development as a leading tourist destination in Indonesia. The domestic tourist segment, especially Medan and its surroundings, still dominates visits to Lake Toba, while Malaysia and Singapore still dominate the international tourist market. During the recovery phase (2020-2025), the Lake Toba region is expected to gain a larger share of the existing market by improving the quality of facilities and services, developing new products, and attracting educational and volunteer market segments from the Netherlands and other European countries.

During the acceleration phase (2025-2035), the Lake Toba region needs to prepare itself to develop European and American markets, which are experiencing a decline in visits by targeting new segments and markets from other developed countries. In addition, the Lake Toba region needs to expand its domestic market by improving connectivity and reviewing domestic flight tariffs, which are considered one of the main obstacles. The expected new markets include India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia's new generation, and Europe.

Government efforts and stakeholders must support all the development activities in the Lake Toba region to improve connectivity, review domestic flight tariffs, develop new products, and attract new market segments.

4.1.3. Product Development

(Bappenas, 2020; Buhalis, 2010; Camilleri, 2017) The tourism product development program aims to prepare products for sale through field understanding, literature research, planning, and field trials. Each tourism destination requires a variety of products to thrive. Therefore, these products must be unique and distinct from other tourist destinations. Tourism product development is based on attractions and other tourism resources, considering the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and services to sell products to tourists (Yuliari & Riyadi, 2019).

The Lake Toba region is a super-volcano with the largest and deepest volcanic lake. Its landscape is formed from several volcanic eruptions and has a history of the Batak people as the largest ethnic group outside Java, with their own culture. Tourism products in the Lake Toba region are based on existing natural and cultural wealth supported by adequate infrastructure. These products will be developed considering market trends, as mentioned earlier, both domestic and international markets, and specific segments such as Asian millennials and rapidly growing domestic markets. Moreover, geographically, the Lake Toba region has potential for the Asia-Pacific tourist market, especially in India, China, Korea, Japan, and Australia. The European market, which was once significant, must also be revitalized.

When developing tourism products, the needs and preferences of diverse types of tourists should be considered, ranging from those who enjoy long trips to those who prefer to stay within their comfort zones. The currently available markets mainly consist of lower-end segments, but we also need to consider higher-end markets in the future. In addition, specific themes should be considered to direct product development towards specific specializations. One of the clusters that is equipped with MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference, and Exhibition) facilities and recreation is the East Cluster in the Lake Toba region, especially in Parapat in Girsang Sipangan Bolon and Sibisa in Ajibata. The development of Sibisa's tourist area will strengthen its position as an attraction for MICE and recreation. Tourism products in the Lake Toba region must meet the needs of various tourists, including millennials, families, older people, and tourists with MICE product needs.

The tourism product development program in Lake Toba aims to prepare products that are ready to be sold through field understanding, literature research, planning, and field trials. Each destination in the Lake Toba region requires various products for tourism to thrive; therefore, there is a need for uniqueness and differentiation from other destinations. These products are developed by considering attractions and other tourism resources and the availability of the infrastructure, facilities, and services needed to realize them. By doing so, tourists can consume the resulting products.

The Lake Toba region is an attractive place to visit because of its rich history and abundant natural resources (Tiimub et al., 2020). Developed tourism products must meet the psychographic needs of tourists, ranging from allocentric to psychometric travelers. In addition, the targeted market includes both lower- and higher-end segments and various demographic groups, such as millennials, families, and older people. MICE products have also been developed to meet the needs of tourists who require such products.

Several clusters in the Lake Toba region specialize in different products. For example, the East Cluster specializes in Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) and recreation and is already equipped with the necessary facilities. The West Cluster will utilize Lake Toba's position as a UNESCO Global Geopark, with Samosir Island as the focal point. The South Cluster focuses on urban heritage, while the North Cluster relies on its natural tourism products. Therefore, each cluster in the Lake Toba region has different product specializations to attract tourists.

Flagship products must be established as other tourism products to strengthen the position of Lake Toba as a tourist destination that can enhance competitiveness against competitors. Products that can be developed include ecotourism associated with voluntourism, geotourism, lake tourism, urban and rural tourism, MICE, student exchange programs, sports tourism, and cultural tourism.

These products are selected based on the diverse market characteristics and unique resources in the Lake Toba region, as well as the distinct characteristics of each cluster. Accommodations allocated in each region must also be adjusted to the cluster's theme or the products being developed. Additionally, various activities must be designed to be associated with products or can be carried out in each cluster. By doing so, Lake Toba's destination will become more attractive and be able to meet the needs of tourists with different preferences.

After products are ready for development and implementation, the next step is to communicate them to the target market. Ready products should provide functional and emotional benefits that can be marketed to the appropriate market. However, the product development process is complex and requires effective management to coordinate the building structures and execute the development process. Furthermore, all issues related to product development must be coordinated effectively until the product is ready for sale. In product development, in addition to economic aspects, environmental factors and social impacts should be considered to ensure that the developed products can benefit all parties involved.

Thus, new products can be developed by exploring the potential of other tourist attractions around Lake Toba from existing clusters, such as natural, cultural, culinary, and historical tourism. Additionally, collaborations can be made with relevant parties, such as tourism site managers and local communities, to develop unique and appealing products for tourists. The following steps can be taken to develop new products:

1. Developing new tourist destinations such as waterfalls, mountains, and other natural attractions around the Lake Toba region.
2. We are adding more diverse types of tourism, such as culinary, cultural, and historical tourism.
3. We are building shopping centers, entertainment venues, and sports arenas to enhance tourist attractions.

4.1.4. Market Penetration

(Bappenas, 2020; Danurdara & Rifanggi, 2022; Putranto & Astuti, 2022; Widianingsih et al., 2023) Market penetration refers to expanding the market share of a destination or product by targeting new customer segments or by increasing the consumption of existing customers. Market penetration in the Lake Toba region is discussed in the narrative context.

Lake Toba is still a popular destination for domestic tourists, especially those from Medan and its surrounding areas. However, in the future, it is expected that tourists from major cities in Indonesia will also visit Lake Toba because of improved interconnectivity and the increasing number of middle-class and upper-middle-class individuals who enjoy adventure. Most domestic tourists visiting Lake Toba are families and participants of meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibition (MICE) events.

However, the number of international tourists is limited, with Malaysia and Singapore being the dominant segments. However, market penetration was employed during the recovery period (2020-2025) to acquire a larger market share. Enhancing the quality of facilities and services and developing new products are crucial to attract more international tourists to stay longer and engage in diverse activities in the Lake Toba region.

Educational and volunteer market segments are attractive options for attracting tourists from the Netherlands and other European countries. The Lake Toba region will creatively package existing products to provide international tourists with satisfying experiences.

Therefore, in market penetration, intensive promotion can be conducted using various media channels, such as advertisements, social media, brochures, and the official website of the Lake Toba region. Promotional efforts can focus on specific countries with significant potential as tourist markets, such

as Asian and European countries. Some steps that can be taken for intensive promotion include the following.

1. Creating a strong and creative marketing campaign, such as producing promotional videos, organizing tourism festivals, and engaging influencers to promote the Lake Toba region on social media.
2. We collaborate with travel agencies and tour operators to ensure that the Lake Toba region is listed as a recommended tourist destination.
3. They offer discounts and special deals to attract tourists, such as free admission tickets or hotel room discounts.
4. They are improving the quality of services and the overall tourist experience in the Lake Toba region, ensuring that tourists feel satisfied and recommend the destination to others.

4.1.5. Market Development

(Bappenas, 2020; Giannoni, Hernández Guerra, & Pérez Rodríguez, 2017) The goal was to expand the market by targeting new customer segments and preparing for market expansion during the acceleration period (2025-2035). The Lake Toba region aims to attract European and American markets that have experienced a decline by enhancing their destinations and services. In addition, it targets markets in other developed countries with new market segments.

Furthermore, the Lake Toba region is highly suitable for millennials, as 60% of millennials worldwide come from Asia. Therefore, the region must have gained a larger market share during this period. To achieve this, Lake Toba must provide easily accessible online information, considering millennial travelers' independent and rapid decision-making tendencies.

The tourist market for the Lake Toba region is wider than that of domestic tourists but also includes international tourists. An increase in the number of tourists from Europe, the United States, and other developed countries is expected. The region also attracts Asian millennials, who require online information for independent travel. Improved connectivity is considered a key factor in expanding the market share. Improving domestic flight fares, which are perceived as a major obstacle for domestic tourists, is necessary. A special study is needed regarding long-haul flight fare policies for multiple destinations. The Lake Toba region targets new markets such as India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the new generation of Australia, and the new generation of Europe.

Therefore, to expand the market and target specific countries, the following steps can be taken:

1. Collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism and Indonesian embassies in specific countries to gain attention and promotion from authorities.
2. Organizing roadshows in specific countries to promote the Lake Toba region and increase traveler awareness of the destination.
3. More attractive and unique travel packages than other tourist destinations in Indonesia, such as cultural and culinary tourism.

4.2. The Marketing Mix for Lake Toba Tourism Area

A marketing mix needs to be developed with specific programs tailored to the tourist destination's context to make Lake Toba a unique and appealing destination. Using a structured marketing program, Lake Toba can showcase its distinctive features and advantages such as being the world's largest caldera, strong cultural heritage, and breathtaking natural scenery. With a well-planned marketing program, Lake Toba can position itself as a unique and distinct tourist destination, enabling it to compete effectively with other tourist destinations in Indonesia and neighboring countries. Lake Toba is recognized as having tremendous potential, and the right marketing mix strategy is crucial in maximizing this potential. Specific programs have been implemented in certain aspects of the marketing mix. For instance, efforts have been made to enhance the skills of tourism industry personnel, improve regulations and organizations, and elevate service quality. Additionally, there is a focus on physical evidence, which involves destination development programs such as infrastructure improvements, city architecture, and environmental initiatives. Branding and product packaging are important for strengthening Lake Toba's position as an attractive tourist destination. These branding

programs are closely related to the aspects of promotion and place (Bappenas, 2020; M. M. Hasan & Islam, 2020; Išoraitė, 2016; Manangiuli, Sinulingga, & Sibarani, 2019; O. M. J. Simanjuntak, 2019; V. C. Simanjuntak, 2016).

The marketing mix related to Lake Toba as a tourism destination is as follows.

4.2.1. Branding/Product

(Bappenas, 2020; Erfurt-Cooper & Cooper, 2010; Suparwoko, 2012) Having a recognizable and clear brand that does not confuse tourists (Chigora, Ndlovu, & Zvavahera, 2021; Tarigan, Lubis, Rini, & Sembiring, 2020). Lake Toba holds two statuses as a tourist destination: the National Strategic Tourism Area with the brand "Lake Toba - Caldera of Kings" and the Lake Toba Caldera Geopark with the brand "Lake Toba Caldera Geopark." In the planning process, these two statuses were merged into one destination, considering that both revolve around Toba Caldera, the world's largest caldera. Therefore, it is necessary to review and unify these two brands into a strong brand that accurately represents Lake Toba's destination. This aligns with UNESCO's recommendation to use a simpler and more communicative logo. By establishing a strong brand, Lake Toba will gain increasing recognition as a premier tourist destination in Indonesia (Bappenas, 2020).

Furthermore, the narrative highlights that many famous destinations in Lake Toba already possess strong storytelling elements. Storytelling plays a vital role in product marketing at tourist destinations. It combines factual information and stories to capture tourists and generate interest in their experiences. Storytelling makes tourist destinations more appealing, particularly for domestic tourists who can discover something new in an area. These destinations have become more attractive as storytelling package stories that have not been heard or shared. Storytelling enhances the appeal of tourist destinations and allows people to connect with local areas. When tourists interact with communities in these destinations, they can shape their own story experiences, which convey the themes of healing, survival, and resilience (Kennedy, Tobing, Toruan, Situmorang, & Manullang, 2022; Susianti et al., 2022).

The narrative further emphasizes the positive impact of a storytelling-based tourism promotion strategy. Storytelling serves as a crucial means for tourists to learn about the background of events and the destinations they are visiting. Through storytelling, actors in tourism and the creative economy can introduce products or works grounded in philosophical value, creating a positive emotional connection between the product and its buyers. Storytelling techniques can be employed effectively in tourist destinations and various promotional attractions, as oral storytelling is deeply rooted in cultural traditions that have developed over centuries. Everything, from legendary fictional stories to historical accounts, can be magnetic in storytelling (Kemenparekraf, 2021; Kennedy, Tobing, Lumbantoruan, & Manullang, 2023; Susianti et al., 2022).

4.2.2. Promotion

(Bappenas, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Melania & Ellyawati, 2018) Creative and innovative promotional campaigns are necessary to capture the attention of tourists and enhance their interest in visiting Lake Toba. Comprehensive and informative marketing materials are essential to promote Lake Toba. These materials can take various forms, including text, graphics, audio, video, or a combination of these. They should provide information on the profile of Lake Toba, tourist attractions, accommodations, amenities, accessibility, and other relevant tourist activities. These marketing materials will be disseminated through multiple media outlets such as print, social media, websites, and applications. The implementation of this program was planned in eight districts.

Smart tourism was introduced as a platform to increase the value of tourism by integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into tourism development. Although smart tourism applications in Indonesia are still relatively rare, several regions, including Lake Toba, are reviewing their readiness to adopt smart tourism practices. Smart tourism aims to enhance visitor mobility, facilitate access to information, and cater to other needs related to tourist activities. The goal

is to establish Lake Toba as a world-class tourism area with a competitive advantage over other destinations (Kennedy, 2022; Smith, 2015).

In addition, a program is planned to develop an application that will serve as a platform for promoting Lake Toba. In the era of Tourism 4.0, where information technology plays a crucial role, this application will enable users to access information, engage in two-way communication with operators, facilitate product transactions, provide guide services, etc.. Integrated applications with multiple services will simplify access to information and the availability of necessary services.

This application allows operators and managers to gather tourist data, including preferences for tourist attractions, activities, and overall service quality. These data will assist in the development of services and improve overall tourism destinations. Based on this data, government bodies, private entities, and the community can enhance their service quality, attracting more investors to participate in the tourism industry.

4.2.3. Place

(Bappenas, 2020; Chawla & Chodak, 2021) Prepared marketing materials can be presented online and offline in various forms. However, a place for promotion and sales is crucial to ensuring its effectiveness. Both online and offline media should be interconnected to strengthen promotional efforts. Each location has its own strengths and advantages. Online media has the power to deliver information quickly and easily to tourists. By contrast, offline media can provide tangible evidence and strong interaction for tourists, making them feel safe and comfortable during their visit.

Suppose that the application is used as an online media and promotion program. In this case, the place referred to in this narrative is the offline media platform, namely the Integrated Information Center (Pusat Informasi Terpadu, PIT) between the Tourism Information Center (TIC) and the Geopark Information Center (GIC). PIT is a crucial information center for domestic and international tourists regarding Lake Toba as a tourism destination. Information about tourist attractions, accommodations, accessibility, activities (tourism products), and so on can be clearly and comprehensively delivered through this offline media platform. In addition, tourists can obtain more in-depth information about Lake Toba Geopark through GIC. With PIT, tourists can obtain accurate and reliable information, allowing them to fully enjoy the beauty of Lake Toba.

One of the best alternative locations is the SM Raja XII or Silangit Airport area, which is planned to become the main gateway for tourists to the Lake Toba area via air transportation in the long run. Therefore, the necessary programs include designing and developing a management plan and temporary location rental for PIT; promoting and establishing collaboration schemes with the creative industry, SMEs, cooperatives, and other producers; and constructing and providing supporting facilities and infrastructure.

4.2.4. Organization/People

(Bappenas, 2020; M. Hasan & Azis, 2018) Although capacity development programs for human resources and organizations have been discussed in previous studies, several specific programs are planned in the marketing program to ensure successful planning and implementation (Commey, Koko, & Hattingh, 2020).

One is the development of a Joint Promotion Body/Agency for the eight districts around the Lake Toba area. This organization will facilitate and save costs for promotional programs carried out by the districts, including North Sumatra Province and the Lake Toba Authority Implementation Agency (BPODT). To run this promotion body/agency, the government and the private sector can contribute to the budget and human resources. Information integration can also be achieved through joint promotion management, so that the eight districts in the Lake Toba area can be effectively promoted as a unified geopark.

Human resource development programs and operational support will also be implemented to sustain the promotion programs. This program includes training workers with marketing and promotional competencies to support the effective operation of the promotion program. The human resources involved in this program can come from civil servants or professionals placed within the joint promotion body/agency, or related to specific programs. With this program, it is expected that the Lake Toba area will become more known and visited by tourists who want to enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of this tourist destination, both through online (application) and offline media (PIT).

Therefore, to improve the quality of facilities and services, renovations and improvements can be made to public facilities, such as roads, parking areas, toilets, and the construction of a comprehensive tourist information center that provides information about tourist attractions in the Lake Toba area. To enhance the quality of facilities and services in the Lake Toba area, the following steps can be taken.

1. Training and education are being conducted to improve the skills and knowledge of staff and workers in the tourism sector, including homestay management, restaurants, and tourist attractions.
2. We are improving infrastructure around the Lake Toba area, such as road repairs, building health facilities, and improving transportation systems.
3. They are expanding the reach of Internet networks in the Lake Toba area, making it easier for tourists to connect and obtain information about tourist destinations.
4. Enhancing environmental awareness and sustainability in tourism management, such as promoting the use of local products, minimizing the use of disposable plastics, and reducing the negative impact of tourism on the environment.

Regarding the WiFi issue experienced by foreign tourists in Lake Toba, the first step is to improve the availability of WiFi networks in the area. This can be achieved through collaboration with local internet service providers or by investing in better internet network infrastructure. Improving infrastructure aims to provide a more reliable and accessible Wi-Fi service for tourists. Government and tourism area managers are advised to consider providing free Internet access in areas frequently visited by tourists, such as hotels or restaurants around Lake Toba. This initiative can enhance the overall tourist experience and meet connectivity needs. Training and education programs can be conducted for hotel and restaurant owners and other relevant operators to ensure that tourism businesses are equipped to provide secure and reliable Internet networks. These programs can impart the necessary knowledge and skills to establish and maintain high-quality WiFi services for tourists. Finally, the narrative emphasizes the importance of regular monitoring and evaluation of WiFi services in Lake Toba. This ensures that the quality of WiFi networks meets the expectations of tourists and that any issues or shortcomings can be addressed promptly. These steps aim to enhance the WiFi experience of foreign tourists visiting Lake Toba and improve their overall satisfaction in the area.

4.3. Strategic Recommendations for Lake Toba Tourism Area

Based on the findings of this research, there are some recommendations for the Government and Stakeholders involved in the marketing strategy for the Lake Toba tourism area.

1. Continue providing strong support for the development of Lake Toba as a tourist destination, as it positively impacts the area's progress and improvement.
2. Focus on improving connectivity, including reviewing domestic flight tariffs, attracting more tourists, and expanding the domestic market.
3. Collaborate with relevant parties, such as tourism site managers and local communities, to develop unique and appealing tourism products for Lake Toba.
4. Coordinate efforts to improve infrastructure, facilities, and services to enhance the tourist experience.
5. Consider environmental factors and social impacts during product development to ensure sustainability and benefit all the parties involved.
6. The recommendations in Table below can be made for the marketing strategy in the Lake Toba tourism area.

Table 1. Tourism Marketing Strategy Recommendations for the Lake Toba Tourism Area

<i>Positioning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize Lake Toba's unique features, such as being the world's largest caldera formed by a massive eruption, its rich cultural heritage, and breathtaking landscapes. - Market Lake Toba is valuable in achieving the government's goals of strengthening the national and regional economy through tourism. - Develop marketing strategies highlighting Lake Toba's proximity to Singapore and its accessibility to attract tourists.
<i>Market and Promotion</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on expanding the international tourist market beyond Malaysia and Singapore, particularly targeting the educational and volunteer market segments from the Netherlands and other European countries. - Prepare for the future by developing the European and American markets and attracting tourists from other developed countries such as India, China, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, and Europe. - Enhance the quality of services and overall tourist experience in Lake Toba to ensure tourists feel satisfied and recommend the destination to others. - Develop a strong and creative marketing campaign to promote Lake Toba, including producing promotional videos, organizing tourism festivals, and engaging influencers on social media. - Utilize various media channels such as advertisements, social media, brochures, and official websites to promote Lake Toba intensively. - Collaborate with travel agencies and tour operators to ensure Lake Toba is listed as a recommended tourist destination. - Offer attractive deals and discounts to attract tourists, such as free admission tickets or hotel room discounts. - Improve connectivity and review domestic flight tariffs to enhance the domestic tourist market and overcome obstacles.
<i>Product Development</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop innovative and attractive tourism products that leverage Lake Toba's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and the hospitality of its people. - Consider the needs and preferences of diverse types of tourists, ranging from millennials to families and older people. - Develop various tourism products, including ecotourism, geo-tourism, lake tourism, urban and rural tourism, MICE, student exchange programs, sports tourism, and cultural tourism. - Specialize different clusters in the Lake Toba region for specific tourism products, such as MICE facilities in the East Cluster, UNESCO Global Geopark in the West Cluster, urban heritage in the South Cluster, and natural tourism in the North Cluster. - Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to develop new tourist attractions, such as waterfalls, mountains, and other natural sites, as well as culinary, cultural, and historical tourism. - Adjust accommodations and activities in each region to align with the theme or products being developed.
<i>Market Penetration</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Target new customer segments by enhancing the quality of facilities and services and developing new products to attract more international tourists to the Lake Toba region. - Utilize intensive promotion efforts in specific countries with significant potential as tourist markets, such as Asian and European countries. - Focus on the educational and volunteer market segments from the Netherlands and other

<p>European countries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct intensive promotion through various media channels to raise awareness of Lake Toba as a tourist destination. - Collaborate with travel agencies and tour operators to ensure Lake Toba gains attention and promotion in targeted countries. - Offer discounts and special deals to attract tourists and ensure high-quality services and overall tourist satisfaction.
<i>Market Development</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collaborate with the Ministry of Tourism and Indonesian embassies in specific countries to gain attention and promotion from authorities. - Focus on attracting Asian millennials by providing easily accessible online information and catering to their independent travel tendencies. - Prepare for market expansion by targeting new customer segments, particularly the European and American markets. - Organize roadshows and create attractive travel packages to increase traveler awareness of Lake Toba. - Improve connectivity and review flight fares to overcome obstacles for domestic tourists and attract tourists from new markets.

Source: Analysis from various documents

These recommendations aim to strengthen the marketing strategy for Lake Toba and help position it as a highly desirable tourist destination, attract a wider range of domestic and international tourists, develop unique and appealing tourism products, enhance market penetration and development efforts, and contribute to the growth of national and regional economies.

5. Conclusion

The Lake Toba area has great potential as a super-priority tourist destination strategically located near Singapore, with its main attractions being natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and a friendly local community. Despite the competition offering different products, Lake Toba remains a highly prioritized tourist destination, supporting the government's policy of strengthening the national and regional economic structure.

The study concludes that the local government can implement several policy strategies to meet the expectations and satisfaction of tourists in the Lake Toba tourist area. These strategies include improving the quality of tourism services, developing tourism infrastructure, optimizing tourism promotion, developing various tour packages, enhancing tourist safety and comfort, improving service and product quality in the tourism sector, and developing ecotourism and sustainable tourism. In this study, we propose to implement these strategies holistically to enhance the attractiveness of the Lake Toba tourist area and strengthen its position as a leading tourist destination in Indonesia.

The Lake Toba area must continue to develop innovative and appealing tourism products to increase the number of tourist visits. Improvements in service quality, infrastructure development, and appropriate and effective promotions are crucial. Tourism product development programs should also be carried out to prepare unique and distinctive products from other tourist destinations based on attractions and other tourism resources, while considering the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and services required to sell these products to tourists.

The needs and preferences of various types of tourists should be considered when developing tourism products. The Lake Toba area has potential markets in the Asia-Pacific region, especially India, China, Korea, Japan, and Australia, as well as in Europe, which needs to be further enhanced. By continuously developing and improving attractive tourism products, the Lake Toba area will become a

sought-after tourist destination and will contribute to strengthening the national and regional economic structure.

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