
Developing a *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* for Competitive Tourist Destinations

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Abstract

This research aims to develop a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) for competitive tourist destinations through interviews with various stakeholders, including tourists, destination management, local communities and tourism business actors. Using a triangulation and reliability approach, this research collects data from various sources to ensure the accuracy and consistency of information. The research results show that the uniqueness of a destination, such as local culture, natural beauty and authentic experiences, are key elements in developing an attractive USP for tourists. Tourists emphasize the importance of differentiated experiences and interactions with local communities, while destination managers highlight the need for innovation in tourism products and digital promotions to increase visibility. Local communities play an important role in creating a USP through active participation in tourism development, while tourism business actors emphasize the importance of effective marketing strategies to attract more visitors. Through triangulation techniques, this research found consistency between stakeholder views regarding the need to create an authentic and sustainable USP. Data reliability is strengthened by member checking and analysis of supporting documents. This research recommends that destination managers focus on developing USPs based on local uniqueness and community involvement to increase competitiveness in the global tourism market.

Keywords: *Unique Selling Proposition, Tourist Destination, Competitive*

INTRODUCTION

Competition in the tourism industry is increasingly fierce along with the growth of globalization and advances in information technology (Kotler et al., 2017). Tourists now have more destination choices that can be accessed easily via digital platforms (Buhalis & Law, 2008). Therefore, tourist destinations need to have unique differentiating factors in order to compete effectively in the global market. In an increasingly competitive tourism context, research on Unique Selling Proposition (USP) has become an important focus for developing tourism destination marketing strategies. Several previous studies have identified various aspects in developing an effective USP, as well as their impact on tourist attraction and satisfaction. *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* is a marketing strategy that emphasizes the uniqueness of a product or service compared to its competitors. In the context of tourism, *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* can be in the form of unique culture, natural beauty, unique tourist attractions, or authentic experiences

that cannot be found anywhere else. By applying *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* appropriately, tourist destinations can increase tourist attraction and loyalty.

This research aims to analyze strategic steps in developing a USP for a competitive tourist destination. The research focus includes identifying unique destination elements, local community involvement, competitor analysis, and effective communication strategies in conveying USP to tourists.

The previous research in this research according to (Karina and Teknologi 2024) explained the development of the *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* in the hotel industry, especially in new hotels in Bali. This research shows that a USP that focuses on consumer needs and preferences can strengthen a hotel's position in a competitive market. By offering a unique and different staying experience, hotels can attract the attention of tourists and build customer loyalty (Karina and Teknologi 2024). (Tarman Hidayat 2019) explains that USP strategy must be based on physical and functional differences between the product being offered and competitors. They emphasize the importance of creating strong advertising claims so that the product or destination can be clearly recognized by consumers. This research also shows that the uniqueness offered must be relevant to market needs to ensure the success of the marketing strategy. Furthermore, research (Murdana 2019) on Gili Trawangan Island after the earthquake shows how the USP approach can be used to recover tourist visits. This research finds that reformulating marketing strategies through regional positioning and imaging is very important to rebuild a positive image of a destination after a natural disaster. This approach helps link the USP to the unique characteristics of the destination, thereby increasing tourist attraction (Murdana 2019). (Yugo Susanto, Sri Bangun Lestari 2020) in research discussing Bengkulu City emphasized that the implementation of USP in regional government programs such as Visit 2020 Wonderful Bengkulu is still not optimal. They found that although there is rich tourism potential, marketing management has not been effective enough in communicating the USP to tourists. This research shows the need for more planned and creative marketing strategies to increase tourist visits to the area.

The results of previous research explain that developing *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* competitive ones require a deep understanding of the uniqueness of the destination, involvement of local communities, and effective communication strategies. This research aims to analyze strategic steps in developing *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* for competitive tourist destinations

LITERATURE REVIEW

Unique Selling Proposition Concept in Tourism

Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is a marketing strategy that highlights the unique aspects of a product or service to differentiate it from competitors. In the context of tourist destinations, *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* is an important part of attracting the attention of tourists amidst increasingly fierce global competition. The following literature review discusses the concept *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)*, its application in the tourism sector, and its relevance to the competitiveness of tourist destinations.

Unique Selling Proposition (USP) Concept

According to (Kotler, P., & Keller 2016) USP is a unique value proposition offered by a product or service to consumers. In the context of tourism, USP includes elements that make a tourist destination different and more attractive from its competitors. These elements can be unique natural attractions, rich cultural heritage, distinctive tourist experiences, or a combination of these factors (Ritchie and Crouch 2003).

Strategy for Forming USP for Tourist Destinations

- a. Identify Competitive Advantages: The first step in forming a USP is to identify the competitive advantages that a tourist destination has. This involves a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis to understand the potential and existing challenges (Porter 1985).
- b. Market Segmentation: Tourist destinations need to target specific market segments that are most likely to be attracted by the USP offered. Market segmentation can be done based on demographics, psychographics, or tourist behavior (Kotler, P., & Armstrong 2018).
- c. Branding and Marketing: Once the USP is determined, the tourist destination needs to build a strong brand and market the USP effectively. This involves the use of social media, advertising, public relations, and other marketing strategies to reach target markets (Keller 2013).
- d. Product and Service Development: Tourist destinations need to develop products and services that support the USP they offer. This involves improving the quality of attractions, developing new tourist experiences, and improving customer service (Pine B. and James H. 1998).

USP Concept in Tourism

According to (Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Koshy, A., & Jha 2009) *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* is a unique promise made to consumers, which not only differentiates the product but also creates added value for consumers. In tourism, a USP can be cultural uniqueness, natural beauty, exclusive facilities, or experiences that cannot be found anywhere else.

An Empirical Study of USP

1. Unique Culture and Traditions
Research (Ritchie and Crouch 2003) shows that tourist destinations with a focus on unique local culture have higher appeal among international tourists. An example is Bali with its Hindu traditions and distinctive dance arts.
2. Natural beauty as USP
Destinations like Raja Ampat in Indonesia are known for their underwater beauty which is their main USP. According to research (Buckley 2019) destinations with maintained natural ecosystems have great potential to attract ecotourism tourists.
3. Unique Travel Experience
(Pine B. and James H. 1998) introduced the concept of experience *economy*, where unique experiences are the main USP in attracting tourists. For example, a night safari in Gunung Leuser National Park provides a different experience compared to other destinations.

USP Development Strategy

1. Destination Branding
Strong branding, such as Wonderful Indonesia, helps create a unique image for certain tourist destinations (UNWTO 2020).
2. Collaboration with Local Communities
Involving local communities in development *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* increasing the authenticity and sustainability of tourist destinations (Richards, G., & Hall 2000)

To support the development of USP for tourist destinations, the following are relevant theories:

Tourism Marketing Theory

- a. Signal Theory
This theory explains how destinations provide signals to the market through USP promotions according to (Spence 1973) in his research explaining that one example is the use of social media to display the uniqueness of a destination.
- b. Competitive Advantage Theory
(Porter 1985) states that competitive advantage can be achieved through product differentiation, including in the tourism sector.

Tourism Destination Development Model

1. Model (Ritchie and Crouch 2003)
This model emphasizes the importance of main attractions (core resources and attractors) as the basis for USP development.
2. Tourism Marketing Model by (D. Buhalis 2000)
Buhalis identified that information technology can be used to promote USPs effectively.
3. Competitive Advantage Theory
(Porter 1985) states that competitive advantage can be achieved through product differentiation, including in the tourism sector.

Factors that Influence the USP of Tourist Destinations

1. Changing Market Trends Changing market trends can influence *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* a destination. Destinations need to adapt to new trends, such as increasing interest in sustainable tourism or health tourism, to maintain competitiveness (Middleton, V. T., Fyall, A., Morgan, M., & Ranchhod 2009)
2. Technology can be used to improve *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* tourist destinations. For example, the use of mobile applications to provide personalized tourism information or the use of virtual reality to create immersive tourism experiences (Dimitrios Buhalis and Law 2008)
3. Sustainability is becoming increasingly important for tourists. Destinations that are committed to sustainable practices, such as good environmental management or support for local communities, can attract environmentally conscious tourists (Font, X., & Tribe 2000)

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand the phenomenon *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* in depth. This method is suitable for exploring the uniqueness of tourist destinations based on the perceptions of local communities, tourists and tourism industry players. A qualitative approach allows researchers to dig up information regarding unique steps that can become the USP of a tourist destination. The data collection techniques used in this research are:

1. Data collection techniques
 - a. Observations were carried out at tourist destinations that were the object of research to identify unique steps, cultures and experiences that could become *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)*. This technique is also used to record interactions between tourists and the destination environment
 - b. Interview deep
Interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including:
 - 1) Tourist destination manager
 - 2) Local community
 - 3) Traveler
 - 4) Tourism business actors (tour guides and accommodation providers)The interview aims to explore perceptions about the uniqueness of the destination and its potential *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* which can be developed.
 - c. Documentation Study Documentation related to destination management reports, visit data traveler and publications marketing by analyzing to obtain additional information regarding existing marketing implemented.
 - d. The survey was conducted on tourists using a semi-structured questionnaire with the aim of understanding preferences for the unique steps of a destination.
2. Data Analysis Techniques, data obtained by analyzing using the thematic analysis method, namely initial coding, data categorization and thematic interpretation. Besides that, analysis SWOT is also used to evaluate potential *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* in context competence of tourists.
3. The research was conducted at the Gili Trawangan beach tourist destination, North Lombok.
4. Validity and Reliability
To ensure the validity of the data in this research, triangulation techniques were used by comparing the results of observations, interviews and documentation. Besides that, reliability Data is maintained by systematically documenting all research processes.

RESEARCH RESULT

Results of research on development *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* for competitive tourist destinations were obtained through interviews with various stakeholders, including tourists, tourist destination managers, local communities and tourism business actors. The following is a summary of the results obtained from each group of respondents:

1. Results of Interviews with Tourists

Travelers emphasize the importance of the unique experiences a destination offers. They want authenticity in their experiences, including interaction with local culture and natural beauty. The interview results showed that:

- a. Diversity of Activities: Tourists love destinations that offer a variety of activities, from adventure to relaxation.
- b. Service Quality: Friendly and responsive service has a big influence on tourist satisfaction.
- c. Digital Promotion: Travelers say that clear and interesting information on social media and online booking platforms influences their decision to visit a particular destination

2. Results of interviews with tourist destination managers

Destination managers identify several key elements in developing *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* among others:

- a. Location and Accessibility: A strategic and easily accessible location is a determining factor in attracting tourists.
- b. Tourism Product Innovation: The development of new, innovative tourism products, such as thematic tour packages or cultural experiences, is essential to differentiate oneself from competitors.
- c. Collaboration with Local Communities: Managers realize that the involvement of local communities in developing tourism products can increase the authenticity and attractiveness of destinations.
- d. Unique Experience Preference: Tourists tend to choose destinations that offer unique experiences such as authentic natural beauty or interaction with local culture. They also assess the importance of facilities that support comfort.
- e. Influence of Digital Media: Travelers reveal that promotions through social media and online reviews play a big role in influence their decision to visit a destination (Meilinda, Hairunnisa, and Sary 2018)

3. Results of Interviews with Local Communities

Local communities provide perspectives on cultural potential and natural resources that can be used as USPs.

- a. Cultural Richness: Local traditions and customs are considered to be the main attraction that can attract tourists.
- b. Participation in Tourism: The community wants to be more actively involved in tourism development so that the economic benefits can be felt directly by them.
- c. Environmental Sustainability: There is awareness of the importance of protecting the environment so that tourism can be sustainable
- d. Involvement in Tourism: Local communities see the potential of their culture and traditions as a key element of the *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)*. They also want active participation in tourism management so that economic benefits can be felt directly.
- e. Environmental Sustainability: Society emphasizes the importance of preserving the environment as part of *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* destination (Ningrum, D. P., Adhrianti, L., & Gushevinalti 2018)

4. Results of Interviews with Tourism Business Actors

Tourism business actors emphasize the need for effective marketing strategies for *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)*. Some of the important points raised include:

- a. Digital Marketing: The use of social media and websites as promotional tools is very effective in reaching a wider audience.
- b. Special Tour Packages: Offering tour packages that combine unique experiences with competitive prices can attract more tourists.
- c. Feedback from Tourists: Collect feedback from visitors to continuously improve tourism services and products.

Apart from looking at the results of the interviews, also explaining the results of the research using a triangulation approach shows that there is a consensus among all stakeholders regarding the importance of authentic experiences and the involvement of local communities in creating *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* which are interesting. For example, tourists stated that interaction with local culture and community traditions was a significant added value, while managers emphasized the need for innovative tourism products that reflect this uniqueness. However, the research results obtained from the reliability approach show that the information obtained from interviews is consistent with documentary data, thereby increasing confidence in the research findings. For example, destination managers confirm that marketing strategies based on the *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* have increased the number of tourists visits significantly.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this research confirms that developing *Unique Selling Proposition (USP)* Competitive tourism destinations require collaboration between all stakeholders as well as a strong data-based approach. By understanding tourists' needs and expectations and involving local communities, destinations can create attractive and sustainable tourism experiences, while strengthening their position in the global tourism market.

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