

Buying Travel Behaviour Of Nihiwatu Sumba Resort As Communication Strategy

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Buying Travel Behaviour Of Nihiwatu Sumba Resort As Communication Strategy

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Abstract

The tourism industry is one that needs attention during the pandemic, because there has been a significant decline. Therefore knowing the consumer behaviour of potential consumers will help tourism producers in determining communication programs to be effective in conveying messages. Nihiwatu is a resort in Hoba Wawi, East Nusa Tenggara which has been named by the international magazine Travel + Leisure as the world's best hotel in 2016. The purpose of this study is to be able to see the travel-buying behaviour of Nihiwatu Hotel visitors. The method in this research is descriptive quantitative and uses an online survey. The results of this study indicate that family orientation when visiting becomes dominant, after that the need for rest from daily routines and motivation for traveling becomes the reason for coming. Apart from that, the media for communicating as a reference for consumers are websites and uploads from public figures. Most purchases use the Nihiwatu website itself and E-commerce to get discounts. What is expected before coming is in accordance with the expectations of visitors. Consumers are satisfied with the service they get at Nihiwatu, but it is still not a point that they will make repeat purchases.

Keyword: Travel Buying Behaviour, Tourism Communication, Consumer Behaviour

Introduction

One of the foreign exchange earners in Indonesia is the tourism sector. With the beauty of nature and the many tourist destinations in Indonesia, Indonesia is one of the go-to countries for traveling.



Source: (Berita Resmi Statistik, 2021)

The decline in the Indonesian tourism industry was a result of restrictions during the COVID 19 pandemic, which resulted in a decrease in the number of tourists visiting

Indonesia. Restrictions on tourists entering Indonesia or vice versa, are part of preventing the spread of the virus as well as part of reducing domestic and foreign tourists to Indonesia. The decline in state revenue in the tourism sector reached 20.7 billion. The lockdown conditions during the pandemic caused the tourism industry to face tough challenges, including the hospitality business. Foreign tourist arrivals fell by 64%. The hotel occupancy rate in Indonesia has decreased significantly from 56.73% to 28.07% during the period July 2019-July 2020 or decreased by 28.66 points (Kemenparekraf, 2021)

The development of star hotel occupancy rates in Indonesia has also experienced a sharp decline. So that quite a lot of hotels are not operating due to the lack of activity and visits from both foreign and domestic tourists.



Source: (Kemenparekraf, 2021)

With the decline in the COVID pandemic outbreak, the tourism industry is starting to look back at things that can be done to improve the Indonesian tourism industry again. The results of McKinsey's research say that the Indonesian people believe that financial conditions will improve again in an average of 2 months. As many as 32% of respondents answered that finances would improve again in the next 6 months. (Kemenparekraf, 2021) This shows that there will be changes in consumer behavior patterns that need to be considered by tourism industry players. By recognizing how consumer behavior changes towards vacationing in the new normal era, it will help business people determine strategies in communicating with potential customers. For example by making the appropriate communication strategy with potential customers. Effective communication will help producers receive the response that is expected.

Nihiwatu Sumba Resort is a resort located in Hobawawi Village, Wanukaka, Sumba Carat, East Nusa Tenggara which was founded in 2015 and has international standards. Even though it is located in the countryside, this hotel offers super luxurious facilities. The owner of this resort is Chris Burch and 90% of his employees are local residents. (Nathaniel, 2022). One of the hotel's social responsibility programs is to develop and support the education of the local community. (Nihiwatu Sumba Resort: World's Best Private Hotel, 2021). Nihiwatu Sumba was named the 2016 best hotel by Travel+Leisure magazine with a score of 98.35. (Clemence, 2016) Not just one year, in 2017 Nihiwatu Hotel is back in the world's 100 best hotels according to Travel + Leisure magazine. (Nathaniel, 2022).

Nihiwatu Resort received several awards in 2019 as the 8th Best Resort/Hotels in Asia according to Travel + Leisure Awards magazine. Also in the same year the Editors' Choice

Award Andrew Harper. Also named the 2nd World's Most Instagrammable Hotels. After that it became Travelers Choice at the 2020 Trip Advisor Awards. (Penghargaan, n.d.) But with the achievements that Nihiwatu has achieved, Nihi still feels the impact of the COVID pandemic. Merry Maspatella as Nihi Sumba's HR Director said that hotel conditions have not returned to normal conditions in carrying out their operations and will still experience losses in 2022. (Seo, 2022).

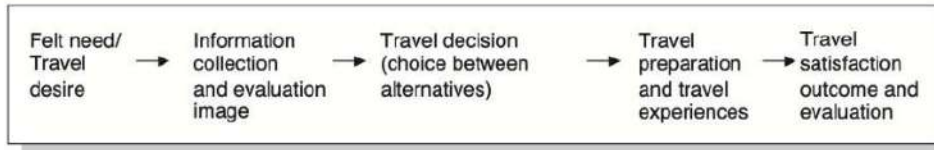
The number of guests staying at star hotels in April 2022 in NTT was 28,188 people with 26,793 domestic guests and 1,395 foreign guests. The average length of stay at star-rated hotels in April 2022 was 1.55 days. The average length of stay for domestic guests is 1.54 days and the average length of stay for foreign guests is 1.89 days. (Dhema, 2022) This is a challenge for Nihiwatu to maintain the competitiveness and selling power of the company. With changes in consumer conditions, Nihiwatu Resort needs to review whether there have been changes in consumption patterns and market shifts after the pandemic.

Tourism communication is a study that brings together two disciplines, namely the disciplines in communication studies and tourism studies. Communication studies contribute persuasive communication theory, mass communication, interpersonal communication and group communication. Tourism studies themselves contribute to studies of tourism marketing, tourism destinations, accessibility to destinations and human resources and tourism institutions. (Bungin, 2015). According to Joko R Widokarti, the function of tourism communication relates to 7 important things. The first function is information, this function is to collect and store data, facts and messages, and opinions from tourists and potential tourists. This first function is useful for business people in determining strategies from conditions and changes in tastes from prospective tourists and tourists. The second function is the socialization function, in order to interact with tourists. The hope is that there can be effective communication between business people and tourists. The third function is the function of motivation. This function is expected to motivate tourists to use various kinds of products from business people as desired. The fourth function is the function of promoting culture by disseminating tourism products that have high historical and technological value. You can use mass media or new media communication. The entertainment function is the fifth function, where pleasant communication will make tourists entertained and happy. The function of integration is useful for bridging the differences between tourists and potential tourists and business people. The last function is the Innovation function, marketing communications encourage the birth of innovation. The existence of tourists' needs and desires for tourism products has resulted in a high-performance and competitive tourism industry in accordance with the needs and developments of the era. (Widokarti & Priansa, 2019).

Therefore, business people should start seeing behavior changes from tourists, especially after the pandemic. This is important because there are differences in behavior and even in the way of making decisions, will determine the message conveyed must be different. This consumer behavior is the most researched field in marketing and tourism by using the term "travel behavior" or "tourist behavior" (Cohen, Prayag, & Moital, 2014). Consumer behaviour involves certain decisions, activities, ideas or experiences that satisfy consumer needs and wants (Solomon, 1996). The aim of the consumer behavior model is to try to provide a simplified version of the relationship between the various factors that influence consumer behavior. Various models have been developed to describe consumer behavior with

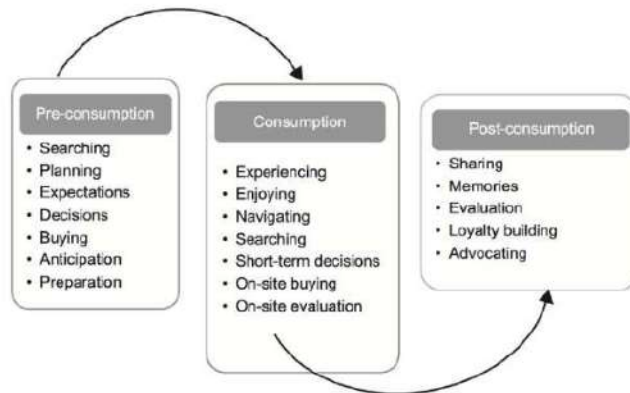
the intention of trying to control these behavioral patterns (Horner & Swarbrooke, Consumer Behavior in Tourism, Second Edition, 2007).

Mathieson and Wall suggested a linear five-stage model of travel buying behaviour. (Mathieson & Wall, 1982) In the first phase, a person recognizes their need or desire to go on a trip or vacation. Entering the second phase, they gather all the necessary information and then evaluate every available option. In the third phase, they will decide from among the alternatives. In the fourth phase, they prepare to travel. In the last phase, they will give a score for their satisfaction and it will be the evaluation stage.



Source: adapted from Mathieson and Wall (1982)

Figure 1. Travel-Buying Behaviour



Source: (Andrades & Dimanche, 2015)

Figure 2. The consumption of tourism product by tourists.

Method:

The research uses 5 indicators from Mathieson and Wall's travel buying behavior. It consists of Felt need/ travel desire, Information collection and image evaluation, travel decision (choice between alternatives), travel preparation and travel experiences, and also travel satisfaction outcome and evaluation. This research is a descriptive study with a quantitative approach, using the online survey method. Answer choices using multiple choices. The descriptive function is to observe and explain the nature of the population or events of interest, is quantitative in nature, is the first way to create potential hypotheses and the first step in research is to provide a broader picture. (Turk & Uysal, 2017, p. 18). Descriptive research is very common in the field of recreation and tourism, this is due to several reasons, the field of recreation and tourism can be categorized as relatively new, the very dynamic nature of changing phenomena to study and the separation between research and action is often. (Veal, 2018).

Using SPSS tools to perform frequency and average calculations. Questionnaire surveys are used when a certain range of information is required from an individual or an organization. Typically, questionnaire-based surveys are used to collect answers to questions where possible answers are limited, such as a person's gender or education level. However, some questions can be open-ended, with an unspecified range of answers – for example, open-ended questions about visitor complaints or suggestions about the management of recreational or tourism facilities. (Veal, 2018). Data from a sample of the population studied will be collected using a questionnaire. (S & Tukarin, 2012). The sample in this research is Indonesian people who have stayed or travelled at least once to Nihiwatu Resort, totalling 30 respondents.

Results and Discussion

Segmentation Nihiwatu

Age

The distribution of data for the age of the respondents was dominated by the age range between 26-35 years, which was 60%. Followed by late adolescents or in the range of 17-25 years by 25% then the rest are people in the age range of 56-65 years by 15% of all respondents.

Gender

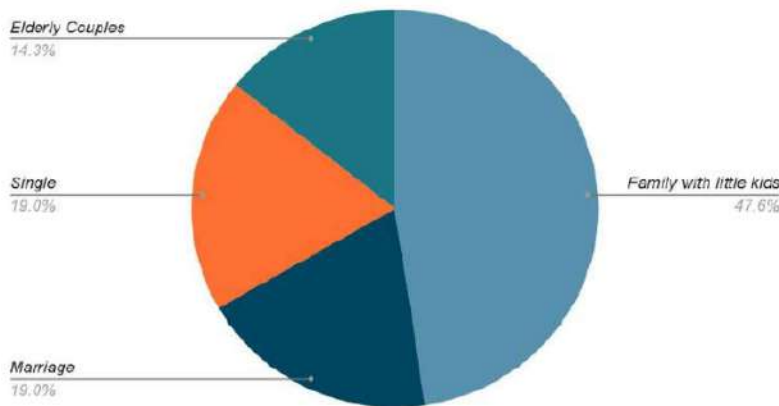
For the gender of respondents who have experience staying at Nihiwatu, the data shows that it is dominated by male gender by 65% and female by 35%.

Family life Cycle

47.6% of respondents have a married status with small children, 19% have just married. The rest are 19% single and 14.3% parents.

In this study also found the reason for the need for a large enough fee to stay. Therefore, visitors who come to Nihiwatu are people who are adults or have their own income. Some of them deliberately come for a once in a lifetime activity, such as a honeymoon or big family event.

Family life cycle



Source: Research results

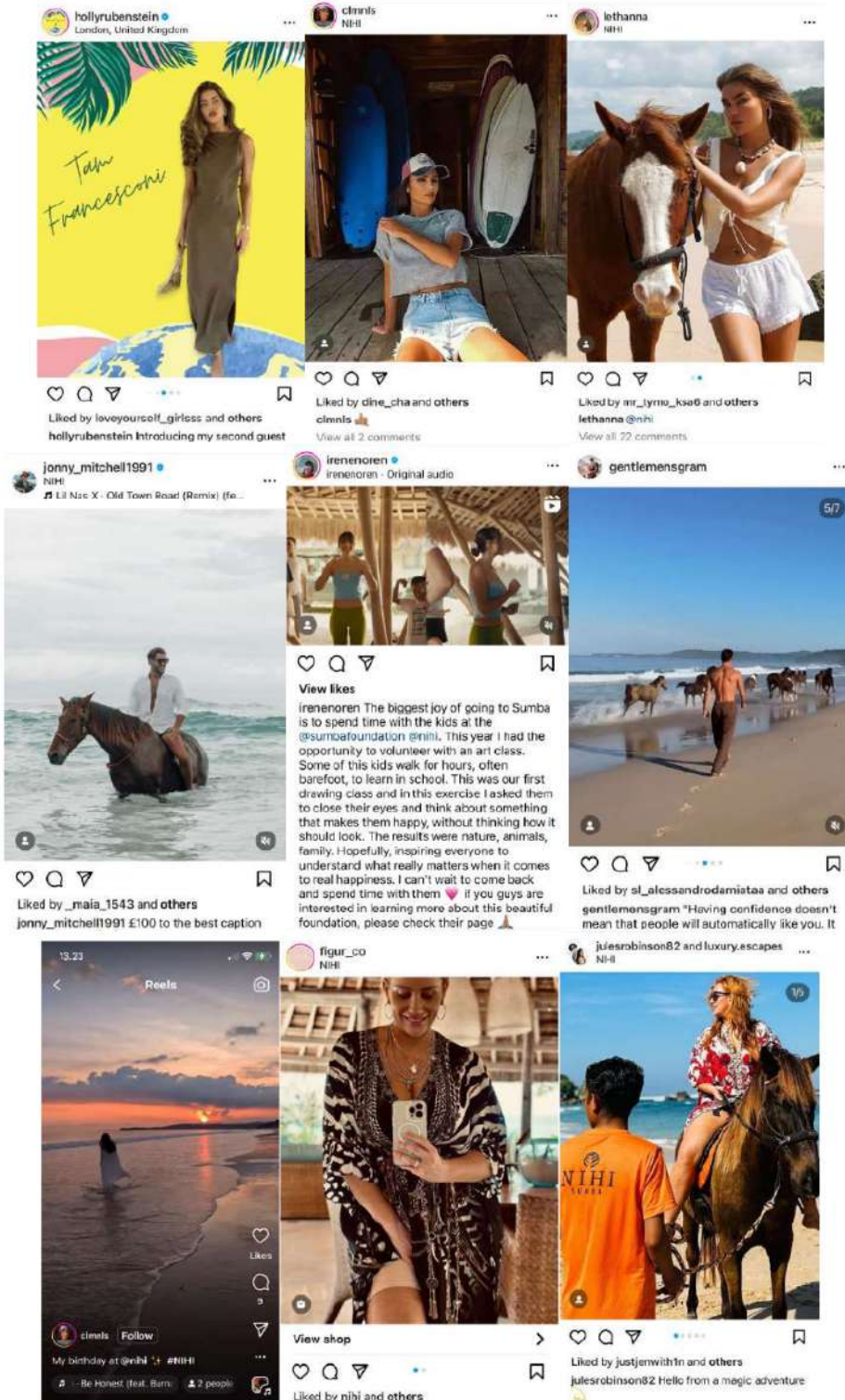
Travel Buying Behaviour
Felt need/ Travel Desire

The results of the study show that 90% of a person's need, desire to take a vacation and visit the Nihiwatu Hotel is due to marketing on social media, google ads, and the Nihiwatu website. As well as the suitability of the message with the conditions or orientation of the customer. In addition to foreign visitors, there are local visitors as well. Most of them are well-known people such as artists, celebrities. Celebrities who visit use Instagram social media and then use NIHI's "tag" and "hashtag" tools, so that it is very possible for other Instagram users to see them. This is very large in the "explore" of other Instagram users.

With various content from celebrities, it will result in a desire for followers to start following and want to appear like what they see on Instagram or social media. **The desire to be seen as cool was evident in the study of Instagram travel selfies.** Tourists often take pictures in front of the signs or attractions or even at the wildlife as a way to describe their experience on vacation. **It is also crucial to highlight the need to understand these selfies within the larger contexts of social media photo sharing (e.g. food photo conventions).** (Gretzel, 2017) Understanding which parts can be highlighted in a tourism industry will make it easier to arouse consumer desire.

One study on young people in Surabaya proved that Instagram's role was most significant at the dreaming stage and had the least role at the ordering stage. Young people are inspired after seeing travel-related posts (uploads) on Instagram due to the travel-related accounts they follow. The results of this study have provided preliminary evidence that the travel process starts with using Instagram. (Prasetya, Jaya, & Thio, 2021)







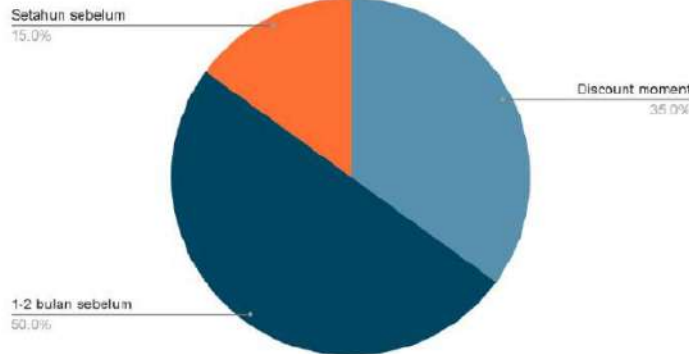
Source: Instagram Nihi

Family Orientation

85% of respondents feel they need a vacation with their family after seeing messages on the Nihiwatu Hotel marketing media, as well as the suitability of their free time. Starting from couples who have just married, where they need time together or honeymoon. Furthermore, as the largest percentage, namely 50% of respondents, are families with young children, who need and want time together as a family and to be close to their children like friends. The priority for choosing the time for vacation will be adjusted to the time of the whole family. Quality Time is a priority in selecting a location.

One of the main factor that influence the buying behaviour is the involvement of family. Buying behaviour gets affected through the opinions of family members during or before travel. The factor related to ego affects the choosing of travel destinations. (Factors influencing Consumer Buying Behavior during Travel, 2016) Nihi facilitates activities with the family, not only activities for adults but also for children. This can be found on the website which is one of the things Nihiwatu highlights. According to Hiam and Schewe (1994) (Widokarti & Priansa, 2019) There are eight main steps in the procedure for carrying out the correct positioning. One of them is collecting data on consumer needs. To carry out positioning correctly, marketers need to record all the needs and desires that all products may fulfill. By knowing the orientation and needs of a person in making a decision to take a vacation, it can help communicators prepare messages in advertising. In hopes of creating an effective message. As can be seen from the products offered by Nihi, do not forget to include family activities, starting from children's activities and activities that can be done for the whole family.

Kapan melakukan Pembelian



Source: Research results



Source: Website Nihi

The need to take a short break from daily activities

100% of the respondents took a holiday trip after feeling the need to take a vacation from their daily activities. Things such as work, college and the need for time with family are their reasons for taking a vacation and starting to look for information on where to go on vacation. This is in accordance with the Hedonic tourism theory. *Hedonistic tourism* involves the tourist in seeking pleasurable activities. The tourism experience is based on physical pleasure and social life. The hedonistic tourist is often younger and travels in a group with other like-minded people. (Horner & Swarbooke, *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism*, 2007). The hedonistic tourist day often looks very different from the family vacation we just considered. They tend to get up late and then spend their time around the pool or at the beach. They would usually go out partying and not sleep until the following morning. (Horner & Swarbrooke, *Consumer Behaviour in Tourism*, Second Edition, 2007, p. 130) Pleasure and detachment experience positively affect hedonic tourism happiness, while personal meaning and self-reflection experiences positively affect eudaimonic tourism happiness. (Park & Ahn, 2022)

Desire Because It Likes Vacation Activities

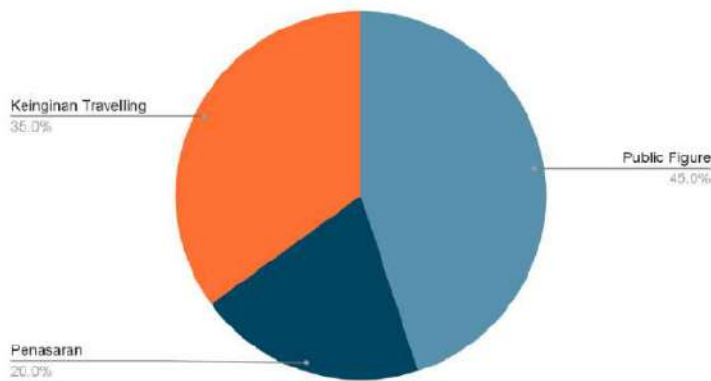
Marketing messages from Nihiwatu Hotel through social media and website intrigued some 20% of respondents. This is a communication message that makes them want to come and makes potential customers who really like vacation trips want to come to visit the Nihiwatu hotel for a holiday.



Source: Instagram Nih

Among all the things that are available at Nihiwatu, ecotourism is the number one attraction for most of the visitors who come, especially foreign tourists. In various advertisements, Nihiwatu always displays the beauty of nature and the activities carried out by visitors. This communication message is what inspires and motivates the media audience to move on to the next stage. The function of tourism communication as motivation goes well at this stage, where tourists are motivated in finding and using products from Nihiwatu. Supported by an informative and emotional advertising function, it makes it easy for tourists to enter the next stage, which is to start looking for more in-depth information.

Motivasi Pembelian



Source: Research results

2. Information Collection & Evaluation Image

Regarding the need for information, 65% of the respondents obtained complete information through the Hotel Nihiwatu website. This is also due to Google ads directing customers to the original Nihiwatu website. Not only Google ads, uploads from public figures play the biggest role for customers to choose Nihiwatu as a holiday destination. This happens when respondents consume social media and witness posts by public figures. Then respondents will also look at the website and find out more information about Nihiwatu on social media when making a decision. For example, Rachel Venny, who uploaded her vacation at Nihiwatu, which later became viral on social media. (Noviandi & Ariska, 2020). Apart from that, there are also Rahfi Ahmad, Luna Maya, Ayu Dewi, who are also celebrity names who have visited and uploaded content, both on Instagram and the YouTube channel. (Lova, 2020) Without realizing it, this is a way to convey information as well as means for promotion to tourists as a form of celebrity endorser. Not only for Nihiwatu followers, but also for followers or fans of celebrities.

Source credibility is one of the indicators in selecting a spokesperson or company endorser. By looking at the expertise, trustworthiness, attractiveness and likability. (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015) Celebrities can use the testimonial method as well as upload vacation experiences on social media, endorsements, or product commercials and make video clips, or even become spokespersons for these tourist attractions.



Source: Kompas.com

The information collection & evaluation image stage is the stage where they collect the various kinds of information needed and then evaluate each of the options available. 90% of the respondents reacted to the advertisements they saw from various media by starting to compare information on social media and starting to go to the company's website.

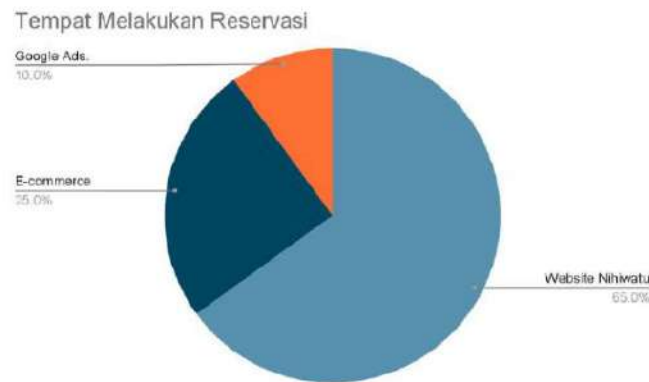


Source: Research results

Instagram stories have a significant impact on impulse purchases of travel products because of the features that activate and attract buyers towards travel and travel products. Instagram stories improve customer hedonic motivation, website quality, situational variables, and diversity seeking. Besides that social media can generate new trends that lead to hobbies but do not shape culture. (Hajin, 2022). These generations use digital media and word of mouth differently when searching for travel information. The differences are also apparent in the pre-, during and post-travel stages. Generation Z tends to use digital media and share travel experiences through a certain social media platform more frequently than Generation Y. (Damanik, Priyambodo, Wibowo, Pitanatri, & Wachyuni, 2023) Instagram is an important source of information and inspiration in the destination selection process. In addition, it has been found that travel-related content is one of the most followed on Instagram and that it definitely increases the interest of users to visit certain destinations. (Tessin, Pivac, Besermenji, & Obradovic, 2022)

3. Travel Decision (Choice Between Alternatives)

The decision to choose Nihiwatu is also due to the convenience of customers in accessing information about the place, the offers provided on the Nihiwatu website, and the ease of making transactions. This can be seen from the amount of purchases on the Nihiwatu Website, which is 65% of the respondents. Then you can also make transactions on e-commerce which also directs customers to discounts, so that purchasing decisions become even greater. Finally, because of the customer's interest after seeing the uploads of public figures and attractive travel offers, people with a holiday hobby are curious about experiencing a vacation at Nihiwatu.



Source: Research results

Hedonic shopping values, shopping lifestyles, positive emotions and impulse buying form complex, diverse consumer purchasing patterns and gradually become habits in using a service. (Pradiatiningtyas, 2015) By understanding consumer patterns in making choices among existing alternatives, it will help producers determine strategies in communicating and offering services that can meet hedonic value needs and impulse buying. Nihi understands the needs of travelers who come with a hedonic type. This is shown through the selection of activities, pictures and photos on the website, TikTok and Instagram. Because most of the tourist orientation is activities with family, getting out of daily activities, and having a hobby

for traveling. The activities provided by Nihi include sea, land, cultural, children, culinary and dining activities. This communication strategy fulfills what tourists need, so tourists will have a preference for Nihi compared to other choices.

The decision to go on vacation will be determined by the social conditions and economic profile of the traveler, previous experience and the attributes of the destination. Apart from that, this can happen to foreign visitors who also have the motivation to enjoy ethnicity and culture as well as climate. They will use the information from the advertising strategy they get to plan their trips. The motives most have are price, safety, previous experiences, accessibility, hospitality, and facilities. (Desfiandi & Singagerda, 2019)

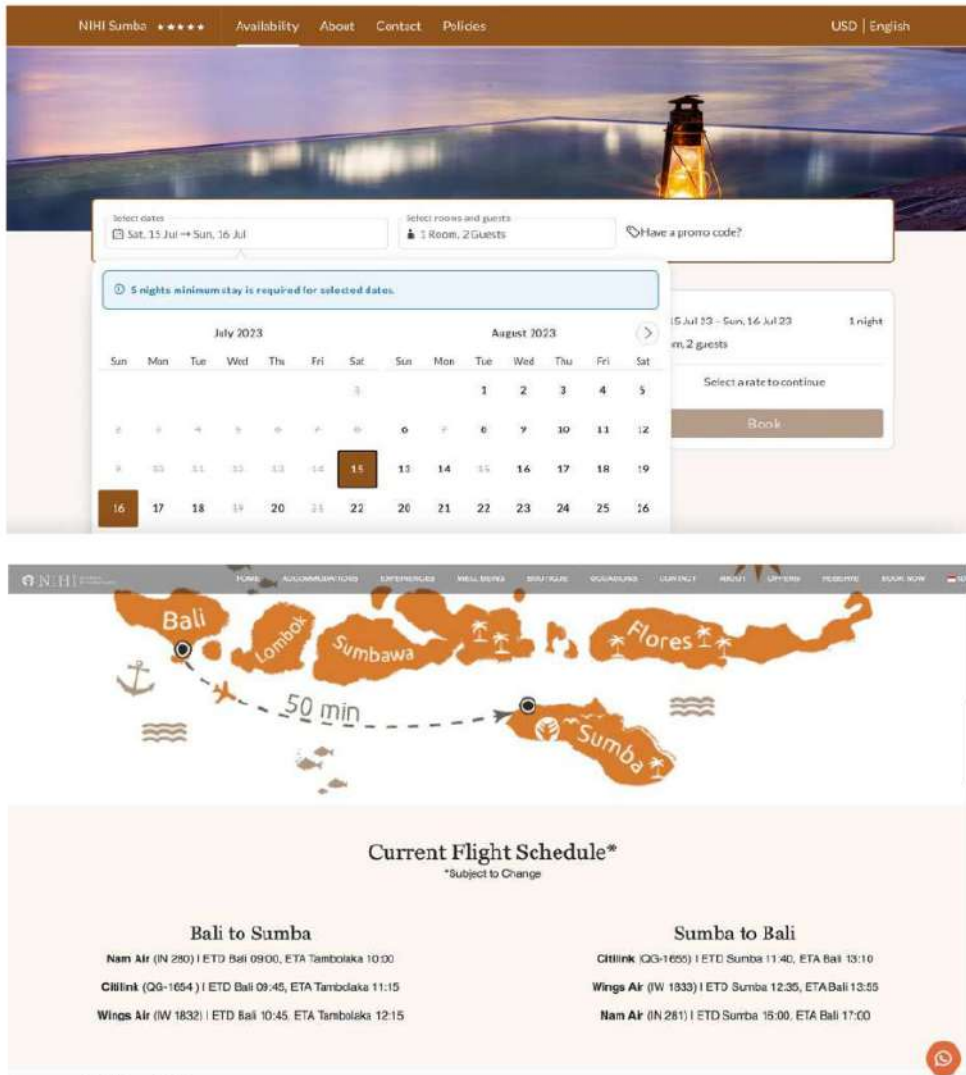
4. Travel preparation & travel experiences

From the research results, after determining Nihiwatu as a vacation destination, none of the respondents would cancel their trip because they were interested in other vacation destinations. In fact, from their experience, the experience of having a vacation at Nihiwatu is 90% in line with customer expectations after seeing marketing messages. Only 10% of respondents feel the expectations formed from marketing messages do not match the reality they experience. The destination attribute that Nihiwatu really relies on is the surrounding environment, then the authenticity of nature that is maintained, also highlighting the cultures of the people in Sumba. So that it covers all types of tourism, namely Wildlife, Landscape and Physical Attributes, Heritage, Culture and Society.

Even though Sumba is one of the islands that has extraordinary natural beauty, Sumba is not included in the list of popular places for tourists to visit. Therefore, for tourists who have set a destination for a vacation to Sumba, they have gone through a good consideration process at the Choice **14** between Alternatives stage, so they are less likely to cancel their trip.

Jong and Cho explains what kinds of travel experiences generate and enhance positive emotions throughout all travel stages. One of the significant factors throughout all stages is memory. (Jung & Cho, 2015). Repeat purchases are directly correlated to the AirAsia brand loyalty consumers have **16** developed due to their seamless experiences throughout the buying process. (Rosdi, 2022). The heritage tourism destination reputation not only directly and positively influences tourist consumption behaviour but also indirectly affects tourist consumption behaviour through tourist memorability and the chain relationship between tourist enjoyment and memorability. (Wang, Yang, & Li, 2021). Experience in traveling to previous places also becomes part of the memory that helps tourists make decisions to prepare for the next trip. It is also related to the emotions that are left behind as part of the experience. In this case, Nihiwatu has met the expectations of tourists who will visit. Nihiwatu's strategy is to show what is the highlight and the strength of what Sumba has. So that advertising is very **29** promoting and can be found in tourist areas. The integration function and the innovation function **play an important role in the** marketing communications **strategy. Business** people must look for selling points and continue to make innovations that are different both in the form of services and activities carried out. Starting from a good experience from searching for information, ordering, checking in, staying overnight and arriving at the post purchase, it becomes an entity that must be thought about and considered. Nihiwatu provides various conveniences in accessing information and placing orders. Orders can be made via the website, travel agents and travel applications. Through this website, travel agents and also

travel apps. One of the conveniences prepared by Nihiwatu on the official website is a route to Sumba via Bali. Apart from that, Nihiwatu has also prepared easy ordering through the website.



Source: Website Nihiwatu

5. Travel Satisfaction Outcome & Evaluation

Regarding customer satisfaction, we find that only 15% are regular shoppers. Some of their first impressions and experiences coming to the Nihiwatu Hotel were really interesting and in line with expectations. What is shown in the advertisements and promotions is in accordance with what is expected by the respondents. Advertising communication pattern that is persuasive and shows what are the advantages and selling points of the product is one of the strategies used by Nihiwatu. 85% of respondents are traveling to Nihiwatu for the first time.

Tourist satisfaction is defined as the overall pleasure felt by tourists from the result of tourist expectations, desires, and needs fulfillment (Hellier, Geursen, Carr, & Rickard, 2003). It could be referred as tourists feeling in regard to their experience (Hussain & Ekiz, 2009). Tourist satisfaction is influenced by tourist expectation, which could affect their perceived experience. (Hussain & Ekiz, 2009). Tourism experiences derived from partner-owned, customer-owned, and social touch points positively affect perceived hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, while experiences derived from destination-owned touch points only positively influence hedonic well-being. In addition, both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being significantly affect consumers' intention to revisit the destination and to spread word of mouth online. (Chen, Teng, Fang, Lu, & Hossain, 2021). A person's satisfaction during a visit can be in the form of a testimonial and without realizing it is a word of mouth promotion strategy. In addition, word of mouth using social media will be more targeted at the younger generation. But that's not a reason for them to come back regularly every time they need a vacation trip. They are still opening up opportunities for other destinations to travel on holiday.

Conclusion

The result of this research is to be able to see the travel buying behavior of visitors to Nihiwatu Hotel. How to measure using a five-stage model of travel buying behavior (felt need, information collection and evaluation image, travel decision, travel preparation and travel experiences, satisfaction outcome and evaluation).

The highest level of felt need/travel desire is family orientation, the need to take a break from daily activities and desire because it likes vacation activities. In the information collection and image evaluation stage, it shows that the preferences of respondents are more from public figures and Google search, then the Nihiwatu profile. The travel decision that emphasizes this is the website from Nihiwatu and e-commerce because the information available is very complete and helps respondents in making a decision and getting a discounted price. At the travel preparation and travel experiences stage, no respondents cancelled their travel plans. This is because what was promised meets what is needed by the respondent. In the last stage of the travel satisfaction outcome and evaluation it was found that the majority of respondents were visiting Nihiwatu for the first time, with good outcomes and in line with expectations. However, this cannot be said to be a reason to make a repurchase.

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