

The Influence Of Public Relations On Tourists Visiting Decisions At Sari Ater Resort In Subang Regency, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT:

Subang Regency is one of the regencies in West Java which has reliable tourism potential. One of the destinations that can be visited as one of the mainstay tourist attractions in Subang Regency, which can attract tourists to come is Sari Ater Resort hot spring. Sari Ater hot spring bath is one of the most visited tourist objects by both domestic and foreign tourists. The strategy implemented by Sari Ater hot springs to increase the number of tourists is an integrated marketing communication strategy. Integrated marketing communication is carried out aimed at influencing tourists' decisions to visit Sari Ater hot springs because promotion is a form of marketing communication activity that focused on how to disseminate information, influence, increase target markets to accept, buy, and be loyal to the products offered by the company.

Keywords:

integrated marketing, visiting decision, public relations.

INTRODUCTION

At this time, tourism has become the cornerstone of the country's large foreign exchange income expectations, now tourism has transformed into an industry called the tourism industry, producing tourism products to be sold. The Government is trying to improve and develop all aspects that can arouse the willingness of tourists to visit Indonesia, so it is necessary to hold a tourism promotion and by creating a special event by visiting Indonesia. According to Law Number 10 of year 2009 concerning tourism: "tourism is a variety of tourist activities, supported by various facilities and services provided by the community, businessmen, national government and local governments."

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts that international tourism will experience growth in the future. UNWTO also predicts that in 2020 tourism will become the largest industry in the world with an estimated 1,602 billion international tourists, and it will boost an economic growth and job opportunities that can create a world income of USD 2 trillion.

The target countries of international tourists are Western Europe and North America which bring in 97 percent of the world's tourists and the rest is spreading in various parts of the world, especially East Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. The number of tourists visiting East Asia and the Pacific was 122 million. China is the most visited country with 31.29 million tourists, and Japan is the lowest country in the top ten with 4.757 million tourist arrivals. Indonesia is the eighth country visited by 6.234 million tourists.

Tourism in Indonesia today can provide a direct push for the progress of development or improvement of ports (sea or air), roads, local transportation, hygiene or health programs, cultural projects, environmental sustainability and so on. Tourism can provide benefits and enjoyment for both the community within the region itself and for foreign visitors. Indonesia is an archipelago country that has quite good tourism potential. The tourism potential owned by Indonesia, among others, is a beautiful natural panorama. The tourism potentials owned by Indonesia can be used as a strength to attract tourists to come to Indonesia. Besides, Indonesia has a variety of cultures that can be

used as a tourism potential. Tourists who carry out tourism activities can enjoy a variety of tourist attractions in every region in Indonesia. The islands in Indonesia have considerable tourism potential and have tourist attractions that can invite tourists to come. One of the regions in Indonesia that has good tourism potential is West Java.

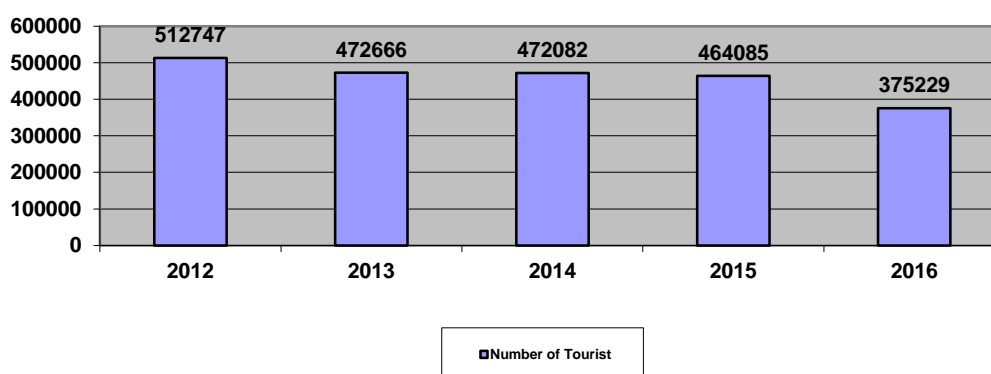
West Java is known as a province that has many and various types of cultural and tourism resources, and some of them have a high quality and attractiveness. The cultural resources that are owned, such as: language, literature and regional scripts, art, archeology, history, traditional values and museums are still developing. West Java Province, known for its richness in diversity of tourism resources, includes: nature tourism, cultural tourism and special interest tourism. West Java's culture wealth and diversity can attract domestic and foreign tourists to visit. Subang Regency is one of the tourist areas in West Java that is visited by many domestic and foreign tourists. Subang Regency has tourist sites that can be visited by tourists and has quite good natural tourism potential. Generally, tourists visiting Subang Regency want to enjoy different tourist attractions from other places in Indonesia.

Subang Regency has interesting tourist attractions including Mount Tangkuban Parahu, Ciater Highland Resort, Sari Ater Resort (hot spring), Ciheuleut Swimming Pool, Tirta Citapen Swimming Pool, Planet Water Boom, Mount Kujang Valley, Capolaga Waterfall, Cijalu Waterfall, Karembong Waterfall, Cileat Waterfall, Ciangin Waterfall, Sawer Waterfall, Curug Badak Cave Waterfall, Bentang Waterfall, Cinangrang Waterfall, Bareubeuy Waterfall, Pandawa Waterfall, Cimincal Springs, Pondok Bali Beach, Cirewag Beach, Plentong Beach, Blanakan Crocodile Breeding, Kalijati History House and Sari Bunihayu Tourism Village.

One of the mainstay tourist objects in Subang Regency that can attract tourists to come is the Sari Ater Resort hot spring. Sari Ater hot spring bath is one of the most visited tourist objects by both domestic and foreign tourists. Sari Ater hot spring bath is positioned as a tourist spot that is visited by many tourists. Sari Ater hot springs are located in a mountainous area that has hot water attractions that are good for skin because of their sulfur content.

The following is statistical data regarding the number of tourists visiting the Sari Ater Subang hot spring in 2012-2016:

Figure 0. Number of Sari Ater Resort Tourists in 2012-2016



Source: Marketing of Sari Ater Resort, 2017

Based on Figure 1. above, the number of tourists visiting Sari Ater hot spring in 2012-2016 has decreased. A significant decrease in the number of visitors occurred in 2016, as many as 88,856 people or 65 percent. The significant decline in visitor numbers in 2016 cannot be ignored. The decrease in the number of visitors will bring an impact on the decreasing

number of visitors who will come to the Sari Ater hot spring in the following year and the company will suffer losses. The strategy implemented by Sari Ater hot springs to increase the number of tourists is an integrated marketing communication strategy.

Integrated marketing communication is carried out aimed at influencing tourists' decisions to visit Sari

Ater hot springs, because promotion is a form of marketing communication activity that focused on how to disseminate information, influence, increase target markets to accept, buy, and be loyal to the products offered by the company. Integrated marketing communications carried out by the management of Sari Ater hot springs have a considerable influence on the products and services offered by Sari Ater hot springs. Integrated marketing communications carried out for groups of domestic tourists including Advertising, Personal Selling, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Internet Marketing and Public Relations.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

IMC (Integrated Marketing Communication) is a concept of marketing communication planning that introduces the added value of a comprehensive plan to evaluates the strategic roles of various communication disciplines such as general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations; and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.

In simple terms, IMC can be defined as "The process of managing customer relationships that drive brand value." Whereas specifically, IMC can be defined as "a process that has a cross-function in creating and maintaining beneficial relationships with customers and other stakeholders by controlling and strategically influencing all messages sent to this group and triggering dialogue with specific intentions to them."

According to Lamb, et.al, (2009) Integrated Marketing Communication is a combination of promotional tools - including advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion - used to reach the target market and fulfill the organization's overall goals (Afrimadona et al., 2019). That is, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a combination of promotional tools including advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion used to reach target markets and meet overall organizational targets.

According to Griffin and Ebert (2007) Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a combination of tools (advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and publicity) to promote a product.

From the definition of Integrated Marketing Communication according to some experts it can be concluded that Integrated Marketing Communication is a complementary and mutually supportive set of tools that can be used in promotional activities. As for the composition of the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) delivered by experts, it can be concluded that it consists of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing, interactive marketing, and publications.

Lovelock, et al. (2009) divides Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) into:

1. Advertising is one of the most widely used forms of promotion for companies to promote their products.
2. Public relations are comprehensive communication effort from a company to influence the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of various groups towards the company.
3. Direct marketing is an interactive marketing system that utilizes one or more advertising media to generate measurable responses and / or transactions in any location.
4. Sales promotion is a form of persuasion through the use of various incentives that can be arranged to stimulate product purchases immediately and increase the number of goods purchased by customers.
5. Personal selling is direct (face-to-face) communication between a seller and a prospective customer to introduce a product to a potential customer and form a customer's understanding of the product so that they will then try and buy it.
6. Trade shows or better known as publicity are a form of non-personal presentation and dissemination of ideas, goods and services, which the beneficiary person or organization does not pay for.

Integrated Marketing Communication provides the optimal distribution of each promotional method. The effectiveness of each marketing combination is different and sometimes overlaps with other methods. The Integrated Marketing Communication that has been developed is carried out to achieve the company's goals that have been previously set. Based on the problems to be studied, the discussion will focus on five Integrated Marketing Communication, namely direct marketing, sales promotion, advertising,

interactive / internet marketing, and public relations(Harun, 2019).

2.1 VISITING DECISION

The decision to visit in this study was adapted from the purchase decision because the mind process that tourists go through to determine the choice of a tourist destination are the same as the purchase decision stage in general(Maulana, 2020). Marketing is closely related to efforts to create and provide value to tourists or customers.

Marketing aims to satisfy the needs and wish of tourists or customers. The decision to visit arises because of an objective assessment of certain goods or services and emotional impulses that arise from consumers due to the needs that must be met by tourists.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008) Customer behavior is the buying behavior of the final consumer-individuals and households who buy goods and services for personal consumption. This means that the purchase decision is a decision process in which consumers actually decide to buy one product among the various choices.

According to Kotler and Keller (2007) The stage in decision making is where tourists use tourism products/services. Based on the opinions of several experts above, it can be concluded that the decision to visit is a process in which tourists choose to use products or services from a variety of choices provided by companies that provide tourism goods or services.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2009) measure visiting decisions can be made through the following six decisions:

1. Product/service options: Companies must focus their attention on people who are interested in visiting the tourist areas they manage, so that tourists can make decisions to visit these tourist attractions.
2. Brand choice: Tourists must be able to decide which tourist areas to visit. Each tourist area has different offers.
3. Dealer Choice: Tourists have differences in terms of determining which dealer to use due to location factors, low prices, complete inventory, shopping convenience, wide space and so on.

4. Time of Visit: The decision of tourists to come to visit varies according to the needs of tourists. The timing of the visit determines the peak and lonely times during the year the arrival and departure of tourists are helpful in many ways.
5. Number of Visits: Tourists can make decisions about how many tourism products/services they want to visit. There may be more than one visit made. Companies must prepare the number of tourism products/services according to the different desires of each tourist.
6. Payment Methods: Tourists visiting a tourist area must make a payment. Currently, some tourists make payments in cash or using credit cards.

This study will discuss five decisions taken, namely product/service selection, brand selection, determination of visit times, payment methods, and the number of visits.

2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ON TOURISTS VISITING DECISIONS AT SARI ATER RESORT

The effect of Public Relations on the decision to visit is good Public Relations Communication will make customers think about a brand or product, and if the effect is right it will direct customers so they decide to participate in the Public Relations Communication offered by the company. The promotional strategy is to manage organizational communication initiatives, coordinate and integrate advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, interactive/internet marketing, and public relations to communicate with buyers and other parties who influence purchasing decisions. Hurriyati (2010) explains that promotion is a marketing activity that seeks to spread information, influence/persuade, and/or remind the target market of the company and its products to accept, buy, and be loyal to the products offered by the company concerned (Rasyid & Dulkiah, 2020).

In the tourism industry, Public Relations Communication is needed to attract tourists to visit tourist objects. Alma (2004) argues that "Consumers buy something, not only needing the item, but also something else that is expected. That something is following the image formed by him. Therefore, an organization or company must provide information to the public to form a good image. So that by creating a good image in the eyes of the public it will increase the

decision to visit tourist attractions (Alimi, et al,2005, In the Journal of The Influence of Advertising on Consumer Brand Preference).Chonlada Sangkaworn, et al., In the Journal of Marketing Practices of Hotels and Resorts in Chiang Mai: A Study of Products, Pricing, and Promotional said that analyzing consumer behavior will help companies to determine the direction of consumer behavior so that companies can create and provide trends in product development and attributes of communication methods (Practices, 2008).

Based on the explanation above, marketers use Public Relations Communication to persuade more potential customers to use the products and services offered by the company. The opinion of experts regarding the influence of Public Relations Communication on visiting decisions, support that a good Public Relations Communication can affect the decision to visit.

3. METHODOLOGY

Based on the variables studied, the type of research of this research is descriptive and verification research. Sugiyono (2008) defines that descriptive research is research conducted to determine the value of the independent variable, either one or more variables without making comparisons or linking with other variables. Descriptive research here aims to obtain a description of the problem under study. Descriptive research here aims to obtain a description or description of promotions and how these promotions can influence visiting decisions.

According to Arikunto (2009) verification research is "research which wants to test the truth through data collection in the field". In this study, the validity of the hypothesis will be tested through data collection in the field, such as the promotion test in forming a decision to visit Sari Ater Resort. Based on the type of descriptive research, the research method used is descriptive survey method and explanatory survey method to explain the relationship between variables through hypothesis testing. This method is used to explain the relationship between the research variables through hypothesis testing. According to Sugiyono (2008) what is meant by the survey method is: "The survey method is used to obtain data from certain natural (not artificial) places, but the researcher performs treatment in data collection, for example by

distributing questionnaires, tests, structured interviews and so on (treatment is not like in experiments). Research that uses this method involves collecting information from a part of the population directly on the scene (empirically) to know the opinions of a part of the population on the object being studied." The development method used is the cross-sectional method. According to Umar (2009), the cross-sectional method is a research method by examining a certain phenomenon at one time.

The sampling technique used in this study is systematic random sampling because the population is considered homogeneous and can be used without knowledge of the sampling frame. The population in this study is mobile. Regarding the source of data obtained in obtaining information that is used as a source in obtaining data, this data source is divided into two, namely: 1) primary data, 2) secondary data. The testing instruments used are validity and reliability tests, with testing the influence between variables using Partial Least Square (PLS).

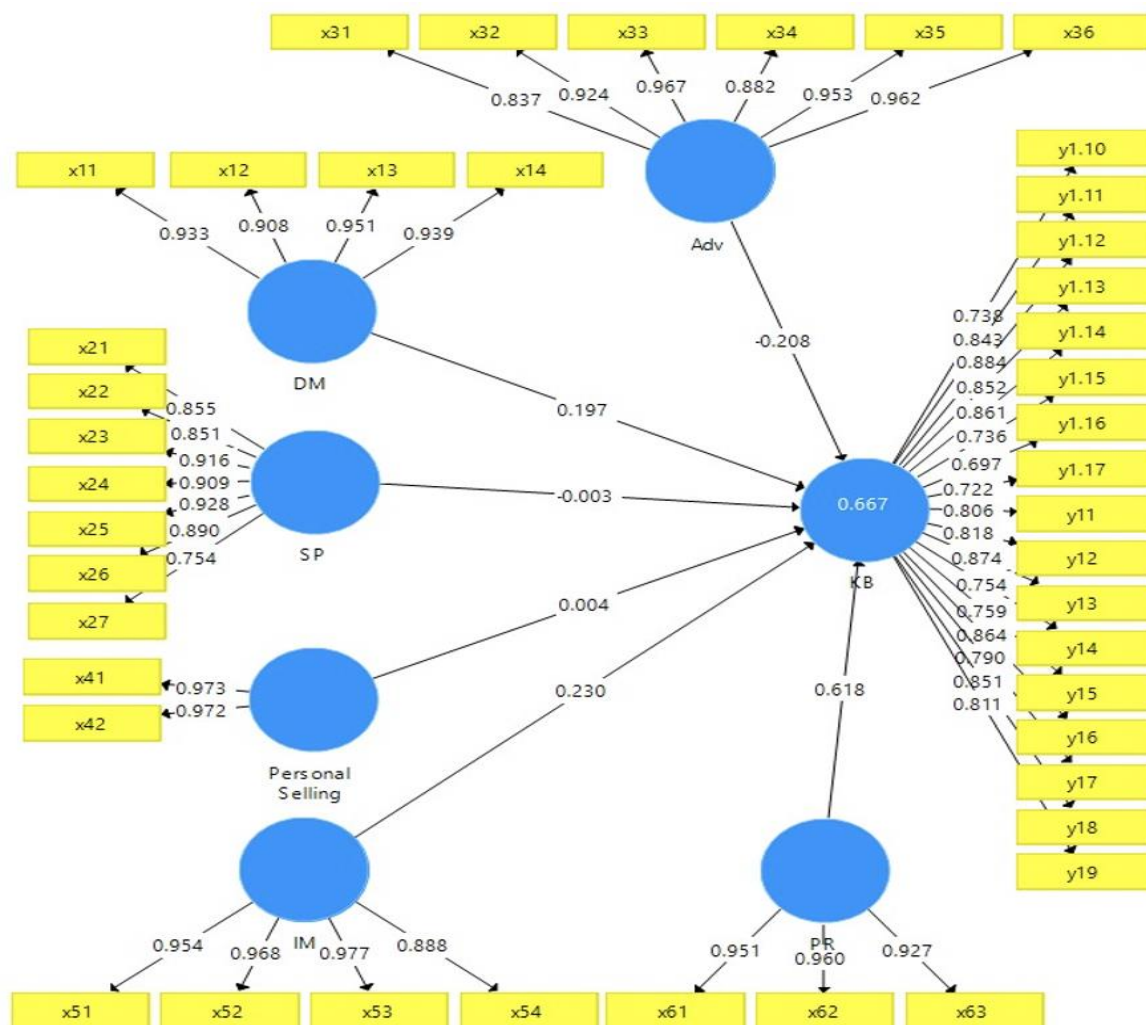
4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the beginning PT Sari Ater Hotel & Resort was a swimming pool used by people who lived in the nearby areas such as Ciater, Palasari and Nagrak. Not long after a Dutchman named Mr. Hack Bessel found that the hot spring turned out to create healing effects especially for skin diseases then people from many different areas started to visit this place to bathe and cure themselves. In 1968 the Government of Subang by the help of the district's public service cooperated with the District Revenue Agency gradually built the hot spring as a tourism object. Mr. Sahro acted as the first manager from Subang public service with only 11 staffs. In 1972 PPN DWIKORA IV (now known as PTPN XIII Ciater) built one room as the toilet and a traditional vernacular shaped gate as an office and the ticket counter.

On March 20, 1974 the local Subang government turned in the management of Ciater Hot spring to PT Sari Ater led by Mr H.A. Soewarma. In 1975 the hotel, restaurant and some other facilities were built. To improve the development of the company, in 1974 the Organization was restructured and a General Manager was chosen to lead the hotel and Sari Ater tourist site under the name of Sari Ater Hot Spring Resort. Up to

now it is better known as Sari Ater Hot Spring Resort and Recreation.

Figure 2. Outer Model Test Results



FROM THE RESULTS OF THE PATH COEFFICIENT MODEL IT CAN BE EXPLAINED THAT

a. Advertising has an effect of -0.208 on visiting decision, indicating that there is an effect but negative which means that if advertising is increased then the result on visiting decision will decrease. This is likely to happen because advertising comprises display advertisement, radio advertisement, brochures, posters and leaflets, symbols and logos. Among the existing advertisement, Sari Ater only uses brochures, posters and leaflets and symbols and logos which are displayed in the improper media for example they do not put the billboard in the strategic places so that people ignore the presence of the advertisement.

- b. Direct Marketing has an effect of 0.197 on visiting decision, indicating an effect but not significant. Direct marketing comprises the intern magazine, marketing activities via email and phone calls. Sari Ater only publishes intern magazine, email marketing and phone calls. Intern magazine publication gives only a few effects because they do not aim at the target market due to the lack of the number of marketing staffs. Their marketing staffs come and go because those who cannot reach the target usually do not stay long. As a result, they have to hire the new staffs and have to start everything from the beginning.
- c. Sales Promotion has an effect of -0.003 on visiting decision indicating a negative effect if the sales promotion increases then visiting decision will decrease. Sales promotion includes giving rewards, special rates and membership discount. As for sales promotion Sari Ater rarely does these

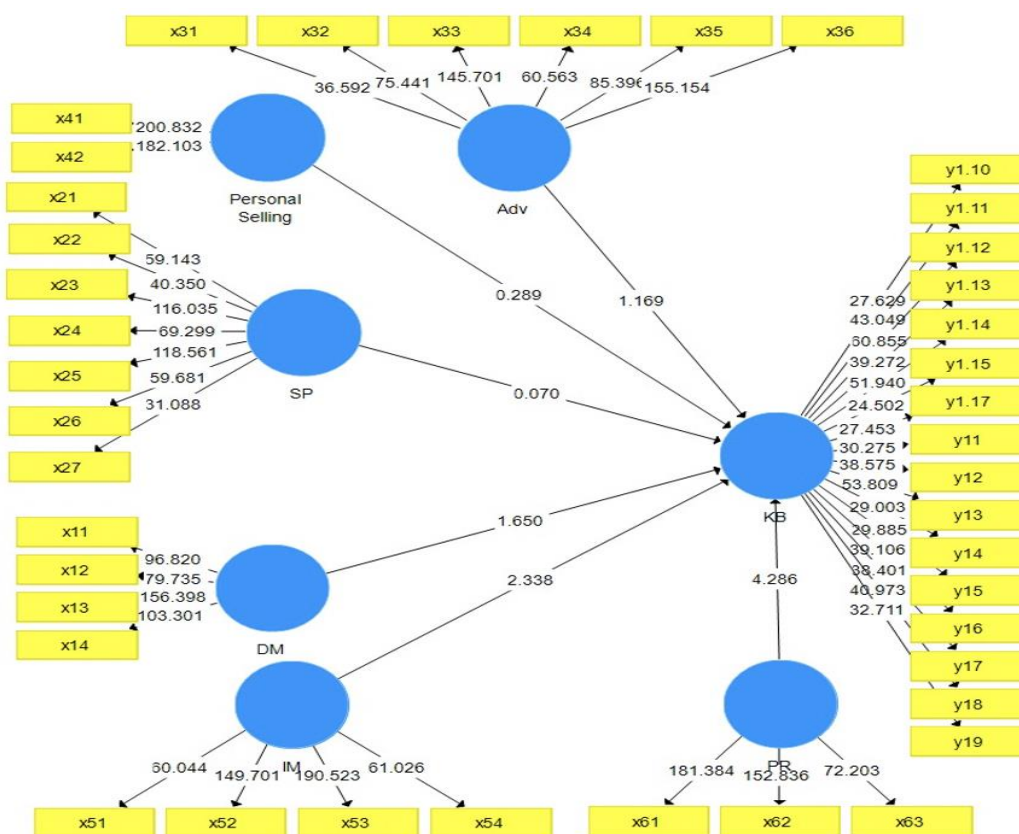
activities. As a consequence, people may not notice this and the sales promotion program may not reach the goal.

- d. Personal Selling has an effect of 0.004 on visiting decision, indicating that there is an influence, although not significant. Personal selling includes selling presentation, intensive program, discount program and exhibition. Sari Ater does the selling presentation, intensive program and discount program. This creates effects on the visiting decision.
- e. Internet Marketing has an effect of 0.230 on visiting decision, indicating that there is a significant effect. Internet marketing enables

people to make reservation/booking and digital payment as well because they can use credit/debit cards and e-money such as OVO payment.

- f. Public Relations has an effect of 0.618 on visiting decision, indicating that there is a significant influence on the greatest value, so it can be said that public relations is the most influential. Public relations include seminar, charity and sponsorship in variety of activities. Sari Ater is often used as a place to conduct seminars so that at the same time they create public relation activities which have effects on the visiting decision. In addition to that, Sari Ater regularly conducts charity activities and becomes sponsorship in many activities.

Figure 3. Hypothesis Test Result Model



FROM THE RESULTS OF T-STATISTICS IT CAN BE CONCLUDED:

- a. Advertising has an effect of 1.202 under 1.96 on visiting decision, indicating that there is no significant effect.
- b. Personal Selling has an effect of 0.276 under 1.96 on visiting decision, indicating that there is no significant effect.
- c. Sales Promotion has an effect of 0.071 under 1.96

on visiting decision, indicating that there is no significant effect.

- d. Direct Marketing has an effect of 1.662 under 1.96 on visiting decision, indicating that there is no significant effect.
- e. Internet Marketing has an effect of 2.302 above 1.96 on visiting decision, indicating that there is a significant influence.
- f. Public Relations has an effect of 4.128 above 1.96 on visiting decision, indicating that there is a significant influence on the greatest value, so it

can be said that public relations is the most influential.

Based on results above, from 6 (six) aspects in Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) that is Advertising, Direct Marketing, Sales Promotion, Personal Selling, Internet Marketing, and Public Relation, not every aspect significantly affecting tourist visiting decision. Direct Marketing and Personal Selling are the two aspects that give no significant effect to visiting decision, although they correlated positively. Moreover, the other two aspects, Advertising and Sales Promotion, have significantly negative effect on Visiting Decision. This indicates that the more companies/management spreading the advertisements and present promos, the more potential visitors reduce their interest in visiting. On the contrary, two aspects show significant positive effect on Visiting Decision, that is Internet Marketing and Public Relation. Internet Marketing become one of aspects that significantly affecting visiting decision because the development of information technology is currently growing rapidly. People tend to use online media to seek for product/service references (including place to visit), and it is supported with the massive use of online media for sharing their experience about a service or product. The internet also make the booking and payment easier because potential visitors can see and read up all the tourism information they want to know, all in one convenience way. So the marketing strategy now cannot rely only on direct or offline marketing, but also should maximize the digital platform. The greatest significance value of IMC aspects related to Visiting Decision is Public Relation. Public Relation affect not only inviting new visitors but also maintaining the loyal visitor. A strong Public Relation will create a good image of the company/management and will increasing the company/management value.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research results, it can be concluded as follows: Implementation of Integrated Marketing Communication at Sari Ater consisting of Advertising, Personal Selling, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Internet Marketing, and Public Relations has a good assessment of tourists. The sub-variables that received the highest average score were Public Relations as a representative of Company Value. Followed by

Internet Marketing through the ease of ordering (booking) places and the ease of payment, as well as the ease of understanding the information conveyed, while the one who received the lowest assessment was Sales Promotion. Furthermore, to increase the number of visits in Sari Ater hot spring, the company should pay more attention to Internet Marketing and Public Relation aspect. Overall, the research results show that Public Relations Communication has influences on Visiting Decision at Sari Ater hot spring.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research work was supported by Beasiswa Unggulan Dosen Indonesia Dalam Negeri (Scholarship for Excellent Domestic Indonesian Lecturers, BUDI DN)-LPDP, Year 2016 (20161141100774).

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