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## Increasing the Marketability of Homestay Business in Low Season: Mu Homestay Case Study

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### Abstract

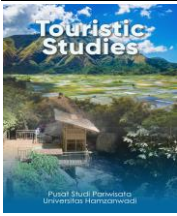
This study aims to determine efforts to increase the marketability of the Homestay business during the low-season period and strategies to minimize losses during the low-season period. This research was conducted at Mu Homestay, located in Kembang Kuning Village. This research was conducted because the low season is a natural part of the business. Still, the low season does not affect Mu Homestay due to careful planning and appropriate actions. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive qualitative approach. The object of this study is Mu Homestay, and the subjects include elements related to Mu Homestay. Data collection techniques in this study are observation, documentation, and interviews. Data analysis techniques are carried out by collecting, reducing, presenting, and concluding data. The validity of the data is carried out by employing an extension of participation. The results of this research show that Mu Homestay carries out Efforts to increase guest interest in staying by selling tour packages, cooperating with tourism agents, and promoting and improving service quality. Mu Homestay's strategy to minimize losses during the Low season is carried out by ensuring satisfaction and getting feedback from tourists.

**Keywords:** Homestay business, low-season, market

### Introduction

Tourism development in the world has undergone various changes in form and nature (Wihartanti et al., 2020). Tourism activities can provide opportunities for entrepreneurs. Tourism can also make a country's economic growth fast and positively affect other sectors in tourist-receiving countries (Rahmi, 2020). According to (Setiawan, 2016), the development of this tourism must be supported by adequate facilities and infrastructure to support the smooth running of the tourism sector.

Indonesia's tourism industry has become the most significant manufacturing activity and consistently grows yearly. The World Tourism Organization has predicted that in 2023, there will be an increase in the number of Indonesian tourist visits (Azizah & Cahyadi, 2023). Based on data in 2023, international tourist arrivals increased by 567.27% compared to February 2022, an increase of 567.27% compared to February 2022. This is an impressive achievement for the tourism industry. Factors that could explain this significant increase may include improvements in the global situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic, successful vaccine rollouts, and strong government tourism promotion efforts. In addition, other factors such as increased international flight connections, attractive vacation package deals, and changing traveler preferences can also contribute to the tremendous growth.



The beginning of the year became something thrilling for accommodation business people, including Homestays. It has entered the low season, with reduced travel demand. The end of the year is a harvest period for accommodation business people (Eddyono, 2021). Meanwhile, January to March is a month of low occupancy, often called low season (Nurcahyo et al., 2021). Usually, owners provide exceptional prices and intensively make sales calls to attract guests (Parantika & Juliandra, 2021). Regarding business prospects, Homestay optimizes its business to develop better and faster and positively impacts business owners and visitors (Ariqa, 2021).

West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is one of the provinces in Indonesia consisting of 2 islands, namely Sumbawa Island and Lombok Island. Natural resources and beautiful panoramas make NTB Province the leading destination after Bali (Setyanto & Winduwati, 2017). In 2020, West Nusa Tenggara Province contributed to tourism as many as 739.52800 tourists in December. Currently, East Lombok Regency is one of the tourism references that has the potential to develop tourist destinations with abundant natural potential and customs that are still thick with the status of the majority Muslim religion (Rahmatullah, 2020).

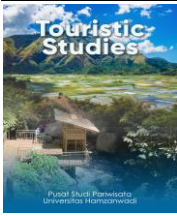
Kembang Kuning Village has an exciting and strategic geographical location. This village, located in the Sikur sub-district, is a tourist village in the developing category. In 2022, Kembang Kuning Village has a total of 14 Homestays. The low season significantly impacts homestay room sales because demand usually decreases during this period (Murti et al., 2019). This could result in a decrease in income and profits for Homestay owners.

The low season is not only a consideration but also a benchmark for every Homestay manager to test the extent to which the manager can manage the business in conditions that are not ideal. It is also important to remember that the low season is a natural part of the hospitality business, and Homestay owners must have an excellent strategy to deal with it. However, Mu Homestay is less affected by the low season, which can be achieved with careful planning and proper action; they can reduce the negative impact and even create new opportunities during this period. From the description above, researchers are interested in taking the title of Increasing the Selling Power of Homestay Business in the Low Season Period: A Case Study of Mu Homestay.

## Methods

In this study, the approach used is a descriptive qualitative approach. This research is conducted to solve a problem investigated by examining the condition of the subjects and objects of research based on the facts in the research place (Yulianah, 2022). The point is that researchers want to see the emphasis or depth of data obtained through data received through sources and data seen in the field. So, research in using information and communication technology as a promotional medium in increasing the competitiveness of local businesses in the tourism industry can be described through this descriptive qualitative method.

Based on the method used, researchers only use primary data as a source of data obtained from field studies using data collection techniques such as observation and interviews. Researchers use this data collection technique to get valid and appropriate data in this study. To declare this study is good or not, researchers elaborate again using triangulation to prove whether the data from this study is research done scientifically or not to test the



data obtained.

## Findings and Discussion

### Mu Homestay's Efforts in Increasing Customer Interest to Stay

The efforts made by Mu Homestay to increase tourist interest to stay overnight are done by selling tourism products other than the Homestay accommodation itself. The following is the narration from the resource person:

"Mu Homestay is attractive to tourists because of its lodging and some tour packages we sell. These packages make many tourists, especially foreigners, interested in staying at Mu Homestay. These tour packages include a cooking class, walking tour, hiking, tour to know local culture, and bicycle tour. We promote these packages through online and offline media. In addition, we collaborate with local tourism agents to promote and improve service quality to guests who stay. (Interview, Mu Homestay Manager, 26/08/2023).

Based on the results of the researcher interview above, Mu's strategy for Homestays in increasing guest interest to stay are:

#### 1. Tour Package Sales.

A critical element in improving the image of a product is to maximize sales of the product, either through direct selling or through social media. Direct selling is when a company wants to establish direct communication with customers through media to encourage how the customer responds.

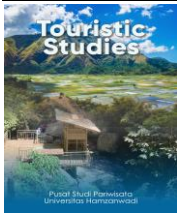
With the increase in technology, Homestay owners are required to plan marketing strategies to keep up with the development of the digital world. One business that needs the use of technology is in the field of tourism, one of which is Mu Homestay. Mu Homestay itself is engaged in the sale of tour packages in Lombok. The guest house packages sold by Mu Homestay include:

##### a. Cooking class

Cooking class is a cooking activity that is carried out together in a place to process a product or cooking ingredients. It includes an in-depth understanding of how it is essential in shaping cultural identity, traditions, history, and values. The findings in the field show that the strategy to increase the marketability of the Homestay Business Mu Homestay case study is divided into two: strategies to increase selling power and strategies to reduce losses during the low season. a society. Mu Homestay offers tour packages (cooking classes) different from others; tourists usually take part in this activity to learn and be directly involved in preparing food or processing food and beverages, such as the traditional coffee reconnaissance process. Hence, this method is an authentic way to enjoy typical drinks of the region, with tools and processes that are still traditional to make cooking classes offered by Mu Homestay more unique and fun.

##### b. Walking tour

Walking tours are trips through various terrain, ranging from flat asphalt roads to rugged



mountains. The uniqueness of walking tours at Mu Homestay is that tourists feel rural life and cultural uniqueness in Kembang Kuning Village and get to know the natural beauty around it, so it can rarely be found elsewhere, and deserves to be one of Mu Homestay's unique tourist destinations.

c. Tour or class about local culture

A local culture tour or class is a great way to experience and understand the local culture deeply. In this case, Mu Homestay brings and introduces local people's handicrafts, such as promoting uniqueness and providing valuable experiences to tourists. The handicrafts recommended at Mu Homestay include Woven Cloth (Pringgasela) and Bamboo (Loyok) handicrafts. Introducing tourists to making woven fabrics from raw materials, the dyeing process, and the weaving process to become ready-to-use products.

d. Island Trip (Journey to Gili)

The Gilis are a group of small islands located in Indonesia. In NTB itself, especially East Lombok, the beauty of the Gilis has become a significant attraction for tourists worldwide. Mu Homestay takes advantage of the beauty of marine nature by making tour packages. As for the uniqueness of this package, tourists can enjoy natural beauty such as white sand beaches, amazing underwater life, water activities such as playing banana boat, and much more. One of the girls offered by Mu Homestay is Gili Kondo, who collaborates with tour guides in that place.

e. Hiking or trekking

Hiking is a beautiful way to explore the beauty of nature, improve physical and mental health, and feel adventurous, and hiking has something for everyone. Creating a nature tour package is an exciting idea. Mu Homestay offers tour packages to places with unspoiled natural beauty, such as Jeruk Manis Waterfall, Sarang Walet Waterfall, Sembalun, and Benang Kelambu Waterfall. This can provide an experience that is not for tourists who want to enjoy the beauty of nature.

f. Bike tours

Bike tours are a fantastic way to explore a destination, experience freedom, and improve physical and mental health. Whether looking for a nature adventure, a cultural experience, or simply a chance to exercise, bike tours have something to offer everyone. Mu Homestay is located in one of the most stunning and natural locations.

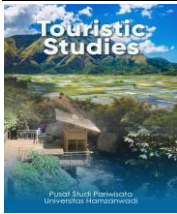
The area around this Homestay is known for its extraordinary natural beauty, stunning landscapes, and well-preserved nature. From towering mountains to deep rivers

Quiet, everything is available near this Homestay. They are making it a great place to make an exclusive bike tour package. With a bicycle tour package, tourists can feel the incredible natural beauty that makes guests' holidays full of meaning. The strategies carried out by Mu Homestay to increase sales of tour packages are:

g. Market Segmentation

Mu Homestay managers understand that determining the target market with the products to be sold is the key to the success of a business. Marketing and sales efforts can be ineffective without a good understanding of your target market. The following is the narration from the speaker:

"Determining the target market that we will go to, if we target indigenous people, they think that they have paid a lot of money that



they already know, but it's different if we target Europeans, they will be interested in different things from their home country" (Interview, Mu Homestay Manager, 26/08/2023).

From the interviewees' statements, researchers can conclude that determining the right target market is vital in planning a business strategy. With a good understanding of who our customers are and what they need, you can increase your chances of a business.

## 2. Media Marketing

The hospitality industry is one of the sectors most affected by technological developments and changes in consumer behavior. Mu Homestay, as one of the accommodation providers in Kembang Kuning Village, realizes the importance of innovating in marketing strategies. One of Mu Homestay's strategies is as follows:

### a. Conventional

During the rapid development of technology and digital media, conventional media still has an essential role in Di Mu Homestay's marketing strategy. Traditional media, which Mu Homestay uses by building relationships with Homestay owners in Kembang Kuning Village, so when other Homestays lack rooms, they can contact Mu Homestay via WhatsApp (WA).

### b. Digital Marketing

Mu Homestay's marketing is to have an attractive and informative website. This website is not only a booking tool but also an information center. With an aesthetically pleasing and easy-to-navigate design, potential guests can easily find the information they need, including accommodation descriptions, facilities, and guest reviews.

### c. Cooperation with Tourism Agents

Homestays need to find creative ways to attract guests. One of Mu Homestay's approaches is cooperating with local tourism agents to present attractive tour packages, joint marketing, and memorable travel experiences to tourists.

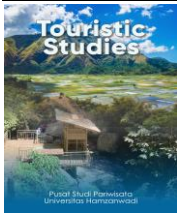
Mu Homestay, located in an area with beautiful natural attractions and local wisdom that is still maintained, realizes the great potential of Mu Homestay and cooperates with local tourism agents. Mu Homestay is aware of having an extraordinary natural attraction, but if it only offers a place to stay, it will not be enough to attract tourists. The following is the narration from the speaker:

"We realize that without cooperation, all the packages we sell will not run well; we know that the Kembang Kuning area has advantages that other regions do not have, so we take advantage of this natural beauty by making attractive tour packages" (Interview, Mu Homestay Manager, 26/08/2023).

From the explanation of the interview results above, tourism as a multiplier effect sector requires cooperation to maximize it. In its application, tourism touches many aspects, requiring more human resources.

## 3. Promotion

Promotion as an activity to deliver information about a product (goods or services),



usually done persuasively to the general public, aims to inform and persuade the audience to respond positively. Promotional activities are among the most effective activities for an organization or company. The types of promotions used by Mu Homestay are:

a. Conventional Promotion

In this case, Mu Homestay promotes conventionally through word of mouth by providing memorable service to guests; with outstanding service, customers who have stayed at Mu Homestay will recommend Mu. Homestay to friends and relatives want to vacation in East Lombok.

b. Digital Promotion

Related to the digital promotion carried out by Mu Homestay, Mu Homestay promotes through Instagram, Facebook, and booking.com website so that it can be accessed by guests while connected to the internet and also to make it easier for customers who want to book and can see guest reviews that have stayed.

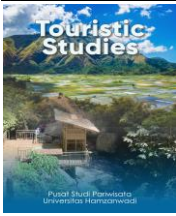
c. Improve Service Quality

According to Zeithaml Berry, the quality of service is divided into five dimensions, namely, physical, where this dimension shows something that consumers can see directly. The second is reliability, which relates to providing services as promised. Third, responsiveness, namely the ability to respond to customer needs and complaints as accurately and quickly as possible. Fourth, certainty is everything related to the ability to convince and gain customers' trust so that they feel safe and comfortable. Fifth, empathy relates to providing personal attention and awareness to satisfy consumer needs. The form of improving the quality of Mu Homestay services is based on five dimensions of service quality according to Zeithaml Berry above, namely: In terms of physical facilities, Mu Homestay provides free Wi-Fi, food and drink facilities, a lounge area, a parking lot, a 24-hour front desk, an introduction to local culture, and daily housekeeping. Reliability. Each accommodation has some reliability to improve the quality and number of visitors. In this regard, Mu Homestay has some of its reliability to enhance the quality and number of visitors, such as ensuring that all the facilities promised on the website are available and correctly updating them regularly to keep them relevant and exciting to guests. Regarding responsiveness in dealing with complaints from guests, Mu Homestay Treats guest complaints thoughtfully and responds well; besides that, Mu Homestay also continues to evaluate the quality of service provided to guests. Indeed, in this case, Mu Homestay gains trust through clear policies and information, booking confirmation, adequate security, ensuring the Homestay is always clean and sterile, ease of communication well, and providing good service. Empathy: Mu Homestay attracts guests' empathy with a sincere welcome when guests arrive with a welcome drink, offering assistance from the moment guests arrive until they check out, always respecting privacy.

### **Mu Homestay's Strategy to Minimize Losses in the Low Season**

After efforts to increase the number of tourists, Mu Homestay applied the concept of sustainable tourism to realize the low session period. The following is the narration from the speaker:

"For the Low Session period, you could say no one is at Mu Homestay. Because we are here for tourist visits in recent years are fairly stable. We



can achieve this with the concept of tourism sustainability. We achieve this sustainability concept by ensuring the satisfaction of tourists who come. So many tourists are satisfied and always want to come back here. If it is not him who returns, his friends or relatives usually come here because they suggest visiting Mu Homestay in their place of origin. This is where sustainability in tourism occurs" (Interview, Mu Homestay Manager, 26/08/2023).

Based on the results of interviews that have been conducted, it seems that Mu Homestay shows a consistent pattern of visits throughout the year. The data below, which reflects information about the low season period, confirms that Mu Homestay did not experience a significant decrease in the low season period. As for the strategy carried out by Mu Homestay to realize the period Low season are:

1. Guarantee satisfaction

The important thing that needs to be considered in the homestay service business is the quality of service that satisfies visitors (tourists). The Homestay accommodation model's interaction between guests and owners is more personal. Therefore, the quality of personal service is the key to the success of Homestay management. At Mu Homestay themselves, They put customer experience at the center of their attention by delivering.

Friendly and personalized service to every guest. Making every guest who visits or stays like a family, which makes tourists feel at home and satisfied with the services provided by the manager of Mu Homestay

Homestay has become a popular accommodation option for many tourists. It's a unique way to experience the comfort of the countryside while exploring new destinations. However, like any other accommodation, customer satisfaction remains the key to success for Homestay owners. At Mu Homestay itself, maintaining customer satisfaction is done by:

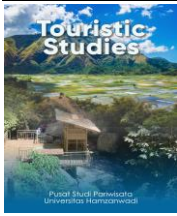
2. Hygiene

Mu Homestay carries out four cleanliness. First, routine cleaning and caring by providing a regular schedule to clean and maintain the entire Mu Homestay area, including bedrooms, bathrooms, and Mu Homestay areas; in addition to providing a routine schedule, Mu Homestay always ensures the equipment used by guests is functioning correctly. In terms of infrastructure maintenance, Mu Homestay ensures that the central systems, such as water, electricity, and water heaters, function properly and repair any damage or technical problems.

Third, maintain the quality of equipment guests use, such as changing towels regularly to ensure cleanliness and quality are supported, and provide all equipment, such as blankets, pillows, and other bedding, in good condition. Fourth, Mu Homestay delivers security and privacy to guests by ensuring doors and windows can be appropriately locked so that guests feel safe and have adequate privacy.

3. Service and Hospitality

It is related to the services carried out by Mu Homestay. Mu Homestay always provides excellent service to guests or prospective guests who want to stay by helping them with everything, from check-in to recommendations for tourist attractions around Mu Homestay. In addition to excellent service, Mu Homestay is also responsive to special requests, such as requests for certain types of rooms or special meals not listed on the menu. Mu Homestay also



pays attention to detail. All rooms are always clean and tidy, with complete equipment.

In addition, Mu Homestay provides additional facilities such as laundry service and airport pick-up.

In addition, one of the things that Mu Homestay guests always remember is the hospitality that they always feel during their stay. Mu Homestay's staff run errands with genuine smiles and hospitality. Always ready to talk to guests, give advice, or exchange stories about exciting places in East Lombok. Guests of Mu Homestay are always given small moments such as welcome drinks and always give attention to guests who make them like brothers.

#### 4. comfort

One of the main factors that affect customer comfort during the stay is the quality of the bed; each room of Mu Homestay is equipped with a European room, such as soft sheets and comfortable pillows, and the distance between the rooms is quite far. Thus, a quality night's sleep is guaranteed to guests by Mu Homestay. In addition to quality beds, Mu Homestay offers guests reasonably complete facilities. Mu Homestay consistently maintains cleanliness and care to provide comfort to customers.

#### 5. Local Experience

One uniqueness of Mu Homestay is the opportunity to interact with locals. Owner Mu Homestay knows the surrounding community and is ready to share information about the local community's culture, customs, and daily life. They can help customers who want to visit traditional markets or unique places in Lombok. If there is a community or family of Mu's manager, Homestay Guests will be invited to participate in Sasak tribal customs such as Nyongkolan.

Mu Homestay can also help guests organize authentic local activities with tour packages offered, such as cycling through the countryside and giving guests participation in traditional handicrafts. All of this will allow guests to experience the surrounding community's natural beauty and local culture.

#### 6. Traveler feedback

Mu Homestay is an inn service business that is never empty of visitors. Several factors make Mu Homestay always visited by visitors, including exemplary service, hospitality from the manager of Mu Homestay, and customer comfort that Mu Homestay always upholds. In addition to the above factors, some factors cause Mu Homestay constantly to be flooded by visitors, namely feedback from customers who have stayed and felt the service provided by the manager of Mu Homestay.

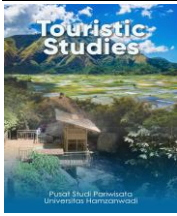
Tourist feedback means that tourists using Mu Homestay lodging services carry out promotional activities. The promotional activity in question is that these tourists recommend Mu Homestay lodging services to fellow foreign tourists because of the factors above.

With this feedback from tourists it has had a positive impact on the lodging service business owned by Mu Homestay. This tourist feedback also indirectly helped ease the promotional activities carried out by Mu Homestay. Positive feedback from travelers can have a significant positive impact on lodging businesses like Mu Homestay.

## Conclusion

It is related to how to increase the marketability of the Homestay business in the low





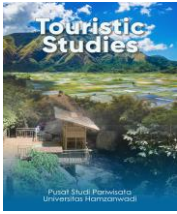
season. Mu Homestay presents a variety of tour packages to attract tourists, not only relying on natural beauty but also offering exciting activities. In addition, Mu Homestay collaborates with tourism agents to facilitate the sale of tour packages. This cooperation is essential in marketing tourism products and achieving desired goals. Conduct conventional and digital promotions through word of mouth by tourists who have visited and use social media to reach a wider audience. Improve service quality. Mu Homestay focuses on five service quality elements: physical, reliability, responsiveness, certainty, and empathy.

The strategy is to minimize losses during the low season. Mu Homestay provides comfort and satisfaction to tourists by ensuring cleanliness, safety, and hospitality, providing a local experience and guaranteeing comfort. Thus, Mu Homestay gets traveler feedback, such as promoting Mu Homestay to

Other travelers. In addition, tourist feedback here is that tourists give positive reviews on Mu Homestay's social media platforms.

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