

Implementation Of Digital Branding For Rural Tourism Development

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism is a strategic step developed by the government to promote regional culture and improve the global economy. the development of rural tourism can be done through social media by promoting the concept of digital branding, but the fact is that the concept of digital branding is still rarely practiced by rural tourism actors. This research uses exploratory qualitative methods that aim to explore something new, which is not widely known by the public. It is found that to build digital branding, the actors need to pay attention to the keywords, captions and taglines used, identify the uniqueness of the tourist attraction to be featured in the content, and conceptualize the content material about telling experience. By applying these concepts, each destination can promote its uniqueness and characteristics through a digital media effectively.

Keywords: rural tourism, digital branding, tourism development

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's natural tourism potential is endless to explore. Indonesia is blessed with an amazing variety of landscapes. The territory of Indonesia has around 17,504 islands, passed by the equator, a line of volcanoes, and a diversity of flora and fauna, most of which are in rural Indonesia. According to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there were 83,794 villages in Indonesia in 2022. (dataindonesia.id, 2023)

This natural wealth owned by Indonesia makes Indonesia's natural tourism potential unquestionable charm. Indonesia's natural tourism or can be called rural tourism, it's potential

cannot be ignored. The government is starting to develop Indonesia's natural tourism potential to be better known to the world. Especially in terms of lifting tourism in rural areas, which is done to make the village superior by having a tourist attraction so that it can lift the economy of the surrounding community. Rural development is the process of increasing the quality in village, by providing a healthy and sustainable ecosystem, it is critical for national development (Gilaninia, 2015)

Tourism village management in Indonesia is part of a sustainable tourism development program. This program is in accordance with the 2020-2024 RPJMN , in order to accelerate the revival of tourism and national economic growth. To strengthen the development of tourism villages, Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) also collaborates with the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (Kemendes PDTT). In order to accelerate the development of rural tourism, the government also carries out a digital promotion strategy by collaborating with various creative industries. (kemenkopmk.go.id, 2020)

Digital promotion has been intensified by the government since after Covid 19 pandemic hit the world which made interest in traveling decrease, but technological developments have become a good thing for the tourism sector and creative economy to survive and thrive amid the pandemic. One of the government's efforts in promoting digital tourism is by providing internet and wifi services, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf) has collaborated with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemkominfo) in developing telecommunications and informatics (ICT) infrastructure in tourism village in Indonesia. To strive for the flow of digital information to be more adequate to remote areas. Not only to support digital tourism, improving internet services while optimizing the development of digital nomad tourism trends in Indonesia. (kemenparekraf.go.id, 2021). This is also related to the fact that the Internet greatly facilitates the information process. Thus, when tourists turn to an online travel agency, 43% of them already know exactly where they will travel and what services they will choose (Watkins et al., 2018), Because on the internet through social media it has

provided a complete range of information about the desired tourist destination, the more complete the information conveyed, the more it can convince someone to visit.

Along with the increasing efforts of digital tourism in building tourism villages carried out by the government, there are several things that need to be considered as well, especially about public awareness in maximizing the tourism potential in their area and promoting it through digital channels. One relatively new social media platform that is helping tourism and hospitality businesses engage with consumers in this enjoy, advocate, and bond stage is the emergence of geo-location (Hudson & Thal, 2013) Social media platforms have a strong role to play in promoting Indonesia's tourism destinations. Many people decide to visit a place because of references from social media or testimonials from other travelers through social media, according to Hudson said, geo location that appears on social media pages makes it easier for people to find the place. Social media also as a source of research data in areas such as consumer decision-making process, e-word of mouth, and travel recommendations (Cheng & Edwards, 2015). People look for information about interesting tourist attractions through social media. The research found that a country as a tourism destination in the minds of final consumers, they use branding to make one country uniquely recognizable in the market. We need to pay special attention to obvious advantages of technologies in branding a destination as a tourism product (Parlov et al., 2016). Branding is a strategy that is currently growing rapidly in various countries or cities to create a strong positioning in the minds of their target markets (Astuti, 2017). So, the ability to brand tourist attractions through social media is something that is important to implement. Branding means building a concept that distinguishes itself from other tourist attractions or with the term digital branding.

Digital branding as well as a visual identity, also consider the thoughts, feeling, perceptions, images, experience, beliefs, attitudes and so on that are associated with brand, this set of considerations builds up our brand image and we may also talk about our experience of a brand as brand experience, brand is personality of a something (Rowles, 2022). So, it can simply describe that digital Branding is a process of building a story and the presence of a product through digital space. Therefore, this process is carried out through websites, applications, social media and the like. Branding is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or combination of all of them intended to

identify goods or services or groups of sellers and to distinguish from competitors' goods or services. Furthermore, Brands are considerable part of any organization's asset portfolio and as such, and they need to be maintained and protected (Cocoran, 2010). Not separated from online marketing, the role of digital branding here is also very important to support the effectiveness of tourism marketing online. That is why a brand is a value that is an important part of a product that must be maintained, announced consistently, or even published through paid advertising impressions to make people realize that a product truly exists. Without appropriate branding, the tourism products promoted will be difficult to recognize or remember by the public. So digital branding needs to be pursued to give a distinctive impression when someone reads or hears about the tourist attraction.

In today's technological era, Digital branding is the key to building meaningful relationships with target audiences online because most people search for tourist attraction information via the internet. This makes it important to reach the target tourists and turn them into tourists who want to visit again next time. Then through digital branding, it can easily introduce the product to the audience, which in this case is a tourism product. We can take an example from the Penglipuran tourism village in Bali, which has a complete digital channel ranging from social media, official websites, and multimedia-based applications. By prioritizing the concept of traditional culture and building architecture, Penglipuran village has successfully branded itself as a rural, fascinating cultural tourism. This means that small villages also have great potential in promoting their tourist attractions through social media if it is carried out properly. Then it is right that the government intensifies village tourism or rural tourism as the current trend destination. The number of villages that have interesting tourist attractions makes each village more competitive in attracting visits. However, in the reality, there are still many villages that have not utilized digital media as a medium to promote their villages.

This research wants to explain further about the importance of how to build digital branding through social media in promoting tourist attractions, and moreover to realize the village stakeholders that the potential of their village can have a good impact through the power of branding on social media and its relevance in the development of rural tourism.

RESEARCH METHODS

For data processing, researchers use exploratory qualitative methods that aim to explore something new, which is not widely known by the public, things that affect the occurrence of something so that it wants to be studied more deeply by analyzing the concept of branding used through digital media in promoting tourist attractions in the village, keyword used, captions used, taglines used, uniqueness representative, and content material. The findings are based on direct observation, and a collection of documentation from various media related to the object of research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Nowadays people have started to be media literate, people fully realize that digital media has a big impact, especially in terms of promotion. Creating social media that functions specifically to publish tourism-related content is very important. In Parveen research found that social media is used for showing market research, especially to gain customer feedback on existing products and services and opinions about upcoming new products and services. Social media is also used to extend new customers and to get referrals and enhance word-of-mouth communication (Parveen et al., 2015). Through social media sites like Facebook, the organizations can ask their customers or fans to share a particular link and advise a product or service to their friends. Moreover, people often look for tourism references only through social media. For this reason, it is recommended that villages have a special account for their tourism. In addition to publicizing tourism, with the account, the community can also have access to account tags when they post their trips to village tourism.

However, when social media accounts have been created, there are still many who do not know how to build digital branding on social media well and correctly for promoting tourism objects. It turns out that uploading photos or videos are not enough to succeed in getting a wide reach, many other things also need to be considered. The first is related to the name of the social

media account used. Does the name already represent the content we want to create, or does the name already reflect the characteristics we want to display. Then how to complete the biography in the account that can briefly describe the account accompanied by a contact or website link to make it easier for the audience to ask directly or explore more deeply about the information conveyed. Biography is one of the elements that determine the account to appear in the search on top, the keywords used in the biography need to be considered so that when the audience wants to find information about a tourist attraction. According to Wang said that we also need to ensure that the keywords are on target (topic) and not too general for use in search (Wang et al., 2016). Furthermore, finding a set of keywords to put on the biography in social media is just the first step. The resulting set of posts from the search can still be very much noisy because of many posts covering the keywords may not be relevant to the user matter. Considering it with detail is one of the ways to make it more specific so the account can build brand identity and appear at the top of the search engine.

Then, in a post about tourist attractions, captions (text description under photo or video) are no less important to include. Based on Heinonen research finding that social media activities are include sharing information and accessing shared knowledge online, such as opinions and comments, following current news from all over the world (Heinonen, 2011). So that caption needed for people can find out detailed information about tourist attractions. It is necessary to attach clear and detailed captions to inform tourist destinations, starting from the name of the place, description of the place, location distance, available facilities and times, entrance charges, to tips on what to do or not to do when you want to go the place can also be informed through captions, so that the audience who sees it already has rich knowledge about the tourist attraction. The use of language or sentences a more simple, valuable, and easy going, so that it is easier to understand and interesting to read. According to Though these sentences are enough to tell the user what the image is about in most cases, yet sometimes more than just a sentence is required to describe the context of image especially when a good description of the image draws more public attention or 'likes' on social media post (Gaur, 2019).

The next thing to considered is about tagline. Taglines (alternatively referred to as slogans, catchphrases, and positioning lines) are the initial phase and a critical component of brand development (Mohd Johan et al., 2022). Tagline of a product has a strong impact on building positive brand perception and as a key part of a brand's identity, contribute to a brand's equity, and brand's image, aid in its gratitude and recall, and help create product differentiation in consumers' brains. Dhanyasree and Kumar also dispute that tagline is combination of simple and catchy words created for advertising purposes and used to give an idea about a product or service offered (Dhanyasree & Kumar, 2018).

Taglines make it easy for people to remember a place. For this reason, a special tagline is needed so that it becomes a characteristic every time a post is made. Taglines in advertising can be said to be branding, this can be loaded in every content post on digital media either in the form of an invitation sentence, or through a hashtag, so that readers can remember the tourist attraction just by reading the tagline. Just like "wonderful Indonesia" which was created as a tagline to characterize the country of Indonesia which has features in various sides. This tagline wants to show the amazing diversity that Indonesia has. When creating a tagline, every word that is conveyed must be considered as detailed as possible so that the sentence, although short, can reflect the tourist attraction. Taglines must always be embedded in every upload consistently and continuously so that they can be remembered by social media viewers, as Yohn discuss that taglines serve an important purpose and are still a simple and efficient approach to expressing a new or updated brand statement (Yohn, 2013).

Rural tourism is a form of nature-based tourism that exposes the rural life, culture, art, and heritage at rural locations, thereby favoring the local communities socially and economically. Such form of tourism has created great impact on the local economy and socio-cultural setting of the concern area on one hand and carries a potential scope for the rural residents on the other hand (Mili, 2012). Rural tourism is a prospect for rural development. As a Villages are usually identical with natural beauty, depending on what natural scenery stands out in the village, such as offering green mountain views, or enchanting rivers, or unique village architecture, and so on. Through the concept of branding, a village has the freedom to point out what kind of tourism is suitable and

easy to remember. For case, if we want to create branding about the concept of natural tourism, then every shared content must always consistently present a green, clean, and comfortable tourist object. So that this tourist attraction can extant itself as a beautiful, alive, and friendly tourist attraction for all ages, it can also provide content in the form of recycling or environmentally friendly that supports the beautiful tourism branding. Carrying the concept of beautiful natural tourism branding certainly needs other support related to the environment, for example having materials or facilities in the form of recycled goods, or environmentally friendly such as trash cans made of rattan or food stall facilities that are decorated more beautifully. These things must be shared through digital media with sentences that describe the branding concept. Photo spots that are decorated using natural materials, this concept can also be adapted to create a natural impression and have characteristics that are easily remembered by visitors.

In the end, tourism branding carried out in the digital realm must be balanced with the concept of interesting content to be presented, interesting in the sense of informative content, such as articles, videos, or infographics that present information about village tourism. Focus on the experience of the community by telling about the experiences that can be found in village tourism, such as beautiful scenery, feelings of peace, clean places and cool air, added interesting photos and videos to provide an attractive display for viewers, invite them to share their experiences too when visiting this tour. According to Nevangga's found that Digital services will create a different feeling of satisfaction and experience compared to using conventional services. The community will spread the sense of satisfaction and experience to those around them to further enlarge the promotion's scope (Nevangga et al., 2023). Then the uploaded content can also present testimonials from visitors who have previously visited the tour. This aims to increase trust for the next potential visitor.

Furthermore, create informative content that presents information about tourist attractions, such as location, available facilities, and activities that can be held there, then tips for visitors who will come to tourist attractions, such as what equipment must be brought, the most passable photo spots, the easiest travel route to take, and what activities are suitable to do, present the uniqueness

that not much found in other tourist villages, such as herding cattle, hiking with beautiful scenery, or the history of the place.

Everything that has been described above will be realized if the villager realizes the importance of managing social media seriously to promote tourist attractions. There is no awareness from the villager to create a special group that can control social media consistently. In this perspective, Kastenholz and Carneiro argue an understanding of how tourism experiences may be supplied and managed in rural destinations, based on both market and destination knowledge, is of primary importance to help rural communities successfully design and manage rural tourism destinations and, ultimately, to achieve sustainable rural tourism development (Kastenholz et al., 2012). So far, social media has only been run based on people's personal desires, meaning that it has not been managed in a structured manner that is oriented towards the quantity of visitors to tourist attractions. What is often found is that social media is managed by anyone, even though he is already busy with his main job. We recommend that social media accounts be managed by a special person, so that the account can consistently run its social media update, create detailed captions, and edit photos properly. As Benthous found that companies engaging in social media will come to a certain level of professionalization when they need to adopt a social media management properly to climb the maturity ladder further (Benthous et al., 2016).

Given that the popularity of social media with tourism consumers continues to grow, tourism organizations can no longer ignore the rising popularity of social media nor their role in the travelers' travel planning process (Leung et al., 2013). This is the time to the rural resident to give attention for the development of their tourism object through social media.

CONCLUSION

The government is aggressively developing rural tourism that aim to increase economic growth, people's welfare, eliminate poverty, overcome unemployment, preserve nature, the environment and resources, and advance culture. The development of rural tourism is also a form

of accelerating integrated village development to encourage social, cultural, and economic transformation of villages. Therefore, each region and village need to look at its potential to be raised and developed to provide added value benefits and produce high productivity to improve the welfare of the local community.

Government has made some effort to improve digital facilities in rural areas, to compensate for this, villages need to build digital branding through social media in promoting tourist attractions, and moreover to realize the village stakeholders that the potential of their village can have a good impact through the power of branding on social media and its relevance in the development of rural tourism by analyzing the concept of branding used through digital media in promoting tourist attractions in the village.

The author realizes that there are still many things that need to be developed from this research such as using quantitative methods that can perfect the research, this might be a reference for future researchers.

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