

Digital Strategy in Enhancing Brand Equity of Pantai Matahari Tourism Sumenep

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ABSTRACT

This community service article delves into the implementation of a digital strategy aimed at elevating the brand equity of Pantai Matahari Tourism in Sumenep. Pantai Matahari, boasting natural beauty and cultural richness, holds significant potential as a tourist destination. However, its underdeveloped brand and limited exposure hinder the realization of its full tourism potential. Through an in-depth analysis of the tourism landscape in Sumenep, key elements for branding are identified. A meticulously crafted digital marketing strategy is then introduced to enhance the visibility and popularity of Pantai Matahari Tourism in the digital realm. This strategy incorporates social media and content marketing to engage a broader audience. The outcome of this initiative includes the establishment of a robust brand identity for Pantai Matahari Tourism, leading to increased public awareness and visitor interest. Collaborative efforts with local stakeholders and businesses further contribute to strengthened tourism infrastructure and attract new investments. The findings underscore the positive impact of tailored branding and digital marketing strategies on the development of Pantai Matahari Tourism, fostering economic benefits for local communities while preserving natural and cultural treasures. This community service initiative signifies a tangible contribution to sustainable tourism development in Sumenep.

Kata Kunci: Brand Equity, Destination Tourism, Digital Strategy, Sumenep Regency, Tourism Improvement

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a vital sector in regional economic development, directly contributing to the increase of income and the well-being of local communities (Tamrin et al., 2024). This sector is especially relevant for areas with rich natural and cultural resources, such as Sumenep Regency, known for its diverse landscapes, cultural heritage, and historical sites (Mayvani et al., 2022). However, despite its wealth of resources, Sumenep faces several challenges in maximizing its ecotourism potential. The primary obstacles include limited public awareness and understanding of the tourism potential, as well as a lack of effective promotional efforts, which restrict the region's ability to attract visitors and stimulate the local economy (Atika et al., 2024).

Matahari Beach in Lobuk Village, Sumenep, is one of the potential tourist destinations that enriches the variety of tourism options in Sumenep Regency. This beach not only offers stunning natural beauty but is also located in a strategic area among other popular tourism destinations in Sumenep (Sufa et al., 2024). This makes Matahari Beach an ideal stopover for tourists wanting to explore various destinations in a single trip (Simorangkir et al., 2024).

With its strategic location, Matahari Beach has significant potential to attract visitors, both domestic and international. Besides its relatively easy access, the beach's presence enhances Sumenep's overall tourism appeal (Kurniawati et al., 2024). A focused development strategy, such as sustainable management and targeted digital promotion, could help increase Matahari Beach's visibility among tourists and establish it as a new tourism icon in Sumenep (Astariningsih Setyoputri et al., 2020).

The development of Matahari Beach also aligns with efforts to create a "tourism corridor" that connects popular destinations in Sumenep, offering a more memorable and cohesive experience for visitors (et al., 2024). By utilizing social media and digital content to showcase the beauty of Matahari Beach, this marketing strategy aims to boost interest in Sumenep tourism and strengthen Sumenep's position as a diverse and appealing destination in East Java (Nurjaman, 2022).

Quantitative data further emphasizes the need for focused intervention. For instance, recent tourism data indicates that the number of visitors to Sumenep is still lower than in other areas of East Java, with only around 150,000 visitors annually, compared to the 500,000 visitors per year in regions like Banyuwangi, highlighting untapped potential and opportunities for growth (Megawati et al., 2023). Moreover, economic indicators for local income and employment in the tourism sector show slower growth, with tourism contributing only about 3.5% to Sumenep's GRDP, compared to the regional average of 7.8%, underscoring the need for targeted strategies to support economic development through tourism (Sjaifurrachman & Fithry, 2024).

To address these challenges, a strategic and structured approach is required to elevate Sumenep's tourism profile (Nurul Herawati et al., 2023). This project aims to tackle these challenges by implementing a comprehensive branding strategy, supported by digital marketing initiatives designed to enhance awareness and visibility of Sumenep's tourism assets. The project begins with an in-depth analysis of Sumenep's main tourist destinations to identify unique features that could form a solid foundation for a strong brand identity (Tamrin et al., 2024).

The next phase involves implementing a digital marketing strategy through major social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to reach a broader audience. This includes content marketing as a core component, focusing on creating and sharing visually and informatively engaging materials—such as articles, photos, and videos—that highlight Sumenep's unique ecotourism attractions (Simorangkir et al., 2024). This targeted digital approach is expected not only to increase visitor numbers but

also to strengthen Sumenep's image as a distinctive ecotourism destination (Mayvani et al., 2022).

The expected outcomes of this project include a clear brand identity for Sumenep ecotourism and an increase in public awareness and interest. Additionally, partnerships with local stakeholders and businesses are expected to strengthen tourism infrastructure and attract investment, providing significant economic benefits to the community (Atika et al., 2024). This initiative demonstrates that effective branding and digital marketing can positively impact tourism development in Sumenep, contributing to sustainable tourism that supports economic growth while preserving the region's natural and cultural heritage (Abdul, 2019).

METHODS

This community service project aims to develop a branding and digital promotion strategy to enhance the tourism potential in Sumenep, with a focus on Matahari Beach in Lobuk Village. The project will be carried out through a structured process divided into five main stages:

1. Analysis of Tourism Potential

The initial stage involves a comprehensive analysis of the tourism potential in Sumenep, particularly focusing on Matahari Beach. This analysis will include mapping the area's natural, cultural, and historical attractions that could serve as tourist draws. Data will be collected through interviews, surveys, and observations to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the destination, as well as its accessibility and facilities. This analysis will provide a clear understanding of what makes Matahari Beach and the surrounding region attractive to visitors.

2. Development of Destination Branding

Based on the findings from the analysis, a destination branding strategy will be developed to highlight the unique aspects of Matahari Beach and Sumenep's tourism offerings as a whole. This will include the design of a logo, slogan, and other visual elements to create a strong identity for the destination. The primary focus will be on emphasizing the sustainability and natural beauty of Matahari Beach, positioning it as a unique attraction for both domestic and international tourists.

3. Digital Marketing Strategy Planning and Implementation

A digital marketing strategy will be executed using key social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. These platforms will be used to share visually appealing content, including photos, videos, and articles that showcase the tourism potential of Matahari Beach. Content marketing will play a central role in the strategy, providing travel stories, tourist testimonials, and educational materials that highlight the eco-tourism opportunities in Sumenep. This approach aims to increase the visibility of Sumenep and attract a broader audience, especially through digital engagement.

4. Training and Capacity Building for Local Communities

Engaging the local community is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and success of tourism development. Therefore, training programs will be organized for local stakeholders, focusing on tourism management, hospitality services, and the use of social media for tourism promotion. Additionally, capacity building will include skill development in areas such as guiding, marketing local products, and managing homestays or accommodations. These efforts will empower the local community to actively participate in the tourism sector and benefit from it.

5. Evaluation and Follow-up

After the implementation of the branding and digital marketing strategy, an evaluation will be conducted to assess the impact of the project on the increase in tourist visits and public awareness of Sumenep's tourism potential. The evaluation will help identify areas that need further development, allowing for the formulation of future strategies. Follow-up activities will ensure that the momentum built by the project continues, with ongoing improvements to the tourism sector in Sumenep.

This approach is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of tourism in Sumenep, especially in enhancing Matahari Beach as a key attraction. The project will not only improve the region's visibility but also generate economic benefits for the local community through sustainable tourism development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the service activities based on the methodology described above. Each phase of the project has yielded valuable insights and outcomes, contributing to the successful development of Matahari Beach as a key tourism destination in Sumenep. Below is a detailed discussion of the results and findings for each stage.

1. Analysis of Tourism Potential

The first phase involved a comprehensive analysis of Matahari Beach and its surrounding area. Through interviews, surveys, and observations, the project team assessed the natural, cultural, and historical attractions of the region, identifying key assets that could serve as tourism draws. The analysis revealed that Matahari Beach is uniquely positioned in a strategic location between other popular tourist destinations, such as Gili Labak Island and the Asta Tinggi Tombs, making it an attractive stop for visitors exploring multiple sites in Sumenep.

The analysis also highlighted several strengths, such as the beach's stunning natural beauty, calm atmosphere, and the opportunity for eco-tourism activities like bird watching and nature trails. However, challenges such as limited accessibility and insufficient tourist facilities were also identified. These findings served as the foundation for the subsequent phases of the project, particularly the branding and digital marketing strategy.

2. Development of Destination Branding

Based on the findings from the tourism potential analysis, a destination branding strategy was developed to highlight the unique aspects of Matahari Beach. The branding focused on the sustainability and natural beauty of the beach, emphasizing it as a distinctive ecotourism destination. The project team designed a logo, slogan, and other visual elements to create a strong and cohesive identity for the beach, positioning it as a must-visit destination for both domestic and international tourists.

The new branding was well-received by the local community and stakeholders, who participated actively in the branding process. The visual identity, which showcased the beach's unique features, was successfully incorporated into digital marketing efforts, contributing to a consistent and professional representation of Matahari Beach in promotional.

3. Digital Marketing Strategy Planning and Implementation

The implementation of the digital marketing strategy was one of the key successes of the project. The team utilized Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to create and share engaging content about Matahari Beach. The content focused on showcasing the natural beauty of the beach, the nearby attractions, and the potential for eco-tourism activities. The use of high-quality photos and videos, along with educational content about the area's environmental importance, proved to be effective in reaching a broader audience.

Analytics from the social media platforms indicated a significant increase in engagement, with Instagram interactions rising by 30% and Facebook likes increasing by 25% within the first three months of the campaign. The content marketing efforts, which included travel stories and testimonials from visitors, helped build awareness about Sumenep's tourism potential. The digital marketing strategy also played a critical role in improving the visibility of Matahari Beach as part of Sumenep's broader tourism appeal.

4. Training and Capacity Building for Local Communities

Engaging the local community was essential to ensuring the sustainability of tourism development at Matahari Beach. Throughout the project, training programs were held to equip local stakeholders with the necessary skills for tourism management and hospitality services. These sessions covered various topics, including the effective use of social media for tourism promotion, homestay management, and customer service for tourists.

The capacity-building activities also focused on skill development in areas such as guiding, marketing local products, and improving the quality of services for visitors. The enthusiasm from the local community was evident, with many participants expressing their eagerness to implement the knowledge gained. This active participation has contributed to creating a more knowledgeable and empowered community, ready to support the growth of tourism at Matahari Beach and beyond.

5. Evaluation and Follow-up

The evaluation phase, conducted at the end of the first nine months, showed that the project had made a positive impact on the local community's engagement with tourism development. The increased awareness of Matahari Beach's tourism potential was evident, as the community demonstrated a strong willingness to continue supporting the initiative. However, several areas for improvement were identified, including the need for further investment in tourism infrastructure, such as better road access and facilities for tourists.

Follow-up activities will focus on strengthening the existing partnerships with local businesses, enhancing infrastructure, and continuing to develop the branding and digital marketing strategies to ensure long-term success. Additionally, ongoing training programs for the community will be essential in maintaining the momentum of tourism development and addressing emerging challenges.



Figure 1. Workshop on tourism development strategy for Matahari Beach in Lobuk Village

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion outlined above, this community service project has had a positive impact on the development of tourism potential in Sumenep, particularly at Matahari Beach. Through the stages of tourism potential analysis, destination branding strategy development, digital marketing implementation, and training and capacity building for the local community, the project has shown strong enthusiasm and support from various parties, including village officials, Pokdarwis (tourism awareness groups), and local residents.

The awareness of Matahari Beach's tourism potential has increased, followed by greater local participation in supporting the development of this destination. The success of the digital marketing efforts, carried out through social media platforms, has also contributed to enhancing the visibility of Matahari Beach as an attractive destination, not only domestically but also internationally. Additionally, the training provided to the local community has increased their capacity to manage and promote tourism sustainably.

Although the project has shown positive outcomes, some challenges still need to be addressed, such as the need for improved infrastructure and accessibility around the tourist destinations. Therefore, follow-up actions involving local stakeholders and further development in infrastructure and ongoing promotion are necessary to ensure that the potential of Matahari Beach and tourism in Sumenep can be maximized and developed sustainably.

With greater awareness of the existing tourism potential and strong support from the community, the prospects for tourism development in Sumenep, particularly at Matahari Beach, are promising for boosting the local economy and positioning Sumenep as a leading ecotourism destination in Indonesia.

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