"Pemuda Hebat" as a virtual community in tourism branding at Ponorogo

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Abstract

Virtual communities bring together people with different values and common interests on a massive scale through the internet. Virtual communities present a new form of urban life, and as a result of the adaptation of the technological environment that people in them build identities. Pemuda Hebat is one of the virtual communities, which seeks to brand tourism in Ponorogo. This article uses the constructivism paradigm with a case study method, used to examine the virtual community 'pemuda hebat' and the social interactions that exist within. This article uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, which is research used to research on natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection is in the form of words or pictures, so it does not emphasise only on numbers. The collected data is analysed and described so that it is easily understood by others. Then it is analysed inductively, and the results of qualitative research emphasise meaning rather than generalisation. This research aims to describe and analyse Pemuda Hebat as a virtual community in branding tourism. The data sources used in this research are library materials relevant to the research topic. Data collection in this research uses the documentation method, which is the process of searching for literature data related to the research topic. The data analysis technique in this research uses qualitative techniques with content analysis. The results of this study indicate that tourism branding efforts through virtual communities have a positive impact on tourist visits. The interaction built in the virtual community provides support between individuals to share information and skills in terms of branding the tourism potential of their respective villages. The researchers suggest that in order for this community to be sustainable, it needs the attention of the government as it plays an important role in the development of tourism in the area.

Keywords

Virtual community, Branding, Tourism

Introduction

Society 5.0 is an era with the need for rapid information exchange, making the role of communication technology very important. One of the things that also follows the development of technology is the existence of virtual communities. The number of

virtual communities allows people to engage in activities and form communities virtually with people from all over the world without having to physically gather in one place [1].

In virtual communities, interactions occur using internet facilities, where interactions can be carried out without having to meet face-to-face and be in the same area [1]. The changes in the form of communities and volunteer activities carried out virtually are considered to have an impact on a community. Nasrullah (in [1]) states that in virtual communities, each individual has the right and is free to leave their community without any social sanctions to be received. So that in virtual communities' cohesiveness remains one of the important aspects. However, in the life of virtual communities in Indonesia, virtual communities tend to have to go through the physical meeting stage to find their identity as a social community.

The interactions formed in community members are impersonal because they only focus on the role of each member in the community and the activities to be carried out [2]. Whereas close enough interaction is needed so that solidarity in a community can be formed, this is explained in research conducted by [3]. Although virtual communities do not often communicate verbally, social interaction is still needed because the actors in the community are humans whose nature is to socialize.

Virtual communities manage and maintain the community to survive, many of them open recruitment of members to join the community. The target of recruitment in virtual communities is not a few that lead to students and students, because they are usually thirsty for new experiences and insights, including in the field of volunteering. [4] found that students join an organization to gain experience and new friends. However, in fact not all students who join organizations are able to carry out their duties properly.

The development of virtual communities today has attracted the attention of the Ponorogo Regency Government to form the "Pemuda Hebat" community. The "Pemuda Hebat" Community consists of young people from villages throughout Ponorogo Regency. These youths were given training on the use of social media as a branding medium. After the training, this community was given the task of branding tourism in their respective villages. This community is a verbal community that turns into a virtual community. Because the community does activities and communicates virtually. In the future, the community will be managed and developed virtually. The "Pemuda Hebat" Community is expected to be able to brand the potentials in Ponorogo through social media. As stated by [5], social media has a very important role in branding tourist destinations. In this era of growing digital transformation, social media has become one of the best ways to promote tourist destinations to a wider audience and build a strong brand image. Social media allows tourism potential to be recognized by customers and tourists. However, there needs to be a proper strategy to develop the community and maintain its sustainability.

Tourism branding through social media is an effective step to promote tourist destinations and attract tourists to visit a place. A branding strategy that can be used in the tourism industry is to increase visibility through social media [6]. Village tourism managers can utilise social media platforms to increase their reach.

Branding is the activity of creating an image, promoting a product or service [5]. There are three important roles of branding in science development. First, branding has a role to create a positive image for tourists, forming perceptions and loyalty through product references. Second, brands are associated with brand positioning that can form unique brand occupancy among tourists by utilising communication as a medium to create strong associations with product characteristics. Third, brands can add value to organisations and consumers [7].

In the branding process, marketing and promotion become very important. Various marketing strategies can be carried out, such as website development, social media, advertising campaigns, tour promotion, and various other forms of promotion. Destination branding can help tourist destinations to differentiate themselves from other destinations, increase the number of tourist visits, increase income from tourism, and have a positive impact on the local economy [5].

This research aims to describe and analyse Pemuda Hebat as a virtual community in branding tourism. This research highlights the use of digital technologies, such as social media and mobile applications, in building virtual communities focused on tourism branding. This reflects an adaptation to the development of 4.0 technologies that increasingly dominate the way people interact and share information about tourism destinations. In addition, Pemuda Hebat as a virtual community shows how the younger generation can play an active role in promoting tourism. It provides a new perspective on the role of local communities in tourism branding, where they are not only consumers but also content producers and destination promoters.

Method

This article uses the constructivism paradigm with a case study method, used to examine the virtual community 'pemuda hebat' and the social interactions that exist within. This article uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, which is research used to research on natural object conditions, where the researcher is the key instrument. Data collection is in the form of words or pictures, so it does not emphasise only on numbers. The collected data is analysed and described so that it is easily understood by others. Then it is analysed inductively, and the results of qualitative research emphasise meaning rather than generalisation [8].

Results and Discussion

Results

Youth with their abilities and skills play an important role in tourism development. Youth are expected to be a link between local wisdom and the needs of tourists. The way that youth can be involved in tourism development is by mastering social media as a means of branding tourist villages so that they become attractive to the wider community (Andayani in [9]). The use of social media can reach information and promote village potential more widely and massively. Tourism owned by the village can be recognised at a wider scope without any regional restrictions with the help of social media. The role of youth is very important in identifying and managing potential to be used as village branding through digital media.

By cooperating with local village youth, the Ponorogo district government took the initiative with the "Pemuda Hebat" programme. These "Pemuda Hebat" are young people who are selected from each village because of their ability to use technology and social media. The selected youth will be given training in event management, disaster mitigation in tourism, media publication, and YouTube. After the training, the youth joined a community called "Pemuda Hebat". Initially this "Pemuda Hebat" is a verbal community engaged in the promotion of tourism formed and funded by the government of Ponorogo district. With the development of technology, the community turned into a virtual community. They seek to promote tourism through existing social media. However, although this "Pemuda Hebat" community turned into a virtual community, this virtual community still establishes communication offline. So that social interaction within the community is maintained and intense.

From the results of the interviews, it can be concluded that the members of Pemuda Hebat have a strong motivation to contribute to tourism branding in Ponorogo. They actively use social media and organize various events to attract tourists. Despite facing challenges such as the lack of government support, they remain optimistic and committed to promoting the potential in their villages.

The Figure 1 is one of the activities of the great youth in promoting the tourism potential in their village. However, the ability to create content needs to be improved so that the content can attract tourists to visit their village.

Communication that takes place in simple things to the most complex things though, for example in marketing, sales, and branding activities of a product offered. Branding basically departs from the word brand / brand which means name, term, sign, symbol or design and a combination of all of them which aims to identify a product or service and distinguish it from others. Branding is not only a promotion, but a continuous process and integrated with all marketing activities that can create an image and excellence of a product so that it has competitive capabilities. The success of branding can increase added value and improve the quality of the industry [10].
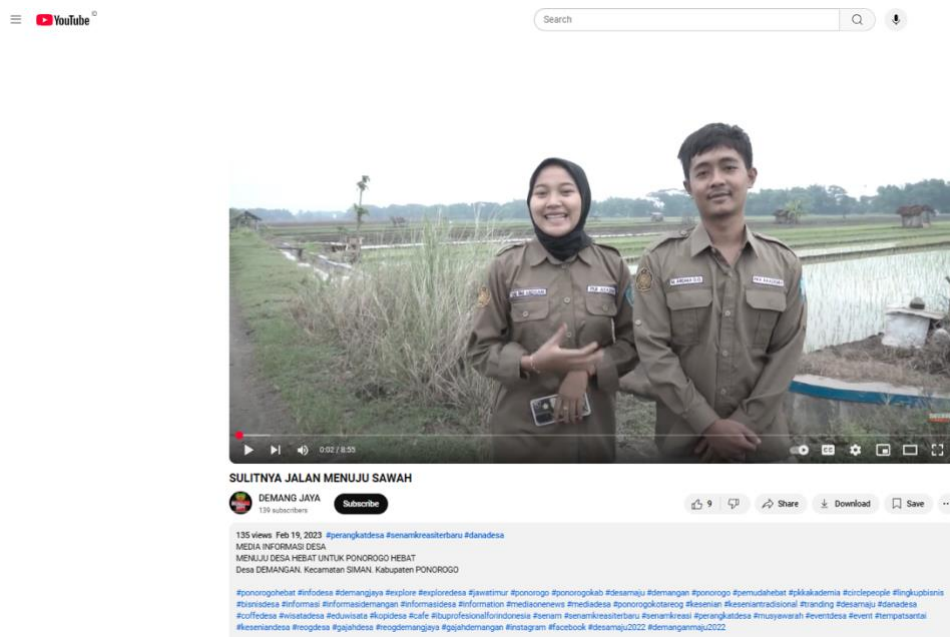
Figure 1. Pemuda Hebat activities in promoting the tourism potential

Tourism product branding cannot be separated from the participation of all elements of society including local youth. Local youth as one of the key actors in tourism branding has a huge impact. Youth who are technology literate are expected to be able to brand tourism potential with existing technology. Currently, digital technology has supported various tourism branding processes. It is undeniable that digital media or social media has a big influence on the tourism industry [5].

In accordance with the branding strategy, there are several stages in optimising tourism promotion activities of village tourism in Ponorogo regency. Branding is part of the marketing method. This method is the basis for maintaining the sustainability of tourism with a tourism image. Changes in the trend of tourists looking for information sources in the digital era through social media affect the effectiveness of the branding process carried out. Government [6].

Julia Winfield Pfefferkorn in [11] explains one of the branding strategies of a particular region, using digital tourism is necessary for foreign tourists and local tourists who want to visit tourist areas. In Ponorogo district in branding tourism will be increasingly developed with the presence of digital tourism. The form of digital tourism in Indonesia to develop tourism is the merc-des application. This application makes it easy for tourists to access tourist destinations with the merc-des application via smartphone. The merc-des application has features that are easy to use by users and the capacity is not too large. In this application there are tourist destinations, culinary to culture contained in each village in Ponorogo regency.

The role of the great youth community is important in terms of managing the merc-des application. Because those in charge of filling destination content in the application are young people who are already members of the great youth community. The briefing

that has been given certainly makes it easier for great youth to prepare content to publication. It is proven that the content in the merc-des application has many visitors.

However, the youth do not only promote. They work together with managers at tourist sites to develop a more targeted marketing strategy, especially with the icons that tourist objects already have so that they can be different from one village to another. They consistently maximise branding activities in the future by not only focusing on monotonous promotional activities. This certainly needs collaboration with stakeholders.

Discussion

Social media consumption has now become a social behaviour of the audience or users. In practice, information related to the existence of tourist attractions has become a consideration and agenda for the community to visit these tourist sites as a lifestyle today. So that conditions like this need to be further anticipated by the great youth to be ready to transform into a more modern marketing method than previous efforts. [12].

No less important is brand implementation, the purpose of the branding process is to instil awareness and a positive image in the minds of consumers, of course it must be supported by real conditions that match what has been imaged on social media. According to cooper in [10], tourism provides easy achievements for tourists to be able to access tourist sites, especially in terms of transportation or services offered. Meanwhile, the components provided as capital for tourist arrivals, both natural resources, cultural tourism attractions, and man-made attractions. Supporting facilities are needed by tourists, such as: lodging, restaurants, banks, travel agents, and others.

With the existence of this great youth community, finally branding a tourism destination can prosper local residents and fulfil the harmonisation of tourist needs. However, it is hoped that this branding effort by the great youth will not change the direction of sustainable tourism development. The development of a village tourism system ecosystem that emphasises local wisdom and protects the surrounding environment.

Conclusion

The importance of the role of youth in tourism development, particularly in utilising social media for branding rural tourism destinations. The involvement of local youth in branding tourism products through digital technology is highlighted as a key factor in improving the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry. The collaboration between the government and the 'great youth' community demonstrates the importance of youth in promoting and managing tourism branding efforts, which ultimately contribute to the economic welfare of local communities while preserving cultural heritage and environmental sustainability.

Cooperation with managers at tourist sites to develop a more targeted and iconic marketing strategy is an important stage to create competitiveness so that it does not

only focus on monotonous promotional activities. Because social media consumption has now become a social behaviour. Information related to tourist attractions has become a consideration and agenda for the community to visit these tourist sites as a lifestyle today. So that conditions like this need to be further anticipated by the great youth in order to continue to transform into more modern marketing methods.

Pemuda Hebat as a virtual community in tourism branding offers new and relevant insights into the role of technology and community participation in the modern tourism industry. Pemuda Hebat introduces the concept of virtual communities as an effective branding tool, replacing or complementing conventional tourism promotion methods. This shows a paradigm shift in the way tourism is marketed in the digital era.

Acknowledgement

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