

The role of cultural ambassadors in promoting Samarinda tourism

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Abstract

This study explores that Cultural Ambassadors play a strategic role in introducing and promoting the cultural richness and tourism potential of Samarinda, the capital city of East Kalimantan, Indonesia. As representatives of the younger generation who understand local cultural values, they act as communicators, educators, and promoters in disseminating information about tourist destinations, traditions, arts, and local wisdom to the wider community, including domestic and international tourists. With strong cultural knowledge and good communication skills, Cultural Ambassadors help create a positive image of Samarinda as a city rich in cultural heritage and worth visiting. Through qualitative methods, including interviews, case studies, and document analysis, this research aims to determine the importance of the role of Cultural Ambassadors in carrying out their duties to promote tourism in Samarinda. The findings reveal that they play a central role in cultural preservation, tourism marketing, and community engagement, especially through social media platforms and public events. The study concludes with recommendations for strengthening ambassador training, cross-sector collaboration, and the use of digital media in promoting Samarinda as a culturally vibrant and sustainable tourist destination.

Keywords

Cultural ambassadors, Tourism, Samarinda

Introduction

In the era of globalization, competition between regions in attracting tourists is increasingly high, necessitating active participation from various parties in efforts to optimize tourism promotion. Samarinda City, as the capital of East Kalimantan Province, possesses diverse tourism appeal, ranging from the beauty of the Mahakam River, the cultural richness of the Dayak and Kutai tribes, to unique culinary specialties. However, the path of introducing and promoting these potentials still face objective challenges in terms of reach and effectiveness. A critical challenge in this effort is the effectiveness and reach of promotional agents.

A tangible form of contribution addressing this promotional challenge is through reinforcing the role of Cultural Ambassadors (Duta Budaya), who represent the younger

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generation. Samarinda's Duta Budaya which had gone through selection and training processes, are expected to be the frontline in this promotional effort. Their duty is introducing and educating the public regarding Samarinda's local culture while also promoting local tourism destinations. Their role is highly strategic as they possess capacity in communication, cultural knowledge, and the use of social media, enabling them to package and convey local identity and values attractively to a broad audience. They are not merely the representative of the region but also agents of change who possess a deep understanding of local identity. Despite this acknowledged strategic importance in uplifting the regional tourism image, there are few numbers of studies that have specifically discussed the real contributions, effectiveness, and challenges faced by cultural ambassadors or Duta Budaya in Samarinda, as most studies focused on researchers' respective regions or cities. This lack of in-depth understanding hinders the local government in formulating promotional policies and programs that are more strategic and sustainable. Nevertheless, those studies will be used as references for in-depth analysis this study offers to uncover the extent of the Duta Budaya's role in promoting Samarinda tourism, as well as analyzing the effectiveness and strategies they utilize.

Based on the urgency and the existing research gap, this study aims to determine the importance of Duta Budaya's role in carrying out their duties to promote tourism in Samarinda City as front-line agents who educate the public and package local identity attractively. Furthermore, additional objective of this study is to analyze the strategies used by Duta Budaya's in introducing local tourism potential to the community and tourists. In order to achieve these objectives, this research will be structured as an empirical study focusing on revealing and analyzing the tangible contributions of the Duta Budaya within the local tourism context. The results of this research are expected to serve as evaluation material and strategic reference for the Duta Budaya, prospective Duta Budaya, and the local government, particularly the Samarinda City Education and Culture Official.

Method

The research execution is structured into three main stages. 1st Stage encompasses foundational preparation: Literature Study (including downloading international journals related to the research theme) and Field Observation (visiting the research location and communicating the research plan to relevant parties). During this initial phase, the team also determined the specific research method and prepared interview guidelines and questions. 2nd Stage focuses on Data Collection, primarily through interviewing tourism stakeholders at the research location, alongside comprehensive data collection that integrates literature review and the results of the interviews. Following data acquisition, 3rd Stage concentrates on processing and interpretation. This stage begins with Data Classification, involving the activities of collecting, sorting, classifying, synthesizing, summarizing, and creating indicators. As most of the data are

narrated, this study is using qualitative research method which searches identifying patterns and relationships that in turn developed into general findings. The methodology culminates in formulating the Conclusion, presented as a brief outline summarizing the final findings of the research.

Results and discussion

Based on the qualitative descriptive research conducted on the "Role of Cultural Ambassadors in Promoting Samarinda Tourism," the study has identified three principal roles, detailed strategies, and significant impacts of these young representatives as Communicators, Educators and Promoters.

As Communicators, Ambassadors serve as the official voice of the Samarinda City Government. Their effectiveness relies on seven functional dimensions of social media: identity, presence, relationships, reputation, groups, conversation, and sharing. By maintaining a strong identity (recognizable profiles) and presence (frequent updates), they ensure that Samarinda stays visible to potential tourists.

As Educators, they conduct activities aimed at preserving culture, such as teaching students about local history and traditional arts at sites like Kampung Tenun. This role is crucial because the interpretation of cultural acts determines the audience's emotional response. When ambassadors interpret local traditions with respect and pride, it elicits admiration from tourists or visitors, which will correlate a high intention to visit previously taught destinations.

Finally, as Promoters, Duta Budaya's involves active participation in major events, such as the harvest festival at Pampang Cultural Village, while consistently producing informative, educational, and engaging content focused on the ten (10) Objects of Cultural Advancement (OPK) utilizing Instagram and public events to create engaging content. Previous research indicates that shared content on social media may enhance a city's attractiveness through images built. Furthermore, high interactivity will build stronger relationships with the audience, fostering a community of returning tourists.

In spite of their success however, there are significant challenges that needs to be faced by Duta Budaya's whether it's internal or external, such as coordinating their short periods of tenure with local government program, limited financial support to cover necessary operational costs, difficulty in measuring public engagement and interests toward local culture especially among the youth. Nevertheless, the impact of their work is visible in which they have increased public and tourist awareness of Samarinda's cultural potential based on the number of increasing of public participation in local cultural festivals and public spendings on those festivals. These findings reinforce the importance of sustained collaboration and support from the Samarinda City Government to ensure the program's long-term effectiveness.

Conclusion

There are few key conclusions from this research that can be articulated. But in summary, Duta Budaya's are indeed invaluable strategic assets for Samarinda's tourism future. To maximize their role, this study offers the following recommendations on improving Duta Budaya's capabilities on promoting tourism for Samarinda that can be considered to be applied by similar cities. Firstly, it is recommended on focusing training on multilingual and hospitality skills to increase returning tourist as they often equate language capabilities and hospitality with competence and friendliness. Secondly, Duta Budaya's and related stakeholders should prioritize interactivity by actively engaging in conversations with followers whether through digital platform or directly to boost perceived destination attractiveness. Thirdly, on the topic of digital platform campaigns, Duta Budaya's need to cooperate with influencers, specifically nano and micro influencer segments to support the credibility of promotional campaigns. Finally, further research should shift towards measuring the long-term impact of these roles with quantitative indicators, such as the growth of the local creative economy and tourist arrival numbers.

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