

OPTIMIZING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN BRANDING MARON RIVER AS A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN PACITAN, EAST JAVA

Wida Nofiasari¹, Sandey Tantra Paramitha², Inggar Saputra³

Universitas Media Nusantara Citra, Jakarta, Jakarta Barat¹

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Jawa Barat²

Universitas Jakarta, Jakarta Pusat, DKI Jakarta³

wnofiasari@gmail.com¹, sandeytantra18@upi.edu¹, inggarsaputra88@gmail.com³

Naskah diterima tanggal _____, direvisi akhir tanggal _____, disetujui tanggal _____

Abstract

Tourism development in Indonesia is proliferating, marked by an increase in tourists and the increasing recognition of tourism in various regions. Technology, particularly social media, contributes to this growth by fostering the emergence of diverse social media platforms and content creators, which in turn boost the Indonesian tourism industry. One such example is the Maron River tourism in Pacitan, East Java. The Maron River is a tourist destination that offers tropical forests, animal ecosystems, and a variety of natural beauty that can be reached within an hour's journey by boat. Even though it is Pacitan's leading tourist attraction, the Maron River is still hampered by weak branding efforts through optimizing social media. This research aims to see the extent to which social media optimization supports the branding of Maron River tourism in Pacitan. The theories used are tourism communication, social media, and branding. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study research method. The research results stated, 1) The use of social media is quite effective in increasing the branding of Maron River as a tourism to the wider community, especially tourists visiting Pacitan; 2) An effective approach and outreach are needed to increase the natural tourism potential of the Maron River through increasing human resources in the area around the Maron River in mapping Maron River tourist destinations; 3) There are needs to be supported and cooperation between tourism actors in Pacitan in improving the branding of the Maron River tourist destination by providing education on the importance of social media to promote the Maron River tourist destination. Conclusion: An effective social media approach and strategy is needed, as well as support from Pacitan tourism actors in increasing community knowledge and experience to optimize the branding of the Maron River tourist destination with the help of social media.

Keywords: *Social Media, Branding, Tourism*

How to cite (APA Style): Anandayu, R., & Muslim, A.B., (2021), Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet consectetur adipiscing elit. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan*, 21 (3), 2021. 110-121. doi:<https://doi.org/10.17509/jpp.v21i3.xxxx>

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as one of the leading sectors and national priorities has developed rapidly in Indonesia in recent years. In 2022 is a turning point in the revival of the tourism sector in Indonesia after being suspended as a result of being hit by Pandemi Covid-19. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) until October 2022, the number of foreign tourist visits to Indonesia has reached 3.92 million people or exceeded the optimistic target or the set limit set at around 3.6 million people. These results result in tourism foreign exchange values of \$ 4.26 billion (Ministry of Tourism, 2022). The progress of

tourism is certainly supported by many factors, one of which is through digital communication with the use of social media, which is a new trend today. As explained by Sutisna et al. (2022), the use of social media platforms encourages the emergence of creator content that gives rise to the creative industry. Many people know tourist destinations in Indonesia through social media content on both Youtube, Instagram, and TikTok. Viralism makes the development of the tourism industry develop rapidly with the help of effective digital-based marketing communication in fostering a market place that is able to attract many tourists.

The development of tourism through digital marketing is in line with the goals of tourism in Indonesia, which want to encourage economic growth, improve the welfare of society, cultural progress, and national identity (Kemenpar, 2019). The progress of tourism on the economic side is also inseparable from the government's intervention, which places it as a sector of priority development together with food, energy, maritime, industrial estates, and special economic areas (KEK). This condition has an impact on the opening of business investment opportunities and the acceleration of infrastructure development. The tourism sector creates large financial benefits for economic actors through the supply of goods and services to tourists at tourist sites (Bessie, 2019). Tourism also encourages the creation of employment opportunities for creative economic actors involving the utilization of community potential through increasing knowledge, empowerment, and participation of the community as a development agent (Rakhmadani, 2021).

Tourism must be developed into a service industry sector that involves the desires and cooperation of the community (Cole, 2006). The active role of the community around the tourist sites is expected to be able to support the government in creating the success of tourism development (Devi & Sumanto, 2017). This is very important because in the last three decades, tourism has shifted from the aspects of entertainment and holidays, becoming a service industry that supports the local economy creatively (Mariyono, 2007) and creates sustainable community empowerment. In a study mentioned, the arrival of tourists visiting tourism objects can improve the welfare of local residents and encourage increased foreign exchange for the country (Febriana & Pangestuti, 2018).

The use of digital technology in tourism in Indonesia has been widely carried out in various Indonesian tourist destinations. Research Utomo (2023) of Jalan Tunjungan East Java area found a reality of the importance of digital marketing and promotion in comparing a tourist location. In the midst of globalized digital economic development, the use of websites and social media is felt to be important in creating influences to introduce and attract tourists to visiting tourist destinations. The existence of memorable knowledge and experience gained by tourists will create other people's interest in visiting the tourist site. Social media account support, tourist posts and influencers, cooperation with tourism applications, and online media also support the dissemination of information and tourism promotions regarding the uniqueness of tourism to the general public and tourists.

Meanwhile, Sutisna et al. (2022), in their research, explained that the optimization of digital-based tourism promotion supports the development of tourism in Pekijing Village, Banten. The development of digital tourism promotion is carried out through various social media, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. There are three strategies that can be carried out, namely (1) providing a fundamental understanding of various characters from the social media platform so that it helps the community in the development of Pekijing Village Tourism, (2) optimizing promotion on social media through attractive, appropriate, and targeted content production so that the community or prospective tourists are curious to come to Pekijing Tourism Village because it is viral on social media, and (3)

optimizing promotion through social media: Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok by creating unique and interesting titles and narratives.

A study conducted by Benjamin et al. (2021) explains how tourism communication through digital marketing is able to attract and increase the knowledge and interest of people to visit the Ciburial Tourism Village. This is because digital media is able to upload various information, both text and photos and videos, to market the Ciburial Tourism Village so that it is worth a visit. More and more international, national, and local tourist visits indicate success in marketing communication, which has an impact on the development of the Ciburial Tourism Village and the surrounding community. The success of tourism communication based on digital marketing is also felt by the community in the Aan Secret Waterfall tourist attraction. The beauty of the waterfall, panorama of cliffs, rice fields, hills, and sea is marketed by tourist managers using digital media (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube) through attractive and consistent content to be able to attract tourists (Gorda et al., 2021). The use of social media as the first choice is practical, has affordable costs, and is able to reach the audience of many Muslim women et al. (2021). Social media is considered quite effective in improving tourism in several cities or regions and introducing the identity of a city, such as a tagline specifically created to describe a city or region.

Pacitan East Java is one of the districts in Indonesia that has a tourism destination that is no less beautiful; if it continues to be communicated to the wider community, it will have a significant impact on tourist visits. One of the beautiful natural destinations in Pacitan, the Maron River, is located in Dersono Village, Pringkuku District, Pacitan Regency. At present, the Maron River is quite rapidly developing; tourists can walk along the river as far as 4.5 kilometers, which empties into Ngirobojo Beach. The beauty of the Maron River is considered to resemble the famous Amazon river in the world, so it is nicknamed the Green Canyon Pacitan and the Amazon Pacitan River. Along the way, using engine boats, tourists will see a variety of natural beauty ranging from greenish blue water to trees, forests, endemic animals, and other environmental ecosystems. Surrounded by dense tropical forests, high cliffs towering and flourishing various plants along the river created extraordinary views. This natural beauty makes the Maron River suitable for various natural activities such as swimming, fishing, and natural photography.

One of the most popular tourism activities is exploring the Maron River, where tourists will be unforgettable along the clear river with a calm flow of water equipped with beautiful views of tropical forests. Using a motorized boat with a local guide who is generally a local resident, for 40 minutes tourists will feel the trip along the river with a variety of flora and fauna around the Maron River. Various popular photo spots can be an opportunity for tourists to take Instagrammable photos so that they have the potential to go viral and increase the branding of the Maron River tourism to be more enjoyed by the wide audience. The best level of security with buoys and supporting facilities will make every tourist feel safe and comfortable along the Maron River.

One of the problems of the Maron River is the lack of socialization through social media, given the limited knowledge of the community and the managers of tourist destinations. So far, the Maron River tourism communication still relies on government promotion assistance and promotions from tourists who have visited the location through their personal social media in promoting to a wide audience. The promotion was also carried out in collaboration with tourist managers around the Maron River, which are members of the tourism and tourism information program promoted by private travel in Pacitan. While the management of social media has not been running optimally in comparing the Maron River tourism. This condition certainly needs attention because the construction of tourist destinations means

that success is also influenced by how to compare and promote tourist areas with all the potential for uniqueness and natural beauty. Moreover, keep in mind that tourism is a trip that is often limited in time, carried out by individuals or groups that aim to find balance and happiness in the social, cultural, natural, and scientific dimensions (Kodhyat, 1998).

The existence of the Maron River tourism has actually also just begun to be echoed in 2012. Long before that, the Maron River tends to be used by local residents for swimming and fishing activities. Based on the discussion of the surrounding community, it was finally agreed to open the Maron River tourist attraction, which received the support of local residents and the Pacitan Tourism Office. Since then, the Maron River tourist destination began with its superior facilities and the activity of the river using a motorized boat. Every year, tourists visiting the Maron River are quite large, reaching 10,000 people. This condition is strengthened by village institutions by establishing BUMDes, engine facilitation assistance, tourist t-shirts, and the provision of cleaning facilities. Even though they have received government support, the promotion and branding of the Maron River tourism are still felt, still lacking in particular in the optimization of social media. For this reason, there is a need for community participation in comparing and promoting the Maron River through the use and optimization of social media such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

This study conducts a qualitative method with a case study approach. Qualitative methods are research that bases itself on discursive things such as written documents, field notes, interview results, and non-discursive data (Pawito, 2007). While the approach of the case study used to provide an understanding of something that attracts attention, social processes that occur, concrete events, or the experience of people who are the background of a case.

Data Source and Instrument

The instrument of this study is carried out through primary data (observation, interviews, and documentation) and secondary data (journals, books, reports, and other literature studies). The key informant in this study was Dwi as the manager of the Maron and Dwi Purnawan River Tourism as the Chief Editor of Pacitanku.com.

Data Analysis

This study emphasizes interpretive qualitative analysis. The process begins with collecting data in the field, then classifying data according to the order in the diffusion of innovation. According to Sugiyono (2013), the qualitative research process is divided into 3 main stages, namely the stages of description, reduction, and selection. Researchers conduct in-depth analysis of the data and information obtained. The researcher can find themes by constructing the data obtained into a new building, hypothesis, or knowledge. The process of obtaining data or information at each stage (description, reduction, selection) is carried out circularly, repeatedly in various ways and from various sources. After finding conclusions from several stages, researchers convey information descriptively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

The process of branding and digital promotion is an important key in managing a tourist destination. This needs to get the support of many things, such as government regulations, the creativity

of villagers, increasing the knowledge and experience of villagers, tourism management innovations, as well as other things. However, the success of building a tourist destination requires the creativity of residents and managers of tourist attractions, especially in promotions or marketing. Creativity will increase, accompanied by an increase in the knowledge and experience of citizens, especially in empowering the economic community.

In this digital era, many promotions or marketing involve digital aspects, one of which is the use and optimization of using social media. During this time, the manager of tourism and the community around the Maron River are still faced with difficulty producing creative content and persuasive narratives. Often the existing social media is still minimal information and lacks updates so that it does not create an interest in other social media users. Moreover, often the people around the Maron River and the Maron River tourism manager are faced with the difficulty of internet access, as recognized by Dwi Hardianto as the manager of the Maron River tourism.

"The limitation of the internet is still our obstacle in developing branding and promotion of the Maron River tourism. Often signals are cut off, so that the weakness of the internet network makes content updates rarely done. Especially if there is a flood, the internet and electricity are a problem here. Another obstacle is the limited ability of managers and society in terms of knowledge and experience producing good, creative, and interesting content" (Dwi, 2023).

This condition certainly has an impact on the absence of a significant increase from tourists visiting the Maron River. The lack of tourism communication marked by minimal information is accessed; tourism promotion that is lacking in influence is still not the maximum branding of the Maron River in the wider community. Whereas according to Pratiningsyas (2016), the number of social media users in Indonesia is very large so as to create a broad market potential. Reality also shows that many tourists visit a tourist attraction after seeing viral photos, texts, and videos on various social media platforms such as TikTok, Youtube, and Instagram. This condition requires the expression and optimization of social media so that the branding and promotion of the Maron River tourism to the wider community, especially tourists who visit Pacitan, can run effectively and efficiently.

In overcoming the constraints of citizens' creativity, then his party cooperates with online media Pacitanku.com. This online media helps residents and tour managers in developing the social media of the Maron River so that it can be maximized. This is important as an effort to compare and promote the Maron River tour to be better known. Training, counseling, and guidance given by the Pacitanku Online Media Team is one way to overcome the difficulties of optimizing social media. Making attractive, unique, and quality content is a strategic choice in increasing the income of the community around the Maron River tourism location and creating a tourism-aware community and technology literacy. Collective commitment and awareness are expected to increase the number of tourist visits and increase the branding of the Maron River as the first choice in traveling in Pacitan Regency.

"Cooperation with Pacitanku online media is part of education, social, and economic communities. We want the people of technology literate, able to utilize social media in supporting the Maron River tourism. With the existence of social media education, the branding of the Maron River will be better, and the socioeconomic life of the community will be more prosperous. The key to tourism is one of them: improving the economy of the community around the tourist sites. Currently the Pacitanku.com team already has Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and a website. The most interested in Instagram, focus on tourism and MSMEs." (Purnawan, 2023).

Increasing the satisfaction and tourist experience gained by tourists while visiting the Maron River is one important aspect in communicating the Maron River tourism to the wider community. This is related to the uniqueness, attractions, and maximum services obtained by tourists while visiting the Maron River. So that the experience of a pleasant tour, as said (Kotler et al., 2017), the tour manager

must create the best service that is packaged with interesting messages so as to create a strong impression in promotion on social media. The combination of digital and conventional media is one of the effective strategies for creating emotional relationships with tourists. Social media, as its basic function as a means of education and entertainment, will encourage the involvement of more audiences or social media users to be interested in visiting the Maron River.

"We are trying to provide maximum service to tourists, so they are satisfied and come back to visit. Customer satisfaction will certainly encourage good messages, attractive content, and positive impressions, thus impacting an increase in tourist visits. Although it is not yet optimal, we are trying to package tourist satisfaction on social media so that there is interesting content. Of course, in the future, there needs to be innovation, such as combining conventional and digital media. Also felt the need for warmer interactions on social media between the managers of the Maron River social media and other social media users" (Dwi, 2023).

Social media is considered to be one of the effective keys to communicating the beauty and development of the Maron River tourism to the wider community. The existence of two-way interactions, as explained by Widada (2018) and Sukrillah et al. (2017), created interactive social relationships by familiarizing sharing information involving individuals and public media so that social media content can be enjoyed by many people. The use of social media actively and participatory, according to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010), will create a communicative response so as to create positive perceptions and make tourists easily make decisions to visit the Maron River. It also supports the creation of good added values in names, symbols, and designs that create emotional attachments between social media users so that tourist loyalty is born to visit the Maron River more than once, Lipa (2009) and Judisseno (2019).

"Actually, interesting social media, such as TikTok and Instagram, for example, provides the opportunity to share information between users. Interesting content and viral videos are sought after by netizens. This means that there is two-way communication; there is a reply interaction, comments, and others. If the social media of the Maron River, assisted by the Pacitanku.com team, can be activated and routinely there is an update, then information is easy to spread and create more participatory interactions with other social media users. The branding and promotion of the Maron River will be stronger, so they have seen on social media interesting; there must be an interest and intention to come directly to the Maron River tourist location." (Dwi, 2023)

To develop Maron River tourism, effective approaches and socialization are needed in increasing the natural tourism potential of the Maron River through increasing human resources in the area around the Maron River in comparing the Maron River tourism destination. Learning to tourism managers and the community around the Maron River towards making interesting content, persuasive actions so that more tourists who tell the experience of traveling in the Maron River, live streaming and video tour of the Maron River, the creation of interactions with social media users (reply comments and messages, Hastag and tagging, as well as the news of giveaway), collaboration with influencers, the use of paid promotional advertisements on social media, the use of Search Engine Optimizing (SEO) into several approaches and social media strategies that can be maximized. By using various strategies, it is hoped that the potential of social media can be utilized to attract more tourist visits, bring up awareness of traveling to the Maron River, and create an interesting and unforgettable travel experience.

Optimizing social media certainly requires support and cooperation between tourism actors in Pacitan in increasing the branding of the Maron River tourism destination. Increasing access to knowledge and education of social media as established in Pacitu.com cooperation and tourism managers to promote the Maron River tourism destination certainly needs to be improved and expanded. The government, the private sector, and organizational and community support in the community can also be maximized so that tourists' interest in visiting and enjoying the natural beauty of the Maron River

increases. In this case, the support of social media training from the government through the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports of Pacitan Regency is needed by the community and the manager of the Maron River tourism. In addition, efforts to promote the beauty of the Maron River tourism can also be done by the private sector through tourism travel agents in Pacitan and surrounding areas. While groups or communities in the community can play a role in the broadness of the Maron River tourism in the internal environment of the group or community. The cooperation of various stakeholders helped determine the sustainability and existence of the Maron River as one of the leading destinations of Pacitan tourism. The need for continuous awareness of the community to be able to advance the destination in Pacitan, as conveyed by Dwi Purnawan.

“The desire to treat the longing of my hometown led me to think of the right way to treat longing by making a book called “Pacitan, The Heaven of Indonesia.” Then in 2013 I ventured to create a website that specifically explored the potential of Pacitan tourism through Pacitanku.com. There I feel happy because it is one of the reasons for others to be happy after reading the writing on Pacitanku.com” (Purnawan, 2023).

Creativity is the key in formulating the steps. The role of the character community in narrating his experience through the realm of digital media began to explore unique and interesting stories that were only owned by Pacitan. They create a different tourist experience from the others, inviting tourists to feel the beauty of Pacitan in depth. Not only that, the involvement of stakeholders and the community of figures became the main focus.

“In utilizing the tourism potential of the Maron River, I invite residents to contribute to serving tourists using a predetermined boat according to the distribution in turn and then together maintain the cleanliness of the Maron River. For me, the role of citizens is very important in developing the Maron River tourism so that people can benefit from the results of tourist visit” (Dwi, 2023).

By involving the community directly, they are not only spectators but also the main actors in tourism promotion. Local businesses are invited to participate, local craftsmen are given the opportunity to show off their work, and street vendors become part of an authentic tourist experience. With strong differentiation, Pacific tourism branding began to attract attention. Through the optimization of digital media, Pacitan is a different destination, not just an ordinary vacation destination. Tourists not only come to see but also feel and experience the beauty and warmth of Pacitan through the sensation of his experience.

Discussion

Branding of Maron River, Pacitan

In theory, tourism communication is dynamic and continues to experience development, which links the interests of communication marked by the rise of the use of technology and social media in the world of tourism. Tourism communication is the process of spreading information about a tourist destination, attractions, services, and experience of traveling to prospective tourists by involving face-to-face interactions and digital-based media facilities. The purpose of tourism communication is to promote tourist destinations so that they can attract tourists, increase tourist satisfaction, and strengthen tourist destination branding in the eyes of tourists. At present, the development of tourism communication is much associated with digital marketing, where information about tourism destinations is communicated to the market through various media channels. In encouraging the success of tourism communication, it is necessary to encourage the branding of tourism destinations that display the uniqueness of tourist destinations so as to attract visitors. An interesting message packaging will create a rational emotional relationship. In addition, media strategy is needed involving conventional and digital media so as to reach a wide audience (Kotler et al., 2017).

Branding Pacitan, especially the Maron River tourism location, has been run by the community, businesses, and academics from the UNS campus. According to Ravamawati & Sicilia Sawitri (2015), the branding of a product contains promises and trust that will be instilled in the minds of people who receive it. There are 3 most important things in branding, namely mind (concept), behavior (behavior in managing), and visual (design or packaging). The existence of the Maron River tourism concept that resembles the Amazon River in the context of Indonesia places the concept in the behavior of managing the Maron River as an attractive tourist destination and succeeds in visualizing the beauty of the Maron River tourism that resembles the beauty of the Amazon River tourism. At present, the branding to be developed by the Maron River as a superior river tourist attraction in Pacitan is developed with UNS, which routinely sends students to teach young people in Pacitan how to compare the Maron River through social media so that it becomes one of the tourist destinations in Pacitan that is well known to the public. The tourist location that has been opened since 2012 is able to present thousands of visitors every year. Through an effort to attach tourists to the beauty of the Maron River with the Amazon River, a brand relationship is developed, which means more than just the physical attribute of a product. The process of creating and finalizing the brand is influenced by the knowledge or experience of the creative service of the Pacitan community from their creative dedication, and this is the main capital to interpret attractive Pacitan tourism. The brand that is designed is disserted by the meaning and value that exist in the realities of the experience of Pacitan figures. Facilitation of tourism, such as ships or boats for around the Maron River, is well coordinated between the government and the community. In addition, the community's economy is encouraged to grow by providing home-based entrepreneurs and MSMEs at tourist sites. Services, cleanliness, safety, and comfort are a priority in developing the Maron River tourism in Pacitan.

In managing tourism in Pacitan, of course there are many supporting and inhibiting factors that become dynamics and challenges for tourist attraction managers. Dwi Hardianto, who manages the Maron River tourism as one of the well-known tourist sites in Pacitan, explains the inadequate road factor, making it difficult for tourists to visit the tourist sites. In addition, the existence of natural disasters, telecommunications networks, and the rise of plastic waste produced by tourists also influence the interest of tourists in the Maron River. In the rainy season, if the rainfall is high, the tourist attraction must be closed to avoid things that are not desirable. In addition, telecommunications networks that are difficult to use make tourists feel less comfortable traveling. But the high access to tourist visits also affects the garbage that is piled up and is trying to find a solution with a garbage truck that transports rubbish regularly.

Social media is an online medium that allows users to communicate and supports the smoothness of social interaction. The media uses web-based technology that makes users connected interactively through a two-way dialogue process. Through social media, the collaboration process is created and facilitates the presence of users and the formation of a fabric between users and social relations. (Widada, 2018) Sukrillah et al. (2017) explain social media as a convergence between face-to-face communication, in the sense of sharing between individuals (shared one per one), and public media, in the sense of sharing with everyone without individual characteristics.

In the world of tourism, the use of social media will have an impact on the decisions and perceptions of tourists in visiting a tourist destination. To achieve this goal, it takes interesting content, active participation of influencers, and the development of interactions between users through social relations and responses in communication on various social media platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The love of the land of birth encourages Dwi Purnawan, a native son of Pacitan, to initiate the Pacitanku.com website. Starting from the hobby of cursing status on Facebook, then there was crowded coordination through the WhatsApp group when there was a flood in Pacitan in 2017, making Dwi participate actively to help the difficulties of Pacitan residents. Since then, social media such as Instagram and websites have

been maximized by Dwi to popularize tourism in Pacitan. According to him, the use of social media is very helpful in comparing tourism in Pacitan. Routinely, Dwi created Instagram and website as effective promotional media in supporting the progress of tourism in Pacitan. In addition to collaborating with the government, efforts to use social media also involve the MSMEs to advertise their products and businesses. Media facilities, both social media and online media, are the choice given the broad reach and tend to be easily accepted by the Pacitan and Pacitan people in terms of information and communication delivered. For example, when my Pacitan media often lifts the beauty of Pacitan tourist attractions, it goes immediately viral and helps encourage the increase in the number of tourists visiting tourist destinations in Pacitan.

The broad impact and influence that spread quickly through social media encouraged Dwi and his team to establish cooperation with many circles, including the government, both the East Java Provincial Government and the Pacitan Regency Government, and MSMEs around the tourist sites. The impact of social media also influences tourism development with economic goals and social information such as natural disasters in Pacitan. Dissemination of information through social media is one of the Pacific tourism branding strategies. According to Gelder (2005), included in the brand strategy are brand positioning, brand identity, and brand personality. While those included in the Knowledge brand include brand awareness and brand image. Brand positioning to be achieved: Pacitanku became the main means of communication in popularizing Pacitan tourism, which continued the formation of identity due to the delivery of messages to the Pacitanku brand. When discussing social media and Pacitanku as online media, a very strong brand personality is formed in the eyes of tourists. In terms of knowledge, this affects the existence of brand awareness and brand image that helps to develop information and communication to tourists for the beauty of tourism in Pacitan.

The Community Figures' Support in Branding the Maron River through Social Media

One of the efforts to promote Pacitan tourism is to combine social media power and a community network that is incorporated in the community. Pacitan tourism can develop because the figures who are generally Pacitan residents who live and inhabit Pacitan and *diaspora* who spread outside Pacitan continue to promote the beauty of Pacitan tourism as a place of birth. Although connected with the outside world, longing for my hometown creates social interaction and pride for Pacitan. This has implications for longing, pride, and desire to show the beauty of nature and humans in Pacitan to others as perceived in thought (Kavaratzis & Mary Jo Hatch, 2019).

Through the existing association, the community of characters builds their best dedication in the form of creative service that has the meaning of affection for the place where he is born and grows flowers in the best life phase. With a meaningful wealth of knowledge and experience, they try to make creative service a life choice so that everything in his birthplace is trying to be guarded, preserved, and introduced to people outside of Pacitan. This form of creative tourism communication is carried out in various ways in accordance with the special specifications that are the background of the character. There is developing support through the creation and provision of tourism facilities, building museums as a means of education and recreation for citizens, encouraging tourism policies and regulations that improve the welfare of the community, and various other creative services.

The uniqueness that exists in the Pacitan realm and cultural heritage in the form of a place and historical heritage does not escape the attention of the community community so that it can be developed optimally through various approaches, such as holding various cultural festival activities and tourist attractions, so as to increase the number of tourists visiting Pacitan. Through the experience of the community, the character develops various creative ideas that depart from the calling to act and contribute

according to the expertise they have. They continue to fight tirelessly in introducing tourism potential and various advantages possessed by Pacitan.

Based on the experience and personal knowledge of the community, the recent creative service emerged, which was not merely a desire to promote tourism and get economic incentives. Creative dedication is more encouraged in how to create a socio-cultural approach that is built on the attitude of egalitarianism in building land spilling on its blood. When promoting a tourist destination, the character community tries to build emotional ties with tourism, which is the segmentation of the priority of its best creative service. As Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono did, the creative service of the former President of the Republic of Indonesia was carried out by building an educational museum, the SBY-Ani Museum. Whereas Dwi created his creative service by raising support so that the Maron River became a tourist destination for tourist choices to visit Pacitan. Outside the two people, there are many figures who participated in the Pacitan tourism.

Dwi Purnawan, founder of Pacitanku.com himself, chose to have a career and provide creative service through social media facilities and websites that have been undertaken so far. Through his best abilities, he had written a book that tells the story of the beauty of Pacitan tourism. With the encouragement and support of the people around him, the thought and ideas of creating a website that are able to treat longing for their hometown. Through the media, he hopes that more people will recognize the potential of Pacific tourism, want to visit tourist destinations, and improve the welfare of traders and the community around tourist attractions. This creates immeasurable happiness in his life, both born and feelings of inner as a Pacitan citizen.

The involvement of residents around the Maron River tourist attraction is also inseparable from the attention of the character, where the community of figures is trying to invite residents around the Maron River to pay attention to the comfort, cleanliness, and creativity in developing tourism. Residents are invited to be orderly in serving visitors who will board a boat to go along the Maron River. In addition, cleanliness must also be maintained so as to maintain the trust of tourists in a clean tourist environment. Selan is the participation of residents carried out with waste contributions and awareness of collecting waste through the provision of garbage bins, especially for traders who sell around tourist sites. Through these approaches, the community of figures invites the community to create extraordinary experiences for tourists so that the impression is expected to make a visit to the Maron River on a different occasion.

Community participation to be aware of tourism is a factor of the key to maximizing productive assets, namely human resources as a controller that creates the best management in every tourist destination, including the Maron River in it. Comparing human resources in tourism locations with creative community service and media support that is raised by social media and online media, Pacitu.com becomes relevant to support attractive tourism in Pacitan (Roman & Bury, 2022). Various key factors create added value, which is beneficial both in social interaction, increases income or economic value, and encourages an ecological tourism environment to be maintained in an effort to pass on the natural beauty of Pacitan for future generations.

Infrastructures Supports

Infrastructure is the key to building and developing Pacitan tourism, where one form of support for tourism creativity is the availability of facilities and infrastructure that can create comfort for tourists. Maron River Tourism Object in natural beauty is able to describe the uniqueness of the nature of Pacitan by attracting many tourists to enjoy riding a boat by going along the natural beauty of the river, which is considered to resemble the Amazon. This condition creates a different, unique tourist experience and is able to bring memorable memories for every tourist who comes to visit it. This infrastructure support is a priority so that tourists not only gain knowledge of the natural conditions of Pacitan but can also

describe the memorable experience of services, especially tourism infrastructure in various Pacitan tourist destinations.

Infrastructure support in the Maron River itself emerged from the initiative and aspirations of residents who were accommodated by the local government and the community. At present the cleanliness and order of the Maron River as a tourist location is quite good, as are the existence of parking facilities, the provision of tickets or tickets for entry, tourist managers that are quite professional, traders who are orderly in selling merchandise, and support for cleaning services in the management of visitor waste, and traders already walk pretty well. Various facilities are supported by well-engineered boat facilities and uniformed, orderly, and professional officers in serving the needs of visitors who will go along the Maron River. All the need for service infrastructure is trying to bring the best service that tries to satisfy the needs of visitors or tourists. But the road to the location of the Maron River still needs development because the road is narrow and rather difficult to pass by four-wheeled vehicles.

In addition, it is trying to be developed by the government, tourist managers, and the community to increase Instagrammable photo spots so that tourists can upload their best photos on social media with the natural background of the Maron River. The provision of the internet is also being maximized in supporting the availability of active communication facilities through social media, which is one of the priority needs of visitors. Suppressing floods and heavy rain, which often impact the closure of the Maron River tourism object, is also being found to be the best solution. The tour manager is also trying to establish cooperation with the State Electricity Company (PLN) so that the supply of electricity for the Maron River tourism object can run well related to various tourist needs, such as charging mobile phones or television watching facilities while gathering and eating with families in various canteen service facilities held by traders around the tourist sites. In addition, considering that there is an increasing need for lodging facilities, being encouraged by lodging that is friendly and quality so that it makes it easier for tourists who want to stay in the village around the Maron River tourist location.

Naturally, various advantages over the support of the Maron River tourism infrastructure are a top priority in improving memorable experiences for tourists. As a leading tourist attraction in the Pacitan area, efforts to comparable require cooperation with human involvement in it that manages tourism itself, including infrastructure services that are an important part of the tourism services business. The shortage in infrastructure becomes a necessity, but it is not a reason to make pessimism about the development of the Maron River tourism in the future. Various deficiencies that exist are trying to improve, and potential excellence that exists will be improved so that the Maron River becomes an interesting, ecologically attractive tourism and creates the best socio-cultural knowledge in maintaining, maintaining, preserving, and developing nature tourism in Pacitan.

CONCLUSION

Social media is a strategic need in communicating tourism in Indonesia, including the Maron River tourist destination in Pacitan. With the beauty of nature and facilitation of river handling activities, the existence of the Maron River tourism promotion must continue to be improved so as to create strong branding for tourists. The existence of strong branding will encourage more and more tourists to visit the Maron River. The increase in the number of tourists will certainly increase the income and economy of the community, thereby encouraging collective welfare and justice. Parking and optimization of social media is an effective means of increasing the branding of Maron River tourism among tourists.

In promoting and comparing Maron River tourism, a variety of strategies and approaches to social media are appropriate and effective. The combination of content, collaboration, social interaction, and use of paid media can be a strategy option to promote the Maron River on social media. In addition, active support and participation are needed from the Pacitan Tourism Actor, both the government and

private sector, and the community in increasing the knowledge and experience of the community around the Maron River and the Maron River Tourism Manager in order to create the optimization of the Maron River tourism destination branding by utilizing social media. Cooperation between stakeholders is believed to be able to strengthen the tourism ecosystem in Pacitan, especially in the Maron River.

REFERENCES

- Benjamin, P., Maryani, E., & Octavianti, M. (2021). Penggunaan Media Digital Dalam Komunikasi Pemasaran Desa Wisata Ciburial, Samarang, Garut. *Communication*, 12(2), 107-121.
- Cole, S. (2006). *Cultural Tourism Community Participation and Empowerment*. British: Channel View Publication.
- Devi, A. H., & Sumanto, R. B. (2017). Pengembangan Obyek Dan Daya Tarik Wisata Alam Sebagai Daerah Tujuan Wisata. *Jurnal Sosiologi DILEMA*. 32(1), 34-44
- Febriana, Y. E., & Pangestuti, E. (2018). Analisis Dampak Pengembangan Kepariwisata Dalam Menunjang Keberlanjutan Ekonomi Dan Social Budaya Lokal Masyarakat (Studi Pada Desa Wisata Gubugklakah, Kecamatan Poncokusumo, Kabupaten Malang). *Jurnal Administrasi Bisnis*. 61(4), 143-150.
- Gorda, A.A.N.O.S., Prayoga, K.B.S., & Anggreswari, N.P.Y., (2021). Komunikasi Pemasaran Objek Wisata Aan Secret Waterfall Berbasis Digital. *Ganaya: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*, 4(1), 29-39.
- Judisseno, R. K. (2019). *Branding Destinasi & Promosi Pariwisata*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Juita L.D Bessie, J.D.L., (2019) Implementasi E-Commerce Dalam Industri Pariwisata. *Journal Of Management (Sme's)*, 8(1), 45-62
- Kaplan, A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the World, Unite The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media, *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Kotler, P., Bowen, J., & Makens, J., (2017). *Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism*. London: Pearson.
- Kodhyat, H, (1998). *Sejarah Pariwisata dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia*. Jakarta. Grasindo
- Liping A.Chai, William C. G. An. M. M. (2009). *Tourism Branding: Communities in Action* (Liping A.Chai, William C.Gartner, & Ana Maria Munar, Eds.). West Yorkshire: Emerald Group Publishing Limeted.
- Mariyono, J. (2017). Determinants of Demand for Foreign Tourism in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ekonomi Pembangunan: Kajian Masalah Ekonomi dan Pembangunan*. 18(1), 82-92.
- Muslimah, T., Dida, S., & Setiyanti, Y. (2021). City Branding Pariwisata Dalam Media Sosial, *Acta Diurna*, 17(2), 22-45.
- Rakhmadani, R. (2021). Komunikasi Pembangunan Partisipatif dalam Pengembangan Desa Wisata Sajen Edu Adventure melalui Pemberdayaan Masyarakat. *Jurnal Penelitian Pers dan Komunikasi Pembangunan*, 25(1): 33-44.
- Sukrillah, Ratnamulyani, & Kusumadinata. (2017). Pemanfaatan Media Sosial melalui Whatsapp Group FEI Sebagai Sarana Komunikasi. *Jurnal Komunikatio*, 3(2), 95–104.
- Amdan, N. S., Alifi, M. I., Muhaemin, M., Ramadhan, A., Pratiwi, M., Fitriyah, N., & Muldi, A. (2022). Optimalisasi pemanfaatan media sosial dalam promosi Kampung Wisata Pekijing. *Jurnal Pengabdian Pada Masyarakat*, 7(1), 72-79.
- Utomo, S. B. (2023). Pemanfaatan Digital Marketing dalam Memperkenalkan Kawasan Wisata Jalan Tunjungan di Surabaya. *Indo-Fintech Intellectuals: Journal of Economics and Business*, 3 (2), 449-458.

- Pradiatiningtyas, D, (2016) Peran Instagram Dalam Menarik Minat Wisatawan Berkunjung Ke Objek Wisata Yogyakarta, *Jurnal Khasanah Ilmu*. 7(2). 1-8.
- Widada, C. K. (2018). Mengambil Manfaat Media Sosial dalam Pengembangan Layanan. *Journal of Documentation and Information Science*, 2(1), 23–30