



Creative economy improvement: Optimizing tourism potential through institution linking and branding

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ARTICLE INFO:

Received: 2023-12-26
Revised: 2024-01-08
Accepted: 2024-02-20
Published: 2024-02-29

Keywords:

Business performance,
Financial reports,
Innovative, Sustainable

ABSTRACT

Tourism villages play a crucial role in national economic growth. However, despite their potential, they often face institutional challenges and lack integration in information technology use, hindering economic progress. Hargorejo tourism village exemplifies these issues, with untapped potential and limited managerial competence hindering economic growth. This community service initiative aims to address these challenges by enhancing understanding of institutional design and emphasizing the importance of branding for each business unit. Through managerial and administrative training and group discussions, the service seeks to strengthen institutions. Additionally, assistance in creating the tourism village website, Kawitarjo.id, aims to support expanded tourism branding for sustainable economic improvement. The outcome includes the establishment of a digital forum, integrating tourism potential and enhancing managers' understanding of implementing tourism branding through digital media. This comprehensive approach contributes to stronger institutions and increased managerial comprehension of tourism village duties, fostering economic growth in the creative industry sector, and benefiting society as a whole. Ultimately, it aims to empower local communities and promote inclusive economic development.

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How to cite: Atmojo, M. E., Nasrullah, N., & Perdana, V. A. (2024). Creative economy improvement: Optimizing tourism potential through institution linking and branding. *Abdimas: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Universitas Merdeka Malang*, 9(1), 203-212. <https://doi.org/10.26905/abdimas.v9i1.12138>

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the promising sectors for every country, especially Indonesia, which has abundant tourism potential. If managed properly, this tourism potential can have extraordinary prospects and become a leading asset. To date, tourism remains a driving force for Indonesia's economic growth, promoting GDP growth, increasing international trade intensity, and raising global investment (Ohorella & Prihantoro, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector was severely impacted, necessitating special strategies to revive it. Besides the tourism sector, the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector also suffered serious impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Indonesia is one of the countries with economic potential in the tourism and MSME sectors, as both sectors play a crucial role in the national economic resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result of the pandemic, all creative economy sectors in tourism experienced a significant decline. According to Rosadi (2021), the number of international tourists in 2019 exceeded 16 million, whereas during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in early 2020, the number dropped to only about 4.08 million (Rosadi, 2021). Based on this data, it is evident that the economic sector in tourism plays an important role in the national economy.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a decline in the creative economy, especially in visitor numbers during the pandemic. The economic downturn in the tourism sector is not only influenced by international tourists but also by domestic tourists. A decrease in the number of tourists in the tourism sector will have a significant impact on the national economy, especially the creative economy, as tourism remains one of the leading sectors in national economic growth. According to Rifa'i (2013), the MSME and tourism sectors are significant contributors to national economic growth, with increasing contributions to GDP every year. This economic growth is undoubtedly influenced by the high number of tourists entering Indonesia. According to data from the Central Statistics Agency, the number of tourists from China reached 2.07 million or 12.8 percent, while the number of tourists (Hanoatubun, 2020).

The development of the tourism sector post-COVID-19 pandemic is crucial. This development will have a significant impact on increasing economic growth and the number of tourists visiting Indonesia, particularly in Kulon Progo Regency. One way to develop the tourism sector in Indonesia and Kulon Progo Regency is to provide ample opportunities for innovation in tourism sector development at the local level. Additionally, to expand the tourism sector in Kulon Progo Regency, villages should be given the opportunity to establish tourist villages. However, the establishment of tourist villages must be based on existing regional regulations, both provincial and regency regulations. The emergence of numerous tourist villages does not mean there are no challenges or problems; rather, the proliferation of tourist villages will create new issues, one of which is management and human resources. Although established tourist villages have a positive impact on economic growth, classical issues, especially related to human resources, remain a major obstacle. This was also highlighted by Widiastini et al. (2018), stating that the challenges in managing tourist villages include the availability of human resources, natural resources, and the lack of tourism branding. According to Setiawati et al. (2019), to expand the reach of a product, a strong branding strategy is needed, focusing on quality to ensure the product can compete effectively.

One example is Hargorejo Tourist Village, which has been recognized by the government as a tourist village due to its attractive natural and cultural potential for integration into the creative economy through the tourism sector. The development of Hargorejo Tourist Village still faces a major challenge, particularly regarding human resources. Based on our observations, the management of Hargorejo Tourist Village still lacks knowledge and experience in managing tourist villages; hence, there is a need for community service schemes, especially to enhance capacity in managing tourist villages. In addition to focusing on increasing human resource capacity in the management process, understanding institutionalization and branding is also necessary. The goal of community service activities is to ensure optimal management of tourist villages, thus enabling equitable and fair economic improvement at the community level. Furthermore, the development of tourist villages will undoubtedly have a positive impact on regional and national economic growth.

2. METHODS

This community service project was carried out in Hargorejo Village, Kokap Subdistrict, Kulon Progo Regency. The project was participated by the local community, especially those involved in

tourism activities within the village. The partners involved in this project were the management of Hargorejo Village Tourism and tourism destination managers. Looking at the destinations, there were approximately four destination managers involved in this community service project. The selection of this location was due to the fact that Hargorejo Village has high potential in tourism and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Additionally, the village has recently formed a tourism village, making it an appropriate location for institutional assistance. Furthermore, there is still a need to enhance the competence level of the tourism village management in terms of institutional management.

The implementation of this community service project utilized the ABCD (Asset Based Community Development) approach. This approach is a model of community empowerment that prioritizes the utilization of assets and potentials owned by the community or local residents (Al-Kautsari, 2019; Fitrianto et al., 2023). The potentials referred to here include creative economic potentials such as MSMEs, tourist destinations, and others. MSMEs and tourism players are part of the creative economy that can be developed in Hargorejo Village, aiming to improve the community's economy sustainably. The implementation method of this community service project consisted of three stages: socialization for tourism stakeholders regarding institutional and branding aspects, group discussion forums, training for tourism stakeholders and destination managers, and evaluation of the implemented programs throughout the community service process: (1) Socialization and Forum Group Discussion were conducted to delve into the issues and find solutions. In this FGD activity, participants included the management of Hargorejo Village Tourism, tourism practitioners or tourism object managers, and village government representatives. This was done through an initial presentation on general tourism issues followed by in-depth discussions; (2) Training was conducted to enhance the capacity of tourism village managers in both branding and institutional aspects. Additionally, specific training on website management as a branding tool was also provided during this training session; (3) Evaluation was carried out to assess the understanding of village government officials, tourism village managers, and tourism destination managers regarding branding. This method was implemented through a post-test mechanism administered after participants completed the training.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service activities conducted in Hargorejo Village, particularly the Tourism Village, are part of the collaboration between Muhammadiyah University of Yogyakarta and the Hargorejo Village Government. One aspect of this collaboration includes community service implementation. There are several activities that can be carried out as part of community service in Hargorejo Village, one of which is mentoring and strengthening the tourism village. This strengthening is necessary because the tourism village in Hargorejo has not fully maximized its tourism potential, and the human resource capacity in managing tourism potential is still very limited. Capacity building and development of existing tourism potential in Hargorejo are crucial. This development is essential because according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (Abidin et al., 2022), the tourism sector is one of the important sectors in the development of a region and the improvement of community welfare. Capacity building for tourism village managers can be done through several activities including: socialization, forum group discussions, and training for tourism village stakeholders.

The aim of this activity is to identify the issues in Hargorejo Tourism Village, particularly those related to tourism destination management. The FGD is conducted to find comprehensive solutions to the issues faced in destination and tourism management. Considering that Hargorejo Tourism Village has tremendous potential, both in natural and artificial tourism, as well as educational tourism, such as the educational archery tourism, the development of tourism potential in Hargorejo Village can be

achieved through FGD with destination or tourism site managers. With the FGD, the issues encountered in the development of the tourism village can be addressed.

The Forum Group Discussion is attended by Tourism Village managers, destination site managers, Hargorejo Village Government officials, and even representatives from the sub-village level. The FGD activity was attended by 30 participants from various sectors including village government, sub-village representatives, tourism site managers, MSMEs, and tourism village managers themselves. Each participant has a role in supporting the tourism village activities. With the collaboration of various stakeholders, the tourism village in Hargorejo Village can be developed more comprehensively.



Figure 1. Forum Group Discussion (FGD)

The FGD was attended by all tourism stakeholders, MSMEs, Village Government, and tourism village managers. This Forum Group Discussion was conducted to address the issues faced by partners, especially in the tourism sector. Based on our observations, there is immense potential that could be developed by tourism village managers, but they have not been able to maximize the development of these destinations. This enthusiasm reflects the seriousness of the community and managers in developing and advancing Hargorejo Tourism Village. The community's enthusiasm in this FGD activity is also a form of realizing the improvement of community welfare through tourism development and management. The development of tourism in Hargorejo Tourism Village is carried out using the community-based tourism (CBT) method. Community-Based Tourism focuses on sustainable tourism packaging in environmental, social, and cultural aspects (Suansri, 2003). According to (Abidin et al., 2022), tourism development, as stated by the UNWTO, must be sustainable and emphasize the active involvement of the community.

Community-based tourism management will have positive impacts, one of which is that the community feels ownership, leading to better management practices and the mitigation of horizontal conflicts among the community. Based on the FGD conducted, community-based management can be implemented. Additionally, the FGD explained the problems faced by tourism village managers, including: First, the lack of knowledge among tourism site managers in managing tourism destinations. Second, the minimal mechanism for promotion or branding of tourism destinations and the underutilization of technology. According to Setiawati et al. (2019), branding is part of the product that creates psychological impacts thus the conveyed branding can influence consumers.

The Forum Group Discussion has identified two main issues that need to be addressed, and these two issues have become the main focus of the community service team in the development of Hargorejo Tourism Village. The development of this tourism village is also to support economic growth and improve the welfare of the people in Hargorejo Village. During the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism destinations in Hargorejo Village could not be developed to their fullest potential. Even destinations that

were thriving before COVID-19 experienced a decrease in the number of tourists, and many destinations were closed. One way to enhance and develop existing tourism destinations is through massive branding and promotion strategies using information technology.

Developing Managerial Capacity through Assistance with Managerial Training and Tourism Branding

The established tourism village in Hargorejo Village plays a significant role and has a heavy responsibility, one of which is developing tourism destinations. Additionally, the goal of the tourism village is to boost local economy and community welfare. To achieve optimal economic growth and tourism destination development, competent human resources, especially in tourism destination management, are needed. Upon observation, it is evident that the tourism destination managers in Hargorejo Village still require enhancement in competency, particularly in tourism branding. It is hoped that through this training, it can assist in promoting tourism in Hargorejo Tourism Village and realize the main objectives of the tourism village. Promotion based on a good branding concept can yield maximum results because branding aims to maintain the level of reachability and brand awareness among potential buyers (Syahputra et al., 2023).

The training was attended by tourism village managers and the media center team from the tourism village. This training was conducted in response to the complaints and issues raised by tourism village managers who still lack understanding regarding tourism village branding and the underutilization of technology in tourism promotion. Based on these complaints, the community service team sought to bring speakers with the capacity and quality to assist in tourism branding training. Additionally, since the tourism village institution is still very new, input and training to support tourism village development in Hargorejo Village are necessary. There is abundant and diverse potential, thus training related to branding and institutional aspects is crucial. Institutional training aims to strengthen managers' knowledge in running the tourism village organization and serves as an initial capital for developing village potentials. On the other hand, branding training is conducted to support massive promotion through electronic media and technology utilization. According to (Irvan, 2015), enhancing product quality, branding design, and utilizing technology in marketing are crucial, and this should be accompanied by customer satisfaction surveys.



Figure 2. Training on internal capacity development in tourism villages and tourism branding

The positive response from the Hargorejo Government and the Village Tourism Managers to this training demonstrates their seriousness and commitment to developing tourism in the area. This is evident from the Kalurahan government's involvement in accompanying the activities until the end, and from the presence and active participation of all village tourism managers throughout the training.

In addition to being aimed at the managers, this training is also directed towards the village tourism media center team, which has a specific role in publicizing and creating creative content about the development of tourism in Kalurahan Hargorejo. This division of tasks will facilitate the development of the tourism sector in the area, with the media center team focusing on promoting and branding tourist attractions, while other managers can focus on developing infrastructure and other tourism models.

With the tagline emphasizing the concept of an educational village, this training becomes key in helping village tourism managers develop their destinations. It is hoped that the development of tourism in Hargorejo Village will align with the established vision, and this training will be an important initial step in achieving that goal.

Tourism Branding via Website

The advancement of the world and the era, always accompanied by technological development, will bring about changes in all sectors, including the tourism and MSME sectors. The impact of this technological advancement began to be strongly felt in 2020 or during the COVID-19 pandemic, where almost all countries experienced the COVID outbreak, which necessitated restrictions on all activities. One way to continue activities with the help of technology, including in the tourism sector, is through digital tourism branding, among other methods. This technological advancement has a very positive impact on the tourism sector or other sectors because with technology, marketing methods that have been conventionally used can switch to digital marketing models. Furthermore, the branding development model through multimedia programs will also be very effective worldwide in institutional or corporate concepts, and this branding management model still needs to be well-managed (Isdarmanto et al., 2020).

Digital marketing is crucial to support the sustainability of tourism established by community groups or village governments. Many problems occur after the establishment of tourist villages, namely the weakness of village tourism managers in understanding and applying marketing strategies effectively (Abidin et al., 2022). Moreover, according to Susanti (2020), the evolving digitalization is not fully understood as an effective tool in introducing or promoting tourist villages due to the lack of knowledge among managers about digital marketing. Meanwhile, Atmojo et al. (2023) state that the utilization of digital media for marketing a product or object is a necessity, given the current technological era. Therefore, it is very important for village tourism managers to be equipped with knowledge of digital marketing or promotion. This is related to the advancement of technology and the habits of society in the disruption era, where many people understand the digital world.

The public's understanding of the digital world can be seen from their activities or habits in daily life, such as transactions and seeking information. The use of digital media has become a necessity for economic actors, and one of these economic actors is village tourism managers. Due to the minimal digital activities being conducted by Hargorejo Tourism Village, the community service team provided assistance in creating digital media in the form of a website. This medium was chosen because it is considered to be a digital platform that integrates transaction activities and publications, allowing the tourism village to have a wider range. A website is also considered to be a broad medium for disseminating information related to the tourist village. Additionally, a website as a medium should facilitate people's search and must have a unique branding or name. The website name in Hargorejo Tourism Village is kawitarjo.id, where this name is an abbreviation of Kalurahan Wisata Hargorejo.

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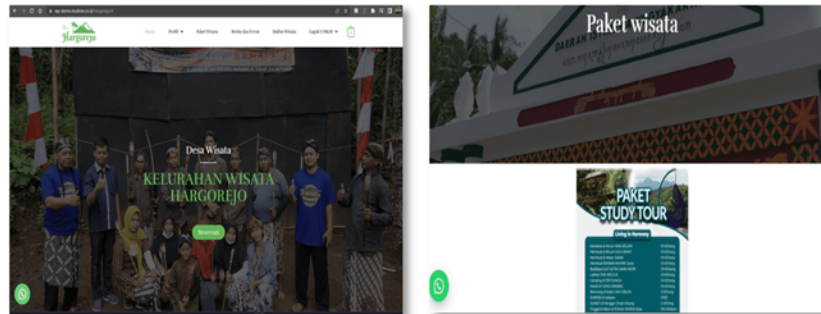


Figure 3. Hargorejo tourism village website

The formation of this website is also aimed as a single integrated platform that will encourage the development of the tourism ecosystem and local economy by involving MSMEs to participate in it. Thus, the connectivity established between these two entities can be realized sustainably and bring positive impacts to the wider community. With the establishment of this platform, it is hoped that it can boost the economy of the community in the Hargorejo tourism village area, because with the presence of this tourism village, there will be many positive impacts, especially economic ones. Furthermore, the establishment of this tourism village can also help the country's economy, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

Evaluation of Comprehension on Tourism Branding

Evaluation is one of the essential methods to be conducted in every community service activity. Through evaluation, we can assess the extent to which participants understand the materials and training provided. In the context of this community service activity, evaluation should be given to all tourism destination managers, especially to assess their understanding of the importance of technology-based tourism branding. The results of this evaluation become the most important part for the government to make decisions or policies, especially those related to tourism in the Hargorejo village. Based on the survey results we conducted, especially after the community service activity, the majority of tourism managers understand the importance of tourism branding.

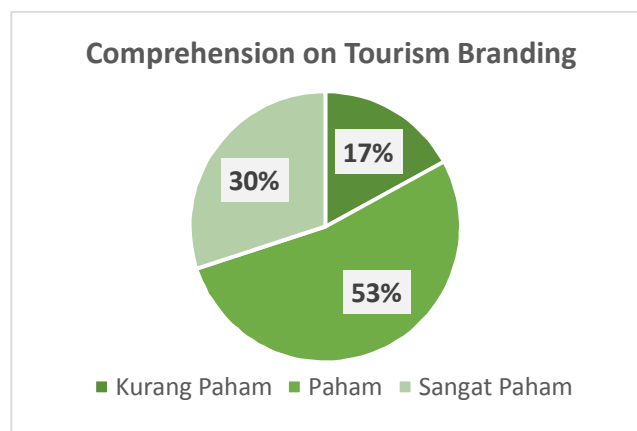


Figure 4. Comprehension on tourism branding evaluation results

Based on the survey results we conducted, the majority of the community, especially tourism destination managers, already understand branding. If we look at the breakdown, it is as follows: 17% of tourism managers still do not understand the importance of branding, 53% understand the importance of branding, and 30% already have a very good understanding of the importance of branding. Certainly, with these survey results, there is still work to be done for the government and village tourism managers to provide understanding about the importance of branding, especially to those managers who do not yet understand its importance. For managers who do not understand the importance of branding for the tourism industry, training can be provided through programs organized by the village government. On the other hand, there has been improvement, as the majority of destination managers and village tourism managers already understand the importance of branding for the tourism industry.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the implementation of the community service activities conducted, several short-term and long-term success indicators can be identified. In the social aspect, the potential outcome expected in the short term is an increase in the understanding of tourism destination managers in managing and developing local tourism potential in Hargorejo Tourism Village. Based on a post-training survey we conducted, there was a 58% increase in understanding among tourism managers regarding digitization or branding. Although not significant, this data indicates that the training had a positive impact. Of course, with this increase, there is still much training and improvement in competence that needs to be enhanced for stakeholders and tourism destination managers in Hargorejo Tourism Village. Moving on to the economic aspect, through strengthening tourism villages in branding and tourism mapping, tourism institutions can guide Hargorejo Tourism Village to become a tourism village that can drive sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, tourism development has the potential to create an inclusive economic zone that involves micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (UMKM) in economic development. Additionally, based on the implementation of this community service, tourism village managers can also actively promote the tourism potential through social media and the website that has been designed. It is hoped that with these media, the promotion of tourism potential in Hargorejo Tourism Village can be more massive, thus increasing tourist attraction and local economic development. This, in turn, can assist the government in boosting regional and national economic growth.

Based on the community service that has been conducted, there are still several areas where competence needs to be improved, especially for tourism destination managers and tourism village managers. This enhancement in competence is necessary to support the achievement of economic improvement and community welfare in Hargorejo Tourism Village. Here are some suggestions for future activities: (1) Intensive branding training is necessary, especially for destination managers and tourism village managers. This training should be conducted to provide an increase in understanding and knowledge among managers in branding and promoting tourism. Furthermore, enhancing this training is also beneficial to understand the characteristics of the target audience of the tourist attractions, so that the promotions provided can be more targeted. (2) There is a need for a creative team to manage the kawitarjo.id website, especially to provide comprehensive information to prospective tourists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the team involved in this community service activity, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the community service team and assistants for their invaluable assistance in the technical aspects of the project. Additionally, we extend our gratitude to Universitas Muhammadiyah

Yogyakarta and the Research and Community Service Institute (LPM) for their generous support through internal grant funding. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the local government of Kalurahan Hargorejo for granting us permission and providing the opportunity to conduct this community service. Furthermore, we would like to thank the members of Hargorejo Tourism Village, as well as the participants and managers of tourist destinations, for their willingness to attend and participate in the training activities. We hope that this collaboration and partnership can continue in the future for the advancement of Hargorejo Tourism Village.

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