

TOURISM AMBASSADOR AND IMAGE MANAGEMENT IN MARGINALIZED AREAS OF BREBES REGENCY

Zani Bayan Az Zahra¹, Tria Patrianti², Izzatusholekha³, Sofia Hasna⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta

Corresponding author, E-mail : zanibayana@gmail.com, tria.patrianti@umj.ac.id, izzatusholekha@umj.ac.id, sofia.hasna@umj.ac.id

Abstract

This research discusses the strategic role of Tourism Ambassador in image management and tourism promotion in marginalized areas, with a focus on Brebes Regency, Central Java. Through the use of digital or new media such as Instagram, Tourism Ambassadors function as a Public Relations (PR) tool to form a positive destination image among tourists. This research uses a qualitative approach with direct observation and secondary data analysis related to tourism promotion in marginalized areas. The results showed that Tourism Ambassador play an important role in managing public perception of destinations through community-based promotion strategies and digital media. Infrastructure and accessibility challenges in marginalized areas can be overcome with good image management and effective PR campaigns. This study concludes that image management through digital media is an important tool in attracting tourists and improving the local economy in less optimally developed areas.

Keywords: *Tourism Ambassador, destination image, digital media, tourism promotion, marginalized areas, Public Relations*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism ambassador is a contest to select several young people to assist the tourism office in promoting regional tourism. According to Oktarina (2015), tourism ambassador are the selection of teenagers aged 16 years to 26 years to become an exemplary image of a dynamic, creative and intelligent young generation. This statement means that tourism ambassadors are generally followed by the younger generation who have a positive spirit and enthusiasm in carrying out their duties. A similar statement was also explained by Randa (2015) that tourism ambassadors are native youth aged 17 years to 26 years who have concern for their environment, especially the tourism potential in their area. (El Zuhri, 2021)

Tourism ambassador have a strategic role in introducing and promoting the tourism potential of an area, including marginalized

areas that are often less exposed. Brebes Regency, as one of the regencies in Central Java, has its own challenges in developing its regional image, especially in less developed and marginalized areas. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2022, the percentage of poor people in Brebes Regency reached 16.0%. This figure is higher than the average poverty rate in Central Java Province, which is 10.98%. These marginalized areas often face problems of minimal infrastructure, low access to education, health, and the economy, as well as limited information regarding their local tourism potential. (Nasila, 2024)

However, through appropriate image management efforts and involving Tourism Ambassadors, marginalized areas in Brebes can be better recognized and receive more attention from the government, investors, and tourists. Tourism Ambassadors act as representatives of regional culture and tourism

that can build a positive image, promote local uniqueness, and become agents of change in improving stereotypes or negative views of marginalized areas.

1. Tourism of Brebes Regency

Brebes has diverse tourism potential, ranging from natural attractions such as beaches and waterfalls, to cultural and historical attractions. Some famous tourist attractions in Brebes include Randusanga Beach, Kaligua Agrotourism, Japanese Cave, and Malahayu Reservoir. In addition,

Brebes is also known as a producer of shallots and salted eggs, which attracts tourists to visit agro-tourism areas and production centers.

Despite its great potential, Brebes faces several challenges in developing its tourism sector.

One of Brebes' advantages is its strategic location on the Pantura route, making it an important stopover for tourists traveling overland from West Java to Central Java. In addition, Brebes has natural resources that are still beautiful and not too exploited, making it an alternative tourist destination for tourists who want to enjoy a calm natural atmosphere. However, Brebes' weakness lies in the lack of supporting tourism infrastructure such as unoptimized road access, limited public facilities, and the lack of effective promotion to introduce existing tourism potential.

In 2023, the number of tourists coming to Brebes was recorded at around 650,000 people.

This figure shows an increase from previous years, but is still far from the maximum potential that can be achieved. One of the strategic steps taken by the local government is to appoint Tourism Ambassadors as the official representation of Brebes tourism. Tourism Ambassadors have an important role in promoting Brebes tourism, especially by utilizing digital or new media such as social media, video platforms, and

websites to reach more tourists, especially the younger generation.

1.1 The Role of Tourism Ambassador

The presence of Tourism Ambassador with digital-based promotion strategies has changed Brebes' tourism marketing approach. The Brebes Tourism Ambassador Forum Association as an organization that houses Brebes Tourism Ambassadors, uses a digital marketing strategy that relies on social media such as Instagram to share promotional content in the form of photos, videos, and interesting stories about Brebes tourist destinations. They also held virtual and offline events such as photo competitions, vlog competitions, and the #ExploreBrebes campaign which invited tourists to share their experiences when traveling to Brebes.

The results of this digital marketing strategy showed a significant growth in the number of tourists visiting Brebes after the presence of Tourism Ambassador with new media. By 2023, the number of tourists increased by 30%, reaching more than 650,000 people. This growth shows that digital-based promotional strategies are able to attract tourists in a more efficient and effective way than conventional promotions. In addition, the Tourism Ambassador also succeeded in building a positive image for Brebes as an attractive and potential tourist destination, especially among domestic tourists.

1.2 Digital New Media

The results of this digital marketing strategy showed a significant growth in the number of tourists visiting Brebes

after the presence of Tourism Ambassadors with new media. By 2023, the number of tourists increased by 30%, reaching more than 650,000 people. This growth shows that digital-based promotional strategies are able to attract tourists in a more efficient and effective way than conventional promotions. In addition, the Tourism Ambassador has also succeeded in building a positive image for Brebes as an attractive and potential tourist destination, especially among domestic tourists

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The object of this research focuses on the role of Tourism Ambassador in managing the image of marginalized areas in Brebes Regency through tourism promotion using digital or new media. Marginal areas in the context of this research refer to areas in Brebes that have tourism potential but have not been optimally developed due to infrastructure constraints and lack of promotion, such as Randusanga Beach, Kaligua agro-tourism area in the highlands, and Malahyu Reservoir and a number of other natural tourist destinations that are still poorly known by domestic and foreign tourists.

This research explores the strategies used by Tourism Ambassador in building a positive image of Brebes in the eyes of the public, especially through social media platforms such as Instagram and tiktok. In addition, this research also seeks to identify the impact of digital promotion on increasing the number of tourists, local economic development, as well as infrastructure challenges faced in the process of managing regional image.

The research method combines a qualitative approach using direct observation of promotional activities conducted by Tourism Ambassador and secondary data

analysis from tourism reports and media. Through this combination of methods, the research can provide a comprehensive picture of how digital promotion strategies affect public perceptions of tourist destinations in Brebes, as well as the challenges that arise in the development of these marginalized areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the role of Tourism Ambassador in image management and tourism promotion, especially in marginalized areas, is based on several concepts and theories related to tourism marketing, destination image, and the use of digital media. This section discusses related literature that includes destination image theory, image management as a public relations tool, the role of tourism ambassadors, new media-based tourism marketing, and the challenges of developing marginalized areas in the context of tourism.

1. Destination Image Theory

Destination image is a perception formed in the minds of tourists about a place based on direct experience or information received from various sources (Gartner, 1993). According to Echtner and Ritchie (1991), destination image includes not only physical aspects, but also emotional aspects formed by promotion, culture, and social reputation of a destination. The formation of a positive destination image is very important in attracting tourists.

A well-managed destination image by Tourism Ambassadors can help increase the attractiveness of marginalized areas, which may have a negative perception among tourists. Research shows that digital media plays an important role in shaping destination perceptions through the delivery of engaging and authentic messages (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991).

2. Image Management as a Public Relations (PR) Tool

Image management is part of a Public Relations (PR) strategy used to build and maintain the reputation of an organization or region in the eyes of the public. In the context of tourism, a positive destination image is a key element to attract tourists. Kotler and Keller (2012) assert that PR is an important tool in creating the desired perception of a destination or product through various media. Tourism ambassadors act as PR ambassador for their regions, using digital media as a promotional tool that can reach a wider audience.

According to Grunig & Hunt (1984), one of the main objectives of PR is to build positive relationships between organizations and their publics, including in destination image management. The use of social media by Tourism Ambassador to manage the destination image through visual content and interesting narratives is part of the PR strategy to create a favorable perception of the tourist destination.

3. The Role of Tourism Ambassador in Tourism Promotion

Tourism Ambassadors are regional representations that function as tourism promotion agents, as well as cultural symbols and community guides in educating and promoting local wealth (Aziz, 2017). They have an important role in increasing tourist awareness of regional tourism potential, especially areas that are not yet widely known such as marginalized areas.

Taufiq's (2015) research explains that Tourism Ambassador are not only tasked with promoting destinations, but are also involved in building relationships with local communities, educating tourists, and supporting sustainable tourism development. Tourism ambassadors also play a role in packaging narratives that can create positive

experiences for tourists through digital media.

4. New Media-Based Tourism Marketing

The development of technology and digital media has changed the way tourist destinations are promoted. New media-based marketing, such as social media and digital video, allows tourists to get information quickly, visually, and interactively (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). This makes digital media a key tool in attracting tourists, especially the younger generation who use more online platforms in planning trips.

According to Wang and Fesenmaier's (2004) research, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) through social media and online review platforms plays a major role in influencing tourists' decisions to visit a destination. Tourism ambassador who actively utilize social media, such as Instagram and YouTube, can reach a wider audience and create interesting and informative content about tourist destinations in Brebes.

5. Challenges of Tourism Development in Marginalized Areas

Marginalized areas often face various challenges in tourism development, ranging from

inadequate infrastructure to limited accessibility (Ashworth & Page, 2011). However, according to Wearing and McDonald (2002), marginalized areas have great potential to be developed through community-based tourism and sustainability. The biggest challenge is how to manage the image of the area to make it attractive to tourists.

Tourism ambassador play an important role in addressing this challenge through community-based promotion, which involves local communities in tourism activities. By utilizing digital media, they can promote the unique potential of marginalized areas, such as local culture, hidden natural beauty, and authentic tourism experiences.

6. Case Studies of Tourism Promotion Through Digital Media in Indonesia

Case studies on tourism promotion in various regions in Indonesia show that the use of new media has had a positive impact on tourism growth. Susilo's (2018) research on tourism promotion in Bali through Instagram and YouTube found a significant increase in international tourist visits after an intensive digital campaign. The use of social media with attractive visual content, such as video storytelling, proved effective in increasing tourist interest.

The application of the same strategy by the Brebes Tourism Ambassador is expected to yield similar results in promoting the tourism potential of marginalized areas. The use of popular hashtags, attractive visual content, and collaboration with influencers can increase the positive image of Brebes as a potential tourist destination.

Based on existing literature, Tourism Ambassador have a strategic role in shaping and managing a destination's image, especially in lesser-known marginalized areas. The use of new media as the main promotional tool provides an opportunity to reach a wider

tourism market, while challenges in tourism development in marginalized areas can be overcome through community-based marketing strategies and sustainability.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach with three main methods, namely observation, government document search, and literature review. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the role of Tourism Ambassadors in managing the image of marginalized tourist destinations in Brebes Regency through digital media-based promotion.

1. Direct Observation

Direct observations were conducted at several marginalized tourism sites in Brebes Regency, such as Randusanga Beach and Kaligua agro-tourism, to identify interactions between Tourism Ambassadors, local communities, and tourists. This observation also includes promotional activities carried out by Tourism Ambassadors in the field and on digital media. Direct observation as a qualitative method is useful for obtaining empirical and in-depth data about the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Observation helps to understand the actual conditions of image management and the challenges faced in the field.

2. Government Document Search

Secondary data was obtained through tracing official documents from relevant agencies, such as the Brebes Regency Tourism Office and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). The Brebes Regency tourism statistics report (2022-2023) was used to obtain information related to tourism development in the area, particularly regarding the level of tourist visits and the potential for local economic development. This document search is important to obtain quantitative data that supports qualitative analysis and findings from

field research (Yin, 2018).

3. Literature Review

This research also conducted a literature review covering key theories on destination image, the role of Tourism Ambassadors, and digital media-based tourism marketing. The literature reviewed included Gartner's (1993) work on the process of destination image formation, Echtner and Ritchie's (1991) work on destination image management, and Tuten and Solomon's (2017) work on marketing strategies through new media. This literature provides a theoretical foundation for the analysis in this study, and helps connect the field findings with the existing theoretical framework.

This literature review also refers to previous research related to tourism promotion in Indonesia through digital media, such as that conducted by Susilo (2018) who found that social media plays an important role in attracting tourists to tourist areas, including marginalized areas.

RESULTS

This research produced several significant findings related to the role of Tourism Ambassadors in image management and tourism promotion in Brebes, especially marginalized areas, as well as the impact of using new media in increasing the number of tourists.

1. Improvement of Tourism Image in Marginalized Areas

Through participatory observation as a Brebes Tourism Ambassador, it was found that the Tourism Ambassador succeeded in improving the image of marginalized areas, such as Randusanga Beach and agro-tourism areas in the highlands. Previously, these areas were less known and had limited accessibility. However, through intensive digital promotion on social media, these places began to be noticed by local and national tourists.



The visual campaign conducted by Duta Wisata through social media such as Instagram and Tiktok uses a content strategy that highlights the natural beauty, local culture, and positive narratives about the tourism potential of the area. This promotion also focuses on local cultural values, which were previously less exposed, so as to form positive perceptions of tourists towards Brebes, especially marginalized areas.

2. Number of Tourists and Growth

Based on data obtained from the Brebes

| Tahun | Bulan | | | | | | | | | | | | Jumlah Wisatawan | Rata-Rata Wisatawan | Persentase (%) |
|-------|---------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| | Januari | Februari | Maret | April | Mei | Juni | Juli | Agustus | September | Oktober | November | Desember | | | |
| 2022 | 444496 | 415260 | 498145 | 153954 | 315018 | 225251 | 241863 | 205028 | 210207 | 230572 | 164680 | 228795 | 3333269 | 277772,42 | 8,33 |
| 2023 | 279012 | 240644 | 297255 | 289833 | 312974 | 303290 | 355055 | 272796 | 270917 | 302277 | 300718 | 224424 | 3449195 | 287432,92 | 8,33 |
| 2024 | 302205 | 234314 | 255948 | 291150 | 228761 | 224059 | 218058 | 225481 | - | - | - | - | 1979976 | 247497,00 | 12,50 |

Source: BPS Jawa Tengah.

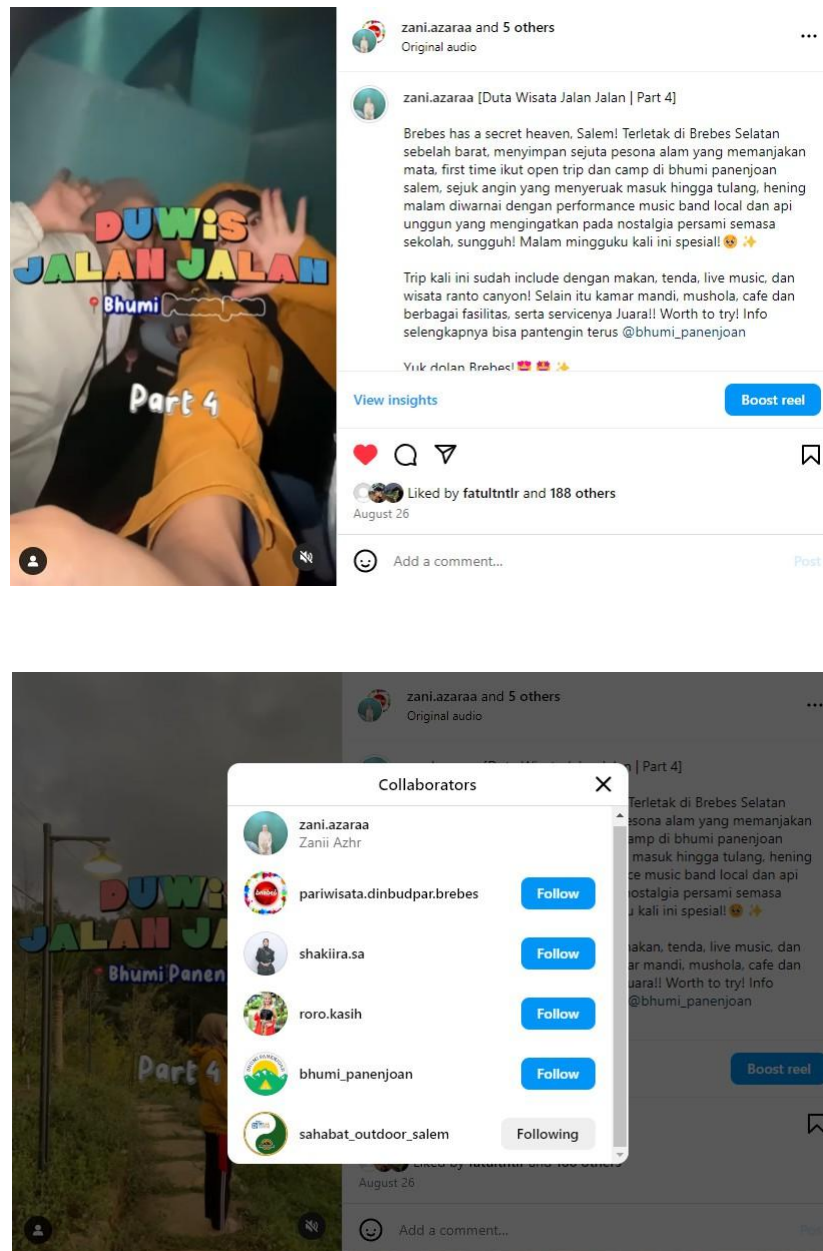
This increase is due to the promotion carried out by Tourism Ambassadors through various social media platforms, especially Instagram, which presents attractive visual content and stories about the uniqueness of Brebes.

3. Tourism Ambassador's Public Relations (PR) Marketing Strategy

Duta Wisata implements a public relations (PR)-based marketing strategy, especially through active involvement in social media. They not only publish content about natural beauty and local culture, but also actively interact with social media users to increase engagement. In addition, Duta Wisata collaborated with local influencers and content creators to expand the reach of Brebes' tourism promotion campaign, which proved effective in increasing the interest of young travelers.

Culture and Tourism Office and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the number of tourists visiting Brebes has increased significantly after intensive promotion through digital media by Tourism Ambassadors. In 2023, around 1.2 million tourists visited Brebes, an increase from 2022 which was only around 1 million tourists. In mid-2024, the number of tourists continued to increase with a projection of reaching 1.4 million tourists by the end of the year.

This collaborative strategy also helped to increase Brebes' credibility and appeal as a potential tourist destination, resulting in an increase in social media followers and attention from mainstream media. According to data from BPS Brebes, the use of influencers and visual content has helped increase tourist visits by 15% by 2023.



4. Challenges of Infrastructure Development in Marginalized Areas

Despite the increasing number of tourists, this study also found that infrastructure challenges are still a major obstacle in tourism development in marginalized areas. Some tourist destinations, such as Randusanga Beach and the highlands in Brebes, still require improvements in accessibility and supporting facilities, such as lodging and transportation.



Tourism Ambassadors, in collaboration with local governments and local communities, have endeavored to promote these infrastructure improvements through public awareness campaigns and encourage private sector participation in the development of tourism facilities.

5. Socio-economic Impact of Increased Tourists

In addition to the impact on the image and number of tourists, this increase in visitation has also had a positive impact on the local economy. Revenue from the tourism sector increased by approximately 12% by 2023.

| JUMLAH OBYEK WISATA, PENGUNJUNG DAN PENDAPATAN DI KABUPATEN BREBES 2023 | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| NO | NAMA OYEK WISATA | JUMLAH PENGUNJUNG (ORANG) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN PENJUALAN (Rp) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN LAIN-LAIN (Rp) |
| | Pantai Randusanga Indah | 92.029 | 400.193.000 | 69.077.000 |
| | Waduk Malahayu Banjarharjo | 214.480 | 393.592.000 | - |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Tirta Husada | 19.934 | 127.186.000 | 13.500.000 |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Cipanas Buaran | 25.155 | 129.485.000 | 4.100.000 |
| | Agro wisata Kaligua Paguyangan | 54.359 | 51.161.400 | |
| | Wisma Kencana | | 454.000.000 | 47.725.900 |
| | Obyek wisata lainnya | 243.202 | | 23.934.000 |
| | 2023 | 649.159 | 1.555.617.400 | 158.336.900 |
| | 2022 | 514.787 | 1.140.553.350 | 851.503.500 |
| | 2021 | 300.775 | 763.380.600 | 397.139.020 |
| | 2020 | 539.800 | 731.456.250 | 474.206.000 |
| | 2019 | 1.204.971 | 1.588.368.350 | 451.425.000 |

Sumber : Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kab. Brebes

With the largest contribution coming from natural attractions and agro-tourism. This provides opportunities for local communities to be involved in the tourism industry, both as service providers and small business actors, which then improves their economic welfare.

Based on the research results, Brebes Tourism Ambassadors have successfully utilized digital media to manage the destination's image and increase the number of

tourists.

However, infrastructure challenges remain an issue that needs to be considered in long-term development. Continued collaboration between the government, local communities and the private sector will be necessary to support sustainable tourism growth in Brebes, especially in marginalized areas.

Table 1. number of tourists and tourism revenue in the Regency

| Year | Number of Tourists (People) | Growth (%) | Tourism Revenue (Rp) | Source |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|
| 2 2022 | 1.000.000 | - | 10.000.000.000 | BPS BREBES |
| 2 2023 | 1.200.000 | 15% | 11.200.000.000 | BPS BREBES |
| 2 2024 | 1.400.000 | 16.67% | 12.500.000.000 | BPS BREBES |

Source: BPS Brebes

DISCUSSION

This research provides some important insights into the role of Tourism Ambassadors in promoting Brebes tourism and the impact of using new media in managing regional image, especially marginalized regions.

1. The Role of Tourism Ambassador in Regional Tourism Branding

The results show that Brebes Tourism Ambassador play a key role in building a positive image of marginalized areas such as Randusanga Beach and the Brebes highlands, which were

previously less known as tourist destinations. The use of social media such as Instagram by Tourism Ambassadors has proven effective in promoting natural beauty and local culture.

In line with the theory of Destination Branding by Anholt (2010), the promotion of

tourism destinations through consistent visual representations can influence the image of the area in the minds of tourists. The content produced by the Tourism Ambassador successfully presents a positive narrative that changes the negative stereotypes related to marginalized areas. In addition, the strong personal branding of the Tourism Ambassador also supports the increase in tourist interest in the promoted destination.

2. Impact of New Media Use on the Number of Tourists

Digital media-based promotion, especially on platforms such as Instagram, has significantly increased the number of tourists coming to Brebes. Based on data from the Brebes Culture and Tourism Office and the Brebes Regency Central Statistics Agency (BPS), there was a 15% increase in the number of tourists from 2022 to 2023, with a total of 650 thousand

million visitors in 2023.

| JUMLAH OBYEK WISATA, PENGUNJUNG DAN PENDAPATAN DI KABUPATEN BREBES 2023 | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| NO | NAMA OYEK WISATA | JUMLAH PENGUNJUNG (ORANG) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN PENJUALAN (Rp) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN LAIN-LAIN (Rp) |
| | Pantai Randusanga Indah | 92.029 | 400.193.000 | 69.077.000 |
| | Waduk Malahayu Banjarharjo | 214.480 | 393.592.000 | - |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Tirta Husada | 19.934 | 127.186.000 | 13.500.000 |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Cipanas Buaran | 25.155 | 129.485.000 | 4.100.000 |
| | Agro wisata Kaligua Paguyangan | 54.359 | 51.161.400 | |
| | Wisma Kencana | | 454.000.000 | 47.725.900 |
| | Obyek wisata lainnya | 243.202 | | 23.934.000 |
| | 2023 | 649.159 | 1.555.617.400 | 158.336.900 |
| | 2022 | 514.787 | 1.140.553.350 | 851.503.500 |
| | 2021 | 300.775 | 763.380.600 | 397.139.020 |
| | 2020 | 539.800 | 731.456.250 | 474.206.000 |
| | 2019 | 1.204.971 | 1.588.368.350 | 451.425.000 |

Sumber : Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kab. Brebes

The use of new media as a tourism marketing strategy is in line with the Social Media Marketing theory proposed by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), where social media allows tourist destinations to reach a wider audience at a lower cost. This is especially evident in destination promotions that involve creative narratives, attractive visual images, and active engagement with younger audiences. The content produced by Tourism Ambassadors not only informs, but also inspires potential tourists to visit Brebes.

3. Infrastructure Challenges in Marginalized Areas

Although the number of tourists continues to increase, this research also found that infrastructure issues remain a major obstacle. Some tourist destinations in Brebes, especially in marginalized areas, still face problems of

low accessibility. Roads to tourist attractions are still inadequate, and supporting facilities, such as accommodation and public transportation, are also limited.

Hawkins and Mann (2007) in their research mentioned that adequate infrastructure is an important component to support the development of tourist destinations. In Brebes, this challenge is one of the factors that hinder the maximum potential of the promotion carried out by the Tourism Ambassador. Inadequate infrastructure can reduce the quality of the tourist experience, which in turn impacts the overall image of the area.

4. Local Economic Impact

This research also reveals the positive impact of increased tourism on the local economy. Based on data from:

| JUMLAH OBYEK WISATA, PENGUNJUNG DAN PENDAPATAN DI KABUPATEN BREBES 2023 | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| NO | NAMA OYEK WISATA | JUMLAH PENGUNJUNG (ORANG) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN PENJUALAN (Rp) | JUMLAH PENDAPATAN LAIN-LAIN (Rp) |
| | Pantai Randusanga Indah | 92.029 | 400.193.000 | 69.077.000 |
| | Waduk Malahayu Banjarharjo | 214.480 | 393.592.000 | - |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Tirta Husada | 19.934 | 127.186.000 | 13.500.000 |
| | Pemandian Air Panas Cipanas Buaran | 25.155 | 129.485.000 | 4.100.000 |
| | Agro wisata Kaligua Paguyangan | 54.359 | 51.161.400 | |
| | Wisma Kencana | | 454.000.000 | 47.725.900 |
| | Obyek wisata lainnya | 243.202 | | 23.934.000 |
| | 2023 | 649.159 | 1.555.617.400 | 158.336.900 |
| | 2022 | 514.787 | 1.140.553.350 | 851.503.500 |
| | 2021 | 300.775 | 763.380.600 | 397.139.020 |
| | 2020 | 539.800 | 731.456.250 | 474.206.000 |
| | 2019 | 1.204.971 | 1.588.368.350 | 451.425.000 |

Sumber : Dinas Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Kab. Brebes

revenue from the tourism sector increased by around 12% in 2023 compared to the previous year. This growth not only helps the development of tourism infrastructure, but also supports the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector, such as homestays, restaurants, and local handicraft businesses.

Richards (2011) mentions that the growth of the tourism sector has a significant multiplier effect on the local economy, especially in underdeveloped areas. In Brebes, the increase in the number of tourists has provided opportunities for local communities to be more involved in the tourism industry, which in turn increases their income and welfare.

5. Collaboration Strategy and Infrastructure Improvement

In addition to digital promotion, Tourism Ambassadors also play a role in encouraging collaboration between local governments and the private sector to develop sustainable tourism. One of the efforts that have been made is a public awareness campaign on the importance of tourism infrastructure development, including road repairs and improvement of public facilities at tourist attractions.

Closer collaboration between the government, private sector, and local

communities is needed to maximize tourism potential in Brebes. This is also supported by Hawkins and Mann's (2007) research, which emphasizes the importance of infrastructure investment to support sustainable tourism growth.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that Brebes Tourism Ambassadors play an important role in improving tourism image through digital media. However, the success of this promotion must be balanced with adequate infrastructure improvements to ensure tourist convenience and sustainable tourism growth. Collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities is necessary to overcome these challenges and ensure the development of tourism in Brebes is optimized.

REFERENCES

- el Zuhri, I., & Ninuk Purnaningsih. (2021). PENGARUH KOMPETENSI DUTA WISATA TERHADAP AKSELERASI PROMOSI AGROWISATA SAWAH SOLOK. *Jurnal Sains Komunikasi Dan Pengembangan Masyarakat [JSKPM]*, 5(5), 697–714. <https://doi.org/10.29244/jskpm.v5i5.883>
- Nasila, R., & Napu, I. A. (2024). Strategi Baru dalam Mendukung Kewirausahaan Sosial untuk Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat Marginal di Kabupaten Bone Bolango, Provinsi Gorontalo. *Journal of Education Research*, 5(4), 4853–4867. <https://www.jer.or.id/index.php/jer/article/view/1671/919>
- Mandalia, S., Santosa, H., & Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, U. (2022). ANALISIS PERAN DUTA WISATA DALAM MEMPROMOSIKAN PARIWISATA KABUPATEN DHARMASRAYA. *Journal of Tourism Sciences*, 1(2). <https://journal.isi-padangpanjang.ac.id/index.php/JTST>
- Dwi Anggraeni, F., & Hidayat, R. (2019). Peran Paguyuban Duta Wisata “Sekargading” dalam Mengembangkan Pariwisata di Kabupaten Batang. *Indonesia Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development*, 1(1), 60–70. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350970506_Peran_Paguyuban_Duta_Wisata_Sekargading_dalam_Mengembangkan_Pariwisata_di_Kabupaten_Batang/fulltext/6381fb7748124c2bc671ef9a/Peran-Paguyuban-Duta-Wisata-Sekargading-dalam-Mengembangkan-Pariwisata-di-Kabupaten-Batang.pdf
- Conselor, R., & Hj Syofia Achnes, D. (2015). PERAN DUTA WISATA DALAM MEMPROMOSIKAN PARIWISATA KABUPATEN SOLOK. *Jom FISIP*, 2(2), 761–63277. <http://dompu.info/d>
<https://www.themediaant.com/blog/role-of-social-media-in-tourism-marketing/>
- Aziz, I. (2017). Peran Duta Wisata dalam Mempromosikan Pariwisata Daerah. *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Pariwisata*, 9(1), 45-57.
- Echtner, C. M., & Ritchie, J. B. (1991). The Meaning and Measurement of Destination Image. *The Journal of Tourism Studies*, 2(2), 2-12.
- Gartner, W. C. (1993). Image Formation Process. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 2(2-3), 191-216.
- Susilo, D. (2018). The Role of Social Media in Promoting Bali Tourism. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 16(2), 102-114.
- Taufiq, A. (2015). Strategi Duta Wisata dalam Promosi Pariwisata Daerah. *Jurnal Pariwisata Indonesia*, 11(3), 89-100.
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). *Social Media Marketing*. Sage Publications.
- Wang, Y., & Fesenmaier, D. R. (2004). Modeling Participation in an Online Travel Community. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(3), 261-270.
- Wearing, S., & McDonald, M. (2002). The Development of Community-based Tourism: Re-thinking the Relationship Between Tour Operators and Development. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(4), 339-354.

