



# Build up destination brand: from a city become a tourism destination

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## ABSTRACT

Destination branding is a formation process that can be influenced by several elements where in this study, testimonials and city images are designated that represent the city of Bandung. This gives rise to the results of the study that these two independent variables have a significant positive contribution to the formation of Bandung as a city and tourist destination due to the existence of destination brand, which is dominated by positive city image from testimonials that appear through Instagram stories, photo posts, and testimonials in both cases. Furthermore, we hope that this can be implemented in other cities in West Java and throughout Indonesia, with the hope of increasing regional income through the city as a tourist destination.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

A city reflects its identity through culture, social environment, food, clothing, and things that make the characteristics of the city give rise to icons and become an identity (Sakti, 2024). With typical food, typical clothing, and culture that is closely related to its environment, over time, from generation to generation, this is the stage or process where a city is transformed into a tourist destination. This tourist destination opens our minds to the fact that it is not only about tourist attraction, natural scenery, heritage, and the like, but with the existence of a city that can create an icon or characteristic, without a particular tourist attraction a brand can be built in that city.

Bandung, where many tourists come because of testimonials about its food which is known to be delicious, and cheap, a variety of creative flavors, clothes as fashion icons, and spots in several city settings that are comfortable to visit, even as a form of action for the millennial generation to become instagrammable areas (Lin, 2023; Sakti, 2024). The brief explanation above shows that an identical city is capable of having a dual identity, namely being both a city and a tourist destination without any particular tourist attraction. A city becomes a tourist destination, indirectly attracting tourists to come and try to prove their curiosity and share the experiences they have had, and all of this is reflected in the tourists' social media accounts through photos posted as statuses, Instagram stories, tweets, it even becomes source of income for YouTubers, which ultimately results in testimonials. Kotler and Armstrong (2018:353) Testimonials are an

advertising style that has a very trustworthy source, is pleasant and supports the product so that consumers can trust it. Testimonials are a way to build credibility, and information published in the media and must favor many people rather than personal interests (Choirunnisa & Walyoto, 2023) Testimonials are powerful weapons for increasing business profits and also the results of these testimonials can show whether the product being sold it is worth buying, where after seeing positive reviews or testimonials we can be more confident, thereby gaining a lot of trust from the public and increasing the superiority of goods and services (Lakho, 2023). In this case, if a city is a product, then from the results of the statements above it is clear that a city can have added value, namely at the same time as a tourist destination.

The image of a destination is a tourist's perception which is formed from information received by tourists, including beliefs, impressions, and perceptions about the destination to be visited (Savira et al., 2022), in this case, the information obtained is related to testimonials built by tourists who come to Bandung. Studies on destination image generally do not differentiate between types of tourist attractions, and most focus on general tourism matters (Guan et al., 2023). Therefore, this research was created to look at how to build a brand for a city so that it can become a tourist destination through the influence of testimonials and the image of the city itself.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted to find out and get answers to whether a city is indeed capable of being a tourist destination through testimonials and the influence of the image of the city itself, especially in Bandung, because if this is successful it can be implemented by various cities in Indonesia so that it can increase regional income from tourism. Furthermore, if the results of this research are successful, it will be able to increase the income of West Java Province through tourism.

Testimonials are a way to build credibility, information published in the media that favors the people at large compared to personal interests (Rostianto, 2019), and is an advertising style that has a very trustworthy or pleasant (supportive) source (Kotler & Keller, 2016). City image is an important plan for a landmark that has long-term influence, and this is still under scientific research to see its relevance in the digital era, so there is still a lot of debate (Huang et al., 2021). The emergence of social media and other digital technologies offers new opportunities to study perceptions of the urban environment. The question remains whether social media can provide a reliable measure of the perception of a city's image and how it impacts it (Shoukat et al., 2022). Variable Y destination brand is a marketing strategy used to create a good perception and image of a destination, where various destinations are of course increasingly competing to display a good image to attract the attention of tourists (Morrison, 2018: 112).

So far, much of what has been produced is research regarding testimonials on brand image to determine consumer buying interest (Saini et al., 2022; Grafiati, 2023). Therefore, we want to investigate by designating the independent variables, namely testimonials and city image, for the dependent variable designated destination brand, so that we can see whether the research results will be the same or different from previous ones from other researchers. In this way, it is able to give rise to new phenomena and new perspectives for future researchers. Here we describe it in the research paradigm chart below:

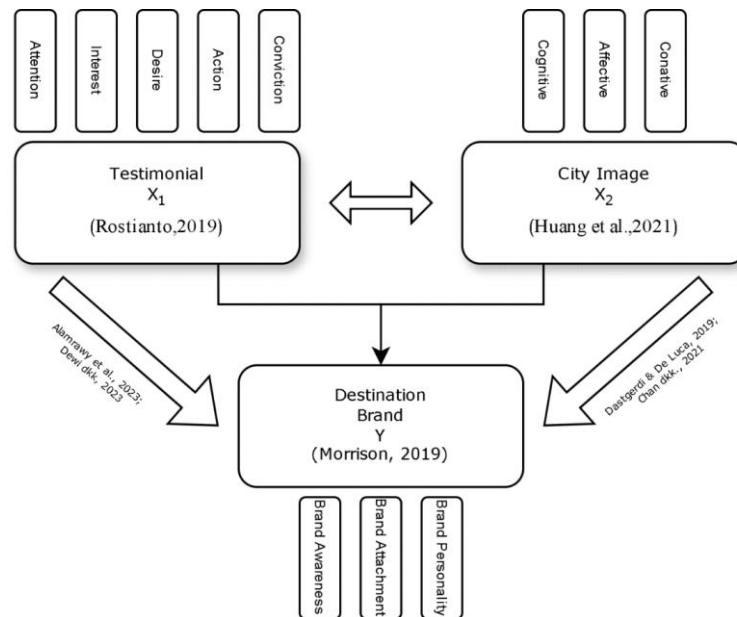


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

- H1: There is an influence of  $X_1$  toward  $X_2$   
 H2: There is an influence of  $X_2$  toward  $X_1$   
 H3: There is an influence of  $X_1$  toward  $Y$   
 H4: There is an influence of  $X_2$  toward  $Y$   
 H5: There is an influence of  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  simultaneously toward  $Y$

Respondents in this research study were tourists who had visited the city of Bandung, then investigated (data processing were carried out) from their Instagram accounts with testimonials in the form of expressions accompanied by photos posted based on the image of the city of Bandung according to their perception so that they could find out whether a destination brand was formed. that Bandung is both a city and a tourist destination. Determination of the minimum sample size is carried out based on calculations using the formula (Malhotra, 2020):

$$n \geq \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{b^2} \quad (1)$$

$n$  = number of samples required,  $Z$  = number of standard error units from the normal distribution that will produce the desired level of confidence.  $\alpha$  = significance level,  $p$  = proportion of the population to be studied (if you cannot estimate the population proportion, use  $p = 0.5$ ),  $b$  = error rate or maximum difference between the sample proportion and the population proportion that can be accepted with the specified level of confidence. In this study, a significance level ( $\alpha$ ) of 5% was used, a confidence level of 95% ( $Z = 1.96$ ) with an error of 10% so that the minimum sample size was:

$$n \geq \frac{(1,96)^2 \cdot 0,5(1 - 0,5)}{(0,1)^2}$$

$$n \geq 96,04 = 97$$

To ensure that the sample meets the requirements, we rounded up the respondents to 120, to anticipate the occurrence of feedback that was less than the

number of samples distributed. Data processing is assisted by the research tool used, namely Path Analysis, to determine the direct and indirect influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Nasir, 2018: 93). Path analysis is a technique for analyzing causal relationships that occur in multiple regression if the independent variables influence the variables directly and indirectly, to provide estimates of the level of importance (magnitude) and significance (significance) of hypothetical causal relationships in the set of variables studied (Ghodang, 2020:17).

The scope of the research is limited to the Bandung city area only, bearing in mind that even in the West Java region, the social environment, culture, typical food, and so on can already see differences. Therefore, this limitation is necessary and adjusted to the research needs, so that when similar research is carried out by other researchers, the limitations will indirectly be appropriate, and it is hoped that the results of the research will be more in-depth, meaning that all shortcomings will be revealed so that further studies can be carried out. able to be implemented and useful specifically and generally.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of data processing are carried out in stages to produce optimal outcomes. These stages are carried out and passed through various processes and ultimately appropriate and adequate process results are obtained. Starting with the validity and reliability testing stage. The results show that the respondents are valid and reliable.

Table 1. Validity Test

Item	$r_{table}$	$r_{result}$	Declare
X1 <sub>1</sub>	0,1967	0,896	Valid
X1 <sub>2</sub>	0,1967	0,887	Valid
X1 <sub>3</sub>	0,1967	0,873	Valid
X1 <sub>4</sub>	0,1967	0,891	Valid
X1 <sub>5</sub>	0,1967	0,888	Valid
X2 <sub>1</sub>	0,1967	0,752	Valid
X2 <sub>2</sub>	0,1967	0,766	Valid
X2 <sub>3</sub>	0,1967	0,775	Valid
Y <sub>11</sub>	0,1967	0,720	Valid
Y <sub>12</sub>	0,1967	0,718	Valid
Y <sub>13</sub>	0,1967	0,769	Valid

Table 2. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Declare
Testimonial (X <sub>1</sub> )	0,893 > 0,60	Reliable
City Image (X <sub>2</sub> )	0,887 > 0,60	Reliable
Destination Brand (Y)	0,798 > 0,60	Reliable

Tables 1 and 2 show that the questionnaire in this study can be used. Next, the results of the direct influence of each variable are obtained and then the indirect influence is calculated. The results of the direct and indirect effects of this research are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Direct-Indirect Influence Variables

Path	Direct	Indirect	Declare
X <sub>1</sub> - X <sub>2</sub>	0,885		Significant
X <sub>2</sub> - X <sub>1</sub>	0,872		Significant
X <sub>1</sub> - Y	0,821		Significant

$X_2 - Y$	0,796		Significant
$(X_1, X_2) - Y$		0,787	Significant

Table 3 illustrates that testimonials have a greater contribution to the formation of a destination brand in Bandung. This is very acceptable because tourists will first see and consider the certainty of their visit based on the reviews they see. Testimonials that appear via Instagram, whether insta stories or photo posts accompanied by testimonials, clearly encourage tourists to come to visit, so that the curiosity that arises through visuals as a result of testimonials can be proven and undeniable, which of course in the results of this study is a positive response. The stronger the testimonials appear, the more the destination brand for the city of Bandung will be formed as a favorite city for tourists to visit, meaning it has a city identity as well as a tourist destination.

The results of our research create a gap with research (Alvianna et al., 2022) which states that city image does not have a significant influence on the decision to visit, with indicators of the quality of Batu city tourism being very good, then the cost of visiting Batu city is affordable and economical, and the personality of city tourism Stones stand in great solidarity. This is quite interesting; with different regions, the research results will be different. Meanwhile, research results (Alya, 2023) show that city image has a significant direct effect on interest in visiting the city of Yogyakarta. Even though our variable Y is the destination brand (in this case the city), the formation of Y can also be based on interest in visiting.

City image as a variable that describes a lower contribution compared to testimonials based on Table 3. This study provides a further explanation that for the research object, namely the city of Bandung, its image is not strong enough to beat online reviews via Instagram, both testimonials and photo posts. Overall, it can be concluded that the respondents were dominated by people with narcissism and self-promoting behavior, in line with the statement (Zengin, 2023). The stimulus for conducting reviews through testimonials is part of a reciprocal relationship, where the testimonial maker gains self-existence until the peak can end up being a career achievement, namely as an Instagram celebrity/online endorser (Khuntari, 2023). He earns income by traveling, making testimonials, posting photos, posting Instagram stories and so on (Silvira & Riswanto, 2023; Bergs & Lub, 2023). Then reciprocal relationship is formed for the object whose testimonies appear, namely by attracting many tourists to want to come to visit so that their curiosity is fulfilled, which indirectly, if this continues, naturally occurs as a destination brand for a city that also becomes tourist destination, namely Bandung city, and this is in line with research conducted by Mandagi's and Amani's research (Mandagi, 2022; Amani, 2022).

Simultaneously, variables  $X_1$  and  $X_2$ , if we look at the value of 0.787, illustrate fairly large contribution, where the value is still above 0.5 and leads to positive significance. This is enough proof that the city of Bandung is able to form a brand for itself through testimonials and the image of the city, so it is true that the city of Bandung has an identity as a city as well as a tourist destination. It should be noted that West Java's regional tourist attractions are scattered on the edge of the region, while the city of Bandung is located as the city center and provincial capital. It could be said that there are no tourist attractions in the city center, what they do have are typical food (culinary), the situation of the city, the layout of the city, the atmosphere of the city, the fashion styles of the local people, culture and comfortable social environment because the residents are known to be friendly.

In the end, several studies say that hospitality determines a city's identity and even the image of the city itself (Almeida et al. 2023; Barkhordari et al., 2023). Hospitality is only one of the elements that shape a city's image or can reach as far as the realm of testimonials (Praswati et al., 2021), so it is clear that variables  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  have contributed to shaping the city of Bandung into a destination brand.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Our findings state that testimonials play an important role in shaping the city's image and forming the destination brand of the city of Bandung. This study looks at the extent to which the independent variables contribute. After conducting the study, it is clear from the two variables that one dominates the other. We hope that there will be continuity from this research so that it can be implemented evenly, meaning that our hope for the future is that if this study can be successful in several cities, then it can further become an outcome for increasing regional income at a minimum for regional/provincial areas first. We can imagine that if this can be realized then the results of the studies and research carried out can be said to have been successful, and that is because of the collaboration between all of us as researchers. Therefore, as a researcher, I really hope that the Bandung city government will be involved in paying attention to these findings so that the city's income will increase, which of course will improve the welfare of its people. For this reason, it is also hoped that future researchers will be able to explore more deeply the function and impact of tourism marketing in forming the city's image as a brand and becoming a tourism destination.

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