

DETERMINANT OF DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY OF CILETUH GEOPARK

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ABSTRACT. This study aims to examine the effect of marketing communication strategy and distinctive destination on destination brand equity. The research was conducted at Ciletuh Geopark Sukabumi one of the leading tourist destinations, but its contribution to the regional economy is still not high. This research uses a quantitative research approach. The research was carried out on a cross-sectional time horizon, namely in 2023. The research was carried out on the Ciletuh Geopark analysis unit with an observation unit, namely Ciletuh Geopark visitors, totaling 150 respondents, and processed with structural equation modeling (SEM). Data collection techniques were carried out to respondents through a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale. The results of the hypothesis testing show that the marketing communication strategy and distinctive destinations have proven to have a significant effect on destination brand equity. These findings provide managerial implications for the managers of the Ciletuh Geopark to pay more attention to the development of distinctive destinations, especially in terms of culinary development by stimulating the creation of distinctive food and beverage products that characterize the uniqueness of the Ciletuh Geopark. Destination managers also need to pay more attention to the attractiveness of online content and social communication on websites, pay attention to and follow up on online reviews from visitors, and develop content on Facebook and YouTube channels that are more attractive and unique which can encourage greater involvement from visitors.

Keywords: Marketing Communication Strategy; Distinctive Destination; Destination Brand Equity.

DETERMINAN EKUITAS MEREK DESTINASI GEOPARK CILETUH

ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji pengaruh marketing communication strategy dan distinctive destination terhadap destination brand equity. Penelitian dilakukan di Ciletuh Geopark Sukabumi sebagai salah satu destinasi wisata unggulan, tetapi kontribusinya terhadap ekonomi daerah masih belum tinggi. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kuantitatif. Penelitian dilakukan pada time horizon yang bersifat cross-section yaitu pada tahun 2023. Penelitian dilakukan pada unit analisis Geopark Ciletuh dengan unit pengamatan yaitu pengunjung Geopark Ciletuh yang berjumlah 150 responden dan diolah dengan structural equation modeling (SEM). Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan kepada responden melalui kuesioner dengan menggunakan skala Likert 5 poin. Hasil pengujian hipotesis menunjukkan bahwa marketing communication strategy dan distinctive destination terbukti berpengaruh signifikan terhadap destination brand equity. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi manajerial bagi pengelola Geopark Ciletuh untuk lebih memperhatikan pengembangan distinctive destination terutama dalam hal pengembangan culinary dengan merangsang terciptanya produk makanan dan minuman yang khas yang mencirikan keunikan Geopark Ciletuh. Pengelola destinasi juga perlu lebih memperhatikan daya tarik konten online and social communication di website, memperhatikan dan menindaklanjuti online review dari pengunjung, mengembangkan konten di facebook dan youtube channel yang lebih atraktif dan unik yang dapat mendorong keterlibatan yang lebih besar dari pengunjung.

Kata Kunci: strategi komunikasi pemasaran; kapabilitas destinasi; ekuitas merek destinasi.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism can support the economic development of both local communities and a country's economy, through income from domestic or foreign visitors (Bunghez, 2016). Economically, tourists are consumers of goods and recipients of services. Of the expenditures made, some go directly to the economic unit of the tourism industry (housing, food, transportation, etc.), some go to the regional budget or the state in the form of levies, taxes, etc., and the third part goes to other economic sectors to pay for delivered products and services provided by these sectors to meet the needs of the tourism industry. (Bunghez, 2016).

Tourism provides benefits in stimulating economic growth by increasing the number of jobs

available in these tourist destinations, both directly and indirectly, within companies that provide the necessary services for tourists (Bunghez, 2016). For Indonesia, the results of a survey by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that the contribution of the tourism sector to gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 until the third quarter will reach 3.6 percent, which is a significant increase from 2021 which was only 2.40 percent (<https://www.menpan.go.id/>).

Ciletuh Geopark is one of the attractive tourist destinations in the Sukabumi Regency area. Ciletuh Geopark is the only geopark in West Java as well as the first and the third in Indonesia. This geopark area has an area of 126,100 hectares which includes eight districts and 74 villages. On April 17, 2018, Ciletuh Geopark was recognized by UNESCO as a

world heritage that must be cared for and protected. (sukabumi.go.id). Ciletuh Geopark is bordered by a white sandy coastline overlooking Ciletuh Bay and the Indian Ocean. (Hindersah et al., 2017).

Ciletuh Geopark has a panoramic view of the beautiful landscape. From several locations it can be seen waterfalls, cliffs, beaches and islands in one glance, which geomorphologically form a natural amphitheater. The Ciletuh Geopark landscape has many waterfalls that have different uniqueness, namely there are terraced, single or lined up. These waterfalls can be seen both from afar and up close. Some of the special waterfall names are Curug Cimarjung, Curug Sodong which has twin waterfalls, Curug Awang which has a height of about 40 m with a width of about 60 m. Apart from waterfalls, there are many large rock clusters named after animals, such as Batu Munding, Batu Kodok, Batu Komodo because there is a similarity with the shape of the animal. There are also caves and small islands that complement the beauty of the Ciletuh landscape. (Hindersah et al., 2017).

However, the existence of the Ciletuh Geopark economically contributed only 2.39% to the GRDP of Sukabumi Regency in 2018. This value is still far when compared to the contribution of Bali tourism which in the same year reached 23.34% of the total GRDP of the Province of Bali (Ramdiansyah, 2022). This indicates that the number of tourist visits to Ciletuh Geopark is not yet high.

Several things affect tourists' intentions to visit a destination, including Destination Brand Equity and Destination Brand Authenticity (Kumail et al., 2022). Likewise, Chi et al. (2018) revealed that brand equity is positively related to tourist travel intentions.

Contemporary destination brand equity studies examine key questions about destination brand marketing effectiveness by using several types of travel-based approaches to destination brand equity, ranging from conceptualization, identification of the various dimensions, and development of appropriate scales to examine the structural relationships between the various dimensions on the destination brand scale. equity (Hyun & Kim, 2019).

Destination brand equity is based on six dimensions, namely brand awareness, price premiums, preferences, popularity, value of a visit, and uniqueness (Kim, 2009). Other authors measure destination brand equity with eight dimensions, namely: destination brand awareness, perceived destination brand uniqueness, perceived destination brand quality, perceived destination brand value, destination brand image, destination brand reputation, destination brand satisfaction, and destination brand loyalty. (Ghafari & Elbanna 2017).

Customer-based brand equity includes four dimensions: brand awareness, brand image, brand loyalty quality, and satisfaction (San Martin, 2019). Brand awareness will reflect the knowledge of tourists about a particular destination or the existence of a destination in the minds of tourists when certain travel contexts are considered (San Martin, 2019). Brand image, often used interchangeably as a brand association, will represent a set of associations attached to a destination, consisting of various individual perceptions relating to various destination attributes that may or may not reflect objective reality (San Martin, 2019). Brand quality is a holistic assessment made on the basis of overall excellence. Satisfaction is a tourist's cognitive-affective state obtained from his experience at the destination. In tourism, loyalty is usually thought of as intention to revisit a destination and word of mouth. (San Martin, 2019). Satisfaction is referred to as an important construct when considering the relationship between tourists' perceived value and behavioral intentions. (Kim, 2009).

Based on observations, there are several things that become problems in building Ciletuh Geopark brand equity. Limited infrastructure and facilities at Ciletuh Geopark, such as roads, transportation, accommodation, and inadequate sanitation, can be an obstacle in creating a positive experience for tourists, can have a negative impact on tourists' perceptions of the quality and convenience of destinations, and affect Geopark Ciletuh's brand equity. In addition, there is a lack of public awareness and understanding of the values and attractions of the destination. This can hinder destination promotion and marketing, as well as affect public perception of the Ciletuh Geopark brand.

A destination needs to be found and created a unique identity to differentiate itself from competitors. (Baruca & Crive, 2022).

Previous studies reveal the role of Tourist Geographical Context on Customer-Based Destination Brand Equity (Cano Guervos et al., 2020). Eid and Elbanna (2018) suggest a destination attribute model that includes two basic dimensions, namely physical attributes and intangible attributes. The unique characteristics of a destination include tangible (e.g., beaches or historic sites) and intangible (e.g., customs, culture, and history) attributes (Qu et al., 2011).

Ciletuh Geopark in Sukabumi has several places or destinations that are usually visited by tourists. There are around 11 places in the Ciletuh Geopark area, including Panenjoan Hill, Drama Peak, Curug Awang, to Kunti Island. Each of these places has its

own uniqueness and characteristics. Starting from road access to the location, existing tourism potential and available tourist facilities (Darsiharjo, 2016). Of the 11 tourist destinations in the Ciletuh Geopark area, they have different development strategies from one to another. This development strategy is adapted to the natural conditions of each tourist destination. (Darsiharjo, 2016).

Naturally, Ciletuh Geopark has a uniqueness that is not owned by other geoparks that already exist in Indonesia. Ciletuh Geopark boasts leading geological heritage sites of international value in the form of tectonic fossils of continental and oceanic plate collisions that occurred during the Cretaceous era, as well as spectacular amphitheater morphology. (Andriany, 2016).

Ciletuh Geopark can also be seen as a means to improve the local community's economy. Local communities are residents who live in eight sub-districts in the Ciletuh Geopark Area. Ciletuh Geopark is one of the sustainable tourism destinations, namely tourism business activities that aim to manage all resources in such a way that economic, aesthetic and social needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, biodiversity, processes and life system supports. (Kadarisman et al., 2023).

Marketing activities bridge a destination so that it is communicated to the public to build their interest in visiting a destination. Previous research reveals several aspects that affect brand equity in the tourism industry, namely: advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, social media, and digital marketing (Kushwaha et al., 2020). Marketing communication strategies also increase tourism potential (Amin & Priansah, 2019). Social media communications, whether controlled or not controlled by the destination organization have an impact on destination brand equity. (Huerta-Álvarez et al., 2020). Besides, Tran et al. (2019) reviewed that destination branding varies greatly because there are many attributes in destinations related to economic, social, cultural, political, and technological issues related to destinations as products. For destination, branding has an important role in developing a tourist destination marketing strategy to produce a strong positive emotional value from the relationship between tourists and certain destinations (Kashif et al., 2015).

However, none of these studies have examined the effect of marketing communication strategy and distinctive destination on destination brand equity simultaneously, to test which variables have a greater influence. Based on that, the question that arises in this research is whether the marketing communication strategy and distinctive destination

have a significant effect on destination brand equity. Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of marketing communication strategy and distinctive destination on destination brand equity. The research was conducted at Ciletuh Geopark Sukabumi as one of the leading tourist destinations, but its contribution to the regional economy is still not high.

Marketing communication is a means for companies to inform, persuade, and remind customers, either directly or indirectly, about the products or brands they sell. (Kotler et al., 2022). Kotler et al. (2022) mention several communication formats, namely: advertising, online and social media communication, mobile communication, direct marketing, events, and experiences, word of mouth, publicity and public relations, personal selling, and packaging. Aspects that affect brand equity in the tourism industry are advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, social media, and digital marketing (Kushwaha et al., 2020).

This study measures several marketing communication strategy formats based on Kotler (2022), which include: 1) advertising: magazines, newspapers, and brochures; 2) Online and social communication: website, online review, Facebook, YouTube channel; 3) Events and experiences: festivals, tourism exhibitions; 4) Word of Mouth: verbal WOM, WOM on social media; 5) Publicity: annual reports, public relations.

Distinctive destinations are measured by dimensions and indicators referring to Baruca & Čivre (2022). which put forward unique destination attributes consisting of 1) Unique and natural resources: landscape, climate, panorama; 2) Cultural heritage: cultural attractions, architecture at tourist sites; 3) Culinary: special food, special drinks; and 4) Identity: beach, hill, waterfall.

Brand equity studies consist of two broad categories: first, measuring customer perceptions of a brand; and studies on customer behavior toward tourist destination brands (Kumail et al., 2022). Brand equity shows that customers have a high perception of the quality of a product, and they can identify the brand compared to its competitors. (Kumail et al., 2022). Destination brand equity in this study refers to Kim et al. (2009) which includes: destination awareness, destination preference, destination value for a visit, destination uniqueness, destination popularity, and destination price premium.

METHODS

This study examines the destination brand equity of Ciletuh Geopark in Sukabumi using a quantitative research approach. This research is a causality study

aimed at obtaining evidence of a causal relationship (caused and effect relationship (Malhotra, 2010). The research was conducted on a cross-sectional time horizon, namely in 2023. The research was conducted on the Ciletuh Geopark analysis unit with an observation unit namely Ciletuh Geopark visitors. Researchers did not get the population data of Ciletuh Geopark visitors, so the sample was taken by simple random sampling of 150 respondents. Data was processed with structural equation modeling (SEM). Data collection techniques were carried out to respondents through a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of structural model (inner model)

Table 1. Test of Outer and Inner Model

Variable	R Square	Cronbachs Alpha	Composite Reliability	Q square
Marketing Communication strategy	-	0.841	0.873	-
Distinctive Destination	-	0.787	0.839	-
Destination brand equity	0.473	0.772	0.840	0.58

Source: SmartPLS V3.0

Analysis of inner model shows the relationships between unobservable variables, which evaluated by using Goodness of Fit Model was indicated by the value of R square on endogenous constructs and Q square (Stone-Geisser's). The value of Q square obtained 0.02 (minor), 0.15 (medium) and 0.35 (large), and only used for the endogenous construct with reflective indicator. Refer to Chin (1998), the value of R square amounted to 0.67 (strong), 0.33 (moderat) and 0.19 (weak). Table 1 gives the R square value in Destination brand equity as endogenous variables are in the moderat criteria (> 0.33), and Q square values are in the large criteria (> 0.35), so it can be concluded that the research model is supported by the empirical condition (fit).

Analysis of measurement model (outer model)

Analysis of measurement model (outer model) shows the relations between observable variables (indicators) and unobservable variable. Validity and reliability test is used to measure the unobservable variables and the indicators in measuring the dimension that is constructed. Cronbachs Alpha's value is used to measure the reliability in measuring variables. The value of Cronbachs Alpha bigger than 0.70 (Nunnally, 1994), indicates that indicators have

good reliable measurement. Composite reliability and Cronbachs Alpha > 0.70 , indicated all of unobservable variables in the model estimated fulfill the criteria of discriminant validity. Table 1 shows values of Cronbachs Alpha > 0.7 and Composite Reliability > 0.7 , so it can be concluded that all variables have reliable dimensions and indicators

Table 2. Loading Factor of Latent Variable-Dimension-Indicator

Variable	Indicator-Dimension	Loading factor	SE	t-value	P Values
Destination brand equity	BE1 <- Destination brand equity	0.602	0.048	12.570	0.000
	BE2 <- Destination brand equity	0.738	0.035	21.201	0.000
	BE3 <- Destination brand equity	0.686	0.049	14.022	0.000
	BE4 <- Destination brand equity	0.667	0.047	14.171	0.000
	BE5 <- Destination brand equity	0.768	0.037	20.775	0.000
	BE6 <- Destination brand equity	0.628	0.056	11.261	0.000
Marketing Communication strategy	Advertising	0.837	0.023	36.587	0.000
	MCS1 <- Advertising	0.575	0.083	6.897	0.000
	MCS2 <- Advertising	0.771	0.038	20.101	0.000
	MCS3 <- Advertising	0.714	0.045	15.944	0.000
	Online and social communication	0.871	0.018	47.655	0.000
	MCS4 <- Online and social communication	0.772	0.035	22.129	0.000
	MCS5 <- Online and social communication	0.538	0.077	6.968	0.000
	MCS6 <- Online and social communication	0.720	0.043	16.884	0.000
	MCS7 <- Online and social communication	0.678	0.055	12.420	0.000
	Events and experiences	0.745	0.036	20.905	0.000
	MCS8 <- Events and experiences	0.866	0.030	28.610	0.000
	MCS9 <- Events and experiences	0.663	0.077	8.651	0.000
	Word of mouth	0.804	0.029	27.647	0.000

	MCS10 <- Word of mouth	0.834	0.028	30.292	0.000
	MCS11 <- Word of mouth	0.870	0.021	41.978	0.000
	Publicity	0.731	0.038	19.088	0.000
	MCS12 <- Publicity	0.612	0.075	8.175	0.000
	MCS13 <- Publicity	0.831	0.046	18.031	0.000
Distinctive Destination	Unique and natural	0.781	0.039	20.019	0.000
	UD1 <- Unique and natural	0.733	0.052	14.163	0.000
	UD2 <- Unique and natural	0.729	0.051	14.363	0.000
	UD3 <- Unique and natural	0.746	0.044	17.017	0.000
	Cultural heritage	0.696	0.049	14.325	0.000
	UD4 <- Cultural heritage	0.814	0.043	18.978	0.000
	UD5 <- Cultural heritage	0.801	0.047	17.062	0.000
	Cullinary	0.823	0.027	30.793	0.000
	UD6 <- Cullinary	0.805	0.044	18.409	0.000
	UD7 <- Cullinary	0.529	0.085	6.192	0.000
	UD8 <- Cullinary	0.787	0.053	14.936	0.000
	Identity	0.817	0.031	26.018	0.000
	UD9 <- Identity	0.758	0.053	14.196	0.000
	UD10 <- Identity	0.775	0.045	17.383	0.000

Source : Data Processing with SMARTPLS v3.0 (2023)

Table 2 shows the result of outer model for each dimension on indicators. For second order. This research model causes the loading factor obtained be able to explain the relationship between variables-dimensions and dimensions-indicators.

The loading factor of outer model show that the indicators are valid which value > 0.5 and t-value < 1.98 (t table at $\alpha = 0.05$) with p value < 0.05. The result of measurement model of unobservable variables on their dimensions shows to what extent the validity of dimensions in measuring variables. Figure 1 shows the path diagram of research model of this study.

The structural model is formulated as:

$$DBE = 0.286 * MCS + 0.618 * DD + \zeta_1$$

DBE = Destination Brand Equity

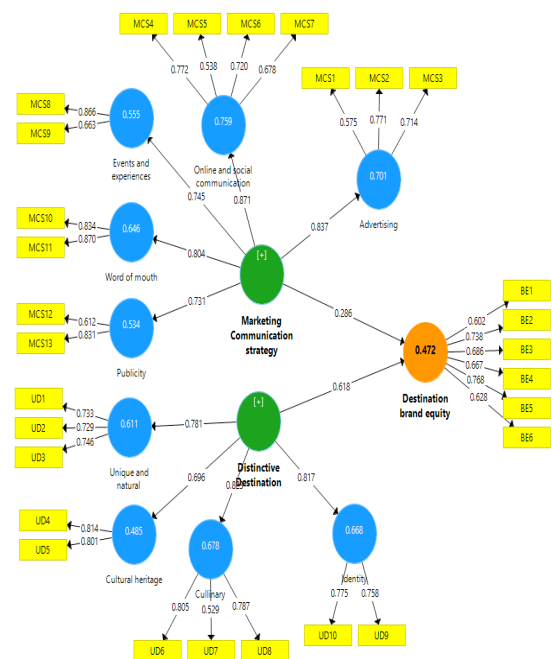
MCS = Marketing Communication strategy

DD = Distinctive Destination

ζ_1 = Residual

Hypothesis Testing

The result of hypothesis testing shown on table 3.



Source : Data Processing with SMARTPLS v3.0 (2023)

Figure 1. Path Diagram of Research Model

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Coeff. Estimated	SE	t-value	Pvalue	R ²	Concl.
1 Marketing Communication Strategy -> Destination brand equity	0.286*	0.068	4.206	0.000	0.086	Hypothesis accepted
2 Distinctive Destination -> Destination brand equity	0.618*	0.055	11.206	0.000	0.387	Hypothesis accepted

* significant at $\alpha=0.05$ (t table =1.98)

Source : Data Processing with SMARTPLS v3.0 (2023)

Based on table 3, it is obtained that:

- Marketing communication strategy have significantly direct effect to destination brand equity ($R^2 = 8.6\%$)
- Distinctive destination have significantly direct effect to destination brand equity ($R^2 = 38.7\%$)

Based on the results of hypothesis testing, it can be described a research finding on figure 2.

The research finding reveals that Marketing communication strategy and Distinctive destination contribute to destination brand equity of Ciletuh Geopark. Distinctive destinations have a greater influence than marketing communication strategy in creating destination brand equity in the Ciletuh Geopark. This indicates that for visitors to the Ciletuh Geopark tourist destination, the uniqueness of the destination is more valuable than the marketing communication strategy implemented by the destination manager.

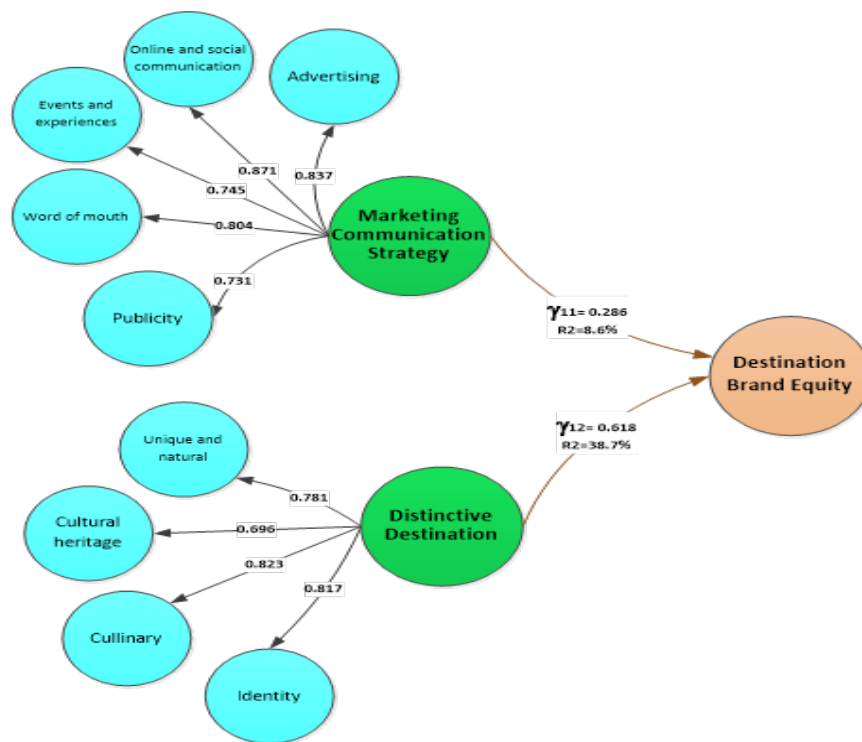


Figure 2. Research Finding

The experience that visitors feel when enjoying the uniqueness and naturalness, cultural heritage, culinary, and unique identity of Ciletuh Geopark gives a deeper impression that creates stronger brand equity in their minds. Distinctive destinations in this study are measured by four aspects that refer to unique destination attributes (Baruca & Čivre, 2023) which include unique and natural resources, cultural heritage, culinary, and identity. Of the four aspects, it turns out that culinary has a greater loading factor in reflecting distinctive destinations (0.823), identity (0.817), unique and natural resources (0.781), and cultural heritage (0.696). It turns out that culinary specialties are a distinctive destination aspect that is more prominent in driving Geopark Ciletuh's destination brand equity. The next aspect that gives influence is Ciletuh's identity in terms of beaches, hills, and waterfalls. Meanwhile, unique and natural resources get a lower loading factor. Meanwhile, cultural heritage that highlights cultural and architectural attractions at tourist sites gets the lowest loading factor.

Yuniarti et al. (2022) mentions some of the uniqueness of Ciletuh Geopark destinations which are divided into natural resource and socio-cultural attractions. Natural Resource Attractions include natural resource tourism objects in the Ciletuh Geopark area consisting of: Cikepuh Wildlife Reserve Area, Cibanteng Nature Reserve, Turtle conservation area, Pangumbahan, Cipeucang Protection Forest, beautiful scenery, rare types of rocks and fossils, unique rocks, small islands, Caves, Waterfalls, Various types of

beaches. Socio-Cultural Attractions include: Cultural Village (Kasepuhan Customs, Archaeological Sites, Historical Buildings, Art, Traditions, Legends/Myths, Batik Village, Turtle hatchlings released by tourists.

This shows the uniqueness and intrinsic value of Ciletuh Geopark which can be enjoyed from its natural beauty, biodiversity, geological sites and rich local culture. This uniqueness provides a unique experience for tourists and creates a strong attraction. Destinations that have clear advantages and uniqueness tend to be easier to remember and recognize by tourists, which in turn affects the formation of brand equity.

Ciletuh Geopark also offers tourists an authentic and immersive tourist experience. The experience includes activities such as hiking, hiking, interacting with local people, and exploring rare geological sites. This unique and authentic travel experience leaves a strong and memorable impression on tourists, which can increase brand equity.

The uniqueness and beauty of Ciletuh Geopark creates a positive impression on tourists who visit it. This positive experience can encourage them to provide recommendations to others through word-of-mouth, online reviews, or sharing experiences on social media. Word of mouth recommendations and positive reviews have a strong influence in shaping a destination's image and reputation, which are important elements of brand equity.

Although the marketing communication strategy is also important in promoting Ciletuh Geopark and introducing the destination to a wider audience, its influence is more supportive. The marketing

communication strategy plays a role in promoting the destination, raising awareness, and communicating the destination's values and appeal to a wide audience. Through the right communication strategy, destinations can build a positive image, inform the uniqueness and experience offered, and influence the perceptions and intentions of tourists to visit. Effective marketing communications can increase awareness and knowledge about Ciletuh Geopark, but without the strong uniqueness and experience offered by the destination itself, these marketing messages may not feel relevant or have a major impact on brand equity formation. Whereas, marketing and communication are the main and persuasive elements of an organization that can be used to bridge the market by conveying and communicating ideas (Utami and Sadeli, 2014).

In terms in this study, online and social communication carried out by managers of Ciletuh Geopark through websites, online reviews from visitors, and content on Facebook and YouTube channels are aspects of marketing communication strategy that make the biggest contribution to establishing destination brand equity. This shows that content on social media helps shape tourist perceptions of Ciletuh Geopark. As known in the study of Stojanovic et al. (2022) and Huerta-Álvarez et al. (2020) that social media content forms destination brand equity. The role of the media, which is so important in disseminating information, requires attention and consideration in marketing activities because choosing the right media can have a significant influence on promotional activities (Khadijah et al., 2022).

These findings can be useful for the management of the Ciletuh Geopark to pay more attention to the development of distinctive destinations, especially in terms of culinary attractiveness in the Ciletuh Geopark tourist area. This is because culinary specialties have a greater loading factor than identity, unique and natural resources, and cultural heritage. The specificity of drinks and food needs to be further improved with a variety of new variations and innovations that are more attractive to tourists. The management of Ciletuh Geopark also need to pay more attention to the development of a marketing communication strategy, especially in terms of online and social communication by creating content that stimulates the involvement of social users in general and visitors in particular so that it can attract more tourists.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the effect of marketing communication strategy and distinctive destination on destination brand equity in the Ciletuh

Geopark in Sukabumi, West Java. The results of the hypothesis testing show that:

1. The marketing communication strategy have proven to have a significant effect on destination brand equity.
2. Distinctive destinations have proven to have a significant effect on destination brand equity.

Distinctive capabilities make a bigger contribution than marketing communication strategy in creating Ciletuh Geopark destination brand equity. Visitors are more interested in including unique and natural resources, cultural heritage, culinary, and identity found in Ciletuh Geopark which gives a deep impression so that it further supports the creation of destination brand equity. Although the marketing communication strategy is also important in promoting Ciletuh Geopark and introducing the destination to a wide audience, its influence is more supportive. The marketing communication strategy plays a role in promoting the destination, raising awareness, and communicating the destination's values and appeal to a wide audience. Effective marketing communications can increase awareness and knowledge about Ciletuh Geopark, but without the strong uniqueness and experience offered by the destination itself, the marketing messages may not feel relevant or have a major impact on brand equity formation.

The findings of this study provide managerial implications:

1. For the managers of the Ciletuh Geopark to pay more attention to the development of distinctive destinations, especially in terms of culinary development by stimulating the creation of distinctive food and beverage products that characterize the uniqueness of the Ciletuh Geopark.
2. Destination managers also need to pay more attention to the attractiveness of online content and social communication on websites, pay attention to and follow up on online reviews from visitors, and develop content on Facebook and YouTube channels that are more attractive and unique which can encourage greater involvement from visitors.
3. The development of a distinctive destination can also carry the concept of eco-tourism which puts forward ecological and socio-cultural integrity as an alternative concept for the development of the Ciletuh geopark. (Hindersah et al., 2017).
4. There needs to be increased collaboration by managers of the Ciletuh Geopark tourist area by involving the active role of various relevant stakeholders such as local government,

business actors in the Ciletuh Geopark area, academics, environmentalists, non-governmental organizations, mass media, influencers on social media, as well as the local community, in an effort to support the marketing communication strategy for the Geopark Ciletuh tourist destination so that the uniqueness and attractiveness of destinations in the area can reach a wider audience and attract more visitors.

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