

# ESTABLISHING CITY BRANDING STRATEGY FOR TOMOHON CENTRAL TOURISM AREA IN ATTRACTING INTEREST IN VISITING TOURISTS

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** City branding is a marketing strategy aimed at building a positive image of a city, building differentiate and increasing the city's competitiveness as well as attracting tourists and investors. This study aims to determine the city branding strategy in the central area of Tomohon City, and see the effectiveness of implementing this strategy in attracting tourists to visit.

**Methods:** This study used a descriptive qualitative method with data collection through interviews, observation and documentation studies..

**Findings:** The results of this study indicate that the government of Tomohon City together with stakeholders have implemented a city branding strategy that is in accordance with the Anholt city branding concept, although overall it has not been optimally implemented because it is only focused on promoting TIFF as an international event and the utilization of promotional media and community participation has not been optimal.

**Conclusion:** On the other hand, the Tomohon City Center area already has various cultural activities, characteristics, positive perceptions and names that are known as potentials that can be further developed to attract tourists to visit.

*Keywords:* Strategy, City Branding, Visiting Interest, Tourism, Tomohon City.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the potential fields that can be developed for the economic progress of a region. Because tourism has now become an additional source of foreign exchange for a region. Now every region in Indonesia is competing to introduce their respective regional tourism sector, especially with regional autonomy regulations making districts or cities required to live independently, including in tourism management. Weaknesses in tourism at this time can be seen from the brand, which is considered not strong enough (Yoeti, 2010). So it is necessary to have a marketing strategy, one of which is through a branding strategy to introduce and market tourism brands to be better known by domestic and foreign tourists.

In the last two decades, city and regional governments have developed various promotional strategies conceptually known as city branding (Lucarelli & Berg, 2011). City branding is a concept in branding that aims to strengthen relationships and build a positive image of a city, differentiate the place from its competitors, attract tourists, investors, and increase trade (Braun et al., 2013). Big cities worldwide have widely implemented city branding internationally, and have proven to significantly impact the city's progress (Kasapi & Cela, 2017). Such as the application of slogans and taglines to several cities, including Paris with its tagline "The City of Lights," New York with "I Love NY," and Hong Kong as "Asia's World City" (Shen, 2010), and many more. In Indonesia itself, the implementation of city branding has also been carried out in several cities such as Surabaya with the tagline "Sparkling Surabaya," Solo with the "Spirit of Java, Yogyakarta with "Jogja Istimewa." Apart from these cities, one of the cities that also implements the city branding slogan based on the potential and local wisdom of the region is the City of Tomohon.

The city of Tomohon is one of the cities in North Sulawesi, which has a lot of tourism potential that can be further developed, both in the form of natural and cultural potential. Since 2008, the Tomohon City Government has been actively promoting Tomohon City as a City of Flowers with the slogan "Greet the World with Flowers." It organizes the Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF) as an international scale festival yearly. Along with the increasing recognition of the TIFF festival, various tourist areas in Tomohon are also being developed, including the central area of Tomohon City.

In efforts to develop tourism potential in the central area of Tomohon City after the Covid-19 pandemic, a city branding strategy is needed so that various promotional activities can increase tourists' interest in visiting again. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out further studies in viewing the city branding of Tomohon as a sustainable strategy so that the identity that has been built is more robust and easily remembered. This article was created to examine the application of city branding in the central area of Tomohon City and see the effectiveness of implementing this strategy by measuring hexagon city branding. This study also aims to find out the proper city branding strategy for attracting tourists to develop tourist areas in Tomohon City.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Tourist

Based on Law No. 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism in Article 1, paragraph 3, tourism is all activities supported by all facilities and services provided by the community, business people, government, and local governments.

### City Branding

In terminology, city branding is understood in the context of marketing management. Branding is a process by which efforts are made to influence how people interpret and construct their feelings about a brand (Kavaratzis, 2009). Whereas city branding, according to Padison in Hidayat (2014), is a competitive means to achieve excellence in increasing investment and tourism, community development, strengthening local identity and identifying people with their city, and mobilizing all social activities to avoid division.

There are four general marketing strategies to make it more attractive to tourists and investors in certain areas, namely image marketing, attraction marketing, infrastructure marketing, and people marketing. ) (Kotler in Arwanto, Nugraha & Widiyarta, 2020). According to Anholt (2007), there are six aspects to measure the effectiveness of city branding, namely: presence, potential, location, pulse, people, and prerequisites.

## Visiting Interests

Interest in visiting is a feeling of wanting to visit an exciting place. In this case, interest in visiting is analogous to buying interest in a product. According to Putra in Aviolitasona (2017), interest is an encouragement to motivate someone to take action. Kotler and Keller (2014) added that visiting interest is a consumer action in choosing or deciding to visit a tourist attraction based on experience in traveling.

## Traveler

In the Tourism Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, it is stated that tourists are people who carry out a tourism activity carried out by a person or group of people when visiting certain places for recreation, personal development, or an understanding of the uniqueness of tourist attractions within a certain period. Temporary.

## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. The research subjects are the Tomohon City Government and the Tomohon City Tourism Office, which are directly related to the city branding strategy in the central area of Tomohon City. Data collection techniques in this study used three techniques, namely interview techniques, observation, and documentation studies. Primary data is data obtained directly from the place and subject of research. In contrast, secondary data supports data in the field in the form of documentation, archives, and journals related to research. Data analysis used in this study was carried out during data collection and used Miles and Huberman's interactive model. In the interactive model, there are three types of analysis activities (data reduction, data presentation, and concluding), and data collection itself is a cyclical and interactive process.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### City Branding Strategy for the Tomohon City Center Area

The implementation of the city branding strategy carried out by the local government in the Tomohon City Center Area includes marketing activities as follows:

#### 1. Image Marketing (Image Marketing)

Image marketing includes the uniqueness and goodness of the image owned by a tourist area, often shown through slogans. In this case, the Tomohon City Center Area strengthens its image as the City of Flowers. The document that explicitly establishes the City of Flowers as the vision of the City of Tomohon is the 2016-2031 Regional Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPDA), with the vision to make Tomohon the City of Flowers a comfortable, safe, creative, and sustainable tourism destination. Both Tomohon City Spatial Planning (RTRW) 2013-2033, with a vision to realize sustainable development in Tomohon City as an environmentally friendly City of Flowers supported by agriculture and ecotourism activities (Tomohon et al. Office).

The strategies determined to elevate the Kota Bunga brand include

Building city gates with different floral nuances and symbols as well as being landmarks for the region;

Developing floricultural activities in the Tomohon City Center Area;

Developing facilities to support flower industry activities in the Tomohon City Center area, such as building flower windows and markets and making the "Tomohon International Flower Festival" (TIFF) event the highlight of the national tourism agenda.

The Tomohon City government's slogan was "We Greet the World With Flowers," or in English, "We Greet The World With Flowers." Unfortunately, until now, the Tomohon City Government has socialized the slogan "Tomohon Tough" or Tomohon Tranquil, Safe, Comfortable, Superior, and Living in Harmony, as seen on the city government's official website. So that the image of the Tomohon City Center Region as the City of Flowers is not visible in any infrastructure or tourism activities and is remembered by the public.

#### 2. Attraction Marketing / Attraction (Attraction Marketing)

The Tomohon City Center area has a variety of attractions and natural beauty, historical buildings and places, parks and green spaces, convention and exhibition centers, and shopping and trade centers on the main road corridors in the Tomohon City Center area. One of the activities carried out by the City of Tomohon in attracting local and foreign tourists is by holding an international standard activity, namely the Tomohon International Flower Festival or abbreviated as TIFF, which has been held since 2008 and has become an annual event calendar of the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism. Other activities, such as art performances or cultural activities, are held in the Tomohon City Center area, including the

Kulintang Festival, the Maengket Festival, the Ma'zani Festival, and the Kawasaran. The attractiveness advantages of each tourist destination in the Tomohon City Center Area are then promoted through digital tourism through social media, websites, and so on. The City Government and the Tomohon City Tourism Office have also compiled a program to re-organize local cultural events on a regular and massive basis by mobilizing the community in every village, school, studio, and cultural community.

### 1. Infrastructure Marketing

The City of Tomohon has provided several infrastructures that support tourist attractions and ease of access to information. Some of them: providing accommodation in the form of 3-star scale lodging, increasing access or transportation by adding online transportation services, adding road corridors and pedestrian paths, building show windows as agro-tourism locations, maintaining flower markets, and building spaces and city gates that reflect the image of Flower City. Unfortunately, in building easy access to information, the Tomohon City Government has not yet provided a particular application and website that offers various information related to tourist attractions, transportation, and lodging for tourists.

### 2. Resident Marketing (People Marketing)

Community participation and support are urgently needed to create a conducive culture and climate for advancing tourism in the Tomohon City Center Area. Synergy among the stakeholders has been established but has yet to be maximized because participation is visible only in TIFF implementation. The involvement of the Tomohon community is most evident when the community is competing to make gardens for their respective sub-districts within the framework of TIFF activities. At the same time, flower farmer groups have yet to be fully involved. As for the private sector through entrepreneurs, the government has not been directly involved in strengthening the brand but has taken advantage of the potential of Tomohon City by presenting tourist attractions that rely on flowers as their attraction. The Tomohon City Government has subsequently drawn up a plan to increase community participation by carrying out and facilitating training for creative tourism economy actors.

### The Effectiveness of City Branding Strategy for Tomohon City in Attracting Tourists' Interest in Visiting

Following are the results of the analysis of six aspects which show that the city branding strategy in the Tomohon City Center Area in attracting tourists visiting bypasses has been running effectively:

#### 1. Presence

This aspect is used to measure a city's branding based on a town's international status. Since 2008, Tomohon City has been widely recognized for holding the Tomohon International Flower Festival (TIFF), which has developed into an annual international event. This increases the potential for other tourist objects in the Tomohon City Center Area to be more widely known by local and foreign tourists.

#### 2. Potential

This aspect is used to measure the branding of a city based on economic and educational opportunities in a city. The town of Tomohon is in a mountainous area with a mountainous and hilly topography, making agriculture a leading sector. There are various types of plants cultivated in Tomohon City. Because of the cold and cool mountain climate, this attracts investors to build lodging in villas or hotels. Even the Tomohon City Center area's shopping and trading area is decorated with various types of flowers cultivated by regional farmers.

#### 3. Place

This aspect is used to measure the branding of a city based on people's perceptions of the physical parts of each town. The Tomohon City Center area has cool air, which can provide comfort for the community to enjoy urban space, and has well-managed infrastructure and urban planning. These various physical aspects have improved the community's welfare and increased the number of tourist visits; based on data from the Tomohon City Tourism Office, in 2022, the number of visits by local or domestic tourists will reach 416,671 people. The many tourist visits show the community's reaction to Tomohon City is perfect.

#### 4. Pulses

This aspect is used to measure the branding of a city based on the perception that there are exciting things in a town, whether it's activities or events that can fill spare time or attract visitors' interest. The Tomohon City Center area currently has 96 tourist destinations divided into 61 natural objects, eight artificial objects, and 27 cultural tourism objects (Tomohon City Government, 2021). The TIFF event is an annual festival leading a tour of the City of Tomohon.

#### 5. People

This aspect is used to measure city branding based on how friendly the residents are, what communities exist in the community, and how the area can provide a sense of security for visitors. The

Tomohon City Center area has offered various services to give every visitor a sense of satisfaction and security. The availability of services at tourist attractions begins with daily needs services such as food vendors, drink stalls, or snacks, then trade services such as sales assistants, carpenters, or other services, services for convenience and pleasure such as clothing stores, household furniture stores, then services related to the security and safety of doctors, pharmacies, police and firefighters, and many other tourist services.

#### 1. Prerequisite

This aspect is used to measure city branding based on the quality of a city, whether it is satisfactory, has standard public facilities such as schools, hospitals, transportation, and sports facilities. Tomohon City, in terms of vehicles, already has transportation facilities that reach all areas, from public transit and taxis to transportation to explore tourist villages. Educational facilities are available in the Tomohon City Center area: the Bethesda Academy, GMIM II Tomohon Elementary School, Caritas Catholic High School, Gonzaga Catholic Middle School, St. Familya, and Stella Marris Catholic Middle School. Worship facilities, namely the GPDJ Church and the Hati Kudus Catholic Church. As well as other facilities include the shopping center area, culinary, Bethesda General Hospital, and RTH, Alfa Omega Park.

City branding has a vital role in building a city's brand so that it is better known by the public and attracts tourists and investors (Daniel et al., 2014). City branding is a form of marketing promoting a positive image of a tourist destination to influence tourists' decisions (Blain et al., 2005). City branding has become a strategy for city and regional governments worldwide to improve the image of their cities to the global community (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been done, it is known that the Central Region of Tomohon City has implemented a city branding strategy to have differentiation and identity as the City of Flowers. However, the city government and stakeholders have yet to implement this strategy optimally. Overall, the marketing of Tomohon as a city of flowers still needs to be improved because the Tomohon City Government is more focused on creating international events, and the use of mass media and website/internet advertisements is not optimal. Implementing these components is not optimal and still leads to the promotion of the International Flower Festival. At the same time, there are many potentials and tourist objects in the Tomohon City Center Area. On the other hand, the Tomohon City Center area already has various cultural activities, characteristics, positive perceptions, and a name that is widely known as the organizer of international TIFF events. So that the Tomohon City Center Area has the potential to be further developed and managed to form an identity and uniqueness as a Flower City that can attract tourists to visit.

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