

Implementation of smart branding as a regional development strategy in Indonesia

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Abstract: Smart branding aims to optimise the appeal of a region, attract tourists and investors, and improve the quality of life for the community. With globalisation, every region is required to compete with one another to become an attractive, conducive, and culturally preserved region. Smart branding enhances a city's competitiveness through the latest technology and more effective systemisation. The Indonesian government has begun to realise the importance of smart branding, awarding regions that have branded well through the Smart City Award event launched by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. This study aims to analyse how smart branding is implemented in Indonesia, the factors that support it, and how smart branding can support the implementation of smart cities across several cities in Indonesia. This study uses secondary data from the Central Statistics Agency and relevant previous studies. This study uses qualitative descriptive analysis and factor analysis. This study found that several cities that have received smart branding awards have strong brand awareness.

Key Words: *City branding, Smart Branding, Smart City, Factor Analysis*

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Introduction

Globalisation causes each city to face intense competition to attract investment, tourists and quality resources (Exenberger et al., 2013). The Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge for cities in Indonesia in maintaining their regional branding (Sujiatmi et al., 2023). Regional branding is used internally as a strategy to foster a sense of pride and shared ethos, thereby improving the local economy (Saputro & Amallia, 2022). Every city is affected by the pandemic, both manufacturing and services (Pasquinelli et al., 2022). Branding is an effort

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that is mobilised to improve a product (Steve et al., 2021). Place branding has evolved over the last two decades and is an important approach in managing cities (Eshuis, Braun, & Klijn, 2013; Florek et al., 2021). A region can use branding to attract tourists and investors and to improve the quality of life of its people (Prasetya & Laksono, 2021). The development of digitalisation encourages regions to compete with one another to make their regions attractive tourist destinations and conducive workplaces (Kotler, 2002; Riza et al., 2012). Through city branding, economic growth is stimulated through increased business clusters and local tourism (Kowaas et al., 2023).

The complexity of urban issues and advances in digital technology have driven the concept of smart city planning. The implementation of smart cities in Indonesia is highly relevant given that Indonesia is a developing country with a large population and faces various urban issues that require innovative solutions (Gunawan, 2022). The implementation of smart cities in Indonesia is based on the dimensions of smart cities, namely smart governance, smart economy, smart branding, smart living, smart society, and smart environment (Kemenkominfo, 2017). The implementation of smart cities in Indonesia is guided by the vision and mission outlined in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan, leading to differences in their application across regions (Rachmawati, 2019). City branding can be implemented by utilising smart cities, namely the dimension of smart branding, to increase regional competitiveness by enhancing regional brand value (Wahyudhi & Devi, 2023). Smart branding can be used as a solution for a region to adapt to the opportunities and challenges of development in the era of globalisation, namely by making the region competitive locally, regionally, and internationally.

Since 2016, ASEAN itself has played an important role for its members in increasing value and competitiveness in the global economy (Prayudi et al., 2022). Each country strives to enhance its regional branding by exploring local potential and uniqueness. Indonesia itself has established the branding of 'Wonderful Indonesia' and 'Pesona Indonesia'. 'Wonderful Indonesia' is aimed at promoting the overseas market, while 'Pesona Indonesia' is aimed at promoting the domestic market (Yuristiadhi & Shintya, 2017). Branding is very influential in increasing tourist visits to destinations in the country (Mikulic et al., 2016).

Indonesia's abundant natural resources, cultural diversity, and tourism potential are opportunities that must be utilised effectively. The application of smart branding supports the integration of innovative technology and increases community participation in sustainable development (Winoto et al., 2023). Smart branding in Indonesia aims to attract investors, which is expected to boost regional economic activity. However, many regions do not understand the importance of regional branding (Kasali, 2015). Some regions also do not effectively explore and manage their regional resources, which could be used as capital to build regional brands. These regions are not ready to determine their potential for development to support regional income (Nuryasman, 2008). The government's commitment to managing regions is certainly an aspect that influences the success of regional branding, in accordance with Law Number 32 of 2004 concerning Regional Government, which serves as a paradigm of decentralisation, in which regional autonomy is fully contained within regencies or cities. The need for regions to develop brands creates a strong, comprehensive global position (Sukmaraga & Nirwana, 2016).

The government recognises and highlights the importance of branding in a region by leveraging local uniqueness and potential. Therefore, the government, through the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo), presents awards, one of which is the Smart City Award for regions that have implemented branding well. Other awards have also been successfully implemented by regions, including the city branding award launched by SuaraPemerintah.ID and TRAS N CO Indonesia to evaluate a

city's digital image, as well as the Indonesia Smart Nation Award (ISNA) launched by Citiasia to assess efforts to create regional brands. By 2023, 241 districts/cities in Indonesia will have implemented the smart city concept. Since 2019, eight cities in Indonesia have received smart branding awards from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Studies on how a region utilises digital technology to strengthen its image through smart branding are needed to optimise the tourism climate, regional business ecosystem, and urban planning using information technology. Studies on how a region can utilise digital technology to optimise its image are needed to improve the tourism climate, regional business competitiveness, and urban planning.

Methods

This study was conducted in cities that have implemented smart city initiatives in Indonesia to identify supporting factors using SPSS and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). Factor analysis was conducted on 61 cities that had become smart cities in 2023. The variables used in the factor analysis consist of 18 variables including tourist Attraction (Master Plan Guide, 2021); foreign tourists and local tourists (Susanto, 2021); Transportation Infrastructure; Hotels or Lodgings (Masterplan Guide, 2021); Restaurants and Eateries (Masterplan Guide, 2021); number of ATMs (Gilboa et al., 2015; Rohman et al., 2019); PAD (Hidayat and Sunarharum, 2023); PDRB (Hidayat and Sunarharum, 2023); Hospitals; Traditional Markets (Rohman et al., 2019); Number of Shopping Centers (Rohman et al., 2019); Number of Supermarkets (Rohman et al., 2019); Number of MSMEs (Rohman et al., 2019); Crime rate (Ulimaz, 2021); Regional Competitiveness Index; City Park (Sofie & Rachmawati, 2024); Environmental Index (Guideline Masterplan, 2021) and Length of Good Road Condition.

Through factor analysis, supporting factors for smart branding were obtained. The next step is the analysis focused on the city that received the smart branding award. The data used are secondary, obtained from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) and from search engine scraping. This research data was collected from February 2025 to March 2025. The object of analysis of this research is eight cities that received smart branding awards at the Smart City Forum Event by the Ministry of Communication and Information (Denpasar, Surakarta, Ambon, Kediri, Kupang, Pontianak, Samarinda, Semarang) in 2019-2023. The award is based on local government innovation and collaboration in improving the lives of its people, because smart cities are not just about technology; technology is an element that accelerates the realisation of the region's goals and vision. Here are the ~~regencies~~/cities that have received the smart branding award.

The implementation of smart cities is studied through digital brand awareness and factors that support smart branding. Brand awareness is measured by the volume of search results on search engines (SuaraPemerintah.ID and TRAS N CO, 2022; Asshagab, 2024).

Table 1. Measurement Parameters for Digital Brand Awareness

Chanel	Digital Brand Awareness
Search Engine	Number of search results related to regions using the keywords "regional name" " , regional tourism" " , regional investment"
Social media	Number of followers on social media

Source: SuaraPemerintah.ID and TRAS N CO, 2022; Asshagab, 2024

Search engines aim to identify the existence of a region on the internet using specific keywords. Keywords and indicators used are in line with the Smart City Masterplan Guideline launched by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (2021), namely related to tourism: building a tourism ecosystem, business: building business competitiveness and city appearance: structuring the face of the city. The results obtained in this study are then presented in tables to facilitate the identification of the gap (Asshagab, 2024). Search engines such as Google and Bing were used to determine whether the city existed. The logos and slogans of each city that received the smart branding award were also identified through a literature study utilising local government websites and social media. This provided data on the number of social media followers and city logos/slogans. The data were analysed qualitatively by presenting the findings through figures, tables and descriptive statistics.

Results

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis aims to discover new variables that are more specific than before, and these new variables are called factors (Ihsan et al., 2023). Through several variables collected from the literature, several factors were formed, including:

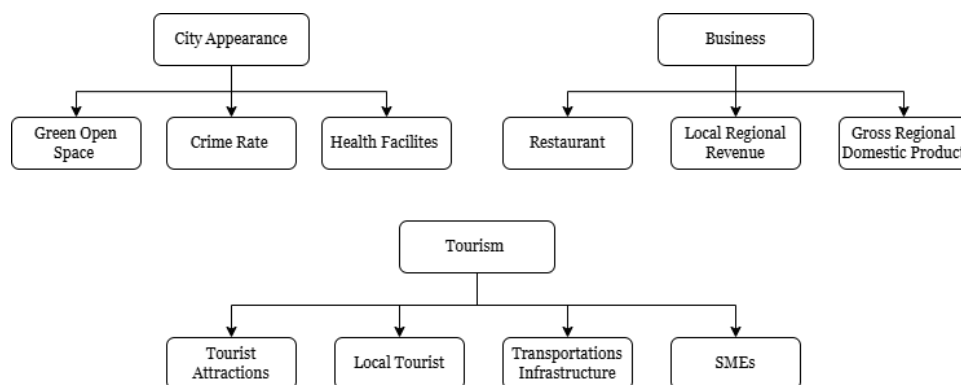


Figure 1. Factors that support smart branding

Source: Author's analysis, 2025

Based on Figure 1, supporting factors for smart branding include city appearance, city business and tourism. City appearance consists of green open spaces, crime rates and the availability of health facilities. City business consists of restaurants, local revenue and gross regional domestic product. Tourism consists of tourist destinations, local tourists, transport infrastructure and micro, small and medium enterprises. These factors help cities highlight their uniqueness and identity, thereby increasing their appeal and helping governments attract more investment.

Search Engine

Brand awareness aims to introduce an organisation's brand to the public (Utari, 2022). The use of platforms such as websites, Instagram, YouTube, etc., to promote a region is essential for enhancing its image. In the context of smart branding, this is used to boost tourism,

business, and the city's image by leveraging its uniqueness to compete locally, nationally, and internationally. To achieve brand awareness, the keywords used in search engines are: 'city name', 'tourism', and 'city investment'. The results obtained are:

Table 2. Search engine results of cities that received smart branding awards by the government in 2019-2023, using Google & Bing

City	Google		Bing	
	Search results for "City" and "Tourism"	Search results for "City investment"	Search results for "City" and "Tourism"	Search results for "City investment"
Denpasar	15,300	529	92,100	21,100
Surakarta	16,600	1,150	117,000	49,200
Ambon	6,650	559	101,000	29
Kediri	38,500	2,170	151,000	94,200
Kupang	9,700	1,030	119,000	29,300
Pontianak	11,400	425	128,000	22,500
Samarinda	12,500	1,960	73,400	34,400
Semarang	98,700	2,820	457,000	190,000

Source: Author's analysis, 2023 (processed on February 22, 2025)

Table 3. Average number of city search engines that received smart branding awards from the government during the 2019-2023 period

Keywords	Average Search Engine Results	
	Google	Bing
Tourism	209,350	1,238,500
Investment	10,643	440,729

Source: Author's analysis, 2025

Social Media

Social media as an option in implementing smart branding (Muslimah, 2021). Marketing using social media is useful for increasing brand awareness and brand loyalty, reducing marketing costs, and optimising Google search results (Laba et al., 2021). The following are various social media platforms in several cities in Indonesia.

Table 4. Number of followers/subscribers on social media, cities that received smart branding awards by the government in 2019-2023

No	City	Number of Followers/Subscribers		
		Instagram	YouTube	Twitter
1	Denpasar	176K	3,84K	20,8K
2	Surakarta	92K	4,13K	21,5K
3	Ambon	1,3K	9,6K	2,8K
4	Kediri	100K	4K	1,8K
5	Kupang	9,8K	201	1,3K
6	Pontianak	533K	2,79K	3,5K
7	Samarinda	49,9K	2,6K	5,9K
8	Semarang	191K	36,4K	12,1K

Source: Author's analysis, 2025, (Access as of January 2025)

Brand Logo and Slogan

Branding in urban areas defines a city's identity through logos, brands, and symbols (Putra, 2021). There are two approaches to branding a city: spatial positioning and spatial placement (Syssner, 2009; Yananda & Salamah, 2014). The following table shows the availability of branding logos and slogans/taglines for cities in the study area.

Table 5. Slogans of Cities that have received awards from 2019 to 2023

No	City	Slogan/Tagline	Branding Approach
1	Denpasar	The Heart of Bali	<i>Spatial Enchorage</i>
2	Surakarta	The Spirit of Java	
3	Ambon	City of Music	
4	Kediri	Harmony Kediri	
5	Kupang	City of Love, Coral City	<i>Spatial Positioning</i>
6	Pontianak	City of the Equator	
7	Samarinda	City of Civilisation	
8	Semarang	Semarang: Variety of Culture	

Source: Author's analysis, 2025

Slogans/taglines and branding logos usually convey characteristics or expectations to consumers. Here are some examples of city branding logos in Indonesia.



Figure 2. Denpasar City Logo and Tagline
Source: Denpasar City official website
(<https://denpasarkota.go.id/>)



Figure 3. Surakarta City Logo and Tagline
Source: Official website of the Surakarta City
Tourism, Culture, and Creative Economy Agency



Figure 4. Samarinda City Logo and Tagline
Official Website of the Samarinda City Government

Referring to the figure above, Denpasar has the branding slogan 'The Heart of Bali', Surakarta has the branding slogan 'The Spirit of Java' and Samarinda has the branding slogan 'City of Civilisation'. These branding slogans were created by the local government to make the cities unique and easily recognisable by the public, as well as to differentiate them from other cities.

Smart Branding Innovation

In 2023, 61 cities in Indonesia had implemented smart city initiatives. However, not all cities received awards, especially in the smart branding category. In the same year, eight cities received smart branding awards. The following are the smart branding innovations implemented by these cities.

Table 6. Smart Branding Innovations That Received Awards in 2019-2023

No	City	Smart Branding Innovations
1	Denpasar	Gajah Mada Heritage Area and Tukad Badung Storytelling
2	Surakarta	Solo Technopark
3	Ambon	Ambon City of Music Programme
4	Kediri	Community Empowerment (Prodamas) Programme
5	Kupang	Development of Sepe Flower Weaving
6	Pontianak	Caping Village
7	Samarinda	Revitalisation of the Citra Niaga Area
8	Semarang	Smartphone-based location guide 'Semarang in your hands'

Source: Social Media, Websites of Cities that received the Smart Branding Award for 2019-2023



Figure 5. Gajah Mada Heritage Area and Tukad Badung Storytelling in Denpasar City

Source: Official website of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in Denpasar Source: Solo Technopark official website (<https://solotechnopark.id/>)

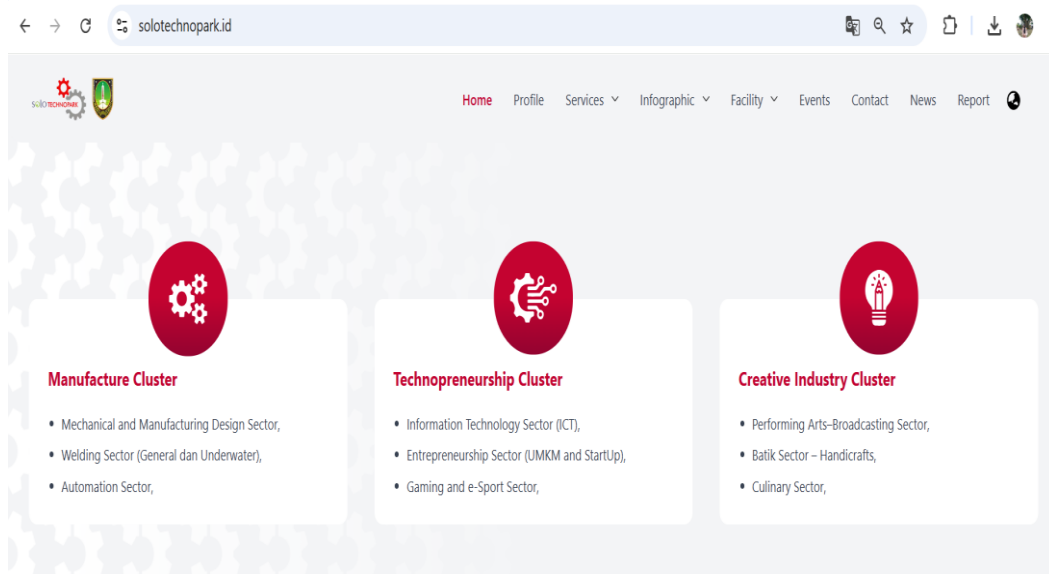


Figure 6. Solo Technopark Website

Referring to Table 7, smart branding innovations in these cities vary. Some cities focus their innovations on tourism, business or city appearance. An example is Denpasar, which has redesigned the Gadjah Mada area to make it more attractive. Meanwhile, the Surakarta City Government focuses on strengthening the local economy through the development of working spaces supported by ICT enhancement and optimisation of the Solo Technopark website.

Discussion

Factors that support smart branding include the city's appearance, business, and tourism. The availability of green open spaces, crime rates and health facilities influences a city's appearance. Governments can use landscape strategies in planning an area. The elements contained in the strategy include urban design, architecture, public space, public art, and green open space (Miles, 2005; Januchta-Szostak, 2010). The urban design aspect, which includes public space architecture and green open space, is one of the efforts to implement smart branding. Ensuring sufficient open space is a strategic step in preserving the environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change. This was deployed by the Samarinda City Government, which revitalised the commercial area into a public space and landmark of Samarinda City (Syativa et al., 2022).

Green spaces are designed to have good lighting, enhance community togetherness, and create a safe environment. Ecologically, green spaces produce oxygen and absorb air pollution, providing healthy and fresh air for the surrounding environment. However, research by Venter et al. (2022) on the relationship between green open spaces and crime reduction found no uniform relationship across different types of activities and levels of green environment. Wang et al. (2024) also noted that the relationship between green open spaces and crime varies by crime type. In this case, policymakers should consider green open spaces as a potential but not absolute measure to reduce crime.

The Kediri City Government also carries out environmental optimisation through the Arteri programme 'Kediri Open Space'. The programme focuses on structuring public spaces to increase citizen interaction. Data on green open spaces in Kediri City can be accessed on the Prodama Website (<https://prodama.kedirikota.go.id/rth>). The programme indirectly creates a brand image for Kediri City. The open space can be equipped with environmental graphic design and play and sports facilities, tailored to each neighbourhood's theme. Reading Park facilities can be an attractive and educational space to improve literacy culture among city residents, equipped with computers and internet access. The Denpasar City Government did something similar with the Gajah Mada area. The area was redesigned with colourful lighting and concrete blocks along the road. The design and aesthetics of public spaces, such as parks, squares and streetscapes, contribute to the appearance of a city (Aswad & Titaley, 2024). This is an effort to create attractive and functional spaces that reflect the characteristics of the city.

Local economic growth is closely linked to regional business growth. Restaurants contribute to local revenue through restaurant taxes, which can be used for infrastructure development and improved public services. Restaurants can help promote a positive image of the city by providing good and attractive services, which are important for city branding (Pellokila et al., 2023). Furthermore, restaurants also create jobs for the local community, both directly through the recruitment of restaurant employees and indirectly by involving suppliers of raw materials, logistics services, and other supporting sectors. Moreover, restaurants contribute to an increase in GRDP. Therefore, policies that support the development of the culinary sector are needed to strengthen the local economy.

Every city utilises resources to generate revenue and drive economic growth (Nabasa & Riharjo, 2021). In this case, regional heads play a very important role. The ability of regional heads to fulfil political promises that are structurally outlined in their vision and mission, objectives, and priority development programmes (Fanggidae, 2020). Regional economic development is an effort by the government and the community to create economic opportunities in line with human resources, the optimisation of local resources, and regional institutions (Susanti et al., 2013). Kupang is also nicknamed the 'coral reef city' because of its coral reefs. In Kupang City, there are many hotels, restaurants, and fish sellers, especially on Pasir Beach (Tibuludji et al., 2018). Fresh fish stalls are one of the culinary attractions in Kupang City.

Cities must provide basic facilities and infrastructure to encourage economic growth (Sarosa, 2020) and support community innovation. The Surakarta City Government itself provides the 'Solo Technopark' area as a space for the community to express their creativity. The provision of this area aims to develop economic potential and increase investment attractiveness. The Surakarta government is also collaborating with various stakeholders, such as academics, the private sector, and the community. The allocation of this space must be properly maintained to prevent misuse (Sarosa, 2020).

Tourism is shaped by the number of tourist attractions, the number of local tourists, the amount of transport infrastructure, and the existence of MSMEs. The tourism sector dominates the development of city branding in Indonesia, because regional brand development is based on local potential, especially tourism (Lestari et al., 2020). Tourism destinations must be supported by transportation infrastructure to facilitate tourist mobility. Good accessibility is a bridge between tourist attractions and MSMEs. An increase in the number of tourists will certainly affect local MSMEs and other tourism support services. Technological advances such as e-commerce will facilitate communication between entrepreneurs and buyers (Sarosa, 2020). Using technology, MSMEs can market their products at home, both nationally and globally. In urban areas, MSMEs will grow if cities make it easier to do business.

In this digital era, tourism must be supported by innovative and collaborative efforts, such as the use of digital applications. The city of Semarang itself has created an IT-based tour guide service, namely Semarang in the hand, through several applications, one of which is Lunpia, launched by the Department of Culture, Sports, Youth, and Tourism. This application recommends contemporary tourist attractions in Semarang and features an audio guide that provides brief information about each attraction. The application also has an AR guide that can direct tourists to their destinations. In addition to utilising technological applications, local tourism development is carried out through innovation and active collaboration between the community and local government. The Pontianak government itself developed Pontianak Caping Tourism by involving Mendawai youth. These young people promote Kampung Caping through the digital ecosystem. The application of smart branding, utilising technology and innovation, is useful for optimising city promotion, including tourist locations.

Promotion in a city aims to identify needs and potential and develop services to meet market needs (Kolb, 2006; Nurjaman, 2022). Essentially, countries must compete in intangible areas such as brand, quality, design, technology, and various after-sales services (Zaichkowsky et al., 2010). Currently, the internet is an important tool in promoting a city. The internet is an important means of communication, especially for tourism, recreation, business, study, science, work, culture, religion, health, and so on (Arifin, 2017). Promoting cities online has the potential to reduce costs and increase sales (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In terms of branding, websites and social media are very important tools for promoting brands. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) is a method of placing keywords and indicators on web pages so that the information is indexed by search engines (Ledford, 2009; Yusananto et al., 2021). SEO is an important part of digital marketing because it can help organisations achieve their branding goals. In relation to smart branding, SEO aims to boost tourism, regional business, and a city's image, making it more competitive locally, nationally, and internationally (Asshagab, 2024). SEO helps websites, destinations, or information about a region appear at the top of search engine rankings and increases organic traffic by making them easier for visitors to find.

To analyse digital brand awareness, the keyword combinations used were 'city name', 'city tourism', and 'city investment'. In this study, SEO was conducted on Google Search Engine, which is often used by the public (Simarmata, 2010; Krismayani & Mafar, 2024), and on Bing. The Bing search engine obtained higher results than Google. However, the large number of results is sometimes inconsistent with the accuracy of the information provided. Deka & Lahkar (2014) compared the accuracy of searches on Google and Bing, with results of 95.3% on Google and 76.6% on Bing. This condition indicates that Bing searches are not always accurate or consistent.

Local governments play an important role in promoting their regions and attracting community participation. The benefits of city promotion are felt not only by the government but also by business actors, such as hotel owners, travel agents, souvenir sellers, and others (Adona et al., 2023). Online presence and availability are crucial for attracting visitors and residents to a region. Chaffey and Smith (2013) state that there are five indicators of digital marketing, namely Search Engine Marketing (SEM), online public relations, online partnerships, interactive advertising, email marketing, and social media marketing. However, the content generated from websites receives little attention despite being easily accessible to internet users (Adona et al., 2023). A commitment is needed to realise a participatory city promotion system through the development of regional websites.

Another thing to consider is social media management. Social media can be used to gather feedback and understand consumer behaviour, enabling the government to determine the right branding strategy to improve the community's quality of life. Engaging,

consistent posts on social media platforms such as Instagram can help build relationships with the community, visitors, and investors. Social media can shape a city's image, helping it attract investors and tourists (Wang & Feng, 2023). The government's social media presence includes Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Of the three platforms, Instagram is the social media platform with the most followers. Pontianak City has the most Instagram followers, while Kupang City has the lowest number of followers. This may be due to poor social media management and monitoring. On the other hand, the interactive, updated, and diverse content from the Pontianak City Government attracts visitors.

Social media can strengthen relationships between communities and audiences, shaping the impression or image of a place (Indriani, 2024). In addition, Indriani (2024) states that city promotion on social media must be integrated with city branding. This condition then affects the decision to visit the city. Electronic word of mouth also influences the decision to visit a tourist destination (Yuliyani & Suharto, 2021). Effective social media management involves efforts to enhance the image of regional brands (Asshagab, 2024). Collaboration between the government and local content creators results in more authentic interactions. Equally important is the analysis of the branding content that is applied. Analysis can be conducted through post-insights, which can serve as a comprehensive strategy for understanding visitor interests and evaluating content.

In representing cities in Indonesia, several factors must be considered, including physical structures, cultural products, and community characteristics that are always associated with the local identity of the region (Wiradharma et al., 2023). Lestari et al. (2020) stated that cities in Indonesia are slow in implementing city branding. Gradually, several cities have begun to realise the importance of branding and are implementing it through the development of city slogans and logos. There are two approaches to branding, namely spatial positioning and spatial encouragement. Spatial positioning relates to broader spatial categories, while spatial anchoring situates the branding of one city within another. An example of spatial encouragement is the city of Denpasar, which developed the branding "Heart of Bali". The city of Denpasar promotes itself by associating itself with Bali, which is famous for its tourism potential.

In terms of its city logo, Denpasar was inspired by a local dance, namely the Baris Dance. This dance is considered to represent cultural diversity, geography, and morphology as elements of Denpasar's personality. The Surakarta City Government did the same thing by using the tagline "Solo the Spirit of Java". Surakarta City developed its branding by associating itself with Java. This tagline aims to support various public activities, promote regional attractions, and encourage property and real estate investment (Saputro & Amallia, 2022). Based on research conducted by Zakia & Baiquni in 2012, 70% of business actors supported the tagline, 4% rejected it, and 26% were neutral. Some respondents rejected it due to the lack of a brand function for the company and insufficient geographical justification. Developing city branding that is acceptable to all levels of society is the biggest challenge for cities in Indonesia. Sometimes, city branding is not aligned with comprehensive studies and stages (Pakarti, 2016), thereby affecting the community's sense of ownership. In addition, city branding is not limited to slogans and logos, but also utilises local resources as capital for regional development.

Other cities are classified in spatial positioning, such as Ambon, known as the "World Music City"; Kediri, with the slogan "Kediri Harmony"; Kupang, nicknamed the "City of Love"; Pontianak, nicknamed the "City of the Equator"; and Semarang, nicknamed the "City of Cultural Diversity". The more interesting and high-quality the branding elements in a city are, the more people will love that city. One crucial element in branding is coordination among government agencies to formulate effective city promotion strategies.

City branding is the process of creating a unique and appealing brand and message for a city, involving various stakeholders such as residents, visitors, investors, and business actors (Sutjiatmi et al., 2023). The city of Samarinda itself has the tagline 'City of Civilisation' and the slogan 'Greetings of Change' with the logo. Explicitly, the tagline explains that the Vision and Mission of Samarinda City focus on and always strive to realise Samarinda City as a Centre of Civilisation. The slogan "Greetings of Change" aims to encourage all levels of society to be ready and brave enough to change, so that the progress of Samarinda City and its citizens will be greater and able to surpass the achievements of other regions.

Cities that receive smart branding awards certainly have innovations that are interesting and have an impact on society. The innovations developed by these cities have different focuses. An example is Ambon City, which has developed innovations aligned with its branding as the City of Music. Music tourism in Ambon City is promoted as a tourist attraction that integrates local wisdom, particularly in Hutumuri Village. On the other hand, Kupang City has developed a local product, namely sape flower motif weaving. This weaving motif is a distinctive feature of Kupang City and also serves as the city's cultural identity.

Smart branding is one of the efforts made to boost the economy, city image and city identity (Abdurrahman, 2008). Winoto et al. (2023) state that the core of smart branding implementation lies in the integration of innovative technology, community involvement, and sustainable development. In this study, community involvement is reflected in the contribution of regional potential marketing through social media. Eshuis et al. (2013) state that smart branding can encourage the development of a city by creating new spaces and shaping people's perceptions of a place.

Conclusions

The implementation of smart branding in Indonesia has been effective, utilising digital platforms, social media, and apps to increase promotional reach and create a more engaging experience. Several factors support the implementation of smart branding in Indonesia, which must be managed holistically to improve people's quality of life and create efficient and sustainable cities. Promoting cities through websites is quite effective, with tourism keywords yielding better results on both Google and Bing searches. On the other hand, these cities make good use of social media to promote their regions and build relationships with visitors.

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