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## Value-Based Digital Branding and Tourist Visit Intention: The Role of Brand Authenticity and Brand Engagement

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### ABSTRACT

Culture-based tourism has become an important strategy in strengthening local identity while promoting regional economic development. In the digital era, communication of cultural values through digital platforms plays an important role in building an authentic destination image and attracting tourists. This study aims to analyze the effects of value-based digital branding on brand authenticity, brand engagement, value perception, and visit intention at the Punden Sari tourism destination in Madiun, Indonesia. This research used a quantitative explanatory approach with a survey method. Data were collected via online questionnaires distributed to 165 respondents who had visited or been exposed to digital promotional content about the destination. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS. The results indicate that value-based digital branding significantly influences brand authenticity, brand engagement, value perception, and visit intention. In addition, brand authenticity and brand engagement act as mediating variables, strengthening the relationship between digital branding strategies and tourist behavioural intentions. The findings highlight the importance of communicating local cultural values through digital branding strategies to enhance perceived value and attract more tourists

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism has become one of the strategic sectors contributing significantly to economic development, employment creation, and cultural preservation. In Indonesia, tourism development is increasingly directed toward destinations that highlight cultural heritage and local wisdom. Cultural tourism offers unique experiences that attract tourists seeking authenticity, historical value, and meaningful interactions with local traditions (Akgün et al., 2020).

One of Madiun's cultural tourism destinations is Punden Sari, a heritage site that combines spiritual values, historical narratives, and traditional cultural activities. The destination offers unique attractions, including traditional performances, local rituals, and the use of bamboo currency as a symbolic representation of local economic practices. However, despite its unique cultural value, the destination still faces challenges in building a strong tourism brand and attracting more visitors.

In the digital era, tourism marketing strategies have shifted toward digital platforms. Social media, websites, and online storytelling have become important channels for promoting destinations. Modern tourists, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, tend to be attracted to destinations that communicate authentic values and meaningful stories rather than merely highlighting visual attractions (Kumar et al., 2023). Therefore, value-based digital branding is a relevant approach for tourism promotion, emphasizing cultural narratives and local values.

Two important constructs that support this strategy are brand authenticity and brand engagement. Brand authenticity refers to tourists' perception that a destination brand is genuine, credible, and aligned with its cultural identity (Morhart et al., 2015). Meanwhile, brand engagement reflects tourists' psychological and behavioural involvement with a destination through digital interactions, such as comments, shares, and participation in online discussions (Brodie et al., 2011).

Previous studies have shown that brand authenticity can influence tourists' behavioural intentions, including visit intention (Napoli et al., 2014). In addition, brand engagement has been found to strengthen the relationship between digital communication and consumer behaviour in tourism contexts (Harrigan et al., 2017). However, limited studies have integrated these variables in a comprehensive model, particularly in the context of small-scale cultural tourism destinations such as Punden Sari.

Therefore, this study aims to analyse the influence of value-based digital branding on brand authenticity, brand engagement, value perception, and visit intention among tourists visiting the Punden Sari tourism destination in Madiun.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design using a survey method. The research object is the cultural tourism destination of Punden Sari located in Madiun Regency, Indonesia. The destination has actively used digital platforms, such as social media, to promote cultural tourism activities.

The study population consisted of domestic tourists who had visited or been exposed to digital promotional content about Punden Sari. The sampling technique used was nonprobability purposive sampling. Respondents were selected based on the following criteria:

Aged 17 years or older

Have seen digital promotional content about Punden Sari

Have an interest in visiting cultural tourism destinations

A total of 165 valid responses were obtained from online questionnaires distributed via social media platforms and Google Forms.

The measurement instrument used a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strongly disagree and 5 indicating strongly agree. The variables measured in this study include:

1. Value-Based Digital Branding
2. Brand Authenticity
3. Brand Engagement
4. Value Perception
5. Visit Intention

Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The analysis involved evaluating the outer (measurement) and inner (structural) models to test the proposed hypotheses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 165 respondents who met the research criteria. The demographic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	78	47.3%
	Female	87	52.7%
Age	17–25 years	92	55.8%
	26–35 years	54	32.7%
	36–45 years	19	11.5%
Education	High School	45	27.3%
	Diploma/ Bachelor	98	59.4%
	Master/ Doctoral	22	13.3%

The majority of respondents were aged 17–25 years (55.8%), indicating that younger tourists dominate the visitor segment of Punden Sari tourism. This finding is consistent with the digital branding approach, as younger generations are more active users of social media and digital platforms.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Value-Based Digital Branding	4.12	0.68
Brand Authenticity	4.25	0.59
Brand Engagement	3.98	0.72
Value Perception	4.18	0.64
Visit Intention	4.32	0.55

The mean values for all variables exceed 3.9, indicating that respondents generally have positive perceptions of the digital branding strategy and the tourism experience offered by the Punden Sari

destination. Among the variables, visit intention obtained the highest mean score (4.32), suggesting a strong willingness among respondents to visit the destination.

**Measurement Model Evaluation (Outer Model)**  
**Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity was assessed using factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Loading Factor and AVE

Variable	Indicator	Loading Factor
Value-Based Digital Branding	VBD1	0.824
	VBD2	0.856
	VBD3	0.798
Brand Authenticity	BA1	0.832
	BA2	0.845
	BA3	0.819
Brand Engagement	BE1	0.812
	BE2	0.828
	BE3	0.805
Value Perception	VP1	0.841
	VP2	0.852
	VP3	0.819
Visit Intention	VI1	0.868
	VI2	0.854
	VI3	0.839

All loading factors are greater than 0.70, indicating that each indicator adequately represents its corresponding construct. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies the convergent validity requirement.

**Reliability Test**

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability
Value-Based Digital Branding	0.842	0.895
Brand Authenticity	0.851	0.904
Brand Engagement	0.836	0.889
Value Perception	0.859	0.911
Visit Intention	0.872	0.918

All reliability values are above the threshold of 0.70, indicating that the measurement instruments used in this study are reliable and consistent.

**Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)**  
**Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)**

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) indicates how much variance in the endogenous variables is explained by the model.

Table 5.  $R^2$  Values

<b>Endogenous Variable</b>	<b><math>R^2</math></b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Brand Authenticity	0.462	Moderate
Brand Engagement	0.538	Moderate
Value Perception	0.587	Moderate
Visit Intention	0.624	Substantial

#### **Effect Size ( $f^2$ )**

The  $R^2$  value of 0.624 for visit intention indicates that approximately 62.4% of the variance in visit intention is explained by value-based digital branding, brand authenticity, brand engagement, and value perception. This suggests that the research model has strong explanatory power.

Effect size analysis was conducted to measure the contribution of each exogenous variable to the endogenous variables.

Table 6. Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

<b>Relationship</b>	<b><math>f^2</math></b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
VBD → BA	0.324	Large
VBD → BE	0.156	Medium
BA → BE	0.287	Medium
BA → VP	0.234	Medium
BE → VP	0.198	Medium
VP → VI	0.412	Large

The largest effect size is observed in the relationship between Value Perception and Visit Intention ( $f^2 = 0.412$ ), indicating that perceived value is the most influential factor affecting tourists' intention to visit the destination.

#### **Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )**

Predictive relevance was evaluated using the Stone-Geisser  $Q^2$  value.

Table 7. Predictive Relevance

<b>Variable</b>	<b><math>Q^2</math></b>
Brand Authenticity	0.312
Brand Engagement	0.356
Value Perception	0.387
Visit Intention	0.428

Since all Q<sup>2</sup> values are greater than zero, the **Hypothesis Testing** model demonstrates strong predictive relevance for explaining tourists' behavioural intentions.

Table 8. Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	t-statistic	p-value
H1	VBD →	0.512	6.892	0.000
	BA			
H2	VBD →	0.286	3.245	0.001
	BE			
H3	VBD →	0.234	2.867	0.004
	VP			
H4	VBD →	0.198	2.456	0.014
	VI			
H5	BA →	0.458	5.673	0.000
	BE			
H6	BA →	0.387	4.892	0.000
	VP			
H7	BA →	0.245	3.124	0.002
	VI			
H8	BE →	0.324	4.156	0.000
	VP			
H9	BE →	0.298	3.784	0.000
	VI			
H10	VP →	0.412	5.923	0.000
	VI			

All hypotheses are supported, as the t-statistics exceed 1.96 and the p-values are below 0.05, indicating statistically significant relationships among the variables.

### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that value-based digital branding is the primary antecedent influencing tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions. Digital communication strategies that highlight cultural narratives, historical storytelling, and local wisdom significantly enhance the perceived authenticity of the tourism destination.

Furthermore, brand authenticity significantly influences brand engagement, indicating that tourists who perceive a destination as authentic are more likely to interact with digital content related to the destination. This interaction may include sharing experiences, commenting on social media posts, and recommending the destination to others.

The results also reveal that value perception has the strongest effect on visit intention, suggesting that tourists' decisions to visit a destination are strongly influenced by the perceived benefits and meaningful experiences offered. Cultural authenticity, emotional value, and social value play important roles in shaping these perceptions.

Overall, the results support the theoretical perspective that digital storytelling and value-based branding strategies can strengthen tourists' perceived value and ultimately increase their intention to visit cultural tourism destinations.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that value-based digital branding plays an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and behavioural intentions. Digital branding strategies that emphasise cultural narratives, historical authenticity, and local wisdom can strengthen brand authenticity and increase brand engagement among tourists.

Furthermore, brand authenticity and brand engagement serve as important mediating variables, enhancing the effect of digital branding strategies on value perception and visit intention. The results also show that value perception is the strongest predictor

of tourists' intention to visit cultural tourism destinations.

These findings have practical implications for tourism managers, suggesting that digital marketing strategies should focus on communicating authentic cultural values and storytelling to attract tourists and strengthen destination competitiveness.

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