

Viral Marketing in Tourism: A Creative Tool to Promote Rest Area as a Tourist Destination (Case Study on Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B)

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Abstract— Indonesia has many old buildings of historical value that are partially stalled. With innovation and creativity, one of the old buildings formerly a sugar factory in Banjaratma, Brebes, Central Java, was successfully renovated and functioned as a toll road rest area as well as a tourist destination and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) center. Inaugurated in March 2019, Banjaratma Heritage Rest Area Km 260B is currently the only rest area with a heritage concept in Indonesia. This rest area was built by maintaining the original structure of a sugar factory that was built in the Dutch colonial era, precisely in 1908. Its uniqueness makes the rest area in Trans Java toll road viral on social media. This study aims to look at aspects of viral marketing and social media communication in promoting and building public awareness about rest area as a tourist destination using descriptive qualitative research with the case study method. Data obtained from interviews with manager and visitors to the rest area, field observations, documentation, library research, and internet data. Data collection techniques were carried out by triangulation with inductive analysis. In conclusion, something unique and different will quickly become viral on social media. This research has practical implications as a viral marketing success story in promoting heritage destinations. Besides, it also became a model for the development of rest areas with the concept of heritage tourism destinations in the future.

Keywords— *viral marketing, tourism, heritage, social media, rest area*

I. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has many historical heritage buildings that have potential to be developed into public facilities and even tourism destinations. With innovation and creativity, one of the old buildings formerly a sugar factory in Central Java, was successfully renovated and functioned as a toll road rest area as well as a tourist destination.

According to Regulation Number 10/PRT/M/2018 issued by the Minister of Public Works and Public Housing, Tempat Istirahat dan Pelayanan (TIP) is a place equipped with various public facilities for toll road users, so the drivers, passengers, and vehicles can rest for a while.

In its development, the concept of the TIP (commonly known as rest area) is updated, and its function is expanded. The Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing is currently

reviewing four concepts for developing rest areas, including rest area for the tourist destination.

[1]Head of the Toll Road Regulatory Agency (BPJT) of the Public Works and Public Housing Ministry Danang Parikesit said, the presence of the rest area on the toll road which at the same time provides a comfort value for motorists will also be expanded according to the function of public services, especially as a tourist destination rest area, primarily as a stop for vehicles to stop but also has its own charm.

One of the rest area with the concept of tourist destination is Banjaratma Heritage Rest Area Km 260B in Brebes, Central Java. This rest area is managed and operated by PT PP Sinergi Banjaratma, a joint venture of five State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN).

Located in kilometer 260 of Trans-Java Toll Road, precisely the Pejagan-Pemalang section, the rest area appears as an iconic old building, which once was the Banjaratma sugar factory during the Dutch colonial era. The building is more than a century old.

In less than a year since its opening in March 2019, this rest area has become very popular and even gotten viral on social media. Such success is inseparable from the management strategy that aims for the rest area to be viral by maintaining some spots of the building as its original, to attract people to come, to take a picture then post them on social media. On Instagram, there are more than 1,000 posts of photos and videos of this rest area with the hashtags of #restareabanjaratma and #restarea260brebes.

Not only on social media, but almost all mainstream media has also been reporting on this rest area, which is said to be the most beautiful in Indonesia. Most online media has been publishing news about the rest area on their travel channel, which is identical to tourism. It meets the target of the management to develop the area into a tourist destination, besides the rest area.



Fig. 1. Rest Area Km 260B Heritage Banjaratma

Many rest areas have been built and developed with expanded functions. However, the Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B is so far considered as the most unique and iconic one because it is the first heritage rest area that was designed as a tourist destination. This study aims to look at aspects of viral marketing and social media communication in promoting and building public awareness about rest area as a heritage tourist destination.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Viral Marketing

Word-of-Mouth (WOM) is defined as oral, person-to-person communication between a communicator and recipient who perceives the respective message as non-commercial although the subject is a brand, product, or service (Arndt, 1967, p.3). Viral Marketing basically has the same as electronic WOM or e-WOM. It is a promotional message that spreads quickly in social networks.

Viral Marketing is a marketing strategy to create content that has the virus-like power, which can encourage people to share it with other people. The use of social media such as Instagram, which are widely used by the public, can also help to spread the message to be viral. The purpose of Viral Marketing is basically to provide information, spread an issue as well as a means of promotion with minimal costs.

Virality is a social information flow process where many people simultaneously forward a specific information item over a short period of time within their social networks and where the message spreads beyond their own (social) networks to different often distant networks resulting in a sharp acceleration in the number of people who are exposed to the message.

[2]Viral marketing expert Jonah Berger in his book titled "Contagious," outline a framework of six principles for why things catch on, using the STEPPS acronym. In an interview with Knowledge@Wharton, Berger said that the books talks about the six key steps to drive people to talk and share. STEPPS is an acronym for:

- Social currency: It's all about people talking about things to make themselves look good, rather than bad
- Triggers, which is all about the idea of "top of mind, tip of tongue." We talk about things that are on the top of our heads.

- Ease for emotion: When we care, we share. The more we care about a piece of information or the more we're feeling physiologically aroused, the more likely we pass something on.
- Public: When we can see other people doing something, we're more likely to imitate it.
- Practical value: Basically, it's the idea of news you can use. We share information to help others, to make them better off.
- Stories, or how we share things that are often wrapped up in stories or narratives.

B. Social Media

Social media are web-based applications disseminating user-generated contents (UGC). Social media refers to activities, practices, and behaviours among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge, and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are Web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, videos, and audios.[3]

According to data compiled by Hootsuite and We are Social, there were 175.4 million internet users in Indonesia in January 2020. The number of internet users in Indonesia increased by 25 million or 17% between 2019 and 2020. Internet penetration in Indonesia stood at 64% in January 2020. At the same time, there were 160.0 million social media users in Indonesia. The number of social media users in Indonesia increased by 12 million or 8.1% between April 2019 and January 2020. Social media penetration in Indonesia stood at 59% in January 2020.

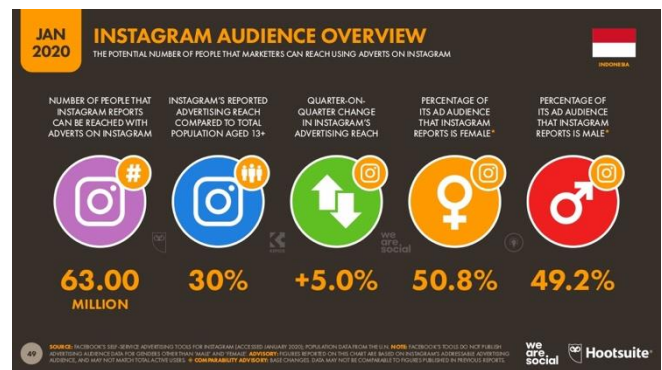


Fig. 2. Instagram Users in Indonesia

Related to tourism destination, social media is particularly relevant since tourism is an information-intensive industry. As a dynamic sector, and functioning as an open system, Tourism is combined with the changes required by the new environment of the Internet, namely digital marketing allied with social networks, contributing to an increasing importance of using tools such as e-WOM and social networks. Internet tools and social media are fundamental instruments to connect consumer and tourism destination because they have been considered an excellent source of information (Del Vecchio, Mele, Ndou & Secundo, 2018).[4]

C. Tourism Destination

Tourism destination is a place or attraction visited by tourists, typically for its inherent or an exhibited natural or

cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, offering leisure and amusement. A tourism destination is a geographical area that attracts visitors. A tourism destination can give an idea of a place that offers tourist attractions in the minds of tourists or visitors.

Tourists are drawn to a certain tourism destination because of its attractiveness that reflects the feelings of the tourists regarding the destination perceived ability to meet their needs. Thus, the more a certain destination meets the tourist's needs, the more it is seen to be attractive, and consequently its popularity grows.[5]

Nurdin Hidayah defines a tourism destination in his book entitled *Tourism Destination Marketing*, as a destination that has the component of tourism activities, including tourist attractions, supported facilities, and infrastructure as well as management.[6]. Referring to this definition, Banjaratma Rest Area is worth being known as a tourist destination because it has several attractions from its historic buildings, toll road infrastructure, and tourism support facilities such as places to eat and souvenirs center.

According to Hidayah, the marketing strategy of tourist destinations comprises the determination of market segments, positioning, and branding. So, the spirit of the marketing strategy is mainly USP (Unique Selling Proposition). Based on the type of tourism segmentation, Rest Area Km 260B Heritage is categorized as Heritage & Cultural Tourism. Heritage & Cultural Tourism as a type of tourism that aims to explore past cultures such as places, buildings, artifacts, history and others [6].

III. METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative method with a case study strategy. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident [7].

Data obtained from interviews with manager and visitors to the rest area, field observations, documentation, library research, and internet data. Data collection techniques were carried out by triangulation with inductive analysis.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. *Unique Products Triggering Virality*

Viral marketing expert Jonah Berger defines six aspects of virality. Among those six aspects, Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B has four of them. First is Social Currency. People tell things that make them look terrific or impressive in the eyes of others. Word of Mouth (WoM) has become an excellent tool to create a good impression. In this case, heritage destinations are considered cool and classy because they have historical and cultural values, so visiting Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B also makes people happy and wants to share it with other people.

Second, Trigger. Triggers encourage people to talk. Triggers are also the basis of sharing. In this case, marketing is all about spreading fondness. New and exciting products will be more likely to be the object of discussion, rather than boring products. How often a product is being discussed and the frequency of its appearance in public space, including

social media, and the link, are also important. Since its opening in 2019, Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260 B has captured the public's attention because of its uniqueness. It can be seen from many posts of photos and videos circulating on social media about this area, as well as news coverage in almost all mainstream media in Indonesia.

PT PP Sinergi Banjaratma's Managing Director, Rachmat Priyatna, in an interview, stated:

"The attraction of these heritage buildings is one of the factors that make it viral. Something different or eccentric can always draw people's attention."

Third, the Public. The critical factor in making a product more easily accepted by many people is its public appearance. Making things more visible makes them easier to replicate, thus increasing the possibility of becoming more popular. Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B is functioned as a rest and service area, which can be accessed by the public, especially toll road users.

Fourth is the Story. People not only share information, but they also share stories. The story is what makes people easier to talk about products and ideas. The heritage image of the Rest Area Km 260B is supported by a narrative about the history of a former sugar factory and Dutch colonialism in Indonesia, in which historical traces can still be found by people who visit the area.

According to the manager of the Banjaratma Rest Area, Edison, the rest area from the beginning, was designed as a tourist destination. For this reason, objects for self-portrait digital photographs or selfies such as dancing fountains and other attractions were developed. Edison, in an interview, stated:

"Our target is to make it viral, and we pursue it through the concept of the building. It is a former sugar factory that is more than a century old. What makes it viral is the comparison from the previous condition, which might have been scary and ugly building, so it is like there is (still) a Dutch (colonial) in Brebes."

B. *Instagrammable Building Design*

Banjaratma Rest Area Km 260B is supported by the characteristics and uniqueness of the physical feature and historical aspect of the building. This building was once functioned as a sugar factory, founded by a Netherlands-based plantation company, NV Cultuurmaatschappij, in 1908. Some parts of the building were not changed, such as walls that seemed to peel and show real bricks. Rachmat Priyatna, in an interview, stated:

"The viral beginnings because this rest area is unique, using old buildings that were renovated but did not change much the original shape of the existing building."

According to Priyatna, the concept of developing the Banjaratma Rest Area is somewhat similar to De Tjolomadoe in Karanganyar, Central Java. The former Colomadu Sugar Factory was turned into a tourist destination. The destination, which opened in 2017, has many photo spots that are perfect to be shared on social media, in particular, Instagram. Thus, it can attract millennials and tourists to visit. Priyatna revealed:

"The developing concept is quite similar, as both occupy the former sugar factory building. However, the difference is

that De Tjolomadoe is purely a tourist destination while Banjaratma is a rest and service area that has expanded its function as a tourist destination.”

With its uniqueness and strong heritage elements, it is almost sure that anyone who stops by in the Banjaratma Rest Area will take some time to explore and take pictures. Some of the most popular photography spots in the rest area include locomotive outside the building, the sugar cane grinding machine, the large and classic windows and doors, and the unique mosque built of red bricks. As stated by Estu, one of the visitors:

“Even those who accidentally stops, they will explore and spend more time than they planned. The visitors will take photos too. The rest area is unique as it is the only one in Indonesia.”

Those photo spots can motivate people who at first did not plan to stop by at this rest area to come to visit or extend the duration of their visit. As stated by Nunung, one of the visitors:

“My family and I have been to Banjaratma Rest Area twice. Besides resting, we went around while taking pictures. (We spent) about two hours there.”

building is environmentally friendly because it does not need air conditioning and over lighting.

“Heritage” is the brand that the management of the Banjaratma Rest Area keens to be highlighted. The image and impression of such heritage have attached to people's minds. Rachmat Priyatna said all the unique features at Banjaratma Rest Area are expected to build a strong impression. Hence, people, especially toll road users, keep coming and make a stop by every time they pass the Trans Java Toll Road. Nunung, one of the visitors confirmed such a statement:

“Now this rest area has become a place that we must visit if we pass the Trans Java Toll Road because the atmosphere is different, so we will not get too bored (after spending some time in the road). We can relieve fatigue after a day on the road by going to a refreshing place.”

Midya, one of the visitors, in an interview, stated:

“The rest area is very innovative. This is a beautiful place that was previously unused then later renovated as a rest area but still preserves the original building. Indeed heritage buildings should be developed like that, so people would want to stop by and could also be a right photography spot. That would help the promotion. It is good; it is interesting.”

C. Virality Improves Visitor Traffic

A rest area has a specific and limited market segment, which are toll road users. However, in the case of the Banjaratma Rest Area, more aggressive marketing is needed as it also performs as a model for SMEs center with a composition of 70% of SMEs and 30% of non-SMEs tenants. For this reason, its manager must do marketing even though the market is very segmented. It needs attraction to encourage people to come in order to increase visitor traffic and tenants' sales.

Advances in communication technology enable interactive communication through mass media, both mainstream and social media. Such communication was carried out by the management, which attracted not only tourist but also journalist from many mainstream media to do the reportage about the rest area. Its launch that was carried out during the 2019 Idul Fitri homecoming season was also the excellent momentum to spread the news about this particular place. The rest area was reported as one of "mandatory" destinations the travelers had to stop by on their homecoming trip. As stated by Midya, one of visitors:

“Back in the 2019 homecoming season, my family stopped by the Banjaratma Rest Area because the news said it was the perfect destination for us to visit. I saw a friend who had been visited it earlier also posted a photo of this rest area on his Instagram account. He said it was good.”

For the promotion on social media, the rest area's manager has created an official Instagram account to post photos and other related content. Not only the management but many SME tenants have also created Instagram accounts about this rest area, making it increasingly popular on social media. Compared to other rest areas, the hashtag #restareabanjaratma is in the top position with more than 1,000 posts.

According to Rachmat Priyatna, the popularity of the Banjaratma Rest Area on social media has an impact on increasing visits. Besides, the manager has been carrying out

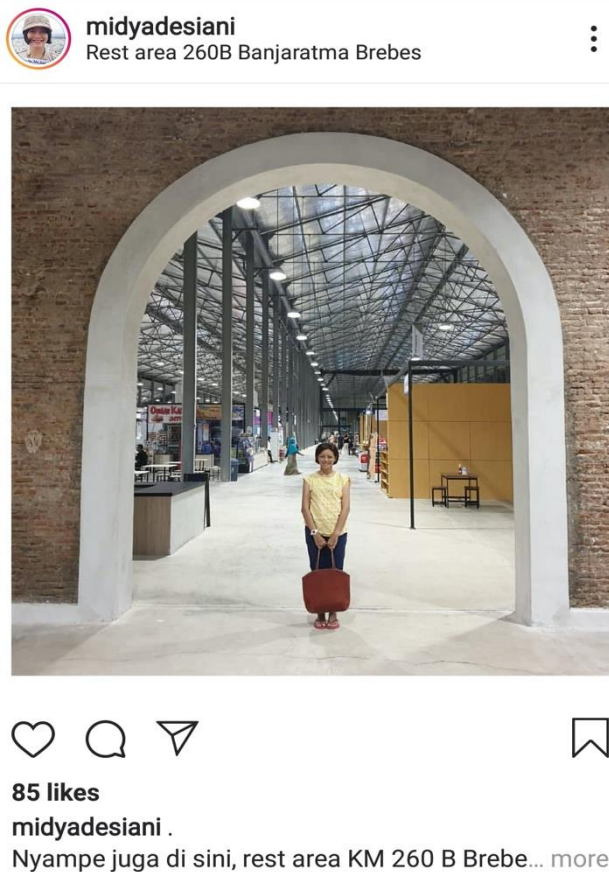


Fig. 3. A visitor of Rest Area Km 260B

In addition to the former sugar factory building, the iconic building that is also a favorite of the visitors is a mosque with unique architecture. The mosque was made of red bricks arranged in such a way as to leave a cavity for airflow, plus a small surrounding pool that makes it cool. The mosque

various strategies to boost traffic. Among the strategy are initiating various activities in the rest area, such as sports, painting exhibitions, children's painting competitions, musical performances, and bazaar.

TABLE I. TABLE 1. TRAFFIC REPORT OF REST AREA KM 260B BANJARATMA

NO	BULAN	Per Bin	Rata2 Per Hari	MOBIL			Jumlah Pengunjung
				Per Bulan	Per Hari	% thdp LHR	
1	JUNI	629,460	20,982	26,088	870	4.14%	72,079
2	JULI	332,910	10,739	15,723	524	4.88%	26,940
3	AGUSTUS	320,370	10,335	16,931	564	5.46%	27,533
4	SEPTEMBER	263,230	8,774	20,519	684	7.80%	28,658
5	OKTOBER	274,200	8,845	14,304	477	5.39%	81,156
6	NOVEMBER	278,330	9,278	14,474	482	5.20%	92,218
7	DESEMBER	420,020	13,549	20,598	664	4.90%	156,408

Currently, the average spending of people visiting the rest area is still at Rp190,000 per person, according to Priyatna. The number of visitors every month fluctuates, depending on the high or low season. For example, in June 2019, which was the high season, 72,079 visitors were visiting the rest area, while in September 2019, it had only 28,658 visitors.

V. CONCLUSION

The success of viral marketing is inseparable from the product itself, whether it is unique and has a selling value. A cultural heritage that is supported in such a way can also have

a selling value and become an attraction of a destination, which can trigger people to tell stories about it through the Word of Mouth (WOM). The success of Banjaratma Rest Area's manager in utilizing social media as a tool to promoting it as a heritage destination, which led to its popularity, can be applied in other places, particularly to reactivate the assets of historical buildings that are unproductive or abandoned.

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