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HOW ARE MSMEs PROMOTED BY MILLENNIALS? VISUAL ANALYSIS OF THE GENPI WEBSITE

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Abstract

This paper explores destination online promotions carried out by millennials related to MSMEs in these destinations. It critically examines the photos and texts describing the destinations published on the Generasi Pesona Indonesia (GenPI/a community consisting of netizens who have interest in tourism) website using keywords that reflect the industry of small and medium enterprises. Despite GenPI's high productivity and strong orientation in promoting local MSMEs, there are shortcomings and limitations in the less facilitative promotions such as unprofessional photo shoot and the loss of human interest component. Therefore, the need to train GenPI volunteers in designing advertisements and their promotional texts arises. This paper contributes to tourism studies, highlighting how the millennials market tourism destinations among themselves by using user-generated content. It also offers some ways to promote a destination, especially a new one, by employing the right framing to develop the local economy. These ways should encourage user-generated content carried out in a systematically programmed site as GenPI to line with the sustainable tourism paradigm. These, in turn, will benefit the local economy.

Keywords: millennial generation, sustainable tourism, MSMEs, destination promotion, user generated content

Introduction

The existence of MSMEs as a small business is a dilemma for the tourism world. On the one hand, MSMEs have a relevant role in generating a more equitable economy and increasing employment in a destination, following the sustainable tourism development paradigm [1]. They stimulate destinations' growth, especially in those far from urban areas [2]. But on the other hand, the old growth-paradigm views smallness as a loss and that destination competitiveness is determined by the role of large companies, luxury service centers, and expensive infrastructure [3]. As a result, in some places, MSMEs are not prioritized and seen as competitors that need no service from either the businessmen or the government [4].

However, this paradigm should fade over time as the older generation is replaced by the younger generation whose awareness towards the MSMEs' role in a destination's growth is bigger [5]. The millennial generation is supposed to be a generation that can best promote MSMEs-dominated small destinations. They are increasingly taking on the role of producers and consumers of tourism [6]. However, the role of millennials in shaping tourism, particularly in promoting MSMEs, is still very little explored in researches [7]. Even so, previous studies have shown that most millennials prioritize aspects of interpersonal exchange, conformity, and tradition [8]. Their number is larger than that of the millennials who prioritize comfort, hedonism, and security which commonly are associated with services provided by large and luxurious industries. Moreover, millennial tourists are known to be more altruistic and can mingle easily with small communities [9]. Research in Indonesia also shows that millennials like user-generated content the most as a driver of interest in tourism [10]. Millennials in Indonesia are also known to have high voluntarism in promoting tourism [11].

In line with the important role of millennials in building voluntary tourism promotion networks, the Indonesian government has founded GenPi (Generasi Pesona Indonesia). GenPi is a millennial community that aims to promote Indonesian tourism through social media and the internet in general. GenPi consists of young volunteers who are creative and enjoy traveling. They create user-generated content that is very popular among the millennials. As a part of their program, GenPi also develops new destinations by promoting certain sites on their social media and websites collaborating with relevant stakeholders.

The tourism promotion carried out by GenPi should engage MSMEs as part of tourist attraction. However, since there is no research related to tourism promotion involving MSMEs by millennials, this research is now directed to identify how MSMEs are promoted by millennials through GenPI. To achieve this goal, we conducted a visual analysis of the destination articles promoted by GenPI on their official website.

Theory

Visual analysis is an analysis of images, portraits, or non-text symbols that accompany a text. It is carried out in four levels namely the stylistic, denotative, connotative, and ideological levels [12]. The stylistic level relates to the shooting technique. The denotative level is how an image is associated with a text which is the title of the image. The connotative level is the relationship between the image and its title with the people, objects, and ideas that the image wants to represent. The last level, the ideological level, relates to the power and value relations that the picture wants to convey. The four levels become a layered component where the creators try to provide macro framing namely constructing and interpreting reality for the audience [13]. Visuals are effective. They are easier and faster to process than simply text because they directly trigger emotional responses, in contrast to the text which requires a series of logic and is in a general cognitive domain [14].

When visuals are used to promote something, the framing becomes a part of social representation. According to social representation theory, message makers use framing to normalize objects, individuals, and events [15]. Furthermore, the message that has been formed is presented to the audience so that the audience will take certain actions in line with what has been normalized [16]. Experts agree that tourism advertisement and promotion are the most persuasive forms of social representation [17].

In line with the above-mentioned underlying theory, millennial efforts to promote MSMEs by reviewing tourist destinations through portraits can be seen as an effort to disseminate social representation. It is expected that people, especially the millennials, are interested in the destinations and contribute to the sites. Therefore, tourism MSMEs can develop there. This partly depends on the visual quality presented in stylistic, denotative, connotative, and ideological aspects. If these aspects are not in line, the conveyed visual fails to create normalization and, therefore, it is also difficult to encourage the audience to act accordingly as what the message sender wants, who in this case are the millennials promoting destinations and MSMEs.

Method

This paper focuses on portraits on GenPI.co and GenPI.id websites. GenPI.id is the site of the central GenPI community while GenPI.co is a site managed by PT. Pesona Digital. It is a business entity established by GenPI to do marketing on mobile phones with a claim to be "Indonesia's No.1 tourism platform". While GenPI.id content is produced by GenPI volunteers, GenPI.co content is produced by professional journalists. The tourism promotional contents on both sites are about the destinations. From 26 February 2018 to 7 August 2020, GenPI.co produced 2,190 articles while GenPI.id produced 80 articles from 30 July 2019 to 6 April 2020. The total articles from both sites are 2,270 articles. On average, one article contains from one to seven portraits.

Due to a large amount of the data, we limited our searches to focus on the first 100 articles which contents were related to MSMEs. We checked all the articles and identified the main photos and titles. When a main photo or title characterizing MSMEs was found, the theme of the photo/title was recorded and the contents of the article were searched for further elaboration by GenPI. The data were then analyzed descriptively and the patterns found were discussed in relation to the theory and previous research literature.

Result

Table 1 shows the main descriptive statistics of the articles from GenPI which are grouped according to the themes. We obtained one hundred articles after reviewing 1125 GenPI.co articles. This means that the percentage of MSMEs-related articles is 8.9% out of the total articles. Meanwhile, in GenPI.id, there were 14 out of 80 articles related to MSMEs, which equals to 17.5%. It can be said that there are more contents related to MSMEs on GenPI.id than in GenPI.co.

Table 1 List of Themes and Content Descriptive Statistics

General Theme	Frequency	Visual Theme
Village	GC: 34 GI: 5	GC: Rural children (1), rafting (4), cycling (1), quiet rural road (1), old building (2), busy rural road (1), bird-eye view (1), landscape (4), blacksmith (1), traditional houses (6), traditional ceremonies (3), weaving women (1), monument (1), foreign tourists (1), waterfall (1), island (1), fishing (1), village stall (1), beach (1), canoeing (1) GI: landscape (2), traditional house (1), canoe/boat (1), outbound (1)
Event	GC: 8 GI: 6	GC: Tourist-swarmed temple (1), landscape (1), singer (1), crowded attraction (1), ceremonies (3), crowded zebra cross (1) GI: poster (4), landscape (1), ceremony (1)
Management	GC: 6 GI: 0	GC: Teaching (1), ceremonial (4), urban street (1)
Market	GC: 27 GI: 1	GC: Crowded attraction (1), bazaar (1), temple (1), souvenirs (1), ceremony (2), mega fauna (1), crowd (1), monument (1), market (1), floating market (2), street vendors (1), poster (2), park (1), stores (4), urban street (5), stalls (2) GI: landscape (1)
Product	GC: 14 GI: 0	GC: Cloth (1), pottery (1), lodging (1), coffee (2), monument (1), beach (1), rice field (1), typical food (1), trees (1), bicycle (1), ceremony (1), souvenirs (1), tourists and <i>batik</i> (1)

Producer	GC: 11 GI: 2	GC: Horse cart (1), motorized pedicab (1), row of stalls (1), café (4), cruise/boat tour(2), coffee (1), row of stores (1) GI: lodging (1), cafe (1)
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Note: GC = GenPI.co; GI = GenPI.id

Village

Rural was the most highlighted theme. It does not directly relate to MSMEs but implicitly markets them as they are the only businesses serving tourists visit in these villages. The visual accentuates the village's distinctive cultures such as traditional houses and its natural attractions such as beaches and rafting. In general, the quality of the pictures is quite poor related to human objects. Some portraits are taken from an inaccurate angle that they do not optimally capture the charm. For example, rafting activities are photographed from high ground and resulted in picturing tourists preparing to board the boat. Ideally, this portrait should be taken from the front that shows the dynamics of tourists enjoying rafting. Moreover, some of the titles seem to be out of line with the portraits shown. In an article entitled "Minister Wishnutama was amazed at the beauty of Mandalika," the visual shown was the minister surrounded by children who did not look cheerful.

Event

GenPI.id has far more event content than GenPI.co. With only 80 articles, GenPI.id displays 6 event contents while GenPI.co only displays 8 events out of 1125 articles. The majority of GenPI.id's visual frames, however, are posters. This is because four of the six events presented are invitations to participate; therefore, the actual events have not taken place yet.

Events such as festivals are opportunities for MSMEs to market their products. Therefore, it is ideal to display their commercial products relevant to the festival. However, the visuals displayed by GenPI.co are only ceremonial things such as the inauguration of activities and even the flag ceremony. Even for GenPI.id, one of the two events that has been held portrays ceremonial things while the other article presents the landscape. If not ceremonial, the displayed visual is a crowd of tourists that is so massive that it is difficult to identify the emotions present there.

Management

Management is the most relevant theme to MSMEs because it directly focuses on the role of MSMEs in tourism. Unfortunately, four of the six articles with this theme show ceremonial activities such as people taking a group photo, someone giving a speech, or officials shaking hands. Only one article is relevant enough in which it shows city streets known as the center of the creative economy industry. However, even this is merely a landscape rather than the dynamic activity of the creative economy which is the message to be conveyed.

Market

The market is an opportunity for MSMEs to sell their products in a relatively unlimited time. More than a quarter of the articles discuss aspects of the market, including the traders. However, only a few portraits managed to capture the expected market's beauty. The abundant chance of making heart-moving pictures are wasted. One article discussing how GenPI opened 18 digital market destinations gives only a list of markets in a poster instead of provides a picture of each particular market. One article created traders' negative framing by stating that street vendors make tourist areas disorganized. On the other hand, the visuals given for the article showed interesting and colorful merchandise from street vendors. Five articles present visuals of urban streets from a distant perspective to get a wide and mass catch. This causes the loss of details and images that should have described each market's beauty.

Product

Product-themed articles are quite diverse with many of them highlighting attractive individual products such as sandalwood, necklaces, souvenirs, and various colorful fabrics. But more visuals are less striking as they show unsuitable images that do not fit with the article title. For example, an article reviewing sago production centers displayed sago palms instead of various processed sago products.

Producer

GenPI also failed to capture the shock and emotional elements of MSMEs when trying to highlight them as an attraction for the destinations. The biggest part of the producer theme is the cafe but the portrait shown is a building rather than an image that can show the quality of the producer. The rows of stalls on the waterfront are photographed from a distance to show the beach too, making the stalls almost invisible. When trying to promote a shopping area, the visuals shown are the conditions when the shops are closed, creating a lonely and unattractive image. GenPI.id lists ten places to relax in Bandar Lampung. All of these locations are MSMEs of various scales, from small stalls to cafes. But most of the portraits presented only capture ceremonial situations where several people stand in line with their backs to the location.

Discussion

There are at least four positive values that can be seen from the data regarding the role of millennials in promoting MSMEs through destinations. First, millennials highlight economical tourism so that it matches the product prices offered by MSMEs. Wherever it is possible, they recommend small but satisfying manufacturers. This is in line with the tendency of millennials to save on accommodation to spend more money on unique experiences [18], [19] Second, millennials make good use of hyperbolic language. They use superlative expressive terms such as "panic shopping," "feels like at

grandma's house," "make you gawk," "really nostalgic," "deep meaning," and so on. Third, they do not hesitate to promote distant and remote destinations such as islands, villages and national parks. Fourth, they are also relatively responsive to social problems faced by providers, such as getting tourists, tidiness, and tourists' protests against cleanliness. These positive values underpin the positive benefits of involving millennials as agents for promoting Indonesian tourism [20].

However, as it has previously been described, there are some weaknesses and limitations in their ability to promote tourism. In general, their weakness lies in the ability to capture the visualization of emotional moments that their text wants to convey. When they write a story of expressive joy, the photograph they show is so premature that it creates a mismatch. This weakens the framing. Framing is the selection and accentuation of certain aspects of reality in textual communication [21]. Portraits are very effective tools for framing due to their special qualities of iconicity and syntactic implications [22]. Visual framing is very important because it can influence public perceptions of the subjects and themes raised [23]. Therefore, visual framing is widely used in news text studies [24]. The visual framing that GenPI failed to display is caused by low proficiency in photographic techniques and capture moments. It can also happen due to communication failures between the photographer and the text writer and editor involved.

It is understood that there are pressures that might lead them to underperform in the visual presentation. Both sites are highly productive. GenPI.co has 2.45 articles per day while GenPI.id produces one article per 3.12 days. The stress due to the commitment to producing fast visual loading with small application memory can also lead to small undetailed photos. GenPI.co in particular only displays one photo in one article so it must comprehensively capture all the moments in one photograph. Thus, there is a tendency of producing a mass and wide photograph which sacrifices details and expressions describing human emotion. This will not be a problem in articles that describe expressive natural destinations such as beaches, islands, sunsets, and so on. But this comprehensive approach fails when the article presents a theme involving the human component in it.

GenPI volunteers need to learn a lot about how to capture moments from international expressive media such as CNN and National Geographic. This might be quite expensive since it requires a high-resolution camera, which may not be affordable for most of the volunteers who only have smartphones with them. However, the government can provide photography training and a little extra capital for each GenPI representative so that they can afford a better-quality specialized camera.

Conclusion

This study highlights the millennial strategy for promoting MSMEs in tourist destinations in Indonesia. Despite being supported

by the high productivity and diversity of destinations as well as good natural photography skills, millennials are still very poor at showing destinations emotion and lack of skills to capture the human elements. Portraits are taken en masse. They treat human objects like natural objects which are ideally shot wide and large. Millennials are very interested in the human and social aspects of the destinations they are aiming for [9]. When viewed from the perspective of framing theory [25], these findings could reflect the old growth paradigm framing unfriendly to MSMEs. Nevertheless, we tend to believe that this is due to a lack of training in destination promotion, particularly training in photography techniques. The phenomenon is in line with the characteristics of millennials who are very productive in capturing images without paying attention to the ideal perspective to be displayed to the public. Sillitoe [26] found that millennials have lower visual skills than the previous generation and they mostly believe that production speed is more important than product quality. The resulting visual contrasts sharply with the visuals shown on the Ministry of Tourism's website, which show sharp, detailed images capable of capturing human emotions [27]. As far as the researchers have found, there is only one portrait that reflects the natural happiness shown by the local community, and that is not entirely ideal because, at the same time, there are two portraits of foreign tourists without any expression, giving the impression that the residents laugh at foreign tourists. In this case, millennials seem unable to take advantage of their digital sophistication and therefore, support the thesis of Masanet et al [28] that millennials are not digital natives, but more of digital apprentices.

With the apparent poor quality of visual-based tourism promotion made by the millennials, it is important to consider a human-interest photography training program for GenPI volunteers. Therefore, they can not only capture social joy but also channel positive emotions to other millennials who are potential tourists to interest them to come and contribute to the local MSMEs.

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