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UMBRELLA BRANDING: THE KEY TO CREATIVE ECONOMY SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract:

This study aims to explore the key role of umbrella branding in strengthening the resilience of the creative economy in tourism villages, thereby increasing the competitiveness of tourism destinations. Through the inspirational story of Srumbung Gunung Creative Peace Tourism Village (DWKP), which has successfully qualified for the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI), this research reveals integrated marketing strategies that promote the preservation of local arts and traditions while developing creative innovations. This research employs a qualitative case study approach. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with village stakeholders, field observations, and document analysis. The research uses a participatory and contextual approach, involving local communities in the research process to obtain an authentic understanding. The research identified a comprehensive umbrella branding model that integrates regional development, marketing strategies, and sustainability in tourism. The model encompasses four key components: local potential identification, creative economy initiative mapping, umbrella branding model development, and community validation through FGDs. This study contributes new knowledge by developing the first umbrella branding framework specifically designed for creative economy development in tourism village contexts, combining participatory approaches with comprehensive branding principles that have not been previously integrated in sustainable tourism literature.

Keywords: Umbrella branding, Creative economy, Tourism villages, Participatory approach, Sustainable tourism

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has emerged as one of the fastest-growing economic sectors globally, contributing significantly to national economies and local community development worldwide. However, rapid tourism development has generated various negative impacts on environmental sustainability and social welfare, including ecosystem degradation, increased carbon emissions, natural resource exploitation, and marginalization of local communities. Consequently, the concept of sustainable tourism has become increasingly critical in destination development strategies across the globe.

The creative economy sector in Indonesia achieved Rp749.58 trillion or 55.65 percent in 2024, according to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf, 2024). This figure indicates that the potential of the creative economy, especially in tourism villages, has not been fully realized. Village communities often face obstacles in accessing markets, developing innovative products, and building strong brand identities, such as inadequate infrastructure, resource limitations, local connections, cultural preservation, institutional support, and others (Siemens, 2010; Steinerowska-Streb et al., 2024).

Umbrella branding represents a strategic marketing approach where a single brand name encompasses multiple products or services within a company's portfolio. This strategy leverages



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established brand equity to support new product introductions and create synergistic relationships between offerings (Miklós-Thal, 2012). The fundamental principle underlying umbrella branding lies in the transfer of brand associations, credibility, and consumer trust from established products to new ventures. Research by Cabral (2009) demonstrates that umbrella branding can be particularly effective under conditions of imperfect observability and moral hazard, where consumers rely on brand reputation as a quality signal. It is especially relevant in tourism contexts where service quality can be difficult to assess prior to consumption.

In the context of tourism villages, umbrella branding can help unite various creative economy initiatives existing in the village under one cohesive brand identity. (Singh & Dall’Olmo Riley, 2022) Emphasize that consumer perceptions of branded commodities significantly influence purchasing decisions, particularly in rural tourism contexts where authenticity and quality assurance become critical factors for visitor satisfaction.

The creative economy encompasses economic activities that derive their value from creativity, skill, and talent, with potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. In tourism village contexts, creative economy initiatives often include traditional crafts, cultural performances, culinary arts, and experiential tourism products that showcase local heritage and innovation. (Steinerowska-Streb et al., 2024) emphasize that rural creative enterprises face unique challenges, including limited access to markets, infrastructure constraints, and resource limitations. However, these enterprises also possess distinctive advantages such as authentic cultural products, traditional knowledge systems, and strong community networks that can be leveraged for sustainable development.

Destination branding involves creating a distinctive identity for a place that differentiates it from competitors and creates emotional connections with target audiences. Effective destination branding requires careful orchestration of various elements, including visual identity, messaging, experiences, and stakeholder engagement (Kladou et al., 2017). (Cai, 2002) pioneered the concept of cooperative branding for rural destinations, arguing that collaborative approaches can help small communities pool resources and create stronger market presence. This collaborative dimension is particularly relevant for tourism villages where individual operators may lack the resources for independent branding efforts.

Recent studies by Qiu et al. (2024) and Kim & Nicolau (2025) demonstrate the growing importance of brand equity in tourism, particularly in destinations that leverage cultural and creative assets. (Park & Nunkoo, 2013) specifically examine the relationship between destination image and loyalty in rural contexts, emphasizing the role of cooperative branding strategies in building sustainable competitive advantages.

Despite extensive research on destination branding and creative economy development, existing studies remain fragmented and lack comprehensive, integrated approaches specifically designed for tourism villages. Previous research has focused separately on umbrella branding in commercial contexts (Miklós-Thal, 2012; Cabral, 2009), destination branding for urban areas (Chan et al., 2022), or rural tourism development without specific attention to branding strategies (Coscarello & Ruffolo, 2022). However, no studies have developed comprehensive umbrella branding frameworks that integrate creative economy development with sustainable tourism principles in rural village contexts.

Slumbung Gunung Creative Peace Tourism Village (DWKP), located in Kabupaten Semarang, Central Java, represents a developing tourism destination that has successfully implemented umbrella branding strategies. The village has qualified for the Indonesian Tourism Village Award



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(ADWI), demonstrating the effectiveness of integrated branding approaches in strengthening creative economy resilience.

Based on the identified research gap, this study aims to address three main research questions: (1) How is the umbrella branding strategy model developed and implemented by tourism actors in Srumbung Gunung Village in building destination brand identity? (2) What internal and external factors influence the effectiveness of umbrella branding implementation in strengthening creative economy resilience? (3) How can the branding strategy framework applied in Srumbung Gunung be reconstructed as a practical model for strengthening community-based creative economy in other tourism villages?

METHODS

This research employed a qualitative case study design using participatory action research (PAR) methodology to explore umbrella branding implementation in Srumbung Gunung Creative Peace Tourism Village, Magelang, Central Java, Indonesia. The village was purposively selected based on its successful umbrella branding strategies and recognition in the Indonesian Tourism Village Award (ADWI). Using purposive sampling criteria of direct involvement in tourism activities and demonstrated knowledge of branding initiatives, 55 participants were recruited, comprising 5 tourism village managers, 20 local community members engaged in creative economy activities, 3 community leaders and government officials, 25 visiting tourists, and 2 external experts in tourism management and branding.

Data collection instruments included semi-structured interview guides exploring branding experiences, challenges, and benefits; focus group discussion protocols for strategy validation and model development; participatory observation checklists for tourism activities and community interactions; document analysis frameworks for village planning materials and promotional content; and visual documentation templates for branding elements and tourism products. In-depth interviews lasted 60-90 minutes and were conducted in participants' preferred language. Two FGD sessions were organized: the first focused on preliminary findings validation, while the second concentrated on framework development. Data validity was ensured through methodological triangulation, member checking with participants for verification of interpretations, expert validation by external specialists, and prolonged engagement in the field. Reliability was maintained through consistent data collection protocols and systematic documentation procedures.

Data analysis followed systematic thematic analysis using NVivo software for data organization and coding. The process involved verbatim transcription, line-by-line initial coding to identify preliminary themes, iterative pattern identification and theme development, cross-case comparison for consistency validation, and synthesis into a coherent theoretical framework. Research ethics approval was obtained from the institutional ethics committee, with informed consent secured from all participants, ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation with withdrawal rights. The PAR approach ensured participatory decision-making throughout the research process, with findings communicated back to the community as a reciprocal benefit.



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Figure 1. Umbrella Branding Framework showing the integration of regional development, marketing strategy, sustainability, and creative innovation components in tourism village branding

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Area Development. Area Development plays a role in integrating regional development with the brand identity of the tourism village. Through a place branding approach, the village is able to build a unique image that reflects its natural wealth and local culture. In addition, strengthening the role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) serves as a key pillar in driving community-based creative economy growth. This strategy not only reinforces the structure of the local economy but also enhances competitiveness by highlighting the authenticity and uniqueness of tourism village products.

The Srumbung Gunung Creative Peace Tourism Village is located in Bawen, Semarang Regency. This tourism village offers unique characteristics that attract tourists through its natural beauty, cultural heritage, and community creativity, supported by facilities and accommodations. The village has developed strong place branding in the minds of visitors, known as Desa Wisata Kreatif Perdamaian (DWKP) or Creative Peace Tourism Village, which adopts the theme of arts and culture to promote peace for the world. It is reinforced by the statement of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), which recognizes tourism as an agent of peace. Tourism brings together visitors from diverse backgrounds, making it necessary to foster mutual understanding among them. This process is supported by motivational activities where visitors receive inspiration from experts to instill the values of peace. The program begins with introductions among participants, interactive games to build connections, motivational workshops on peaceful living, and concludes with a bonfire gathering.



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Figure 2 & 3. Peace Icons & Gamelan Practice

The tourism village also promotes peace through three main criteria:

1. Cultural packaging of traditions and arts that symbolize peace. Cultural activities include gamelan performances organized by village managers. This initiative emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with culture while safeguarding cultural preservation.
2. Peace icons as art installations integrated with nature. Visitors are guided to various symbolic landmarks that inspire and raise awareness about the meaning of world peace, derived from the values of different religions.
3. Local products as souvenirs for visitors. Community income is enhanced through the processing of local natural resources, including agriculture and culinary creations. Visitors are invited to experience traditional herbal medicine (jamu) making and explore a variety of local MSME products such as batik, cakes, traditional foods, advertising crafts, and more.
4. Exploring environmental awareness activities. Visitors participate in ecological, religious, and nature-based tours. Activities include morning visits to ancestral tombs, agricultural exploration, heritage sites, and other natural attractions. These activities aim to develop the village sustainably by shaping visitor perspectives on the environment and fostering appreciation for the integrity of creation.

Further exploration of the Creative Peace Tourism Village can be accessed through the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8lOz3cut0hg>,<https://share.google/O4tuEo72HSo4VHUFN>,
https://www.instagram.com/dwkp_srumbunggunung?igsh=eG9vaGkwMTNydzhl

The research identified a comprehensive umbrella branding model specifically adapted for creative economy development in tourism villages. The model integrates four key components:

Table 1. Umbrella Branding Components for Tourism Villages

Component	Description	Key Elements
Regional Development	Integrating tourism with local area development	Infrastructure, accessibility, zoning
Marketing Strategy	Coordinated promotional activities under a unified brand	Brand positioning, communication, channels
Sustainability	Long-term viability of economic and environmental systems	Resource management, community welfare
Creative Innovation	Continuous product and service development	Traditional preservation, modern adaptation

Source: Research Data Analysis, 2025



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Marketing Strategy. Marketing Strategy has been identified as a critical determinant in shaping a cohesive destination identity. The application of destination branding effectively integrates diverse tourism products into a unified and consistent brand narrative, thereby reinforcing brand equity and enhancing visitor trust. Furthermore, the active involvement of cultural and creative industries strengthens the destination’s attractiveness through performing arts, traditional crafts, and distinctive culinary products. These findings highlight that a coordinated marketing strategy not only generates higher economic value but also significantly broadens the market reach of tourism villages within the competitive landscape of sustainable tourism.

The umbrella branding implementation in Srumbung Gunung demonstrates a systematic approach that prioritizes community participation and cultural authenticity. The process begins with comprehensive brand foundation development, where village stakeholders engage in extensive dialogue to identify unique local values and cultural assets that distinguish their destination from competitors. This foundational phase involves community consensus-building on brand vision and mission, ensuring that all stakeholders share a unified understanding of the village's identity and aspirations. The establishment of brand guidelines and standards during this phase creates a framework for consistent brand representation across all touchpoints.

Product integration represents a critical component of the implementation strategy, involving careful mapping of existing creative economy initiatives within the village. This process reveals opportunities for developing synergies between different products and services under the umbrella brand, creating a cohesive visitor experience. Quality standardization across product categories ensures that all offerings meet established brand promises, enhancing visitor satisfaction and brand credibility.



Figure 4. Visual representation of brand identity elements, including logo design, color schemes, and application across various tourism products and services in Srumbung Gunung Village

Market positioning activities focus on identifying target market segments and developing competitive positioning strategies that leverage the village's unique value proposition. The communication strategy formulation process involves creating consistent messaging across all marketing channels, ensuring that the umbrella brand story resonates with intended audiences. Community engagement throughout the implementation process includes comprehensive stakeholder training and capacity-building programs, empowering residents to become brand ambassadors. Participatory decision-making processes ensure that implementation decisions reflect community priorities and values, while transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms create incentives for continued participation and support.



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Sustainability in Tourism. Sustainability in Tourism emerges as a fundamental dimension that ensures the long-term viability of the village's creative economy. The application of sustainable tourism principles extends beyond environmental preservation, encompassing the creation of memorable tourism experiences that foster deeper visitor engagement. By emphasizing authenticity, service quality, and active community participation, tourism villages are able to establish strong emotional connections with visitors. It, in turn, encourages visitor loyalty while simultaneously safeguarding the sustainability of social, cultural, and environmental ecosystems.

Overall, the findings of this research affirm that umbrella branding should not be viewed merely as a marketing strategy, but rather as a comprehensive framework that integrates regional development, coordinated marketing strategies, and sustainable tourism. The model contributes significantly to strengthening the resilience of village-based creative economies while generating sustainable added value for local communities.

a. Success Factors. The research identified several critical success factors for umbrella branding effectiveness:

Table 2. Critical Success Factors for Umbrella Branding

Factor Category	Specific Factors	Impact Level
Internal Factors	Community cohesion, Local leadership, Cultural authenticity	High
External Factors	Government support, Market access, Tourism infrastructure	Medium
Strategic Factors	Brand consistency, Quality control, Innovation capacity	High

Source: Research Data Analysis, 2025

b. Impact Assessment. The umbrella branding implementation in Srumbung Gunung Village has generated substantial positive impacts across multiple dimensions, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrated branding strategies in rural tourism development. Economic impacts represent the most immediately observable benefits, with participating households experiencing an average 40% increase in income from tourism-related activities within the first year of implementation. This economic improvement stems from enhanced product pricing capabilities, increased visitor numbers, and expanded market reach facilitated by stronger brand recognition.

Social impacts manifest through enhanced community pride and strengthened cultural preservation efforts. The umbrella branding process has created renewed appreciation for local traditions and crafts, as community members recognize the economic value of their cultural heritage. Increased participation in cultural activities and traditional craft production has strengthened intergenerational knowledge transfer, ensuring the continuation of important cultural practices. The collaborative nature of the branding initiative has also fostered stronger community cohesion and collective decision-making capabilities.

Environmental impacts include improved waste management systems and more sustainable resource utilization practices. The emphasis on quality and authenticity inherent in the branding strategy has motivated community members to maintain cleaner, more attractive environments that support the desired brand image. Tourism revenue generated through the umbrella brand has enabled investments in environmental infrastructure, including waste treatment facilities and renewable energy systems.



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Marketing impacts demonstrate significant improvements in visitor recognition and brand recall, with surveys indicating a 60% increase in unprompted brand awareness among target market segments. The coordinated marketing approach enabled by umbrella branding has created synergies between different promotional activities, maximizing the impact of limited marketing budgets and creating more consistent brand messaging across all communication channels.

Challenges and Solutions. The research identified several implementation challenges and corresponding solutions:

Table 3. Implementation Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Impact	Proposed Solution
Limited Marketing Budget	Reduced promotional reach	Collaborative marketing efforts, digital platforms
Quality Inconsistency	Brand credibility issues	Training programs, quality standards
Coordination Difficulties	Fragmented brand experience	Regular stakeholder meetings, clear protocols
External Competition	Market share erosion	Unique value proposition, differentiation

Source: Research Data Analysis, 2025

Proposed Framework. Based on the research findings, we propose a replicable framework for umbrella branding implementation in tourism villages:



Figure 5. Research Visual of a Single Umbrella Brand (Umbrella Branding)

The visual illustrates the concept of umbrella branding as a comprehensive framework that integrates multiple elements under one strategic approach. The umbrella symbolizes the overarching brand, while the drops beneath represent key components that support its implementation: regional branding, marketing strategy, sustainability in tourism, place branding, destination branding, small and medium enterprises, competitive strategy, cultural and creative industries, and memorable tourism experiences. Together, these interconnected elements highlight how umbrella branding not only unifies diverse aspects of tourism development but also strengthens brand identity, enhances competitiveness, and ensures long-term sustainability for creative economies in tourism villages.



Figure 6. Stakeholder network diagram illustrating the collaborative relationships between village managers, community members, government officials, tourists, and experts in the umbrella branding implementation

The stakeholder network diagram highlights the collaborative dynamics essential for the successful implementation of umbrella branding in tourism villages. Village managers serve as coordinators who align strategic directions and operational activities, while community members contribute cultural authenticity, local knowledge, and creative products that form the backbone of the brand identity. Government officials provide institutional support through policy, funding, and infrastructure development, ensuring an enabling environment for tourism growth. Tourists play a dual role as consumers and co-creators of experiences, offering feedback that strengthens destination branding. Meanwhile, experts contribute technical knowledge and innovation, bridging theory and practice to refine strategies. The synergy among these stakeholders creates a cohesive system that enhances brand equity, promotes sustainability, and ensures the resilience of the creative economy at the village level.

Framework Components.

Table 4. Four-Phase Implementation Framework for Umbrella Branding in Tourism Villages

Phase	Duration	Key Activities	Responsible Parties	Responsible Parties
Phase 1: Foundation Building	Months 1-3	(1) Community assessment and stakeholder mapping. (2) Cultural asset inventory and valuation. (3) Brand vision and mission development. (4) Baseline data collection	(1) Comprehensive stakeholder database (2) Cultural asset inventory (3) Agreed brand vision statement (4) Baseline impact metrics	Village management, Community leaders, External facilitators
Phase 2: Strategy Development	Months 4-6	(1) Brand identity design and guideline creation. (2) Product integration and quality standardization (3) Marketing strategy formulation (4) Communication plan development	(1) Complete brand identity package. (2) Product quality standards (3) Integrated marketing strategy (4) Communication protocols	Marketing specialists, Design consultants, Community representatives
Phase 3: Implementatio n	Months 7-9	(1) Brand launch and community training. (2) Marketing campaign execution. (3) Quality monitoring systems	(1) Successful brand launch (2) Trained community members. (3) Active marketing campaigns. (4) Operational monitoring systems	All stakeholders, Marketing team, Quality monitors



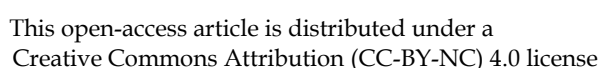
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Implementation Guidelines. Successful implementation of umbrella branding in tourism villages requires careful attention to several critical guidelines that ensure both effectiveness and sustainability. Stakeholder engagement must be inclusive and representative, ensuring participation from all community segments, including women, youth, elderly residents, and marginalized groups who might otherwise be excluded from tourism development benefits. This inclusive approach prevents the creation of elite capture scenarios where only certain community members benefit from tourism development initiatives (Heykal et al., 2024).

Quality assurance mechanisms must be established from the beginning of implementation, including clear standards for products and services, regular monitoring systems, and feedback mechanisms that allow for continuous improvement. These systems should be designed and operated by community members themselves, building local capacity for quality management and reducing dependence on external oversight.

Sustainability planning must address both financial and environmental dimensions, ensuring that tourism development generates sufficient revenue to maintain branding activities while protecting natural and cultural resources for future generations. It requires establishing clear governance structures, revenue-sharing mechanisms, and environmental management protocols that can function effectively without permanent external support.

This research demonstrates that umbrella branding represents a viable and effective strategy for strengthening creative economy resilience in tourism villages, particularly when implemented



through participatory approaches that prioritize community engagement and cultural authenticity. The case study of Srumbung Gunung Creative Peace Tourism Village illustrates how coordinated branding efforts can simultaneously enhance community economic opportunities while preserving and promoting cultural heritage. The framework developed through this research provides practical guidance for tourism village managers and policymakers seeking to implement similar strategies, with key success factors including strong community leadership, consistent quality standards, authentic cultural positioning, and sustainable resource management practices.

The umbrella branding approach offers particular advantages for small rural communities by enabling resource pooling, creating stronger market presence, and facilitating coordinated marketing strategies that would be impossible for individual operators to achieve independently. However, successful implementation requires careful attention to local contexts, community dynamics, and cultural sensitivities that vary significantly across different geographical and socio-economic settings. Future research should focus on developing quantitative measures of branding effectiveness, exploring technology applications that can enhance rural marketing capabilities, and conducting comparative studies across different cultural and geographical contexts to refine and validate the proposed framework for broader application in sustainable rural tourism development initiatives.

Successful umbrella branding implementation in tourism villages requires coordinated multi-stakeholder efforts with distinct but complementary roles. Tourism village managers should adopt participatory approaches involving all community stakeholders in branding decisions while investing in regular capacity building programs covering branding principles, marketing techniques, and business management skills to enable effective community participation. Establishing consistent quality standards across all tourism offerings creates visitor confidence and supports premium pricing, while leveraging digital platforms expands market reach to younger demographics who rely on digital travel planning. Government policymakers must create enabling environments through technical assistance, providing branding expertise and marketing resources, facilitate inter-village collaboration networks for knowledge sharing, and develop infrastructure supporting tourism experiences while preserving environmental and cultural integrity. Policy frameworks should support creative economy development through appropriate regulations and incentive structures that protect community interests while ensuring equitable benefit distribution among all stakeholders.

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