Readiness of Tourism Branding in Supporting Smart Branding of Ambon City

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Abstract

One of the dimensions of smart city is smart branding where one of the elements is tourism branding. Tourism branding can be interpreted as an effort to make the city a tourist destination that has an identity and character so that it has a strong appeal. Ambon City, which is starting a smart city program with all the potential and problems, is faced with challenges in meeting the readiness of the smart city implementation as a whole. This study aims to identify and analyze the readiness of tourism branding in Ambon City by examining several indicators, namely facilities that support tourist comfort (amenities), accessibility, ancillary services and hospitality. The analysis method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. The results of the analysis show the unpreparedness and need for development of several indicators of tourism branding such as road conditions and transportation access to tourist attractions, availability of eating spots and lodging, availability of tour guide services, travel agents, and tourist information. However, some things have started positively such as promotional innovations and tourist services that utilize information technology.

Keywords: *Tourism, Branding, Smart.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in all aspects is now inevitable, encouraging the government to continue to be able to innovate in development. This is a catalyst for district and city governments to develop ICT-based programs as a solution in urban development or based on the smart city concept. Urban development with the concept of smart city has received attention in the national and international scope. Smart city is a city that uses various types of information and communication technologies (ICT) that are useful not only to promote the city but also to improve the economy, mobility, environment, people, life and governance (Lai & Cole, 2022). Meanwhile, Sutriadi (2017) defines smart city from the point of view of the ideological dimension, which is a way to achieve sustainable development by organizing a better future by developing an appropriate policy and development target to create economic growth and a better quality of life.

Citiasia Center for Smart Nation (CCSN) divides the elements of the smart city concept into smart governance, smart branding, smart economy, smart living, smart society, and smart environment. The smart city elements or dimensions by CCSN are used by the government to measure the smart city performance of regions in Indonesia, while in general the main elements in the readiness of smart regions

consist of nature, structure, infrastructure, superstructure and culture. Smart city is an important initiative that must be implemented by all cities in order to progress and develop, but its application in developing countries has many challenges (Alshuwaikhat et al, 2022).

One pillar or dimension of the smart city approach is smart branding. Smart branding is an innovation in marketing the region so as to increase regional competitiveness by developing three elements, namely tourism, business, and city face. There are three elements in smart branding development, namely: (1) Building and marketing the tourism ecosystem (tourism branding); (2) Building a platform and marketing the regional business ecosystem (business branding); (3) Building and marketing the face of the city (city appearance branding).

One of the important elements of smart branding as mentioned earlier is tourism branding. Harish (2010) defines tourism destination branding as the process of building a uniqueness or specificity owned by a tourism destination and communicating it to tourists or investors using a name, tagline, symbol, design or a combination of these media to create a positive image. Furthermore, Kavaratsis (2008) explains that tourism destination branding is one of the trends of city branding by making a city or region a destination or tourist destination city from the community and allowing a city to manage its tourism potential as a unique identity and characteristic for the region.

In Indonesia, many cities have created branding but the majority have not been effectively used to market the city, especially to improve the regional tourism image. Branding is very important for cities or regions in building a strong positioning to be recognized more widely by highlighting unique and new things. The planning of a city cannot be separated from the characteristics of the city which can be seen from its geographical, historical and cultural conditions. Ambon City has a branding, namely "Ambon City of Music" and has even been included in the World Creative Cities Network by UNESCO. The purpose of this innovation is to build a sustainable Ambon City from socio-economic and environmental aspects as well as creativity.

Innovation in city branding, especially tourism branding, has the potential to be developed in Ambon City, but lately this innovation is still in doubt and seems to be just a slogan, not yet followed up with supporting facilities and supporting programs, especially to increase tourism activities. In smart branding, cities or regions are not only expected to be able to market the region but also be able to utilize technology and information in selling the uniqueness of the region. Ambon City has clear branding as the City of Music, but the development and marketing of the tourism ecosystem (tourism branding) still needs to be planned comprehensively in order to attract tourists.

In developing tourism branding Citiasia Center for Smart Nation (CCSN) divides tourism branding indicators on the construction and development of a viable tourist destination (destination), infrastructure that supports tourist comfort (amenities) and builds a friendly culture to visitors (hospitality). The readiness of these indicators must be considered by the city government and other stakeholders

because tourism destination branding acts as an umbrella for leisure portfolios, investment and business tourism, stakeholder products and citizen welfare, this goodwill is certainly created through a unique identity by considering the diversity of stakeholder needs (Baker, 2012).

A comprehensive concept for tourism branding is needed so that it can be a reference for the development of smart branding in the smart city program considering this element is one of the leading characteristics or characteristics that have the potential to be developed in Ambon City. Smart branding is one of the dimensions in smart cities because in the current information era, a city no longer has to be able to meet its needs by only utilizing local potential, but must also be able to attract community participation, both from within and outside the region, as well as business people and investors to help accelerate regional development. Therefore, this research aims to identify and analyze the readiness of tourism branding to support the smart branding dimension in Ambon City.

B. METHOD

Research on tourism branding in the development of the Ambon smart branding program is based on the branding potential of Ambon City which is supported by identity, characteristics and strong tourism potential and on the other hand the government has begun to develop the Ambon City Smart City program. Therefore, in the midst of the identity or branding of Ambon City which has not yet had a positive impact, tourism branding needs to be developed. This research examines fundamentally related to the readiness of indicators in tourism branding, namely:

- Tourism that is worthy of tourists (destination).
- Infrastructure that supports tourist convenience (amenities) such as roads, transportation, hotels/motels/bed & breakfast (B&B), restaurants, etc.
- Ancillary Services and a welcoming culture to visitors (hospitality) including foreign language skills, availability of tour-guides etc.

Based on the characteristics of the research, the approach in this study is a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is research that uses a natural setting with the intention of interpreting phenomena that occur and is carried out by involving various existing methods (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). The use of a qualitative approach in this research is to describe the dynamically developing phenomena and analysis of tourism branding readiness in supporting the Ambon Smart City program.

The analysis method used to identify and analyze the readiness of tourism branding to support the smart branding dimension in Ambon City is descriptive qualitative with a rationalistic approach. The use of a rationalistic approach in this research is to emphasize that science comes from intellectual understanding built on logical argumentation skills, not built on empirical experience. Experience (empirical) only serves to confirm the knowledge gained by reason. There are two analytical techniques used in this research, namely verification analysis tools, and

empirical descriptive analysis tools. In analyzing the readiness of tourism branding, research was conducted at 24 popular tourist sites in Ambon City and then data was collected through observation, documentation, field notes, interviews and so on.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Building and marketing the tourism ecosystem (tourism branding) is one of the indicators of smart branding development initiatives. In this indicator, there are several things that need to be considered, namely:

- Build and develop tourist destinations that are suitable for tourists (destination);
- - Building infrastructure that supports tourist convenience (amenities) such as roads, transportation, lodging, bed and breakfast (B&B), restaurants and others; and
- - Building a culture that is friendly to visitors (hospitality) including foreign language skills, availability of tour-guides and others.

To determine the condition and potential of tourism branding development in this study, the indicators mentioned above are complemented by the concept of components that must be owned by a tourist spot according to Cooper et al (1995: 81), namely attraction, amenities, accessibility and ancillary.

1. Identification of Tourist Attractions in Ambon City

Attractions are the main attraction that motivates tourists to visit a place that includes various elements such as natural beauty, historical tourism, local culture, adventure activities, entertainment and so on. Based on the results of observations, the most dominant type of tourism in Ambon City is natural tourism attractions, there are also several artificial, cultural and historical tourism attractions such as Victoria Fort, Siwalima Museum and Traditional Ceremonies. The following is the percentage of types of tourist attractions in Ambon City at 26 tourist sites that were observed.

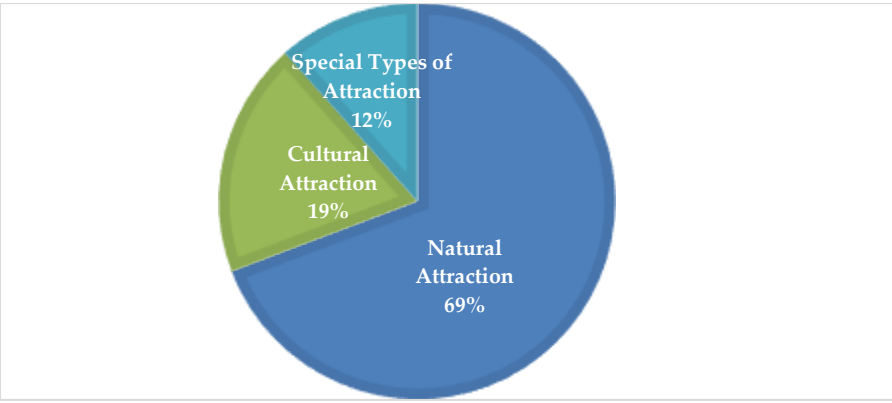


Figure 1. Percentage of Tourism Attraction Types in Ambon City

Based on the diagram above, it can be seen that the most dominant tourist attractions in Ambon City are natural attractions, which amount to 69%, then artificial tourism 19% and cultural and historical tourism 12%. Although art and

cultural tourism attractions are low, they can be found at certain events in Ambon City. The organization of arts, culture and sports in Ambon City aims to increase tourist visits in Ambon City and towards Ambon, a global music city. As a city of culture and arts, Ambon City is referred to as the city of music, with the preservation of local arts and culture, including the development of villages in Ambon City as traditional and cultural villages. There are several art studios, event organizers, or music groups that regularly perform arts and culture. At international, national and local level events. The locations of art and cultural performances in Ambon City include Merdeka Square, Pattimura Park, Peace Gong Park, Karang Panjang Sport Hall, Cultural Building, Mandala Square and various meeting buildings both owned by the government and the community In the development of tourism branding, the character and dominance of tourist attractions need to be considered, branding can be based on the potential of each category of tourist attractions.

2. Accessibility

Accessibility is a transportation facility and infrastructure that supports the movement of tourists from the area of origin of tourists to tourism destinations and movement within the tourism destination area in relation to the motivation for tourist visits. Good accessibility will attract many people to explore tourist attractions in an area. Therefore, good accessibility is one of the main assets in the development of tourism branding. Based on observations, there are still many tourist attractions in Ambon City with poor accessibility. The following is a comparison of the percentage of road conditions and the availability of public transportation to tourist attractions in Ambon City.

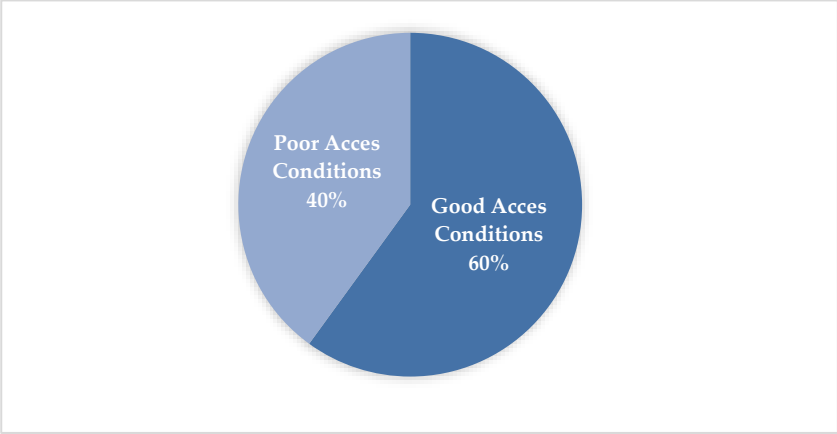


Figure 2. Percentage of Road Condition to Tourism Objects in Ambon City

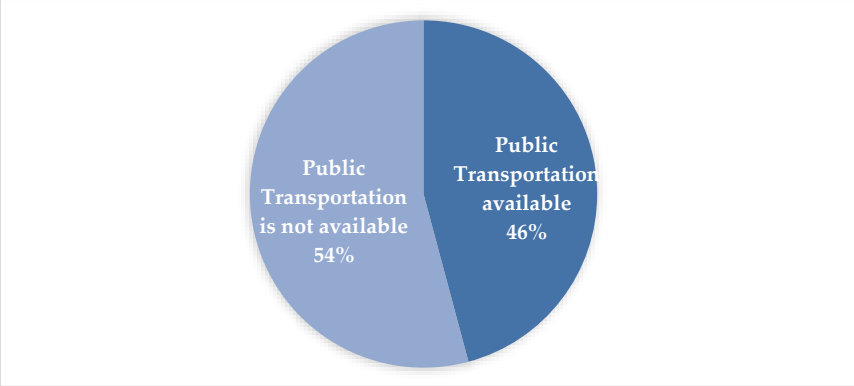
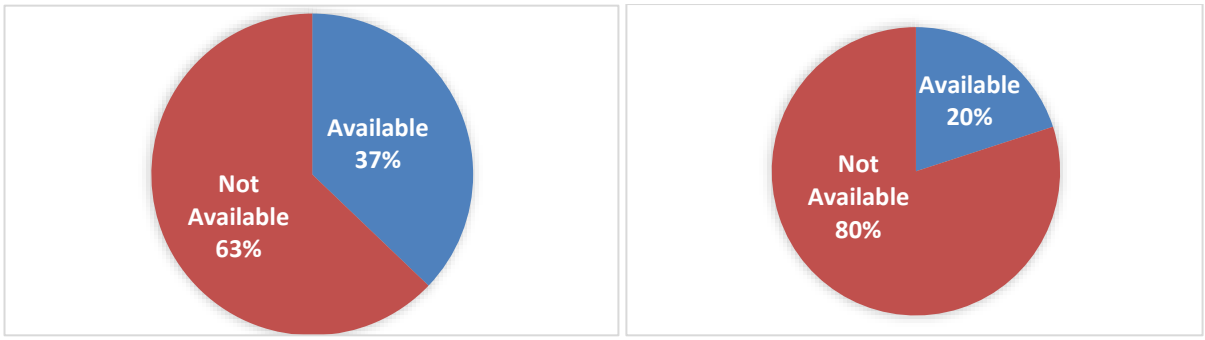


Figure 3. Percentage of Public Transportation Availability to Tourism Objects in Ambon City

Based on the results of surveys and observations in this study, it is known that around 40% of the roads leading to tourist attractions are in poor condition and only 46% of tourist attractions are accessed by public transportation. Poor road conditions can have a negative impact on the tourism ecosystem in Ambon City. Tourists can feel uncomfortable and disrupt the tourist experience and make them reluctant to visit certain tourist attractions. If a tourist attraction is not supported by adequate accessibility, Ambon City will be difficult to develop in the tourism industry because tourism activities depend a lot on transportation because distance and time factors greatly affect the desire of tourists to travel. In addition, according to Wearning and Mc Donald (2002), the implementation of accessibility is also influenced by the role and involvement of the government and local communities. This must certainly be a concern for stakeholders involved in the development of tourism branding because good accessibility can increase the portfolio of Ambon City in marketing its tourism.

3. Analysis of Facilities that Support Tourist Comfort (Amenity)

Amenity is the facilities and services provided to tourists when visiting a tourist attraction. Amenity includes high-quality accommodation such as lodging, restaurants, car rentals, tourist information centers and so on. Amenity is very important in tourism development because it plays a major role in influencing the success of tourist attractions, namely by increasing tourist attractiveness, meeting the needs and increasing tourist satisfaction. Based on observations, in Ambon City there are already several tourist attractions that are supported by adequate facilities, but the majority are still minimal. The following is a comparison of the percentage of availability of facilities that support tourist comfort in Ambon City.



Restaurant Availability *Accommodation Availability*

Figure 4. Availability Bedding & breakfast (B&B) and Restaurant

The diagram above shows that only 37% of tourist attractions in Ambon City are equipped or close to restaurants and only 20% are equipped or close to lodging facilities. The Amenity element in tourist sites in Ambon City is still very minimal because the availability of lodging and restaurants is only located at certain tourist attractions such as Namalatu Beach, Relax Beach, Peace Gong, and Blanda Pool Beach. While tourist objects that only have the availability of restaurants or stalls include lawena beach, Coral beach Liang payer, Amahusu beach, siwang paradise hill, hukurila beach, louw water beach, paragliding hill and Kaluar kusu-kusu water bath. In the development of tourism branding, the readiness of infrastructure that supports tourist comfort is very important. A ready city will be its own selling point to attract tourists. Amenity readiness is certainly an important indicator in the development of tourism branding in Ambon City, complete and adequate facilities will increase the selling value of the promotion and tourism portfolio of Ambon City. Comfortable and attractive facilities need to be developed in priority destinations and can be used as capital in the promotion and branding of Ambon City tourism.

4. Additional Services (*Ancillary*)

Ancillary services are all services provided to tourists. According to Cooper et al (1994) Ancillary is support provided by organizations, local governments, groups or managers of tourist destinations to organize tourism activities. Indeed, ancillary is intended to increase the comfort and enjoyment of the travel experience (Tait and Mazibuko, 2011). Ancillary consists of promotion and marketing, tourist destination management institutions, tourist information, travel agents and tour guides.

Tourism promotion in Ambon City is being improved, generally tourism promotion in Ambon City is divided into two, namely promotions carried out by the government and promotions carried out by the community or tourism activists. Promotion carried out by the community is through social media such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and so on. Meanwhile, the government promotes in several ways, namely through government websites, social media, events and digital applications. Based on observations in this study, promotion on the Ambon City Government website is still very minimal, only a few tourist sites are profiled and not updated.

For events the government routinely holds every year, one example is the Teluk Ambon Festival.



Sumber: https://ambon.go.id/ dan GenePU Maluku

Figure 5. Tourism Object Information on the Ambon City Government Website and Tourism Promotion through the Teluk Ambon Festival Event

In addition, there are new innovations made by the Ambon City Government in conducting tourism promotions and services, namely through digital technology, namely by making the Ambon Acces application. Ambon Acces is an android-based Ambon City application that provides integrated services through digital technology in order to create Ambon City as a smart city by making it easy for the public to get information about Ambon City, including in providing information related to tourist destinations in Ambon City along with supporting facilities. This is a progressive step in the development of tourism branding in Ambon City.

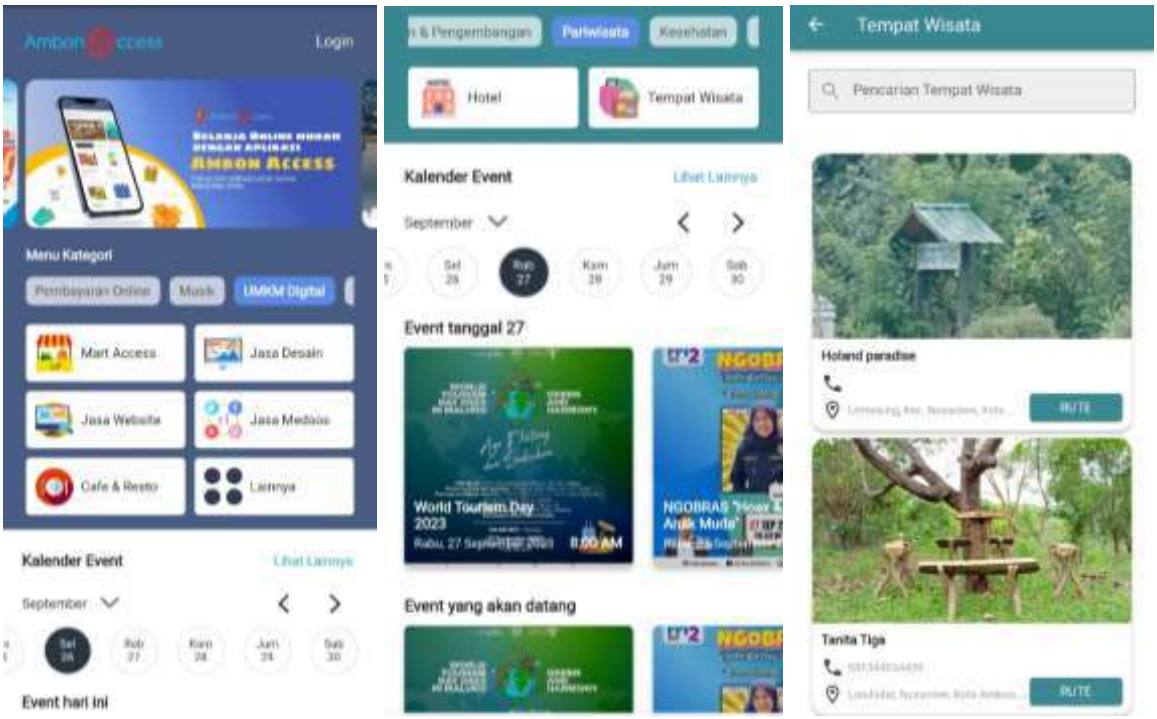


Figure 6. Ambon Access digital application as a Media Promotion and Tourism Services in Ambon City

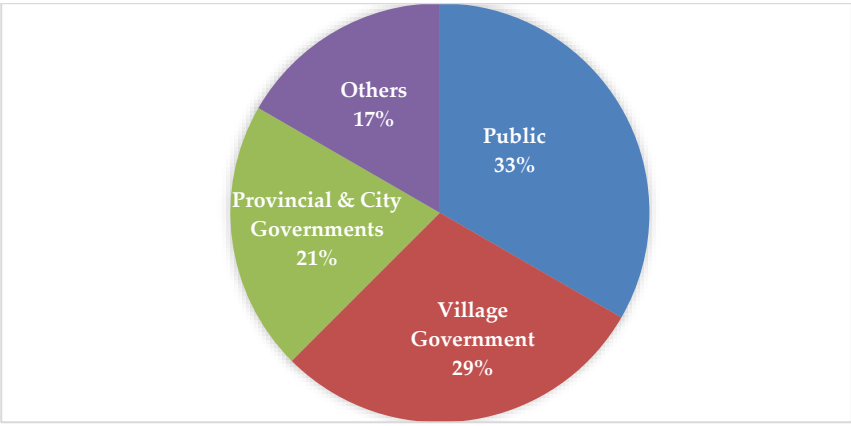
To promote and facilitate tourism services, the Ambon City Government through the Tourism and Culture Office collaborates with a number of parties to realize tourism digitalization to improve tourism services and access. Collaboration is carried out with a number of parties such as PT Telkom and the Financial Services Authority (OJK). This collaboration aims to improve tourism services, namely by increasing promotional strategies through QR Code Scan which contains Ambon City tourism information. The program aims to provide access to tourist information both conventionally and digitally to local and foreign tourists. Although still in the development stage, this is a good step in realizing smart cities in Ambon City, especially related to Smart Branding.



Sumber: www.qrcode-tiger.com and bogor-kita.com

Figure 7. Illustration of QR Code Scan Usage in Tourism Services

In addition to promotion and tourist services, another element studied in ancillary analysis is the management of the tourist attraction itself. Based on the results of observations, other ancillary services besides promotion are still very lacking when viewed from tourism branding standards, this can be seen from the unavailability of tour guide and travel agent services, as well as tourist information. Then related to the promotion and management of tourist destinations is more dominantly managed by the community, which is as much as 33%. Tourist locations that are managed individually are privately owned tourist destinations and marketing through social media such as tiktok, facebook and instagram. It should also be noted that there are several tourist destinations in Ambon City that are promoted and managed directly by the Maluku Province Tourism Office such as Peace Gong, Namalatu beach and Hukurila Beach.



Gambar 8. Percentage of Managers in Sample Tourist Objects ini Ambon City

The development of additional services in supporting the tourism ecosystem in Ambon City, especially towards tourism branding, is very important. Tourism destinations that offer a variety of additional services tend to be more attractive to tourists because they play an important role in improving the tourist experience, tourism industry revenue and local economic development. The ability to meet the various needs and preferences of tourists can make the destination compete in competitive tourism.

D. CONCLUSION

The development and marketing of the tourism ecosystem (tourism branding) is one of the important elements in supporting smart branding. Branding itself aims to build strong positioning by highlighting the character and image of the region itself, especially through tourism. To realize smart branding, the tourism ecosystem in Ambon City must be prepared. The results of the analysis of each indicator studied show the unpreparedness and the need for development. Starting from the lack of accessibility, which is around 40% of the roads leading to tourist attractions are in poor condition and only 46% are accessed by public transportation so that tourist objects will be difficult to develop in the Tourism Industry. Then in terms of Amenity shows that only 37% of tourist attractions in Ambon City are equipped or close to restaurants and only 20% are equipped or close to lodging facilities. Meanwhile, for additional services and hospitality, it shows that the government has been progressive in terms of promotional and service innovation, namely through digital applications, but from other additional service elements it is still very lacking when viewed from the tourism branding standard itself, such as the lack of availability of tour guide services, travel agents, and tourist information. Then for the management of tourist objects, there are still many that are carried out by the community, namely 33% of the sample of tourist objects studied. From these various conditions, a comprehensive strategy is needed to prepare the tourism ecosystem of Ambon City through conceptualized and long-term programs and by involving

various stakeholders ranging from the community, tourism actors, government and private elements.

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