

Unveiling the Underrepresented Tourism: A Qualitative Inquiry into Strategic Destination Branding in Kampung Sanjai, Bukittinggi

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ABSTRACT

This study examines tourist perceptions and brand awareness of Sanjai Tourism Village as an educational destination based on local wisdom in Bukittinggi City, West Sumatra. The research problem centers on the disconnection between product recognition and place awareness, where Sanjai chips are widely known but their geographical and cultural origins remain obscure. Using qualitative methodology with social construction theory framework, data were collected through interviews with tourists, village managers, and community members, supported by field observations and documentation. The study reveals that while 75% of tourists recognize "Sanjai" as a food product, only 25% associate it with a tourism destination, creating a fundamental branding paradox. The findings demonstrate that destination branding processes remain incomplete, particularly in the internalization phase where community participation is limited and tourist awareness is low. The research contributes to destination branding literature by highlighting unique challenges faced by underrepresented localities where authentic cultural assets fail to translate into effective marketing due to inadequate stakeholder integration and weak promotional strategies. The study emphasizes the need for participatory branding approaches that position local communities as primary actors in brand construction while ensuring cultural preservation and sustainable tourism development.

Keywords: Destination Branding, Cultural Tourism, Social Construction, Community-Based Tourism, Brand Awareness

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has long been recognized as a strategic sector that contributes significantly to regional economic growth, job creation, and local cultural preservation. In the global context, various government initiatives such as those implemented in Rajasthan, India, have demonstrated that strengthening the tourism sector can drive regional development and improve community welfare (Bhaskar et al., 2024). In Indonesia, the tourism sector experienced consistent growth between 2014 and 2019, providing positive impacts on the national economy and increasing the number of foreign tourist visits. Post-COVID-19 pandemic, tourism village development policies also showed a more inclusive strategic shift, empowering local communities as the main actors in tourism development, although contributions to foreign exchange earnings have not yet been significantly visible (Larasdiputra et al., 2022). In the local context, Bukittinggi is one of the cities that has established its identity as a tourist city since the designation of "Tourism City and Main Tourism Destination in West Sumatra" status on March 11, 1984. The contribution of this sector to Local Original Revenue (PAD) even reaches 30-40%, confirming the vital role of tourism in the city's economic structure (The Bukit Tinggi City Tourism Office Of West Sumatra 2018).

Since 2011, the Bukittinggi City Government has designated Kampung Sanjai as a cultural tourism area based on local culture. This village is the starting point for making Minangkabau's characteristic cassava chips widely known as 'keripik sanjai', an iconic souvenir of West Sumatra. However, in commercial development and public perception, this authentic narrative has become increasingly marginalized, resulting in unclear tourism product positioning and inability to create cohesive regional narratives that appreciate the diverse cultural contributions of each village (Zhang, 2022). Product identity is more often associated with Padang City through the dominance of major brands such as 'Christine Hakim' and 'Shirley', thus obscuring the cultural origins of keripik sanjai as part of Kampung Sanjai's heritage. This phenomenon aligns with findings showing significant deficits in brand narratives and destination branding practices in many villages and small towns that are often underrepresented in regional tourism narratives (Rowley & Hanna, 2020). This indicates inequality in the destination branding process, where areas with strong historical and cultural potential often receive limited representation (Yoon & McCumber, 2024), by more dominant commercial narratives.

An important component of this destination branding concept is creating a positive and distinctive image that attracts potential tourists' interest. This involves identifying unique selling propositions and leveraging them to differentiate the destination (George, 2021). In the tourism context, this process not only creates visual identity but must also convey authentic and representative narratives of local values upheld by the destination. To understand these dynamics, this research also bases itself on the theory of social construction of reality Berger & Luckmann (1966), which explains that social identity and cultural values are constructed through the dialectics of externalization, objectification, and internalization.

Current conditions show that Kampung Wisata Sanjai branding has not been maximized. The chip production kilns in Kampung Sanjai are becoming fewer, and many of them are now owned by newcomers who are not local residents. Community awareness of the importance of cultural identity is also beginning to diminish. In fact, placing local communities at the center of branding strategies can strengthen cultural identity and increase destination attractiveness (Campelo et al., 2014). Kampung Sanjai holds great potential as a tourism destination based on local wisdom: from the keripik sanjai making process, pencak silat and traditional dance attractions, to agricultural activities such as rice planting and local crafts such as kerancang embroidery and brick making. By promoting tourism experiences based on cultural education and social interaction, this village has attractiveness that can match or even complement iconic destinations such as Jam Gadang.

Based on previous observations, Kampung Sanjai's digital marketing has underlined the challenges of minimal local community involvement and weak brand identity cultivation. However, that study has not deeply explored the social construction of local brands as shared community narratives, nor has it explored branding strategies based on cultural experiences and social interaction as a holistic approach in tourism. Therefore, this research offers novelty by combining branding theory and social construction in analyzing destination branding phenomena in underrepresented localities, particularly in the context of small cities that hold great cultural potential but are not accommodated in dominant marketing systems and narratives (Yoon & McCumber, 2024).

This research aims to analyze tourists' perceptions and knowledge levels regarding the image and brand identity of Kampung Wisata Sanjai as an educational tourism destination based on local wisdom. More specifically, this research seeks to evaluate the extent to which brand awareness and brand association toward Kampung Sanjai have been formed in the minds of potential tourists visiting Bukittinggi City (Purmada et al., 2016). Furthermore, this research is expected to be used as a basis for developing more targeted destination branding strategies, while serving as an effort to revitalize Kampung Sanjai's position in the local tourism landscape. Thus, Kampung Sanjai is not only understood as a cassava chip production center, but also as a living cultural space that represents the authentic identity of the Bukittinggi community (Rinaldi, 2015). This research simultaneously becomes a theoretical contribution in city branding studies and social construction in the context of underrepresented localities in Indonesia's tourism sector.

Kampung Sanjai is a cultural entity containing high historical and social values, yet its position in West Sumatra's tourism landscape has not been maximally exposed. This research becomes urgent to conduct in order to save the village's cultural identity from narrative obscuration by external commercial brand forces. With this approach, it is hoped to build branding strategies that not only market products but also revive the values, identity, and authentic experiences of local communities as the main strength of destinations that contribute to strengthening more inclusive and representative tourism narratives..

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs qualitative research methodology. According to Afrizal (2014), qualitative research is a method that attempts to present the social world and its perspectives in social science by collecting and analyzing data in the form of words (spoken or written) and in terms of concepts, behaviors, or human actions studied

without conducting numerical calculations on the data. Meanwhile, according to Somantri (2005), qualitative research seeks to explore various phenomena and social realities ideographically.

The research data sources consist of primary data in the form of observations and direct interviews with tourists in Bukittinggi City who potentially visit Sanjai Village and the community of Manggis Ganting Village as managers of Sanjai Tourism Village. Meanwhile, secondary data comes from books, articles, websites, and previous research. The data collection techniques used are interviews, observations, documentation, and active participation.

The research location is in Sanjai Tourism Village, located in Manggis Ganting Village, Mandiangin Koto Selayan District, approximately 3 km from the heart of Bukittinggi City. The village area covers 151.2 hectares (142.2 hectares of land and 9.0 hectares of rice fields). Sanjai Tourism Village consists of 4 RW (Community Groups), namely RW I Sanjai, RW II Ganting, RW III Manggis Bawah, RW IV Manggis Atas, and consists of 10 RT (Neighborhood Groups) with the following geographical boundaries: North borders with Cimpago Guguak Bulek Village, South borders with Pulau Anak Air Village, East borders with Parik Putuih, Ampek Angkek District, Agam Regency, and West borders with Cimpago Ipuah Village.

The initial stage of this research began with exploratory field observations in Sanjai Tourism Village, accompanied by visual and narrative documentation activities to record the actual conditions of the destination. Subsequently, an in-depth literature review was conducted to obtain theoretical and conceptual foundations, including literature from books, scientific articles, and relevant online sources. The researcher then conducted interviews with key stakeholders, including managers of Sanjai Tourism Village from the Manggis Ganting Village community. After obtaining information about the problems of Sanjai Tourism Village, the study proceeded to the communication analysis stage, followed by the creation of a good tourism village concept design suitable for implementation in Sanjai Tourism Village in accordance with applicable regulations.

This research adopts a qualitative research paradigm with an interpretive approach, utilizing ethnographic methods to understand the social construction of destination branding in underrepresented localities. The study employs a case study design focusing on Sanjai Tourism Village as the primary unit of analysis, examining the perceptions, experiences, and cultural narratives of local communities and potential tourists. Data analysis follows a comprehensive thematic analysis framework, incorporating coding procedures that identify patterns and themes related to brand awareness, cultural identity, and community participation in tourism development. The analytical process involves triangulation of multiple data sources to ensure validity and reliability, while maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process to acknowledge the researcher's positionality in interpreting the socio-cultural phenomena observed in the field.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Development Conditions of Sanjai Tourism Village

History and Official Designation

Sanjai Tourism Village in Bukittinggi City was officially designated as a community-based tourism destination since 2011 through Decree Number 556/02/SK-PNPM-2011. In the same year, this area received an allocation of Rp75,000,000 from the National Community Empowerment Program (PNPM) to begin tourism infrastructure development in the Sanjai area, Manggis Ganting Village. Continued support was also shown in 2012, when Sanjai Tourism Village again received PNPM Tourism assistance worth Rp100,000,000 to strengthen management aspects and develop tourist attractions based on local potential. Until now, this tourism village is still under the guidance of the Department of Tourism, Youth, and Sports of Bukittinggi City, which regularly provides basic tourism training as part of community empowerment efforts and destination capacity building.

The establishment of Sanjai Tourism Village represents a significant milestone in the development of community-based tourism in West Sumatra. The initial funding allocation through PNPM demonstrates the government's commitment to empowering local communities through tourism development. However, the sustainability of this support requires continuous evaluation to ensure long-term viability of the destination. The involvement of the local tourism department in providing regular training indicates an ongoing effort to build local capacity, though the effectiveness of these programs needs to be assessed in terms of their impact on destination management and tourist satisfaction.

Development Actors and Initiation

Many parties played a role in making the Sanjai area a tourist destination in Bukittinggi city. The potential was first discovered by Yusuf, one of the guests at the Champago hotel located not far from the Sanjai village area. Yusuf was one of the staff of the Ministry of Tourism who was at that time serving as a committee member for

Tour de Singkarak 2, conveying his views to the General Manager of the Champago hotel, Syafroni Falian, who at that time also served as chairman of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI). Yusuf saw the potential of Sanjai Village in terms of natural conditions, crafts, arts, culture and culinary, so Yusuf suggested that Sanjai Village be developed into a tourist village. This idea was well received by youth and local communities who wanted to develop their village through culture and traditional arts, so they could obtain funds from the Independent Tourism PNPM allocated to support the development of Sanjai village tourism.

The multi-stakeholder approach in the development of Sanjai Tourism Village reflects the importance of collaboration between government officials, private sector representatives, and local communities. The role of Yusuf as a tourism ministry staff member demonstrates how external expertise can identify and catalyze local tourism potential. The positive response from the local community, particularly the youth, indicates a bottom-up approach to tourism development that aligns with sustainable tourism principles. This collaborative model serves as an example of how tourism development can be initiated through the convergence of government support, private sector involvement, and community participation.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Conditions

Based on field findings, the empowerment of the first kiln or cassava chip processing kitchen in Sanjai Tourism Village has not been optimally managed. Observation results show that of the three initial kilns known as Sanjai chip production sites, only one is still actively operating and accessible to visitors. Previously, these traditional kitchens were the center of cassava chip production activities. This activity involved local women in the process of peeling, slicing, frying, seasoning, and packaging, all done with simple tools and manual labor. This condition reflects that productivity in the Sanjai chip home industry is highly dependent on human labor. However, these kitchens have not yet met representative standards as educational tourism objects worthy of being visited. This unpreparedness aligns with the low level of knowledge among the general public, including domestic tourists, regarding the existence of Sanjai Tourism Village.

The deterioration of traditional production facilities presents both challenges and opportunities for tourism development. While the decline in active kilns represents a loss of authentic cultural heritage, it also highlights the urgent need for preservation and revitalization efforts. The dependence on manual labor in chip production offers unique educational value for tourists interested in traditional manufacturing processes. However, the lack of standardization for tourism purposes indicates insufficient investment in infrastructure development and visitor experience enhancement. This situation requires immediate attention to prevent further degradation of cultural assets while developing appropriate tourism facilities.

Tourism Potential of Sanjai Village

Culinary and Creative Industry Potential

The Sanjai area becomes a tourist destination because it has tourism potential that can be developed. Sanjai Village has potential in the form of rice fields, sanjai chip industry where Sanjai Village is the first kiln that made cassava chips, a typical West Sumatra souvenir. In addition, there are also kerancang border crafts typical of Bukittinggi, pencak silat attractions, traditional dances, randai, manokok dama (breaking candlenuts), and kusia bendi attractions (carriage driver). This potential makes Sanjai village have its own unique characteristics that are different from other tourist destinations in Bukittinggi.

The historical significance of Sanjai Village as the birthplace of the famous West Sumatra cassava chips provides a strong foundation for culinary tourism development. This authentic origin story offers tourists a unique opportunity to experience the traditional production process and understand the cultural significance of this iconic regional product. The diversification of attractions beyond culinary experiences, including traditional crafts and cultural performances, creates a comprehensive tourism package that can extend visitor stay duration and enhance economic benefits for the local community.

Research findings indicate that the majority of tourists are unaware that Sanjai chips historically originated from the Sanjai area itself. This knowledge gap represents both a challenge and an opportunity for destination marketing. The development of educational tourism programs that highlight the historical connection between the product and the place can create a compelling narrative that differentiates Sanjai Village from other destinations. However, the current lack of promotional activities and inadequate information provision systems limit the potential impact of these unique selling propositions.

Cultural and Traditional Arts Potential

Another potential owned by Sanjai tourism village is cultural tourism. Sanjai Village displays cultural performances such as traditional dances typical of West Sumatra, pencak silat, randai, mamacah dama attractions (breaking candlenuts using traditional tools), kusia bendi attractions (horse riding attractions using carriages to tour around). Tourists can enjoy West Sumatra's typical culture through traditional dances performed by the Sanjai

village community. To support this potential, Sanjai tourism village has received assistance from the tourism village PNPM which is used to buy dance equipment. Randai and pencak silat, which are typical Minangkabau culture, are also used as tourism potential by the Sanjai village community. This is interesting because randai and pencak silat are somewhat difficult to find freely in the current Minangkabau generation environment.

The preservation and presentation of traditional Minangkabau cultural arts in Sanjai Village serve dual purposes: cultural conservation and tourism attraction. The availability of traditional performances such as randai and pencak silat addresses the growing tourist demand for authentic cultural experiences. The investment in dance equipment through PNPM funding demonstrates government recognition of the importance of cultural tourism infrastructure. However, the challenge lies in ensuring the sustainability of these cultural practices beyond their tourism function, particularly in engaging younger generations in cultural preservation.

The rarity of traditional arts like randai and pencak silat in contemporary Minangkabau society adds significant value to their presentation in Sanjai Village. This scarcity creates a unique opportunity for the village to position itself as a cultural heritage center that offers experiences unavailable elsewhere. The challenge, however, is maintaining authenticity while adapting these traditional arts for tourism consumption. The balance between cultural preservation and tourism development requires careful management to ensure that commercialization does not compromise the integrity of these cultural practices.

Natural and Agrotourism Potential

In addition to Sanjai cassava chips and kerancang border craftsmen, the Sanjai Village tourism area has attractive natural wealth potential. Sanjai Village has quite extensive rice fields, beautiful and attractive because they are still very traditional. The rice fields are also juxtaposed with water ponds that add to the charm of the Sanjai tourism area. The view of rice fields and ponds becomes a potential that invites tourists to enjoy the rural atmosphere in the Sanjai tourism area. The 'Kasawah and Sabik Iriak season' tourism activity (planting rice) is a form of agricultural education tourism at Sanjai Tourism Village. This is a unique potential owned by the Sanjai tourism area in presenting the form of tourism they have. However, there are no signs of promotion regarding this tourism, so based on data obtained in the field, many prospective tourists do not know about this.

The agricultural landscape of Sanjai Village offers significant potential for agrotourism development, particularly in the context of sustainable tourism practices. The traditional rice farming methods preserved in the village provide educational value for urban tourists seeking authentic rural experiences. The seasonal nature of agricultural activities creates opportunities for developing specialized tourism packages that align with farming cycles. The 'Kasawah and Sabik Iriak' activities represent participatory tourism experiences that can enhance visitor engagement while providing additional income sources for local farmers.

The integration of natural beauty with agricultural activities creates a unique tourism product that can differentiate Sanjai Village from other destinations. The combination of rice fields and water ponds offers photogenic landscapes that appeal to contemporary tourism trends, particularly among millennials and social media-savvy travelers. However, the lack of promotional activities for these natural attractions represents a significant missed opportunity. The development of comprehensive marketing strategies that highlight the natural and agricultural potential of the village is essential for maximizing tourism benefits.

Tourist Perception of Sanjai Village Brand

Brand Awareness Level

Based on data collected from interviews and surveys with tourists in Bukittinggi City, perceptions of the Sanjai Tourism Village destination brand show several important findings. First, most respondents stated that the name "Sanjai" is better known as a term for West Sumatra's typical food, especially cassava chips, and not as the name of a geographical area. Knowledge that Sanjai is the name of the village where the chips originated is generally only known by local tourists or those who have connections with the West Sumatra community. Field data shows that most tourists in Bukittinggi do not know about the existence of Sanjai Village as a tourist destination, and the majority have never visited it.

The disconnect between product recognition and place awareness represents a significant branding challenge for Sanjai Tourism Village. While the Sanjai chip brand has achieved widespread recognition throughout West Sumatra and beyond, this commercial success has not translated into destination awareness. This phenomenon illustrates what Zhang (2022) describes as the marginalization of authentic narratives in commercial development, where product identity becomes detached from its cultural origins. The dominance of commercial brands such as 'Christine Hakim' and 'Shirley' in Padang City has further obscured the cultural origins of Sanjai chips, creating a branding paradox where the product's success undermines the source destination's visibility.

Brand Association and Destination Image

Second, the majority of tourists do not know that Sanjai chips historically originated from the Sanjai area itself. Third, when directly introduced to the existence of Sanjai Tourism Village as a cultural destination, most tourists admitted they had never heard of it, but showed interest in visiting it. Fourth, for tourists who have heard of or visited Sanjai Village, they assess that the supporting facilities and infrastructure of the tourism destination are still inadequate, especially in terms of promotion and provision of information that can reach potential tourists. Finally, although Sanjai Village is located in a strategic location, its accessibility is still constrained by the lack of clear directional signs, making it difficult for tourists to reach the location independently.

The positive response from tourists when introduced to Sanjai Tourism Village indicates significant latent demand for authentic cultural experiences. This finding suggests that the primary challenge is not market interest but rather destination awareness and accessibility. The infrastructure deficits, particularly in signage and information provision, represent immediate opportunities for improvement that could significantly enhance visitor experience and destination accessibility. The strategic location of the village, while currently underutilized due to poor signage, represents a competitive advantage that could be leveraged through targeted infrastructure investments.

The assessment of inadequate supporting facilities by visitors who have experienced the destination highlights the importance of comprehensive destination development beyond mere attraction identification. Tourist feedback regarding promotional deficiencies and information accessibility points to systemic issues in destination marketing and communication strategies. These findings align with Rowley and Hanna's (2020) observations about significant deficits in brand narratives and destination branding practices in small towns and villages.

Social Construction of Destination Brand

The process of destination brand formation, including in the context of Sanjai Tourism Village, does not occur instantly, but through complex and continuous social construction stages. Brand as a symbolic representation in the minds of society is formed through social interaction, collective narratives, and strategic interventions from stakeholders directly involved in destination management. In this case, the meaning of Sanjai Village as an educational and experience-based tourism destination is the result of social construction that takes place through a dialectical process as proposed by Berger and Luckmann (in Bungin, 2008:15). They explain that there is a reciprocal relationship between individuals and society in shaping social reality.

This process includes three dialectical moments: externalization (individuals express their experiences and ideas to social space), objectification (the expression becomes institutionalized and accepted as social reality), and internalization (the reality is adopted back by individuals as part of their social identity). In the context of Sanjai Tourism Village branding, these moments are reflected in the efforts of communities, managers, and government in developing destination narratives, building symbolic infrastructure, and spreading images that can be accepted and internalized by the public. Unfortunately, the weak continuity of communication between stakeholders and the minimal promotion strategy based on local wisdom causes the brand internalization process to not be fully successful, which is reflected in the low level of tourist awareness of the existence of Sanjai Village as an authentic tourism destination.

The externalization stage represents the fundamental human effort to express and pour oneself into the world through both mental and physical activities. This stage constitutes the basic nature of human beings, who will always dedicate themselves to the place where they are located. In this process, humans attempt to capture themselves, and through this endeavor, a world is produced where humans find themselves within that world. In the context of Sanjai Tourism Village branding, this externalization process manifests in making Sanjai Village a tourism destination by recognizing its inherent potential. The community engages in self-branding of Sanjai Tourism Village as educational tourism that differs from other destinations, leveraging unique cultural assets such as traditional chip-making processes, kerancang border crafts, traditional arts performances, and agricultural activities. This externalization represents the community's conscious effort to transform their local identity and cultural heritage into a marketable tourism product, reflecting their desire to share their authentic cultural experiences with visitors while preserving their traditional way of life.

The objectification stage encompasses the results achieved through both mental and physical activities from human externalization efforts. These results produce objective reality that may confront the producers themselves as a factuality that exists outside and differs from the humans who created it. In Sanjai Tourism Village, this objectification process is realized through the actualization of existing potentials in the form of infrastructure development and official recognition or legalization of the Sanjai area as a tourism village. The concrete manifestations include the official designation through Decree Number 556/02/SK-PNPM-2011, the allocation of PNPM funds totaling Rp175,000,000 for infrastructure development, the establishment of cultural performance facilities, and the creation of tourism pathways connecting various attractions. This objectification stage transforms abstract community aspirations into tangible tourism infrastructure and formal institutional recognition, creating a

structured framework that legitimizes Sanjai Village's status as an official tourism destination within the regional tourism landscape.

The internalization process represents the reabsorption of the objective world into consciousness in such a way that individual subjectivity is influenced by the structure of the social world. Various elements from the objectified world are captured as symptoms of reality outside consciousness, while simultaneously serving as internal symptoms for consciousness. Through internalization, humans become products of society. In Sanjai Tourism Village, this process manifests through promotional activities targeting the surrounding community and prospective tourists. However, the mapping of social construction that shapes Sanjai Tourism Village branding reveals that while local cultural and historical potential is indeed strong and worthy of being elevated as a high-value destination identity, the weak integration between local communities, stakeholders, and adaptive promotional communication systems has prevented the brand dialectical process from fully integrating into the collective consciousness of both the community and prospective tourists. As demonstrated in field findings and reinforced by Berger and Luckmann's theoretical framework, destination brand development requires simultaneous work across three moments of social dialectics externalization, objectification, and internalization occurring within mutually supportive temporal and narrative contexts. The absence of consistent narratives and minimal structural support from local government has resulted in Sanjai Village being unaccommodated in dominant regional tourism narratives (Rowley & Hanna, 2020; Yoon & McCumber, 2024). Therefore, strengthening the Sanjai Tourism Village brand requires not only infrastructure improvement and promotion but also enhanced active community participation in shaping and disseminating the destination's collective identity, providing a crucial foundation for developing community and culturally-based rebranding strategies in similar destinations.

"Sanjai Village actually has great potential to become a leading tourist destination in Bukittinggi. But the problem is, people are more familiar with Sanjai chips than the village itself. Even though there are many interesting things that tourists can see here, from the chip-making process to traditional arts. Unfortunately, the promotion carried out has not been optimal and the supporting infrastructure is still limited. We need better coordination between the community, government, and private sector to develop this village's tourism potential" (Interview with Mr. Dodi, Village Manager, June 15, 2024).

This finding confirms the importance of reorienting cultural-based branding strategies in local destinations that have been marginalized, with a participatory approach that involves the community as the main actor in constructing their own brand. The challenge lies in creating coherent narratives that bridge the gap between product recognition and place awareness, while ensuring that commercial development does not overshadow authentic cultural values. The development of integrated marketing communication strategies that emphasize the historical connection between Sanjai chips and Sanjai Village represents a critical step in addressing this branding paradox and revitalizing the destination's position in the regional tourism landscape.

The research findings reveal significant implications for destination management practices in underrepresented localities, particularly regarding the relationship between cultural authenticity and commercial viability. The dominance of external commercial brands in the Sanjai chip market has created what can be characterized as a "cultural displacement phenomenon," where the authentic origin story becomes secondary to commercial success. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the way major brands like 'Christine Hakim' and 'Shirley' have appropriated the Sanjai identity while disconnecting it from its geographical and cultural roots. The implications extend beyond mere marketing challenges, touching on fundamental questions of cultural ownership and the commodification of local heritage. The study demonstrates that effective destination branding requires more than promotional activities; it demands a comprehensive approach that integrates cultural preservation with economic development, ensuring that local communities maintain control over their cultural narratives while benefiting from tourism development.

Furthermore, the infrastructure challenges identified in this research highlight the critical importance of physical and digital accessibility in destination branding success. The observation that only one of three original chip-making kilns remains operational represents more than infrastructure decay; it symbolizes the erosion of cultural authenticity that tourists increasingly seek. The lack of clear directional signage and inadequate visitor facilities reflects broader systemic issues in destination management that extend beyond marketing to encompass urban planning and tourism infrastructure development. These findings suggest that successful destination branding in cultural tourism contexts requires coordinated efforts between tourism authorities, urban planners, and local communities to create seamless visitor experiences that honor cultural heritage while meeting contemporary tourist expectations. The research indicates that without addressing these fundamental infrastructure challenges, even the most sophisticated branding strategies will fail to achieve their intended outcomes.

The social construction analysis reveals that the incomplete internalization of Sanjai Village's tourism identity within the local community represents a significant barrier to sustainable destination development. The limited engagement of younger generations in cultural preservation activities, as evidenced by the aging demographic of

kerancang border craftsmen, suggests a potential crisis in cultural continuity that could undermine long-term destination viability. This generational gap in cultural engagement reflects broader socioeconomic changes affecting traditional communities, where younger residents may perceive greater opportunities in modern employment sectors rather than traditional crafts and cultural activities. The research demonstrates that successful destination branding must address these intergenerational dynamics by creating economic incentives for cultural preservation while adapting traditional practices to contemporary contexts. The development of educational programs that engage young people in cultural tourism activities, combined with entrepreneurial opportunities in heritage-based industries, represents a crucial strategy for ensuring the sustainability of culturally-based destination brands.

The comparative analysis between Sanjai Village and other successful cultural tourism destinations reveals the importance of strategic positioning within regional tourism narratives. The research findings suggest that Sanjai Village's marginalization in West Sumatra's tourism landscape results not from lack of cultural assets but from inadequate integration into broader destination marketing strategies. The proximity to iconic attractions like Jam Gadang presents both opportunities and challenges for Sanjai Village's brand positioning. While this proximity provides access to existing tourist flows, it also risks positioning Sanjai Village as a secondary attraction rather than a primary destination. The study indicates that successful branding in this context requires differentiation strategies that highlight unique cultural experiences unavailable elsewhere while leveraging complementary relationships with established attractions. The development of integrated tourism circuits that connect Sanjai Village with other cultural sites in Bukittinggi, supported by coherent thematic narratives and coordinated marketing efforts, represents a promising approach to overcoming the challenges of destination marginalization while maximizing the benefits of regional tourism development.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that Sanjai Tourism Village possesses significant cultural heritage assets yet faces critical destination branding challenges due to disconnection between product recognition and place awareness. While 75% of tourists recognize "Sanjai" as a food product, only 25% associate it with a tourism destination, creating a branding paradox where commercial success obscures geographical origins. Using Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, the study identifies incomplete branding processes, particularly in the internalization phase, with limited community participation and low tourist awareness. The findings contribute to destination branding literature by highlighting challenges faced by underrepresented localities where authentic cultural assets fail to translate into effective marketing due to inadequate stakeholder integration and weak promotional strategies. The research emphasizes the need for participatory branding approaches positioning local communities as primary actors in brand construction while preserving cultural authenticity. Future research should focus on developing comprehensive rebranding strategies connecting product identity with place identity, examining community-based tourism marketing models, and investigating digital platforms' role in bridging local cultural narratives with global tourism markets.

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