



# Building Jati Plus Perhutani 40 as a Popular Tourist Destination: A Public Relations and Strategic Branding Approach

Gilang Iksania Nugraha<sup>1\*</sup>, Muhammad Thoyib Amali<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Communication Science Department, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, 55166, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup> [gilang1900030020@wabmail.uad.ac.id](mailto:gilang1900030020@wabmail.uad.ac.id); <sup>2</sup> [muhammad.amali@comm.uad.ac.id](mailto:muhammad.amali@comm.uad.ac.id)

\*Correspondent email author: [gilang1900030020@wabmail.uad.ac.id](mailto:gilang1900030020@wabmail.uad.ac.id)

## ABSTRACT

### Keywords:

Branding Strategies  
Public Relation  
Tourism Branding

The tourism landscape in Indonesia has experienced notable growth, driven by both large and small cities promoting their local attractions. Natural resources play a vital role in the government's efforts to develop tourist destinations, with the rise of social media and word-of-mouth significantly boosting tourism visibility. Indramayu, a region rich in natural assets, has gained attention through the Jati Plus Perhutani 40 (JPP 40) destination located in Mekarwaru Village, Gantar District, West Java. This study examines how Perhutani Indramayu employs public relations and strategic branding to position JPP 40 as a popular tourist destination. The initiative focuses on community involvement, government collaboration, and stakeholder engagement to align with Indonesia's "Seven Wonders of Tourism" standards, which prioritize safety, cleanliness, and memorable experiences. With its unique offerings, such as a trail circuit and scenic teak forests, JPP 40 presents an opportunity to boost local economies and attract more visitors. Key strategies include enhancing branding efforts, improving facilities, and maintaining health protocols post-pandemic. The findings highlight how strategic branding and public relations are pivotal in differentiating JPP 40 and creating lasting value for visitors.

This is an open access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



## 1. Introduction

The world of tourism marketing, especially in promoting and developing the potential of a region, is now widely practiced, both by large and small cities in Indonesia. When discussing the marketing and development of regional potential, the natural assets in a region become the government's main focus for managing the area into a tourism destination. The existence of tourism in recent years can be considered stable, even showing a tendency to grow. This shift can be attributed to the spread of tourism information through word of mouth and social media, which helps people discover these tourist attractions. Tourism has become an increasing necessity in modern society, with the value placed on tourism steadily rising in local communities. Considering the wealth of natural resources in Indonesia, every region naturally has different tourism potentials. Indramayu is one such region. Specifically, the natural potential of Indramayu, which has recently been recognized by the local government, is now being managed as a nature tourism destination called Jati Plus Perhutani 40 (JPP 40), located in Mekarwaru Village, Gantar District, Indramayu Regency, West Java.

As a product of the tourism industry, this nature tourism site requires optimal management from both the managers, the local community, and the local government. The management must also adhere to the Seven Wonders of Tourism (Sapta Pesona) promoted by the government under the Visit



Indonesia program. Sapta Pesona consists of seven elements: safety, orderliness, cleanliness, coolness, beauty, friendliness, and memorable experiences. With an attractive and comfortable environment, tourists will want to stay longer and feel satisfied with their visit, creating lasting memories. In addition, management must consider the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities of the natural potential that is being developed into a tourist destination. It is also crucial to anticipate any future threats.

The development of this destination is being carried out gradually, with financial investments aligned with the principles of the Seven Wonders of Tourism, which are essential for any tourist destination. The natural potential of JPP 40 lends itself well to activities such as photography, relaxation, nature-themed rides, traditional Indramayu music entertainment, and various other facilities. Indonesia's Seven Wonders of Tourism program is designed to raise awareness and responsibility across all levels of society, including the government, private sector, and the general public, so that everyone can act and embody these values in daily life. Sapta Pesona refers to the conditions that need to be created to attract tourists to a specific area or region in Indonesia. We must always strive to create a beautiful and captivating atmosphere, especially in tourist-heavy areas and when serving tourists (Utami & Rahman, 2017).

With an appealing and comfortable environment, tourists are more likely to stay longer because they are highly satisfied with their visit, creating beautiful memories. Additionally, managers need to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the natural potential being developed into a tourist destination. Proper branding is also essential to ensure that a tourism destination has its own identity, differentiating it from other destinations. Branding not only distinguishes a destination but also helps it gain recognition and value in the eyes of the public (Hereyah & Kusumaningrum, 2019). Tourist sites also need large parking areas, not just for vehicles but also for local small businesses (SMEs). The human resources in Naringgul Village have maximized the land for SME use.

Furthermore, JPP 40 itself is a tourist destination that offers a unique view of a teak forest, different from other places because the trees are replanted from trunks instead of seeds, as is typically done. JPP 40 also has a trail circuit that can be used by the public, both from the local area and beyond. One of Perhutani's strategies is to establish business collaborations with tourism networks, promote through posters, and run advertisements. Local communities can also collaborate with Perhutani to build a strong tourism brand. Residents use the natural environment to develop creative ideas, adding photo spots and other attractions. They also manage ticket sales and open small food stalls. As the tourism site continues to grow, it has a positive impact on the financial stability of the region and its residents.

Ongoing development will significantly help the local economy. Perhutani, responsible for forest management, is always ready to address any issues or feedback. During the pandemic in 2020, Perhutani had to limit the number of visitors while still strategizing to maintain visitor stability. Visitors were informed about health protocols and provided with clear and up-to-date information on the protocols to follow during their visit, such as wearing masks, maintaining physical distance, washing hands regularly, and other practices to help reduce the spread of the virus. The responsibility team also implemented limited operating hours for tourist sites and attractions to minimize the time tourists could gather in one place. Destination branding is a key part of the management strategy of JPP 40, under the management of Perhutani KPH (Forest Management Unit) Indramayu, in its effort to establish JPP 40 as a popular tourist destination through public relations and strategic branding approach.

## 2. Method

The approach used in this research is qualitative. The researcher aims to gain a deep understanding of the phenomena related to the study. In accordance with qualitative theory, to ensure that the research yields quality results, data collection must be comprehensive, including both primary and secondary data. Primary data consists of verbal information obtained from informants, while secondary data is gathered from various sources, images, and documentation (Raco, 2018). The type of research employed is descriptive research, as the researcher seeks to describe all existing phenomena (Mukhtar, 2013). This includes periodic phenomena related to the public relations strategy of Perhutani

Indramayu in branding Jati Plus Perhutani 40 as a popular tourist destination. In this research, the researcher employs a descriptive qualitative research method, as the aim is to describe the situation, conditions, or events in more detail and depth regarding the actual circumstances in the field, specifically concerning the Public Relations Strategy of Perhutani Indramayu in branding Jati Plus Perhutani 40 as a popular tourist destination.

### 3. Result and Discussion

In this chapter, the presentation of the data obtained through interviews with Jati Plus Perhutani 40 representatives will be conducted, specifically with Toto Suprianto as the Tourism Supervisor of JPP 40. This interview is related to the public relations and tourism branding strategies employed by JPP 40 in developing tourism. In addition to interviewing JPP representatives, interviews were also conducted with visitors currently at the site. The interviews involved two staff members and three visitors. Data collection for this research was based on interview methods, observation, and documentation related to the branding activities of JPP 40.

#### 3.1. Presenting the Results

##### 1. Public Relation

**Defining the program (or opportunity),** Defining the problem is the process of gathering issues and data from the field before the activities are carried out. In this case, before creating tourism development activities, it is essential to understand the strategies needed by the community. It is important to identify the target groups of the program and assess the conditions of the community. Firstly, being close to the main road is seen as a significant advantage for promotion, making the site easily accessible to potential visitors. Secondly, at the time, there were no nearby tourist attractions in West Indramayu, which presented a unique opportunity to attract visitors. The development of the location was promising, especially in 2019 when visitor numbers increased. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a notable decline in visitor numbers, highlighting the vulnerability of the tourism sector to external factors like health crises. Overall, the statement emphasizes both the potential for growth and the challenges faced by the tourism industry in that area.

**Planning and programming,** Since the establishment of public relations at JPP 40, particularly in supporting the implementation of various tourism events, their active involvement has created a positive and contributive synergy for promoting tourism in West Indramayu. In the near future, the public relations team at JPP 40 aims to present creative ideas while also defining the needs they have to support the execution of these programs. Based on the interview results, it is known that JPP 40's public relations has future program plans that include organizing various activities, such as the Bataru event, a leisurely bike ride, Trail Adventure, and grasstrack. All of these programs have begun to be implemented gradually.

**Taking action and communicating,** Communication occurs after the planning process has been thoroughly completed based on careful consideration and field data. The next step is the operational implementation of the program. At this stage, the performance of public relations is crucial to effectively communicate the program and avoid misunderstandings. This communication is two-way, aimed at building and maintaining the company's reputation in the eyes of the public. According to the public relations team, to attract visitors, promotions are conducted through social media and the distribution of posters at various locations. Additionally, information is also shared verbally from person to person. To provide a better understanding of the site, posts from previous visitors are utilized so that potential visitors can become more familiar with the location.

##### 2. Tourism Branding

**Attractions,** Attraction of the JPP 40 tourist destination in the Indramayu area is the teak forest, which is cultivated and managed by the public relations team. The available facilities also support the principles of tourism development, including clean places of worship, street vendors, toilets, and other amenities at the destination. This discussion reflects a deep understanding from the public relations team regarding the potential of a location that initially functioned merely as a rest area. With the increasing number of visitors, they decided to develop the area into a nature tourism destination. This initiative not only highlights the natural beauty surrounded by trees cared for by the forestry department but also serves to introduce the local culture of Indramayu. The development of nature

tourism creates a synergy between the environment, economy, and culture. Community support is crucial, as they can directly feel the impacts of this development. The establishment of small shops around the tourist location is a concrete example of how this initiative can help alleviate the economic burden on local residents. Additionally, the presence of this tourist spot has the potential to attract more visitors, which in turn can increase local income.

Overall, this initiative reflects a sustainable approach that focuses not only on economic benefits but also on environmental preservation and the strengthening of cultural identity. Thus, the development of this location into a nature tourism site is expected to provide long-term benefits for both the community and the surrounding environment.

**Accessibility**, Accessibility is the most important point in tourism activities. The availability of all means of transportation or transportation services is an important approach for tourism activities. Access is very important because it makes it easier to go from one place to another. Accessibility to the JPP 40 tourist attraction is very easy because it is located close to the main area. Accessibility is a key factor in attracting visitors to tourist destinations. With a strategic location and easy access, there is great potential to attract more tourists. This information can be used as part of a promotional strategy to increase visits and support local economic growth.

**Amenities**, The JPP 40 tourist destination provides adequate facilities for the comfort of visitors. These facilities include places for worship, photo areas, and relaxation spaces, all of which enhance a pleasant tourist experience. Additionally, all food and beverages available around the location are guaranteed to be clean and halal, fostering trust among visitors. The safe and comfortable atmosphere, coupled with a clean environment, further enhances the appeal of this place as a travel choice for families, friends, or other groups.

### 3.2. Create a Discussion

According to The British Institute of Public Relations, public relations is an effort to build and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public. Over time, public relations has been defined in various ways, including a very simple definition: public relations is the effort to do good things to gain trust. According to Frank Jefkins, there are numerous definitions of public relations, but he defines it as a comprehensive, planned communication effort both internally and externally between an organization and all its audiences, aimed at achieving specific goals based on mutual understanding. In his view, public relations is essentially about creating understanding through knowledge and activities (Ardhoyo, 2013).

The role of government public relations is to provide clarification on false and harmful reports about the government, as well as to communicate or inform the public about various government policies. The goal is to shape a positive image of the local government in the eyes of the public. The importance of public relations in government institutions and agencies in modern society lies in carrying out activities and operations across various fields and locations. The techniques used in government public relations are no different from those employed in other sectors, focusing on the dissemination of information and communication. Public relations units are established within government bodies to serve as spokespersons for the government, facilitate reciprocal relations between local government and the general public, as well as community organizations to clarify government policies and activities. They also manage internal communications between departments and units within the government, work to increase media coverage of government and community activities, and coordinate with journalistic organizations. (Lubis, 2012).

#### 1. Public Relation

The public relations team at Perhutani JPP 40 requires thoughtful planning and conceptual development to organize and communicate their efforts in achieving the organization's goals, specifically to encourage the surrounding community to be more aware of environmental issues by promoting forest conservation. In its most advanced form, public relations is a scientifically managed component in the process of problem-solving and organizational change. Practitioners of this type of public relations utilize the best available theories and evidence within a four-step problem-solving process (Broom & Sha, 2013).

The initial step in public relations, "Defining the Program (or Opportunity)," involves thoroughly understanding the community's needs and the tourism landscape before initiating development

activities. This requires data collection and issue identification within the community. For example, JPP 40's proximity to the main road offers a strategic advantage, enhancing accessibility for potential visitors. The lack of nearby tourist attractions in West Indramayu presents a unique opportunity to attract tourists, especially given the strong visitor numbers in 2019. However, the decline due to the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the tourism sector's vulnerability to external shocks, emphasizing the need for adaptive strategies and resilience in planning.

The next phase, "Planning and Programming," has fostered a synergistic relationship at JPP 40 that supports various tourism events in the region. Active involvement from the public relations team has been instrumental in promoting tourism through forward-looking program ideas such as the Batara event, leisurely bike rides, Trail Adventure, and grasstrack activities. The gradual implementation of these programs reflects a strategic approach to tourism development, focusing on community engagement and event diversity.

Finally, the "Taking Action and Communicating" phase is critical, as effective communication ensures the clear conveyance of program details to avoid misunderstandings and enhance the organization's reputation. Two-way communication, which allows for feedback, is essential in building community trust. JPP 40 employs various promotional strategies to attract visitors, including social media outreach, poster distribution, and word-of-mouth marketing. Additionally, leveraging testimonials and posts from previous visitors helps create familiarity and trust among potential tourists, thereby increasing the destination's appeal.

## 2. Tourism Branding

According to (Fanaqi et al., 2020), tourism is a temporary travel activity undertaken by one or more individuals to a location outside their usual residence. The purpose of this travel is driven by various interests, including economic, political, cultural, social, religious, educational, and health-related interests, among others. Nevertheless, the term tourism pertains to travel that involves a change of residence, where an individual temporarily resides outside their original place of residence for specific reasons that are not related to wage earning activities.

The primary attraction of the JPP 40 tourist destination in the Indramayu area is its teak forest, which has been cultivated and managed by the public relations team. This initiative showcases an understanding of the area's potential, transforming what was once a simple rest area into a vibrant nature tourism destination. Additionally, accessibility plays a key role, as effective transportation links can be leveraged as part of the destination's promotional strategies. Highlighting how easy it is to reach JPP 40 in marketing materials can boost its visibility and appeal, potentially attracting more tourists. Furthermore, the presence of adequate amenities at the destination is crucial in attracting visitors and ensuring a positive experience. By addressing basic needs, maintaining cleanliness, and fostering a safe environment, JPP 40 becomes an attractive option for families and friends, contributing to the growth of both tourism and the local economy. This focus on visitor comfort and satisfaction will ultimately help improve the destination's reputation and long-term appeal.

## 4. Conclusion

The public relations team at Perhutani JPP 40 plays a crucial role in promoting environmental awareness and forest conservation within the local community. Their strategic approach involves identifying community needs, planning creative tourism programs, and implementing effective communication strategies. By taking advantage of JPP 40's strategic location and addressing the interests of the community, they have successfully transformed the area from a simple rest stop into a thriving nature tourism destination. The development of attractions like the teak forest, coupled with strategic planning and effective promotions, has positioned JPP 40 as a key player in West Indramayu's tourism industry. The focus on attractions, accessibility, and amenities further strengthens JPP 40's appeal. The natural beauty of the teak forest serves as the main attraction, while convenient access and well-maintained facilities enhance the visitor experience. This comprehensive approach not only draws more tourists but also stimulates local economic growth and fosters a deeper connection between the community and the environment. By prioritizing thoughtful planning, community engagement, and visitor satisfaction, JPP 40 is well-positioned for long-term success in the competitive tourism landscape. Continuing innovation and adaptation will further enhance its reputation and sustainability in the future.

## 5. Acknowledgment

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Department of Communication, Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, for providing me with the opportunity and support to complete this article, as well as for the chance to participate in the 2024 SYLECTION conference. This academic journey would not have been possible without the institution's encouragement and invaluable resources. Additionally, I extend my sincere thanks to Perhutani Indramayu for their warm welcome and cooperation during the research process. Their openness and assistance have greatly enriched the insights and findings of this study.

## 6. References

- Ardhoyo, T. E. (2013). Peran Dan Strategi Humas (Public Relations) Dalam Mempromosikan Produk Perusahaan. *Jurnal Ilmiah Widya* 1: 15–21.
- Broom, G. M., & Sha, B. (2013). *Cutlip and Center's Effective Public Relations (Eleventh Edition)*. Edinburg: Pearson Education.
- Fadilla, D. N., & Darmawan, F. (2018). Pengembangan Aksesibilitas Transportasi Pariwisata Pulau Pramuka Kepulauan Seribu. *Journal of Tourism Destination and Attraction*, 6(2), 1-15.
- Fanaqi, C., Pratiwi, R. M., & Firmansyah, F. (2020). Strategi Branding Pelaku Usaha Pariwisata di Masa Pandemi. *Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship Journal*, 2(4), 263-273.
- Haryanti, R. H., & Sari, C. (2017). Aksesibilitas Pariwisata Bagi Difabel di Kota Surakarta (Studi Evaluasi Peraturan Menteri Pekerjaan Umum Nomor 30 Tahun 2006 Tentang Pedoman Teknis Fasilitas Dan Aksesibilitas Pada Bangunan Gedung Dan Lingkungan). *Spirit Publik: Jurnal Administrasi Publik*, 12(1), 85-96.
- Hereyah, Y & Kusumaningrum, R. (2019.) Proses Destination Branding Dalam Membentuk Citra Tujuan Wisata Museum Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Politik dan Komunikasi* 9(2): 15–34.
- Lubis, E. E. (2012). Peran humas dalam membentuk citra pemerintah. *Jiana (Jurnal Ilmu Administrasi Negara)*, 12(1).
- Mukhtar. (2013). *Metode penelitian deskriptif kualitatif*. Jakarta: GP Press Group
- Raco, J. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Jenis, Karakteristik Dan Keunggulannya*.
- Utami, A. N., & Rahman, Z. (2017). Pelaksanaan Progam Kampanye Sadar Wisata dan Sapta Pesona melalui Pelestarian Kelompok Sadar Wisata (Pokdarwis) di Kelurahan Kandri Kecamatan Gunungpati Kota Semarang. *Journal of Public Policy and Management Review*, 6(2), 1-15.