

Visual Storytelling and Narrative Marketing in a UNESCO Global Geopark: A Strategic Branding Intervention For Hanjeli Tourism Village

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Abstract.

The global tourism landscape is witnessing a significant paradigm shift toward authentic, meaningful, and sustainable experiences. In response, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has emerged as a vital strategic framework. Hanjeli Tourism Village, situated within the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark, offers a distinctive Unique Value Proposition (UVP) through the cultivation of Coix lacryma-jobi L. (Hanjeli)—a nutrient-dense functional food deeply embedded in local cultural heritage. Despite this potential, the destination faces critical branding and digital promotion deficits, resulting in a strategic misalignment between its intrinsic brand identity and its perceived image among prospective travelers. This study examines a strategic marketing intervention leveraging narrative marketing and visual storytelling via promotional videos. By transforming Hanjeli's core tangible and intangible assets into a cohesive brand narrative, this approach aims to enhance brand awareness and stimulate visit intentions. Beyond marketing objectives, the intervention is designed to catalyze positive socio-economic and socio-cultural outcomes for the local community, fostering long-term resilience and sustainability.

Keywords: Visual Storytelling; Narrative Marketing; Destination Image; Hanjeli Tourism Village and UNESCO Global Geopark.

I. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry is currently undergoing a transformative paradigm shift in the post-pandemic era. The long-standing dominance of mass tourism, which focused primarily on visitor volume, is being replaced by "conscious tourism", that is a model that emphasizes quality, sustainability, and meaningful impact (Goodwin, 2016). Modern travelers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, are increasingly selective, seeking destinations that offer profound experiences and authentic connections with nature, local culture, and grassroots communities (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). This shift has catalyzed the resurgence of micro-destinations, with Community-Based Tourism (CBT) emerging as a vital strategic framework. In this model, local communities act as the primary subjects, serving as planners, managers, and direct beneficiaries, ensuring that tourism promotes social empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation rather than mere economic gain (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Hanjeli Tourism Village, located in the Waluran District of Sukabumi, West Java, stands as a prime exemplar of this CBT potential. Situated within the prestigious Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark, the village possesses significant international legitimacy and a wealth of geological and biological heritage. However, its most distinctive asset and Unique Value Proposition (UVP) is the cultivation of Hanjeli (*Coix lacryma-jobi L.*), locally known as Job's Tears.

Far more than a simple agricultural commodity, Hanjeli represents an ancestral legacy, a symbol of food security, and a manifestation of local wisdom (UNESCO, 2021) in climate adaptation. The strength of Hanjeli as a tourism asset lies in its multi-dimensional appeal. Scientifically, it is a superior functional food—high in protein and calcium, and crucially, gluten-free, which aligns perfectly with global wellness and healthy lifestyle trends (Drying et al., 2018; Astuti & Santoso, 2021). Beyond its nutritional value, the village offers immersive "farm-to-table" educational experiences, where tourists transition from passive observers to active participants in the traditional planting, harvesting, and processing of the grain. Furthermore, Hanjeli has been innovatively processed into a diverse culinary palette, including Hanjeli rice, snacks, and even exotic coffee, creating a unique gastronomic journey. Despite these extensive assets,

Hanjeli Tourism Village faces a critical strategic gap: a disconnect between its robust brand identity and its actual brand image in the public mind. While the village strives to be seen as an authentic and healthy destination, its actual market perception remains weak or non-existent.

According to Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (2017), the success of modern tourism marketing depends on the ability to build a robust brand. In an era where over 70% of travel journeys begin with online searches (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019), the absence of a strong digital presence is equivalent to being non-existent. A failure to communicate this value proposition extensively results in low brand awareness, causing Hanjeli Village to lose its competitive edge in capturing market attention (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). To bridge this gap, a planned strategic intervention is necessary through content marketing that resonates with contemporary consumer behavior (Pulizzi, 2014). Among various formats, promotional video stands out as the most potent medium for narrative marketing (Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009). By employing visual storytelling, the village can "show, rather than just tell," capturing the multi-sensory experience of the Geopark's landscapes, the intricate processing of the grain, and the genuine hospitality of the local farmers. This narrative-driven approach is designed to evoke emotions and build a deep connection with prospective tourists (Kotler et al., 2017). Ultimately, this intervention aims not only to stimulate visit intentions and brand awareness but also to catalyze long-term socio-economic growth, foster community pride, and ensure the sustainable preservation of Hanjeli as a vital piece of Indonesia's cultural and agricultural heritage.

II. METHODS

This initiative adopts a community-based approach, specifically targeting key local actors in Hanjeli Tourism Village. The primary participants include members of the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), who serve as the driving force behind the village's tourism management. The activities are conducted on-site at Hanjeli Tourism Village, located in Waluran District, Sukabumi Regency, West Java. This location is strategically situated within the Ciletuh-Palabuhanratu UNESCO Global Geopark. Specific filming and workshop sites include the expansive Hanjeli cultivation fields, community-run production houses, and traditional communal halls (*saungs*) used for culinary presentations and educational demonstrations.

To ensure high-quality production, the project utilizes a comprehensive suite of professional multimedia tools:

1. Visual Recording: Professional cameras and drones are employed to capture both cinematic landscape views and detailed macro shots of the Hanjeli grain.
2. Audio Equipment: High-fidelity microphones are used to record clear voice-overs, interviews, and the ambient sounds of the village to create a multi-sensory experience.
3. Post-Production: Industry-standard editing software is used for color grading, audio synchronization, and the integration of graphic elements like logos and informative "lower thirds".

Originality and Ethical Standards It is essential to emphasize that all materials, including visual footage, interviews, and narrative scripts, are original primary sources. Every frame is captured directly on-site to represent the authentic, daily reality of the community. The narrative is developed through direct Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with the villagers, ensuring that the content is a unique reflection of their specific cultural heritage and local wisdom, rather than a reproduction or imitation of existing promotional materials. This community service project employs a Collaborative Participatory Method, emphasizing the active involvement of local stakeholders, specifically the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) and local MSMEs, throughout all stages of the activity. The objective is to ensure the promotional video authentically represents the community's narrative while facilitating knowledge transfer. The process is structured into four systematic phases:

1. Phase 1: Pre-Production (Planning and Conceptualization)
2. Phase 2: Production
3. Phase 3: Post-Production (Editing and Finalization)
4. Phase 4: Dissemination and Evaluation

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The strategic misalignment between Hanjeli Tourism Village's potential brand identity and its actual brand image represents a significant barrier to its growth. This study demonstrates that narrative marketing, delivered through high-quality video, serves as a vital digital bridge to resolve this disconnect by transforming Hanjeli from a mere agricultural commodity into a multi-sensory experience. This approach effectively communicates the village's Unique Value Proposition (UVP), aligning with modern destination branding frameworks which posit that a strong brand must capture the emotional essence and unique identity of a place to remain competitive in a saturated market. As noted by Almeyda-Ibáñez & George (2017), successful destination branding relies on the ability to translate intrinsic features into perceived benefits that resonate with the target audience. Unlike static promotional media, the "show, don't tell" approach captures the geological significance of the UNESCO Global Geopark and the functional health benefits of Job's Tears, thereby enhancing brand awareness and stimulating visit intentions. Furthermore, the effectiveness of this intervention is rooted in the psychological bond created through visual storytelling.

Humans are inherently connected to narratives, and by highlighting "human interest" stories—such as the daily lives and genuine smiles of Hanjeli farmers—the promotional video creates an emotional resonance that transcends conventional advertising. This emotional connection is vital for modern travelers who prioritize authenticity and meaningful engagement with local communities. This phenomenon is consistent with the perspective of Kotler et al. (2017), who argue that in the era of Marketing 4.0, brands must engage consumers at an emotional level to build lasting loyalty. Consequently, the video does not merely market a destination; it invites the audience to support a grassroots community and participate in the preservation of local wisdom, which are key drivers for loyal and conscious tourism. The success of the visual narrative is inseparable from the systematic four-stage production process employed in this project, which ensured that the final output was both aesthetically superior and strategically aligned with the village's identity.

During the pre-production phase, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with village leaders and stakeholders were crucial for identifying the "soul" of the narrative—shifting the focus from abstract concepts to concrete stories of ancestral heritage. This was followed by a production phase that prioritized original primary sources, utilizing professional equipment and drones to showcase the cinematic grandeur of the UNESCO Global Geopark. By involving the community as the primary "talents" rather than using professional actors, the project maintained a high degree of existential authenticity, a quality that Wang (1999) and more recent scholars like Belhassen et al. (2018) identify as essential for the modern traveler's experience. In the final stages, the post-production synthesis and strategic dissemination ensured that the unique value of Hanjeli reached the intended Millennial and Gen Z audiences through high-engagement platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok. This digital integration is critical, as Buhalis and Sinarta (2019) emphasize that visibility on visual-based social media is the primary influencer of travel decision-making in the current digital landscape.



Fig 1. The official ceremony of the Hanjeli Tourism Village promotional video, held on December 12, 2025, to enhance local branding through visual storytelling.

The culmination of this strategic intervention was marked by the official handover of the promotional video to the tourism village management on December 12, 2025. The event took place at Bale Hanjeli, located within the Hanjeli Tourism Village in Waluran, Sukabumi, from 09:00 to 11:00 WIB. Attended by village administrators and the local community, this session served as a critical platform for dissemination and validation. During the event, the community service team presented the underlying narrative concepts while premiering the video to the attendees. This direct engagement ensures that the final product is not only a marketing tool but also a collective achievement that reinforces the community's identity. This participatory approach in sharing the final results is essential for fostering community ownership, a factor that Giampiccoli and Saayman (2018) identify as a prerequisite for the long-term success of Community-Based Tourism (CBT).

Beyond the immediate marketing impact, the collaborative nature of this process acted as a catalyst for community empowerment, facilitating a significant transfer of digital skills to the local youth and *Pokdarwis*. This "digital sustainability" ensures that the community can independently manage its online presence through high-engagement platforms like Instagram and TikTok in the long term. According to Buhalis and Sinarta (2019), visibility on visual-based social media is a primary influencer of travel decision-making in the current digital landscape. By equipping the community with both the physical video assets and the knowledge to distribute them, this project fosters a sense of pride and self-sufficiency. Ultimately, this intervention ensures that Hanjeli Tourism Village can effectively bridge its strategic branding gap while remaining deeply rooted in cultural integrity and providing sustainable socio-economic benefits to the local population.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores that the strategic integration of narrative marketing and visual storytelling is pivotal in bridging the gap between a destination's potential and its market perception. For Hanjeli Tourism Village, the promotional video serves as more than a mere marketing tool; it acts as a digital bridge that translates local wisdom and agrobiodiversity into a globally accessible brand story. By emphasizing the unique nexus between the UNESCO Global Geopark status and the functional benefits of Hanjeli, this intervention effectively enhances brand awareness and stimulates visit intentions. Ultimately, this approach provides a scalable model for other CBT destinations to revitalize their branding strategies in the digital era, ensuring that tourism growth remains deeply rooted in cultural authenticity and community well-being.

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Conflict of Interest declaration

The authors declare that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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