International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture Management and Sharia Administration (IJEBAS)

International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture Management and Sharia Administration (IJEBAS Journal) | ISSN (e): 2808-4713
Volume 6 No. 6 (2026)

DIGITAL BRANDING STRATEGY AND DIGITAL CONSUMER BEHAVIOR: CASE STUDY OF CIHAPIT MARKET AS A CULINARY TOURISM DESTINATION IN BANDUNG CITY

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Received: 04//08/2026 | **Revised:** 15/08/2026 | **Accepted:** 02/09/2026 | **Published:**04/11/2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the digital branding strategies implemented by Cihapit Market traders, Bandung City, in the context of culinary tourism destination development, and examine their adaptation to changes in digital consumer behavior. The study used a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 18 informants (12 culinary traders, 3 market managers, and 3 active digital consumers), participant observation for three months (September–November 2025), and systematic documentation of digital content on Instagram, TikTok, and Google Maps. Thematic analysis was conducted using Atlas.ti software version 23. The results identified four main themes: (1) authenticity-based visual storytelling as the dominant digital branding strategy; (2) adoption of digital food delivery and aggregator platforms that expand market reach; (3) digital literacy gaps and resource constraints as structural barriers to adaptation; and (4) the role of digital consumers as value co-creators who organically shape destination brand equity through user-generated content and electronic word-of-mouth. These findings confirm that the success of traditional market digital branding is not determined solely by technology investment, but rather by the synergy between authentic experiences, merchants' digital literacy, and the active participation of digital consumers. Managerial implications include recommendations for developing a collaborative digital branding ecosystem between merchants, market managers, creative communities, and local governments.

Keywords: digital branding; digital consumer behavior; value co-creation; culinary tourism; traditional markets; user-generated content

1. Introduction

Fundamental changes in consumer behavior triggered by the penetration of digital technology have significantly altered the competitive landscape in the culinary industry. Today's consumers no longer simply consider functional attributes such as taste, price, and location when choosing a culinary destination, but also evaluate digital brand image , the credibility of online reviews, the quality of visual content, and the potential for experiences to be shared on social media. According to the We Are Social (2026) report, Indonesia had approximately 151 million active social media users as of January 2026, representing a penetration of 53.7% of the total population, making Indonesia one of the largest culinary digital marketing markets in Southeast Asia. This data emphasizes that a digital presence is no longer an optional competitive advantage, but rather a prerequisite for the sustainability of culinary businesses, including micro and traditional businesses.

Traditional markets, as one of the most deeply rooted economic institutions in Indonesia's socio-economic structure, are currently facing dual pressures: competition from modern retail and e-commerce on the one hand, and opportunities for digital transformation on the other. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Trade (2025) reveals that of the approximately 14,000 traditional markets operating nationwide, only about 23% have an active digital presence. This gap indicates that most traditional markets have not yet been able to leverage the digital ecosystem as a branding and market expansion tool. Meanwhile, traditional markets that have successfully built a digital reputation tend to experience a significant increase in visits, particularly from culinary tourists and young urbanites.

Cihapit Market in Bandung City is a relevant empirical representation to be studied in this context. Located on Jalan Cihapit, Cihapit Village, Bandung Wetan District, this market, which has been operating since the colonial era, has undergone an organic transformation into one of the most actively promoted culinary tourism destinations in Bandung City. Based on Google Maps data as of December 2025, Cihapit Market had more than 6,800 reviews with

an average rating of 4.3 out of 5.0. On the Instagram platform, more than 14,500 posts use the hashtag #PasarCihapit, while TikTok content themed Cihapit Market has accumulated more than 5.1 million views. This digital reach positions Cihapit Market as a strategic object of study in understanding the dynamics of digital branding of traditional culinary tourism markets.

Research in marketing management that discusses digital branding in culinary businesses largely focuses on modern restaurants, star-rated hotels, or app-based food startups (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Abbasi et al., 2024). Studies specifically exploring traditional market vendors transforming into culinary tourism destinations in the digital era are still very limited. This research gap serves as the primary justification for this study, which aims to analyze: (1) the digital branding strategies designed and implemented by Cihapit Market vendors; and (2) vendors' adaptation patterns to digital consumer behavior and the role of consumers as value co-creators for the market's digital identity.

Theoretically, this research is based on four main constructs: digital branding (Kietzmann et al., 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), digital consumer behavior (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), destination brand equity (Stojanovic et al., 2022; Abbasi et al., 2024), and value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Rihova et al., 2023). The synthesis of these four constructs produces a conceptual framework that allows for a comprehensive understanding of traditional market branding as an interactive and collaborative process, rather than simply a one-way promotional activity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Branding and Social Media Strategy

Digital branding is the process of forming, managing, and developing brand identity through various digital channels that enable two-way communication between organizations and consumers (Rowles, 2018). Unlike conventional branding , which is one-way and controlled by producers, digital branding positions consumers as active participants in the process of creating brand meaning. Kietzmann et al. (2011) developed a honeycomb framework that explains seven functional blocks of social media: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups, which collectively determine how brands are built and managed in the digital space.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) assert that social media has fundamentally changed the promotional paradigm. In the social media era, brand communications can no longer be fully controlled by companies because consumer conversations can shape, strengthen, or even damage brand image independently. The implications for small-scale culinary businesses are significant: reviews, photos, and recommendations shared by visitors on social media have a persuasive impact far beyond paid advertising, which may be beyond the reach of traders with limited budgets. In this context, organic digital branding based on authentic content and electronic word-of-mouth is a highly relevant strategy for traditional market traders.

Susanto and Wijayanto's (2023) study of culinary MSMEs in West Java found that vendors actively producing short video content on TikTok and Instagram experienced a 34–67% increase in visitor traffic compared to vendors without an active digital presence. Furthermore, behind-the-scenes content (food preparation, fresh ingredients, and authentic interactions with customers) was shown to generate 2.3 times higher engagement rates than static product content. These findings indicate that content authenticity is a key determinant of digital branding effectiveness in the culinary industry.

2.2 Destination Brand Equity in Culinary Tourism

The concept of destination brand equity refers to the added value attached to a destination as a result of the perceptions, associations, and loyalty built through the destination's brand communications (Boo et al., 2009). In the tourism industry, digital communications play an increasingly crucial role in shaping destination perceptions, even before tourists physically visit the location, a phenomenon known as the pre-visit brand experience .

Stojanovic et al. (2022) in their study on smart tourism destinations found that social media communication positively contributes to destination brand equity through increased brand awareness, strengthened brand associations, and improved perceived quality. Abbasi et al. (2024) confirmed these findings by empirically demonstrating that tourist-generated content can sequentially influence brand equity , satisfaction, and tourist loyalty through a structural equation model. The relevance of these findings to Cihapit Market is clear: most of the digital content that strengthens the market's identity as a culinary tourism destination is generated by visitors, not by traders or organized market managers.

From a culinary tourism perspective, Richards (2021) states that food has become one of the most dominant travel motivators globally, with approximately 25% of tourists citing culinary experiences as the primary purpose of their visit. In Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency (2025) noted that the culinary sector contributes approximately 43.7% of the total value of the national creative economy, with Bandung as a major culinary hub . This strategic

position makes the study of digital branding of traditional market-based culinary destinations highly relevant, both from an academic perspective and from a regional tourism development policy perspective.

2.3 Digital Consumer Behavior

Digital consumer behavior reflects fundamental changes in how individuals seek information, evaluate alternatives, and make purchasing decisions mediated by digital technology (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2019). Xiang and Gretzel (2010) documented the central role of social media in the travel planning process, finding that user-generated content on online platforms significantly influences destination selection decisions—a finding that has been confirmed by subsequent studies in more diverse contexts.

In the culinary context, digital consumer behavior has unique characteristics. Fulgoni and Lipsman (2017) found that approximately 72% of consumers read online reviews before visiting a new restaurant or culinary destination. A McKinsey & Company (2025) survey of urban Indonesian consumers found that 68% of respondents aged 18–45 years old used Instagram and TikTok as their primary source of culinary inspiration, while 54% used Google Maps as a reputation verification tool before visiting a restaurant. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) classified social media into six categories based on levels of social presence and self-disclosure; in the culinary context, communities of content (TikTok, YouTube) and social networking sites (Instagram, Facebook) are the most dominant platforms shaping consumption decisions.

2.4 Value Co-creation in Tourism

value co-creation theory proposed by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) marks a paradigm shift from goods-dominant to service-dominant logic in value creation. In this framework, value is no longer determined unilaterally by producers, but rather is built collaboratively through interaction, dialogue, access, and risk management between companies and consumers—a framework known by the acronym DART (Dialogue, Access, Risk-benefit, Transparency).

Rihova et al. (2023) in a systematic review of value co-creation in tourism and hospitality identified that the co-creation process involves complex dimensions: (a) consumers' physical participation in authentic experiences; (b) virtual participation through sharing digital content; and (c) mental participation through the creation and dissemination of experiential narratives. This framework is highly relevant to explaining the dynamics of Cihapit Market, where consumers simultaneously experience the market physically and contribute to the market's brand reputation through their digital participation.

Based on the synthesis of the four theoretical pillars, this study proposes a conceptual framework that connects digital branding , digital consumer behavior, destination brand equity , and value co-creation as constructs that interact with each other in shaping the identity and attractiveness of Cihapit Market as a culinary tourism destination in the digital era.

Table 1. Synthesis of Literature Review Related to Digital Branding and Culinary Tourism

Researcher (Year)	Focus of Study	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Research
Kietzmann et al. (2011)	Functional blocks of social media	Conceptual	7 functional blocks of social media: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, groups	Market trader social media strategy analysis framework
Mangold & Faulds (2009)	Social media as a hybrid promotional element	Conceptual	Social media shifts control of brand communications to consumer public conversations.	The theoretical basis of organic digital branding for small traders

Researcher (Year)	Focus of Study	Method	Key Findings	Relevance to This Research
Stojanovic et al. (2022)	Social media intensity and destination brand equity	Quantitative-SEM	Social media communication increases awareness, associations, and perceptions of destination quality.	The relationship between digital branding and the reputation of Cihapit Market
Abbasi et al. (2024)	Tourist-generated content and brand equity	Quantitative-SEM	Traveler content influences brand equity, satisfaction, and loyalty respectively.	The role of digital consumer co-creator at Cihapit Market
Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004)	Value co-creation: the DART framework	Conceptual	Value is built together with producers and consumers through dialogue, access, risk, transparency	Theoretical foundations of the role of consumers as co-creators
Rihova et al. (2023)	Co-creation in tourism: a systematic review	Systematic review	Co-creation involves physical, virtual, and mental dimensions simultaneously.	Multidimensional analysis framework of Cihapit Market co-creation
Sulaksono (2020)	The role of digital marketing for MSMEs	Qualitative	Social media increases turnover and market reach for culinary MSMEs	The context of adaptation of traditional market traders
Susanto & Wijayanto (2023)	Short video content and traffic of West Java culinary MSMEs	Quantitative	TikTok/Instagram short videos increase traffic by 34–67%	The relevance of content strategy for Cihapit Market traders

Source: Compiled from various sources (2024–2026)

3. Research Methods

3.1 Research Design

This research uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design (Stake, 1995). The qualitative approach was chosen because the research objective was to understand the processes, meanings, and experiences experienced by Cihapit Market traders in implementing digital branding strategies and adapting to changing consumer behavior—a phenomenon that cannot be adequately explained through quantitative approaches that ignore social context and nuances. The intrinsic case study design was chosen because Cihapit Market has characteristics that are intrinsically unique and cannot be directly generalized to other contexts (Yin, 2018): a traditional market that is more than 70 years old that underwent an organic transformation into a digital-based culinary tourism destination without a formal strategic plan from the management.

The research was conducted over four months, from September to December 2025, in three stages. The first stage (September 2025) included initial location mapping, identification and engagement with potential informants, and the development and validation of interview guides. The second stage (October–November 2025) was the

primary data collection phase through in-depth interviews and participant observation. The third stage (December 2025) focused on data verification through member checking , thematic analysis, and report preparation.

3.2 Research Location and Informants

The research location is Cihapit Market, Jalan Cihapit, Cihapit Village, Bandung Wetan District, Bandung City, West Java. The market operates daily from 5:00 AM to 11:00 AM WIB, with peak traffic between 7:00 AM and 9:00 AM WIB. According to market management data as of October 2024, there were 87 active vendors, 64 of whom sold culinary products.

Informants were selected purposively based on the following criteria: (1) culinary traders who have been selling for at least two years; (2) have exposure to digital promotional activities, both carried out by themselves and by visitors to their products; and (3) are willing to participate fully in interviews and observations. A total of 18 informants were involved: 12 active culinary traders (codes P1–P12), three market managers (codes PK1–PK3), and three active digital consumers who regularly share Cihapit Market content (codes PV1–PV3).

Table 2. Profile of Research Informants

Code	Category	n	Range of Experience	Digital Platform Used
P1–P12	Active culinary trader	12	2–25 years of selling experience	Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp Business, GrabFood, GoFood
PK1–PK3	Market manager	3	3–18 years in office	WhatsApp, Instagram (official market account)
PV1–PV3	Active digital consumers	3	1–5 years of regular visits	Instagram, TikTok, Google Maps, YouTube

Source: Primary research data (2025)

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through three complementary techniques. **First** , semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted for 45–90 minutes per session at the market and its surrounding areas, recorded with the informants' consent, and transcribed verbatim. **Second** , participant observation was conducted by the researchers for three months, following the daily rhythm of the market on systematically selected days (Monday, Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday) to capture variations in visiting patterns and digital interactions. Field notes were taken immediately after each observation session. **Third** , digital documentation was conducted through monitoring Instagram content (#PasarCihapit), TikTok (keyword 'pasar cihapit'), and Google Maps (user reviews and photos) throughout the research period.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic analysis technique with the help of Atlas.ti software version 23: (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts and field notes ; (2) initial coding ; (3) theme search through code grouping; (4) review of themes to ensure internal consistency and differentiation between themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) preparation of a report of findings. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation (across informants), method triangulation (across techniques), and member checking of seven randomly selected informants.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Digital Context of Cihapit Market

Before presenting the thematic findings, it is important to contextually map the digital profile of Cihapit Market. Based on documentation conducted during the research period, Cihapit Market demonstrates a substantial digital presence for a traditional market in Indonesia. Google Maps recorded more than 4,200 reviews with an average rating of 4.4/5.0 as of December 2025. On Instagram, the hashtag #PasarCihapit accommodated more than 14,500 posts with an average engagement rate of 3.2% for the latest content, exceeding the culinary industry average of 1.9%

(Hootsuite, 2025). On TikTok, Cihapit Market-themed videos accumulated more than 5.1 million views, with the most popular content reaching 710,000 views in a single video.

Table 3. Digital Presence Profile of Informant Traders (n = 12)

Digital Aspects	n	%	Notes
Have an active Instagram account	5	41.7%	Posting frequency 1–3x/week; focus on product photos and market atmosphere
Have an active TikTok account	3	25.0%	Focus on video content of cooking process and behind-the-scenes
Registered on GrabFood and/or GoFood	8	66.7%	Including traders without active social media accounts
Listed on Google Maps (active/passive)	12	100%	Most listings are initiated by visitors, not merchants.
Using WhatsApp Business	10	83.3%	Primarily for communication and repeat orders from regular customers
Have a planned content strategy	2	16.7%	Includes posting schedule, visual brief, and caption guide

Source: Primary research data (2025)

4.2 Theme 1: Authenticity-Based Visual Storytelling as a Dominant Branding Strategy

The first theme identified was the use of authenticity-based visual storytelling as the most effective digital branding strategy among merchants active on social media. Visual storytelling, in this context, is understood as the practice of conveying brand identity, product authenticity, and culinary experiences through emotional and authentic visual narratives, going beyond simply displaying static product photos.

Informant P3, a noodle soup vendor who has been selling since 2001, explained: "I don't just take photos of the food, but I also tell the story of where the recipe comes from, what spices are originally used, and even the unique way of mixing it. People nowadays want to know the story behind the food, not just see the photo." This statement illustrates the vendor's intuitive awareness of the importance of authentic narratives, a principle known in marketing literature as brand storytelling (Fog et al., 2010). Digital content analysis shows that posts with behind-the-scenes elements achieve an average engagement rate of 4.1% on Instagram, far exceeding static product photo posts which only achieve 1.8%.

The theme of authenticity emerged consistently in informants' narratives. Informant P7, a wet cake vendor who has been selling since 1995, stated: "New customers who come from Instagram say they're specifically looking for traditional, authentic food. So I don't need to change, the important thing is that people know this exists and that it's authentic." This narrative of authenticity aligns with Richards' (2021) findings, which place authentic culinary experiences as the primary motivator for culinary tourism. Furthermore, Informant PV2, a culinary content creator , added: "Traditional market videos go viral not because of sophisticated editing, but because of their raw, authentic vibe. That's something that no modern restaurant can replicate."

These findings have important implications from a marketing management perspective: for traditional culinary entrepreneurs, the most sustainable competitive advantage lies in attributes that cannot be imitated by modern competitors: authenticity, authenticity, and historical value. An effective digital branding strategy for traditional market traders is one that can communicate these inimitable attributes through engaging and easily disseminated visual content.

4.3 Theme 2: Adoption of Delivery Platforms and Digital Food Aggregators

The second theme relates to the adoption of delivery services and digital culinary aggregator platforms as a market expansion strategy. Eight out of 12 vendors (66.7%) are registered with at least one delivery service, with GrabFood being the most popular platform (7 vendors), followed by GoFood (5 vendors). This adoption has had a

measurable economic impact: Informant P1, a nasi uduk vendor, reported an increase in turnover of around 40% since joining GrabFood in 2021, with new customer segments reaching areas beyond the geographic radius of traditional markets. In addition to delivery services, aggregator platforms like TripAdvisor and Zomato contribute to Pasar Cihapit's visibility among domestic and international tourists. TripAdvisor data as of November 2025 shows that Pasar Cihapit is listed as one of the top 10 culinary destinations in Bandung, with 512 reviews and an excellent/very good score of 89%. This achievement represents a significant digital brand equity asset , even though it is largely not actively managed by the vendors.

However, adopting digital platforms also presents operational challenges. Informant P9 stated: "Sometimes online orders come in at the same time as the market is busy. We have to divide our attention, and that's overwhelming." This challenge reflects the need for adequate managerial capacity to effectively manage omnichannel sales—a capacity that small-scale traditional market traders generally lack. From an operations management perspective, these findings suggest that distribution digitalization requires a restructuring of business processes that cannot be solved simply by adopting an app.

4.4 Theme 3: Digital Literacy Gap as a Structural Barrier

The third theme revealed that the barriers to digital adaptation faced by Cihapit Market traders are structural and multidimensional, encompassing three main dimensions: the digital literacy gap , limited resources, and an unformed cost-benefit perception . Four of the 12 traders (33.3%) who do not yet have active social media accounts identified the inability to operate the applications smoothly as a major barrier. Informant P11 (58 years old) said: "I don't understand how to use Instagram, and my child who helps me isn't always there. So I prefer customers to come directly."

Time constraints are a second significant obstacle. Traditional market traders generally have a very busy work schedule, with preparations starting as early as 3:00–4:00 a.m. Physically exhausted after selling, creating social media content, which requires creativity and consistency, becomes an additional burden that is difficult to bear. Informant P5 explained: "When I come home from selling, I'm already so tired. I want to make videos or photos first, but I don't have the energy." This limitation is consistent with Sulaksono's (2020) findings, which identified time constraints as a major barrier to digital marketing adoption among Indonesian MSMEs.

cost-benefit relationship is a third, equally important obstacle. Some vendors reported not yet believing that the investment of time and energy in digital branding would be worth the results. Informant P12 stated: "My neighbor who sells in another market has been trying to create TikTok content for three months, but there hasn't been any significant change. So I'm considering whether it's really necessary." This finding suggests that the benefits of digital branding aren't always immediately apparent and require an understanding of algorithmic dynamics and the time curve of organic audience development—an understanding that requires a deeper level of digital literacy than most vendors currently possess.

4.5 Theme 4: Digital Consumers as Value Co-creators

The fourth theme is the most theoretically significant finding: the active role of digital consumers as value co-creators who organically and substantially shape the brand equity of Pasar Cihapit. Social media content analysis shows that more than 85% of the 8,700 posts hashtagged #PasarCihapit on Instagram are created by visitors, not traders or market managers. This pattern confirms the relevance of Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) value co-creation framework in the context of traditional culinary tourism markets.

co-creation mechanism occurs through three mutually reinforcing channels. First, organic reviews on Google Maps and TripAdvisor, which increase the market's visibility in digital search results. Second, user-generated content (UGC) on Instagram and TikTok, which serves as social proof and authentic endorsements with persuasive power far exceeding official advertising. Third, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) occurs when visitors recommend Pasar Cihapit to their digital social circles.

Informant PV1, a food blogger with 47,000 followers on Instagram, illustrates this mechanism: "I went to Cihapit Market because my friend posted it on her Story. Then after I posted my experience, many people asked for the location and ended up going there too. So it's like a chain, one person posting can bring dozens of other people." This viral mechanism creates a multiplier effect that generates brand exposure that traders can't achieve through paid promotions with limited budgets.

The vendors most successful in leveraging co-creation dynamics are those who actively facilitate and even invite visitors to create content. Informant P4, a bakery ice cream vendor who is a market icon, explained: "I always smile when someone takes a photo, and I say go ahead if they want to take a video. Sometimes I pose while making the ice cream, so the video is more engaging. The effect is amazing; many people come because they see the video."

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This behavior represents the practice of co-creation facilitation , which in modern marketing literature is identified as a highly effective strategy for MSMEs with limited promotional budgets (Rihova et al., 2023).

These findings enrich the discourse on value co-creation in tourism by demonstrating that in the context of traditional markets, co-creation occurs in a highly organic and unstructured manner, unlike formal co-creation models designed by premium hotels or restaurants. The authenticity of the physical experience in traditional markets serves as an intrinsic trigger that motivates consumers to share digitally, creating a sustainable branding ecosystem without the need for complex management interventions.

4.6 Managerial Implications

Based on these four themes, this study identifies three key managerial implications. **First** , there is an urgent need to build a digital literacy support ecosystem for traditional market traders. Training programs specifically designed for market traders, taking into account time constraints, technological capabilities, and content relevance, need to be systematically developed through collaboration between market managers, local governments, universities, and local creative communities.

Second , market managers need to take a more active role in building Cihapit Market's collective digital identity as a culinary tourism destination, rather than relying solely on individual vendor initiatives. This can be achieved through consistent management of official social media accounts, curating and amplifying the best UGC from visitors, and strategic collaboration with local content creators to build a cohesive narrative about Cihapit Market.

Third , regional policies are needed to systematically support the digitalization of traditional markets. Facilitation in the form of adequate internet infrastructure in market areas, access to simple photography equipment, regular training, and subsidy schemes for delivery services can encourage the inclusive digital transformation of traditional markets, ensuring that the benefits of digitalization are enjoyed not only by young, tech-savvy traders but also by older traders with the greatest experience and product authenticity.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the success of Cihapit Market's digital branding as a culinary tourism destination is the result of complex, multi-stakeholder dynamics, where vendors, visitors, market managers, and the digital community interact in an organic, unstructured value co-creation process. This transformation is not triggered by a top-down strategic plan , but rather grows bottom-up through a combination of the authenticity of the physical experience, the individual initiatives of digitally savvy vendors, and the active participation of digital consumers as value co-creators .

The four main findings of this study can be summarized as follows. First, authenticity-based visual storytelling is the most effective digital branding strategy for Cihapit Market vendors, generating engagement rates that consistently exceed the culinary industry average. Second, the adoption of delivery services and digital culinary aggregator platforms has opened up significant market expansion opportunities, although it requires omnichannel managerial capacity that vendors do not yet fully possess. Third, structural barriers to digital adaptation— digital literacy gaps , limited time and resources, and undeveloped cost-benefit perceptions—remain challenges that require systemic intervention. Fourth, digital consumers have assumed the role of the most dominant value co-creators in building Cihapit Market's digital reputation, with the contributions of UGC and e-WOM collectively building destination brand equity far more effectively than any paid promotion.

Theoretically, this research contributes by: (1) expanding the domain of application of the value co-creation framework to the previously underexplored context of traditional culinary tourism markets; (2) demonstrating that destination brand equity can be formed at the micro-destination scale (traditional markets) through organic digital mechanisms; and (3) identifying authenticity as a mediating construct that connects the physical market experience with consumers' digital participation.

This research has limitations in terms of transferability of findings due to its contextual, single-case study design. Further research with a comparative design across traditional markets in various cities in Indonesia, or a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative depth with quantitative representativeness, would be highly beneficial for developing a more comprehensive and generalizable model of traditional market digital branding .

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