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## Interest in Visiting in Terms of City Branding and City Image in Bantimurung Tourism Objects Mars County

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out 1) the description of visiting interest, city image and city branding at the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency, 2) the influence of city branding and city image together on visiting interest in Bantimurung attractions, Maros Regency, 3) the influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency, 4) the influence of city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency. The population in this study were all visitors to the Bantimurung tourist attraction who obtained a sample using a purposive random sampling technique, which was carried out first Calculation of the minimum number of samples using the Cochran formula in order to obtain a total sample of 96 people. The data collection technique used was a Likeart scale questionnaire in which the development of instruments for each variable was tested for content validity using the Gregory formula, construct validity testing using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and instrument reliability testing using the Alpha Conbach formula. The data analysis technique used is descriptive statistics and multiple and partial regression statistics. The results of the study reveal that 1) the description of interest in visiting Bantimurung tourism objects is generally categorized as high, the description of city branding is generally categorized as low and the description of city image is generally categorized as good. 2) there is the influence of city branding and city image together on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency, the magnitude of the influence together is 66%. 3) there is a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency, and 4) there is a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency.

**Keywords:** Branding, Image, Interest in Visiting, Tourist Attraction

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is a sector that contributes significantly to the growth and development of a country's economy, especially a region. This, of course, cannot be separated from the role of marketing in it (Liu et al., 2021). The marketing concept in the current era has been widely adopted by local and city governments in offering various existing leading sectors including the tourism sector (Mukhlis, 2018). Of course, by delivering marketing information, one can find out the attractiveness of destinations in an area.

South Sulawesi province as one of the regions in Indonesia has so many tourist destinations. One of them is in the Maros Regency area where there is a natural tourist destination known as Bantimurung. The destination is managed by the Maros Regency tourism office. Based on interviews conducted with employees of the Maros Regency tourism office, information was obtained

that increasing interest in visiting was a challenge for the Maros district government because this was a matter of taste and there was encouragement from the public to visit tourist objects in Maros district in terms of this is a tourist attraction bantimurung. It was also stated that there had been many strategies carried out by the government to increase the number of visitors to the Bantimurung tourist attraction, including by carrying out various promotions on social media, but this was still returned to each individual person to choose the Bantimurung tourist attraction as their destination.

Efforts to introduce regional tourism potential to the wider community are one of the strategies by carrying out branding (Hadapiningrani & Nofria, 2021). Previous research conducted (Nursanty et al., 2017) suggested that urban or regional planning that has been made so far has not been sufficient to make and be able to win competition between cities/regions. Therefore, the concept of city

branding appears to respond to these conditions so that the current planning can not only be applied but also promotes development and elevates the characteristics of a city or region as a brand that has selling value or has value (Rey & Villar, 2016). Then (Farida et al., 2019) argued that competition between districts or cities through marketing techniques is known as city branding. Then other research conducted by (Jawahar et al., 2020) suggests that the implementation of city branding strategies has a relationship to city image in the community or tourists. Other research put forward by (Alperyt & Isoraite, 2019) suggests that the existence of city branding in an area will automatically form a city image of an area which will become information for the community.

The current phenomenon of city branding and city image among marketing practitioners has become a hot issue, especially in the development and marketing of tourist destinations, so the authors consider it important to conduct a study to determine Interest in Visiting in terms of City Branding and City Image in Bantimurung Tourism Objects, Maros Regency.

The research aims to address the following questions: Firstly, what is the overall perception of interest in visiting, city image, and city branding concerning the Bantimurung tourist destination in Maros Regency? Secondly, does a discernible influence exist, either in partial or combined terms, between city branding, city image, and the inclination to visit the tourist attractions within Maros Regency? These inquiries form the core of the research problem, guiding the investigation into the dynamics of tourist interest, city image, and city branding in relation to the captivating Bantimurung destination in Maros Regency.

## METHOD

This study uses a causal survey method according to the research objective, namely to determine the effect partially and jointly of city branding and city image on visiting interest in Maros Regency attractions and to know the description of each of these variables.

This research will be carried out at the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency which takes place from August - December 2022.

The population in this study is all visitors to the Bantimurung tourist attraction, Maros Regency, then to obtain a representative sample with a population that does not have an absolute or uncertain number, The answer is that in determining the number of samples using the Cochran formula (Sugiyono, 2019) and for a sampling error value of 10%. Here's the formula:

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2} = n = \frac{(1,96)^2(0,5)(0,5)}{(0,1)^2} = 96$$

Based on the results of calculating the formula obtained a minimum sample size of 96 in this study. The sampling technique used *purposive random sampling* to obtain research data

The measured research variables, namely: (a) the independent variable is: city branding (X1) which in this study is the total score obtained from respondents as measured by indicators: 1) presence (city position), 2) place (physical aspect), 3) potential (access offered), 4) pulse (attractiveness), 5) people (friendly people), 6) prerequisite (basic quality of a city or region) and city image (X2) which in this study is the total score obtained from respondents as measured by indicators: 1) affective (a person's feelings towards a place), 2) evaluative (a person's evaluation of a place), 3) cognitive (a person's knowledge of a place), 4) behavior (considerations for making a visit). (b) the dependent variable is interest in visiting (Y) which in this study is the total score obtained from respondents as measured by indicators:

Researchers used a questionnaire as a means of collecting data and information relating to all the variables studied, namely the variables city branding, city image and interest in visiting. The respondents in this study were all visitors and tourists at the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros district. The steps in collecting data in this study include: 1) determining visitors who are respondents based on the arrival of researchers at Bantimurung, where the arrival of researchers is carried out randomly, 2) tourists who become respondents then fill out city branding, city image and interest in visiting questionnaires.

In order to obtain a valid and reliable statement regarding the instrument used, the instrument is processed through.

Table 1. Summary of Expert Validity

Instrument	Number of Items	Internal consistency coefficient value
City Branding	12	1
City Image	12	1
Visiting Interests	9	1

The table above can be stated that the instrument built has fulfilled the validity based on the content by the expert.

a. Construct validity test

The data from the trial results were analyzed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to test the construct validity of each instrument developed in this study. The analysis emphasizes two things, namely (1) finding valid indicators and items to measure each variable in this study from the items developed, and (2) determining the reliability of the instrument.

*Confirmatory Factor Analysis*(CFA) was used to determine construct validity using the maximum likelihood method. The criteria include the results of measurements of Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) > 0.50 and Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) > 0.50. Bartlett's test

Table 2. Summary of KMO test and Bartlett test CB

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures of Sampling Adequacy.		0.836
	2173.2	1,925,934
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	66	66
	0	0

The results of testing the construct validity of the city branding instrument obtained information that based on the results of trials on 130 respondents who were considered equivalent, the Bartlett's test results showed a sig. 0.00 which is less than 0.05 and the KMO and MSA coefficients are 0.83 which is greater than 0.50, then the adequacy of the sample to carry out factor analysis has been fulfilled, then information on the anti-image correlation value is obtained on 12 items having MSA > 0.50 which can then be included in determining the factors. Furthermore, with the Maximum Likelihood method, it was found that as many as 12 items showed each factor load based on its indicator.

Of the 12 items, it was shown that 12 items from indicators 1,2,3,4,5 and 6 had factor loading values  $\geq 0.3$ . Then 11 items were extracted and rotated again to see the

Table 3. Summary of KMO Test and Barlett Test CI

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures of Sampling Adequacy.		0.851
	2105646	1,925,934
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	66	66
	0	0

obtained a sig value of 0.00 for further analysis, then the anti-image correlation value was > 0.50 to be included in the factor analysis. Item validity was seen from factor loading, namely  $\geq 0.30$ (Sudaryono, 2017).Testing the construct validity of each instrument in this study used the SPSS For Windows program.

1. The results of the construct validity test of the city branding instrument

The city comparison instrument is measured through 6 indicators as observed variables with a distribution of 12 items. Where indicator 1 is 2 items, indicator 2 is 2 items, indicator 3 is 2 items, indicator 4 is 2 items, indicator 5 is 3 items and indicator 6 is 2 items. The summary of the test results is presented in the following table

suitability of the factor model with the goodness of fit test so that the chi value was obtained. -square of 1051.68 and a significance value of  $0.00 < \alpha (0.05)$ .

Based on this process it was concluded that in the city branding instrument there are 12 statement items that form a factor. The results of the analysis show that all valid items are found in the 6 indicators as observed variables and have made a significant contribution to measuring the latent variables.

2. The results of the construct validity test of the city faith instrument

The city faith instrument is measured through 4 indicators as observed variables with a distribution of 12 items. Where indicator 1 is 3 items, indicator 2 is 3 items, indicator 3 is 3 items, and indicator 4 is 3 items. The summary of the test results is presented in the following table:

The results of testing the construct validity of the city image instrument obtained information that based on the results of trials on 130 respondents who were considered equivalent, the Bartlett's test results showed a sig. 0.00 which is less than 0.05 and the KMO and MSA coefficients are 0.85 which is greater than 0.50, the sample adequacy for conducting factor analysis has been fulfilled, then information on the anti-image correlation value is obtained on 12 items having MSA > 0 .50 which can then be included in determining the factors. Furthermore, with the Maximum Likelihood method, it was found that as many as 12 items showed each factor load based on its indicators and is presented in Appendix 3. Of the 12 items, it was shown that 12 items from indicators

1,2,3, and 4 had a factor loading value of  $\geq 0.3$ . Furthermore, 11 items were extracted and rotated again to see the suitability of the factor model with the goodness of fit test in order to obtain a chi-square value of 1016.74 and a significance value of  $0.00 < \alpha (0.05)$ .

Based on this process it was concluded that in the city image instrument there are 12 statement items that form a factor. The results of the analysis show that all valid items are found in the 4 indicators as observed variables and have made a significant contribution to measuring the latent variables.

3. The results of the construct validity test of the interest in visiting the instrument construct

Table 4. Summary of the KMO Test and Barlett Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measures of Sampling Adequacy.	0.826	
	1369.23	1,925,934
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	36	66
	0	0

The results of testing the construct validity of the instrument of interest in visiting obtained information that based on the results of trials on 130 respondents who were considered equivalent, the results of the Bartlett's test showed a sig. 0.00 which is less than 0.05 and the KMO and MSA coefficients are 0.83 which is greater than 0.50, then the adequacy of the sample for conducting factor analysis has been fulfilled, then information on the anti-image correlation value on 9 items has MSA > 0 .50 which can then be included in determining the factors. Furthermore, with the Maximum Likelihood method, it was found that as many as 9 items indicated their respective factor loads based on their indicators and are presented in Appendix 3.

11 items were extracted and rotated again to see the suitability of the factor model with the goodness of fit test to obtain a chi-square value of 483. 05 and a significance value of  $0.00 < \alpha (0.05)$ .

Based on this process it was concluded that in the intention to visit instrument there are 9 statement items that form a factor. The results of the analysis show that all valid items are found in the 4 indicators as observed variables and have made a significant contribution to measuring the latent variables.

Of the 9 items, it was shown that 9 items from indicators 1, 2, and 3 had a factor loading value of  $\geq 0.3$ . Furthermore,

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of interest in visiting, city branding, and city image at the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency
  - a. **Description of interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction**

Table 4. Descriptive statistics results for interest in visiting

Descriptive statistics	Scores
N	96
Mean	31,66
Median	31,50
Mode	35
Standar deviasi	2,54



Varians	6,49
Range	9
Skor Minimum	27
Skor Maksimum	36
Sum	3040

Based on the table presented above, it can be observed that within the interest in visiting data, respondents provided a maximum score of 36 and a minimum score of 27. This results in a range of values amounting to 9, with an average score obtained from respondents of 31.66. Furthermore, a standard deviation value

of 2.54 was obtained, indicating that the collected data scores tend to spread between the minimum score of 27 and the maximum score of 36. These values will serve as the foundation for interpreting and determining the categorization of the overall description of interest in visiting.

**b. Description of city branding at the Bantimurung tourist attraction**

Table 5. Descriptive statistics results for City Branding

Descriptive statistics	Scores
N	96
Mean	42,33
Median	42,50
Mode	47
Standar deviasi	3,45
Varians	11,95
Range	11
Skor Minimum	36
Skor Maksimum	47
Sum	4064

Based on the table presented above, it can be determined that within the city branding data, respondents provided a maximum score of 47 and a minimum score of 36. This results in a range of values amounting to 11, with an average score from respondents of 42.33. Furthermore, a standard deviation value of 3.45 was obtained, indicating that the collected data scores tend to spread between the minimum

score of 36 and the maximum score of 47. These values will be used as the foundation for interpreting and determining the categorization of the overall description of city branding.

**c. Description of city image at the Bantimurung tourist attraction**

The results of the descriptive analysis for the variable "city image" are presented in the table below:

Table 6. Descriptive statistics results for City Image

Descriptive statistics	Scores
N	96
Mean	40,78
Median	41
Mode	38
Standar deviasi	3,56
Varians	12,72
Range	11
Skor Minimum	35
Skor Maksimum	46
Sum	3915

Based on the table presented above, it can be determined that within the city image data, respondents provided a maximum score of 46 and a minimum score of 35. This results in a range of values amounting to 11, with an

average score from respondents of 40.78. Furthermore, a standard deviation value of 3.56 was obtained, indicating that the collected data scores tend to spread between the minimum score of 35 and the maximum score of 46.



These values will be used as the foundation for interpreting and determining the categorization of the overall description of city image.

2. The Combined Influence of City Branding and City Image on the Interest in Visiting the

Bantimurung Tourist Attraction in Maros Regency. Presented below is a summary of the results of the multiple regression analysis

Table 7. Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Model	Nilai	t-hit	Sig p
(constant)	6,78	3,61	0,00
City Branding	0,25	2,07	0,04
City Image	0,34	2,92	0,00
F hit	92,25		0,00
R	0,81		
R <sup>2</sup>	0,66		

The table above reveals the calculated results where  $\beta_0$  is 6.78, coefficient  $\beta_1 = 0.25$ , and coefficient  $\beta_2 = 0.34$ . Based on these calculations, the formed regression equation model is  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.25X_1 + 0.34X_2$ . The formed regression equation model explains that when both city branding ( $X_1$ ) and city image ( $X_2$ ) have a value of zero, the interest in visiting maintains a constant value of 6.78. Then, the coefficient value  $\beta_1 = 0.25$  (positive) can be interpreted and estimated that for every one-unit increase in city branding, the interest in visiting is predicted to increase by 0.25. Furthermore, the coefficient value  $\beta_2 = 0.34$  can be interpreted and estimated that for every one-unit increase in city image, the interest in visiting is predicted to increase by 0.34.

Based on the calculated F-test, the obtained F-value is 92.95, which is larger than the tabulated F-value (3.09), and the significance p-value ( $0.00 < \alpha (0.05)$ ). According to these calculations, it can be stated that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a combined and significant influence of city branding and city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency.

Furthermore, an R-value of 0.81 is obtained, indicating a positive relationship between city branding and city image simultaneously with the interest in visiting in this study. To determine the magnitude of the influence or contribution of city branding and city image combined to the interest in visiting, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value is 0.66 or 66%. This signifies that 66% of the variance in the interest in visiting ( $Y$ ) is explained by city branding ( $X_1$ ) and city image ( $X_2$ ) together, while 34% can be influenced by factors outside of this study. This

implies that the independent variables in the model can explain the dependent variable by 66%, and the remaining 34% can be explained by other variables beyond the scope of this study.

3. The Influence of City Branding on the Interest in Visiting the Bantimurung Tourist Attraction in Maros Regency

Observing the presentation in Table 4, where the coefficient  $\beta_1$  is obtained as a positive value of 0.25 for the variable  $X_1$ , thus forming the regression equation model  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.25X_1$ .

Subsequently, to test hypothesis 2 and its significance, the t-test formula is employed. Examining Table 4, the calculated t-value is 2.07, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.66, and the p-value ( $0.00 < \alpha\text{-value (0.05)}$ ). Based on these calculations, it can be asserted that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) in this test is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted. Consequently, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency.

4. The Influence of City Image on the Interest in Visiting the Bantimurung Tourist Attraction in Maros Regency

Examining the presentation in Table 4, where the coefficient  $\beta_2$  is obtained as a positive value of 0.34 for the variable  $X_2$ , thus forming the regression equation model  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.34X_2$ .

Next, to test hypothesis 3 and its significance, the t-test formula is utilized. Statistically, it is formulated as follows:  $H_0: \beta_1 \leq 0$  against  $H_1: \beta_1 > 0$ .

Looking at Table 4, the calculated t-value is 2.92, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.66, and the p-value ( $0.00 < \alpha\text{-value (0.05)}$ ). Based on these calculations, it can be asserted that the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) in this test

is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted. As a result, it can be concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency.

## DISCUSSION

1. The Combined Influence of City Branding and City Image on the Interest in Visiting the Bantimurung Tourist Attraction in Maros Regency.

In relation to the effort to enhance the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency, one of the strategies employed is city branding and the creation of a city image. The results of the multiple regression analysis, based on the collected data, reveal computations that elucidate the model of the regression equation formed in this study. The obtained calculations yield values of  $\beta_0 = 6.78$ ,  $\beta_1 = 0.25$ , and  $\beta_2 = 0.34$ . Based on these findings, the formulated regression equation model is  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.25X_1 + 0.34X_2$ . This established regression equation model explains that when both city branding ( $X_1$ ) and city image ( $X_2$ ) are zero, the interest in visiting holds a constant value of 4.59. Furthermore, the coefficient  $\beta_1$  is obtained as 0.25 (positive), which signifies that an increase of one unit in city branding score predicts a rise of 0.25 in the interest to visit. Similarly, the coefficient  $\beta_2$  is 0.34 (positive), indicating that a one-unit increase in city image score predicts a 0.34 increase in the interest to visit.

To determine the collective contribution of city branding and city image to the implementation of online learning, this is gauged from the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value, which is 0.66 or 66%. This value signifies that the joint influence or contribution of city branding and city image on the interest in visiting amounts to 66%. In other words, 66% of the variance in the interest to visit, which can be explained using the variables city branding and city image, while the remaining 34% is influenced by variables external to this model. Understanding the 66% combined contribution of these independent variables to the interest in visiting indicates that city branding and city image play pivotal and harmonious roles in visitors' intent to visit. This role suggests that an enhancement of both city branding and city image in Maros Regency would further support and elevate visitors' interest in the Bantimurung tourist attraction.

This study demonstrates that city branding and city image in Maros Regency have a positive and significant combined impact on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction. The hypothesis asserting the combined influence of city branding and city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction has been validated through this research.

2. The Influence of City Branding on the Interest in Visiting the Bantimurung Tourist Attraction in Maros Regency.

The function of City Branding is to promote a city by highlighting its distinctive features and strengths, aiming to attract the interest of visitors. City branding typically focuses on managing the city's image, specifically how the image will be shaped and the communication aspects involved in the image management process. City Branding, as a form of tourism communication, serves as one of the strategies or representations for introducing the potential of a region to other areas (external world) through branding efforts.

The results of the analysis, based on the collected data, reveal that there is a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting. This is evident in the coefficient  $\beta_1$ , which represents the coefficient of the variable  $X_1$  with a positive value of 0.25. Thus, the regression equation model is  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.25X_1$ . This can be interpreted and estimated that for each one-unit increase in city branding score, the interest in visiting is predicted to increase by 0.25. Furthermore, the significance test yields a calculated t-value of 2.07, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.66, and the significance level  $P(0.00) < \alpha(0.05)$ . Consequently, it is concluded that there is a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency. This can also be understood as an indication that a well-executed city branding effort by Maros Regency would enhance the interest of tourists in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction.

The findings and results of this study align with the findings of Kusnady (2022), who discovered that enhancing the interest in visiting a tourist destination in a city or region requires a city branding strategy. The presence of a city branding strategy can influence the increase in tourist interest. Additionally, the research by

Prakoso & Marlina (2020) revealed that city branding significantly affects an individual's decision to visit. This emphasizes the strategic role of city branding in promoting the advantages of a region to attract visitor interest. Another finding by Aulia & Yulianti (2019) supports the notion that a city branding program initiated by the government in a region can significantly impact the interest and decisions of individuals to visit a tourist attraction in that area.

City Branding involves a proper communication approach to build the brand of a city, region, and the community residing within, based on the entities' market. City branding is a part of the place brand applicable to a single city or the entire region of a country. City branding is intended to attract tourists, hence it can be considered a part of destination branding. Destination branding is applicable to the tourism market, with its primary objective being to attract visitors to specific destinations (Haryati & Wahid, 2018).

A city that has branding or a distinct brand will possess a unique image for tourists due to its differentiating characteristics from other cities, creating distinct memories. City Branding, as a form of tourism communication, serves as one of the strategies or representations for introducing the potential of a region to other areas (external world) through branding efforts. Through this study, it is evident that city branding in Maros Regency has a positive and significant impact on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction. However, it is notable that a majority of respondents expressed a perception of low city branding efforts by the local government. Nevertheless, the hypothesis suggesting a positive and significant influence of city branding on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist attraction in Maros Regency is supported by this research.

### 3. The Influence of City Image on the Interest in Visiting the Bantimurung Tourist Site in Maros Regency

City image is the identity that is attached to a certain area. By attaching an identity or slogan to an area, it is expected that the distinct characteristics of that area will become more visible. This will arouse curiosity among people who have never visited the area, making them interested and inclined to visit it. A region or city can establish a strong image by forming specific elements. However, these elements should be

conceptualized in line with the goals and potential of the area. Furthermore, the identity of a region or city can be seen and holds a certain value. City image is a crucial element that needs to be ingrained in an area to ensure effective promotion. The awareness of city image within a region encourages people to explore it.

The results of the analysis based on the collected data reveal a positive and significant influence of city image on the interest in visiting. This is indicated by the obtained coefficient  $\beta_2$ , which is positive and equals 0.34. This results in the regression equation  $\hat{Y} = 6.78 + 0.34X_2$ . This equation suggests that for every increase of one unit in city image, the interest in visiting is predicted to increase by 0.34 units. Additionally, the significance test yielded a calculated t-value of 2.92, which is greater than the tabulated t-value of 1.66, and a significance level (sig P) of 0.00, which is less than the significance level  $\alpha$  (0.05). This leads to the conclusion that there is a positive and significant influence of city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist site in Maros Regency. It can also be interpreted that the better the city image built by Maros Regency, the greater the increase in tourists' interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist site.

The findings and results of this study are in line with the findings of (Indriani & Kuswoyo, 2017), who revealed that decisions and interest in visiting a region are influenced by the city image of that area. City image plays a role in enhancing individuals' interest and decision to visit. Moreover, the findings of (Bawole et al., 2021) suggest that city image significantly influences individuals' interest and decision to visit, attributed to people's trust in a city or region. Therefore, the role of city image contributes significantly to attracting visitors from outside the region. Additionally, the study by (Sinta et al., 2021) supports the notion that the interest and decision of tourists to visit are linearly correlated with the city image of a city or region. This is because the image of a city plays a role in building trust in individuals to visit a destination in that area. The findings of (Salampessy & Kaisupy, 2020) further emphasize that a positive city image in a city or region increases tourists' interest in visiting. This is linked to visitors' trust in various tourist destinations within a region.

City image can be considered a platform for showcasing the identity of a region. (Jojic, 2019) confirms that city image is an effort by the



government to create the identity of a place or region and promote it to both internal and external audiences. Through this study, the city image of Maros Regency has a positive and significant influence on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung tourist site. Additionally, the majority of respondents express that the city image executed by the local government is rated highly. The hypothesis that a positive and significant influence of city image on the Bantimurung tourist site in Maros Regency is proven by this study.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the overview of the interest in visiting Bantimurung Tourism Object in Maros Regency is generally categorized as high. However, in contrast, the city branding for the Bantimurung Tourism Object is generally categorized as low. Conversely, the city image aspect is generally categorized as good. The research results also indicate that there is both a partial and combined influence of city branding and city image on the interest in visiting the Bantimurung Tourism Object in Maros Regency. This suggests that while city branding might not have reached the desired level, a positive city image can significantly contribute to increasing visitors' interest in visiting the tourism object.

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