

Branding Awareness Establishment Of Geoculture Tourism Destination Based On Community Empowerment

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ABSTRACT. *Each region has its way of making them a famous tourist destination. West Bandung Regency in Indonesia, with its natural tourism potential, has become the primary source of revenue for the local government, which managed it along with the community. The high public interest in traveling is an opportunity to increase the number of visits from tourists. Thus, efforts are needed to create branding for tourist attraction areas that can attract potential tourists. This study aims to explain Geoculture tourism's contribution to the formation of Lembang, branding it as "Tourism Gate of West Bandung Regency, Indonesia." The method used for this research is a qualitative descriptive study type with data collection techniques by observation, interviews, and literature study. The research subjects are government and community leaders in the tourist area. The results show that the tourism branding establishment of Geo culture Lembang, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia is at the brand awareness stage, shown through the efforts to socialize tourism objects by taking advantage of events and local mass media. The research conclusion shows that the brand awareness of the Geo-Culture Treck tourism cannot provide in-depth knowledge for the community, especially on adventure tourism objects based on community empowerment and local environmental wisdom. So it is suggested that the brand awareness stage in the Geo-Culture Treck tourism socialization needs to be improved sustainably and integrated with government policies.*

KEYWORDS: *Branding Awareness, Environmental Issues, Tourist Areas, Geoculture, Community Empowerment*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Lembang area, according to the West Java Provincial Government Regional Regulation No. 1 of 2008, concerning the control and utilization of space in the North Bandung area (KBU), is part of a highly protected area. Meanwhile, based on the Regional

Regulation of West Bandung Regency No. 2 of 2012 concerning the Regional Spatial Plan of West Bandung Regency 2009-2029, North Bandung Area is an area that includes parts of Bandung Regency, Bandung City, Cimahi City, and West Bandung Regency with the north and east borders by topographic ridges connecting the mountains Burangrang, Masigit, Gedongan, Sunda, Tangkubanperahu, Palasari, and Manglayang. Simultaneously, the west and south have bordered by contour lines of 750 m above sea level, which are highland areas that have a considerable influence on the Bandung Basin's water system. Although regulations from the government govern the area, the implementation of development activities in the North Bandung area, especially Lembang, is still being carried out by the community. This condition worsened by the flawed integrated planning system between regencies and cities.

Over time, to strengthen Regional Regulation no. 1 of 2008 issued by the West Java Provincial Government, another Regional Regulation No. 2 of 2016 concerning Guidelines for Control of the North Bandung Area as a Strategic Area of West Java Province is announced. While regulations governing development arrangements in the North Bandung area existed, it is publicly known that there are still many attempts to make the Lembang highland become a residential area that could potentially damage the environment's balance. The potential for environmental damage in the North Bandung area is due to the lack of concrete action from 3 (three) regional administrative government apparatus in handling the problem.

The tourism sector is one of the largest economic contributors to development that is highly dependent on climate, sunshine, seawater, and natural landscapes (Wijaya & Furqan, 2018). The area of North Bandung, especially Lembang, has hydrological, sociological, archaeological, and tourism functions. It is an area dominated by natural scenic tourist destinations. Referring to the Regional Regulation on Spatial and Regional Planning (RTRW) West Bandung Regency (KBB) No. 2 in 2012 concerning plans for urban/rural system development that are in line with the direction of policies and strategies for spatial use. So, based on the above regulation, the Lembang district area is one of the areas planned as a center for local promotional activities, parallel to Cililin and Cikalongwetan districts. As Tatang Surnyamana, Head of Section 2 of the West Bandung Regency Culture and Tourism Office, revealed, the option to select this area was based on the natural, cultural, and infrastructure potential of the three regions that could be used as a source of business development for the West Bandung Regency area, which eventually could generate income for the region. The tourism industry has become one of the essential earners for Indonesia's income from abroad, supported by several policies so that the strategic national tourism area has a role to play in encouraging other factors, such as economy, social security, and others (Muazir & Hsieh, 2016).

Seeing the North Bandung Region's current condition, the government should not only focus on administrative-hydrological functions as a future absorption area and water source for the West Java region but also need to think about the impact of exploitation in the area, which is increasingly uncontrollable. Furthermore, the destruction of environmental supporting elements in the North Bandung area, which systematically becomes a tourist destination, can be a challenge for tourism stakeholders to bring about Lembang as a prime

tourist destination. Therefore, environmental restoration and protection of public spaces in the Lembang area are increasingly under threat and can lead to "extinction" because business interests in the tourism sector pressure them. As Edy Hidayat, Secretary of Lembang District, states that the current condition of Lembang must become the primary concern of the local government, especially the West Bandung Regency government, to carefully selecting, issuing, and granting permits to particular parties exploiting the Lembang area, which could have an impact on aspects of environmental balance.

The strict and varied local regulations that limit the Lembang area to serve as a destination for natural tourism objects become an opportunity for some business capitalists to open new tourist objects in the area, under the category of a natural tourism destination. Nevertheless, it requires serious efforts to be recognized by the wider community, including valuable time and effort from tourism actors—the repeated dissemination of information about a place or product is required as a brand formation strategy.

The brand war (of tourism destination) is currently established by utilizing various communication and information media to reach the intended target audience as fast as possible. Efforts to introduce new tourist destinations to the target audience are increasingly soaring, with strong competitors from plenty of tourism operators able to change their target audiences' (tourists) tastes over the tourism destinations; An effort to convey information through a unique, attractive, simple, and structured brand awareness as a form of persuasion is desperately needed.

The new tourism areas that offer the concept of tourism by exploring geological aspects and local cultural values are provided by the local community around tourist objects that invite people (potential tourists) to learn and have an adventure in the open environment. This endeavor can initiate a branding awareness campaign for natural tourist destinations in West Bandung Regency, focusing on its potential landscape, specifically for its geomorphology and sociodemography. A tourist destination is a composite of services and nature, a socio-cultural landscape that exists at several regional levels (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). The use of tourism object destinations in Lembang can be used as a regional asset that must be protected and developed professionally, accompanied by an integrated plan with national tourism development objectives.

According to Keller (2008), in (Astuti, 2011), a brand has several stages in its formation. Regarding the Geo-Culture Trek as a form of a new product, efforts can be made through brand salience. In the study of brand salience, achieving a good brand identity means creating an essential brand known by the target audience. The results of brand salience will occupy the top of the mind in the target audience's minds. In other words, top of mind is a form of brand awareness built in the public's minds that can help target audiences understand a product or service category much better. Based on field observations, the charm of a geo-culture tourism destination includes environmental and cultural aspects preservation. This Geo-Culture Trek tourism object is a socio-cultural preservation phenomenon in the form of adventure tourism, which can inspire stakeholders to wisely utilize and develop local wisdom potentials based on environmental preservation.

The concept of brand awareness indicates the existence of new knowledge about a product, service, or institution that the public needs to understand. Brand awareness should

have an impact massively. A rigorous, planned program should be done systematically and measured. The efforts to promote new tourism objects should be made in the same way. As per suggestion by Clow and Baack in (Astuti, 2011) that brands are names generally assigned to a product or service or a group of complementary products while a corporate image covers every aspect of the company. Additionally, the American Marketing Association (AMA) states that a brand is a "name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition (Keller, 2008).

A research study from the perspective of environmental communication is needed to understand the contents of the socio-cultural value content in the geo-cultural tourism area in the North and Central part of West Bandung Regency. What is quite interesting is how geo-culture tourism object destinations in West Bandung could have a high bargaining position in rescuing the environment of an increasingly modern and pragmatic environmental capitalization by utilizing community empowerment to increase geo-culture awareness branding.

2.METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods to make systematic, factual, and accurate descriptions of specific facts and characteristics. Descriptive research accumulates raw data descriptively; it does not need to seek or explain relationships, test hypotheses, make predictions, or get meaning and implications (Suryabrata, 2012). The research is based on the post positivism paradigm. Qualitative research examines participants' perspectives with interactive and flexible strategies on scientific objects' conditions (Sugiyono, 2015).

The technique of selecting informants in this study was carried out using snowball techniques to obtain comprehensive information clarity from the informants. The sample selection using the snowball technique has several stages. First, identifying and considering people who are able to provide information with the interview. Second, this person is used as an informant to identify other people as a sample who can provide information, and this person is also used as an informant to identify other people as samples who are considered to be able to provide information (Silalahi, 2010). Thus, this process continues until the desired number of sample members is met until the informant's answer reaches the saturation point. So, in this study, the criteria for early informants who will be used as the primary source are government figures or community leaders around Geo-Culture tourism in West Bandung Regency, including the Head of the Tourism Division of the West Bandung Regency Culture and Tourism Office, the Secretary of Lembang District, the Head of Pagerwangi Village, and Geo-Culture Treck Activity Committee.

3.RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The geo-culture tourism destination is located in the Lembang area, West Bandung Regency, particularly in Pagerwangi village. Stakeholders in the tourism sector are still discussing to determine the name of geo-culture. Referring to one of the contents of Regional regulation No. 2 in 2012 of West Bandung Regency, the definition of tourism is everything

related to tourism, including the exploitation of tourist objects and attractions and related businesses in that field, per the provisions of laws and regulations. Thus, a geo-culture tourism destination can be assumed as a tourism object even though legally, it has not been recognized as a formal tourist attraction that has received permission from the local government and the local community.

This geo-culture trek destination was initiated by the alumni of a state university in Bandung, concerned about the tourism potential in the Pagerwangi village area. Based on the natural contours of the village of Pagerwangi, it is a suitable tourist destination for adventure sensations and a tool for learning knowledge and physics, which is quite challenging. In its implementation, this geo-culture tourism destination combines 2.7 km long tracks (roads) that run around Gunung Batu Lembang site with the route started from Pagerwangi village area and ended at the Cilanguk art village. In this Cilanguk art village, the community and the public are involved in presenting various kinds of creative arts, culture, and culinary, which originated from the people around the village in the Lembang area participating in the successful promotion of new geo-culture tourism to the broader community. Currently, massive opportunities for tourist destinations created a notion that brands' presence can also represent countries, cities, and regions (Carvalho, Sarmento, & Loureiro, 2017).

The involvement of various parties, communities, and alumni communities is an effort to empower the people of Lembang, especially in Pagerwangi village, whose people have the ability and expertise to support the improvement of welfare in the tourism sector through the opening of natural tourist objects based on cultural values and community empowerment. The "new tourism destination" geo culture trek is expected to be a learning vehicle for the community, village government, and cultural observers of Pagerwangi village concerned about preserving nature, art, and culture, which can become a complement to the adventure tourism sector. Enabling the implementation of sustainable tourism activities from a bottom-up approach and increase community participation in overcoming the problem is necessary to carry out a community empowerment process (Fardiah, 2005).

The formal legality regarding the development of the Lembang area as a tourist area can be used as an opportunity for tourism stakeholders to explore further the potentials that can be developed to support local revenue. Several conscious communities on the environment, preservation of natural and cultural resources, have organized a major activity that carries the issue of environmental preservation molded in an adventure nature tour package, to increase acceptance that the Lembang area is an environmentally friendly tourism area.

The acceptance effort, including covering environmental and cultural preservation in a news format in the mass media, can introduce a new tourism object in Lembang. Based on the author's observations regarding the Geo-Culture Trek tourism destination news in the television news program, it illustrates that the purpose of implementing geo-culture activities is a limited reunion activity of state university students in Bandung. As stated by Mr. Ali as the executive committee and community leaders in Pagerwangi village, said that the geo-culture activity was attended by an alumnus who held the position as Minister of Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia and cultural arts figures, namely Mr. Arief Yahya and Sujiwo Tedjo. The presence of government figures and humanists in an event generating a "magnetic

field" of news sources for the media. The news that appears to the public is the tourism term "Geo Culture Treck," which is the news headline.

The delivery of events on environmental issues in the cultural and tourism sector arranged in the form of news can be part of commodification. The news information can be an exciting fact that enables a presentation of complete and useful information for the community. Therefore, a message conveyed to the target audience originating from the media is not born by chance and instantaneously, but would include planning, construction, and distribution, reflecting the "ideology" behind the message (Halim, 2013).

The Geo-Culture Treck tourism destination's establishment was inspired by the awareness of community group members of the Bandung Basin Research Group (KRCB), which popularized earth tourism for 12 years. In this earth tour, the participants are invited to enjoy and, at the same time, understand the earth sites owned by the Bandung area and its surroundings. Furthermore, the aspect of benefits carried out in Geo-Culture Treck tourism is a tourism activity focusing not only on natural beauty but also on increasing knowledge and awareness to preserve the environment by involving the surrounding community to involve in souvenirs making and art performance of Lembang's native culture. The existence of local wisdom in tourist objects can be a valuable addition to tourist attraction (Bakti, Sumartias, Damayanti, & Nugraha, 2018), especially for the target audience.

Geo-Culture Treck tourism destination is community activities closely related to community empowerment, which is expected to eradicate poverty and economic disparities in the community by involving the community to become a creative tourism service provider. The wider community will quickly identify the tourism potential scattered in the Lembang area if classified based on natural, cultural, or a combination of nature and culture. The division of tourism areas can be used as the basis for an effort to convey the brand awareness that the alumni community wants to build to the target audience (potential local tourists) related to the Geo-Culture Treck tourism destination.

In the cultural aspect, the existence of tourist objects will not only provide opportunities but also threats to the preservation of local cultural values. As an opportunity, culture can enhance and strengthen tourism's more exotic aspects by combining humanist values in promoting tourist objects. Meanwhile, threats that occur in the local culture of tourist attraction sites, which is currently held firmly by the local community, could experience downfall by the flow of information and culture. As is the case in the Lembang area, opportunities to increase tourism are wide open along with advances in information technology that are continuously conveyed to the public regarding tourist objects around the Lembang area.

In the view of public relations, tourism activities should reflect the image of a place through branding. In the branding dimension, tourism activities need to be carried out by various parties by enabling a combination of human (socio-cultural), natural (environmental), and technology elements that can create a new destination for tourist objects. Branding involves local residents, entrepreneurs, and business people, developing and delivering brands (Luthfi & Widyaningrat, 2018). Through cultural tourism activities, people will be motivated as a fundamental element in developing tourism competitiveness. In developing cultural tourism in the Lembang area, the concept of brand awareness is chosen by tourism

actors to continue promoting new tourist attractions and initiating the Lembang area brand as a tourism gateway for West Bandung Regency. Brand awareness can evoke feelings of trust, confidence, safety, strength, durability, speed, status, and other desired associations. According to (Shimp, 2000), several things need to be chosen for a brand: (1) influencing the speed at which consumers realize a brand; (2) affect the brand image; and (3) play an important role in the formation of brand equity. Therefore, the Geo-Culture Treck tourism destination brand must be pursued through the brand awareness stage by gaining awareness from the target audience.

A tourist destination is something that can satisfy the basic needs and self-actualization of tourists. People choose to travel to specific tourist destinations according to particular desires and characteristics, such as climate, scenery, facilities, and other attributes. However, tourist objects' choice also depends on intangible characteristics, such as social satisfaction from the brands formed in people's minds.

On the other hand, one of the emotional aspects tourists consider is the tourist attraction reputation. A tourist attraction's reputation greatly determines how people at home and abroad can feel and relate to a tourist attraction's location. In an era of highly competitive competition, the image of a tourist attraction is a critical success factor in managing the tourism sector as a destination. This notion is in line with what Kotler and Gertner (2002) in (Aruman, 2013) suggest that a new product can exist by building a set of associations. In the context of building a new tourism destination with local wisdom and community involvement, the initiation of an environmentally and culturally friendly tourism brand in Lembang is being made. The new Geo-Culture Treck tourist destination is still in the introduction stage to the community (socialization). Other findings indicate that local governments at the district and sub-district levels, cultural communities, and surrounding communities do not recognize Geo-Culture Treck is a new tourism site in Lembang. This finding means that the information developed and conveyed by tourism actors through news programs in mass media is still limited to agenda-setting that takes advantage of public figures' momentum in visiting Gunung Batu, Pagerwangi village in the Lembang area.

Based on the brand formation process by (Keller, 2008), a product, service, or place is said to be a success if it has received recognition from the target audience, which is shown to have become top of mind. News information about Geo-Culture Treck in the mass media should impact the target audience as it involves the community in programs organized by the alumni community of state universities in Bandung to become viral and attract interest to potential tourists travelers.

Creating an environment that is competitive in the tourism sector, which will be a source of improvement in the community's economy, requires a real struggle in environmental awareness. This environmentally conscious movement needs to be supported by various interest groups that focus on developing tourism potential. One of them is a group that understands the conditions of tourist destinations based on local wisdom. Groups are usually called stakeholders, a group of people who have direct links and interests with the organization (Andipate, 2016). A group that understands the tourism sector based on community empowerment and environmental conservation would persuade the government

to consider and announce it formally as a tourist location, which later becomes a socially, culturally, and environmentally friendly source of regional income.

Further examination shows that some existing stakeholders related to the tourism sector in the Lembang region are the central/provincial and local governments, native peoples, investors, mass media, tourism activist groups, and institutions that focus on tourism development (travel agents, hotels). With such a specific target audience, the forming of brand awareness can be established from the assessment of the majority of people who discuss and publish information in the mainstream media. Therefore, the formation of brand awareness for community empowerment-based Geo-Culture Trek tourism destination can be modeled as follows:

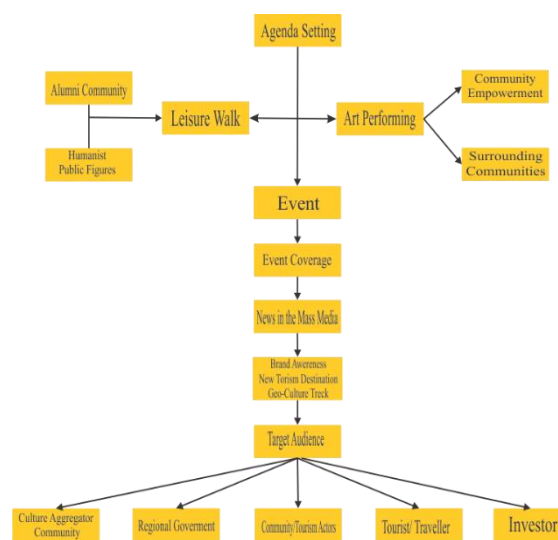


Figure 1. Model of Brand Awareness Establishment in Geo-Culture Trek Tourism Destination

Source: Research Result, 2017

Figure 1. above explains that establishing a location's brand awareness must be formed deliberately through various sustainable communication techniques. The virality goal of the Geo-Culture Trek tourism destination would be able to persuade the target audience to participate in pushing the progress of new tourist sites in the Lembang area. Key factors needed to increase community social capital, including involvement of residents in tourism planning, tourism leadership, and finding different models for local and regional tourism organizations (Moscardo, Konovalov, Murphy, McGehee, & Schurmann, 2017) become strengths in enabling the community empowerment around the tourist attraction. The Geo-Culture Trek tourism destination's brand awareness can be juxtaposed with the community's social activities around the Gunung Batu site to become an icon of the Lembang fault area. Furthermore, (Soemanagara, 2008) explains that a label or icon does not suddenly appear to become a popular brand as it requires a long time and a strategy to deliver communication messages in the form of extensive promotions.

4. CONCLUSION

Various communication activities attempt to form a brand awareness of Geo-Culture tourism based on community empowerment have not been able to provide enough opportunities for people to get to know more about natural tourism sites in the Lembang area, West Bandung Regency, Indonesia. This suggestion means that the public (potential tourists) still have insufficient detail about the concept of geo-culture trek tourism promoted through local mass media. Generally, people would find tourism in the Lembang area as a nature-based tourist attraction. So, it is necessary to develop an agenda-setting strategy that can penetrate through any possible media to show the existence of geo-culture tourism with the goal would be the target audience's acceptance. However, an event introducing the Lembang area through the concept of Geo-Culture Trek as a new tourism destination provides opportunities for the surrounding community to create and develop the local culture, increasing economic value as a manifestation of community empowerment through an environmentally and culturally friendly tourism sector.

5. LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This research has been carried out based on scientific rules and procedures. However, there are still some limitations in the disclosure of the results of the research, including in order for future researchers to obtain a good research model supported by more substantial theory, it is recommended for further research to increase references that would be able to support and reveal the problems of research topics.

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