

Tourists' Perceptions on Ecotourism Destination Brand

(A Case Study Of Taman Wisata Alam Angke Kapuk-Twaak)

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Abstract— Ecotourism has been more and more popular nowadays especially for local tourists. It can be seen from the number of stories that can be found on Internet-usually by using blog in many platforms-telling the experiences to go to many ecotourism sites. Taman Wisata Alam Angke Kapuk (TWAAK) in Jakarta has been one of the ecotourism sites that visited by local tourists. This study seeks to explore those local tourists' perceptions of the TWAAK as an ecotourism destination brand. Qualitative data was used to provide an in-depth analysis of the findings on perceptions over the TWAAK as a destination brand. The research findings explained that local tourist have enjoyed the TWAAK as an alternative tourism in the heart of Jakarta City where mainly dominated by mass tourism. However, they don't know exactly what TWAAK is yet unsatisfied to the way the authorities of the TWAAK treated visitors.

Keywords— *tourist perceptions, ecotourism, Destination Brand, Taman Wisata Alam Angke Kapuk-TWAAK Introduction*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been emerging nowadays in Indonesia. Even more the president of Indonesia Joko Widodo has mentioned that tourism must be set up as one of the leading sectors in Indonesia development (Cnnindonesia.com, 2016). Minister of Tourism of Indonesia has also highlighted that the number of tourists in Indonesia should double to 20 million of foreign tourists (Ministry of Tourism, 2015).

In that regard, the government has made some breakthroughs to fulfill the target that has been set up in which ecotourism has been one of the priorities to be developed by the government especially the minister of tourism (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2015).

Taman Wisata Alam Angke Kapuk (TWAAK), as part of ecotourism in Indonesia which is located in Jakarta, has also been highlighted to be one of the ecotourism destination targets that will be developed by the Indonesia government. It is obvious that there have been lots of tourists both local and international that visited the site. According to the authorities of TWAAK, the number of visitors on holidays usually reached approximately 1500 people (beritasatu.com, 2014)

Many testimonies found on the blogs in the Internet have been some of the proofs that TWAAK has been gaining its popularity. They have made stories that contain both positive and negative values. Photos of the site have also been some of the evidences that displayed as part of the opinion from the visits.

In that regard, TWAAK has been a product namely ecotourism product which is highly experiential in nature, and the experience will most likely different for each customer because of all the variables in play. (Achieng, 2014). Yet it has brand attached on it.

As an ecotourism destination brand, TWAAK affects tourists in making decision. According to Naidoo (2010), a strong brand image is equivalent to a rise in first time customer purchase, positive word-of-mouth (WOM) and customer loyalty.

In order to cope with a fierce competition of ecotourism and win the heart of tourists especially the local ones, ecotourism destination brand studies are necessarily needed. However, there is a lack of research on the perceptions of ecotourism destination brand among local tourists.

This article is, however, aimed to fill that gap by investigating the perception of all local tourists outside Jakarta. Do all those local tourists share similar feelings towards TWAAK. How do they compare the TWAAK as a brand of destination with the others? Are they satisfied enough whenever visiting TWAAK? This article has tried to explore the answers to these questions by using qualitative method research.

II. Literature Review

A. Ecotourism

Ecotourism tries to raise environmental consciousness by exploring ecology and ecosystem and by providing environmental type experiences. Taking part in ecology actively and getting first hand impressions of how ecosystems work influence people' ways of thinking, which finally raises awareness of conservation and protection (Siswanto & Moeljadi, 2015). According to Patterson, characteristics of an

ecotourism business are that it a.) Has a low impact upon a protected area's natural resources and recreation techniques; b.) Supports the work of conservation groups preserving the natural area on which the experience is based; c.) Limits visitation to areas, either by limiting group size and/or by the number of group taken to an area in a season; d.) Involve stakeholders (individuals, communities, ecotourists, tour operators and government institutions) in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring phases; e.) Orients customers on the region to be visited; f.) Hires local people and buys supplies locally where possible; g.) Recognizes that nature is a central element to the tourist experience; h.) Uses guides trained in interpretation of scientific or natural history; i.) Ensures that wildlife is not harassed, and j.) Respects the privacy and culture of local people.

Ecotourism in another perspective is defined as nature tourism with wild mild impact, which causes the maintenance of species and their habitat direct role in the preservation and indirectly by providing local local public view, to make the local community to put value, and protect nature and other lifes as revenue sources. (Alfian, Sulistyadi, Samuel, & Naitio, 2016). Meanwhile, according to the Regulation of the Domestic Minister No.33 of 2009 on Guidelines for Ecotourism Development in the Region, ecotourism is nature tourism activities in the area of responsibility with regard elements of education, understanding, and support for the efforts of conservation of natural resources, as well as increased income of local communities.

According to Ross & Wall (1999), fundamental functions of ecotourism are the protection of natural areas, the provision of high-quality tourism experiences and the stimulation of local economies, through provision of resources for conservation, environmental, education, and local empowerment.

Some scholars have given a highlight on the environment factors regarding the ecotourism concepts. Eraqi (2007), for instance. He said the environment is the main base for the natural and cultural resources for attracting tourists worldwide (Bonn, Joseph, & Dai, 2005 cited by Eraqi, 2007).

There has been a different point of view in defining ecotourism in which as a concept, ecotourism comprises a wide range of activities, from field research of flora and wildlife to weekend nature outings that combine leisure and education (Nikitinskiy, 2001, cited by Eraqi, 2007). This concept of ecotourism has mentioned a sort of research activity that plays an important thing aside from leisure activity.

Epler Wood, Gatz and Linberg (1991, cited from Tungchawal, 2001) found that the intent to travel to natural areas is to discern the culture and the natural background of the surroundings. This purpose will not disturb the unity of the ecosystem and will generate economic chances that provide the conservation of the natural resources profitably to the local residents. According to Valentine's (1992; cited from Tungchawal, 2001) explanation, nature tourism plus ecotourism was more exclusive, an covered merely those activities which rely on natural areas instead of those that are solely increased by natural areas.

Based upon Nicoara's explanation (1992), nature-based tourism, currently called ecotourism, was launched in the 1980s and has become one of the fastest growing segments of the world tourist industry. Further, Swarbrooke (1999) advanced the idea that the term ecotourism is combined with other terms like soft tourism, alternative tourism, responsible tourism, and nature tourism. Ross and Wall (1999; cited from Tungchawal, 2001) believed that ecotourism is consistently deemed to be beyond tourism to natural areas.

Ziffer (1989; as cited by Tungchawal, 2001) breaks down four fundamental genres of tourists questing for nature are as follows:

- a. Hard-core Nature Tourists: Scientific researchers or members of tourist group specifically designed for education, removal of litter, or similar puposes.
- b. Dedicated Nature Tourists: People who take trips specifically to see protected areas and who want to understand local and natural and cultural history.
- c. Mainstream Nature Tourists: People who primarily take an unusual trip
- d. Casual Nature Tourists: People who partake of nature incidentally as part of a broader trip

B. Destination Brand

The destination branding is a management process in the tourism industry that play its role upon two level: first of all, it's the cognitive linking pin with the perceptive and evaluative system of the customers; moreover, it is a mean to align the behavior of the several stakeholders involved to market the area as an unified tourist destination product. In other words, the brand has been seen as a relational resource, both towards the customers and the other several local stakeholders (local firms and other tourist destination organizations) involved to offer the single elements of the TDP (Risitano, 2005).

Destination branding is defined as selecting a consistent element mix to identify and distinguish it through positive image building (Cai Liping, 2002; cited from Hassan, et al., 2008). For instance, how consumers perceive the destination in their minds. Destination branding conveys the promise of memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasureable memories of the destination experience (Goeldner, Ritchie, and MacIntosh, 2000; Kaplanidou and Vogt, 2003; cited from cited from Hassan, et al., 2008).

Destination branding is about combining all the attributes associated with the place (that is, its products, and services from various industries such as agriculture, tourism, sports, arts, investment, technology, education, etc) manage the reputation of the brand based on four elements-brand identity, brand image, brand purpose, and brand equity (Anholt, 2007; cited from Achieng, et. al., 2014).

Destination it self, on the other hand, can be seen as an area that includes all services and goods a tourist consumes during his or her stay. This destination appeal shape should transfer to a unique and competitive destination brand which

expresses the reality of the destination and conveys the tourist perspective (Hassan, et al., 2008). Most tourism activities take place at a particular destination, therefore the destination itself forms a pillar of any modeling that is done for the tourism system (Pike, 2004; cited from Hassan, et al., 2008).

According to Aziz et al (2012), there are similarities between corporate and destination branding, researchers and practitioners can develop destination branding models by examining corporate branding models and including destination branding components from literature and also such elements as leadership, vision, resources, capabilities, understanding of competitive environment, the need for committed people and the value of alliances (Kerr, 2006; cited by Aziz et al, 2012).

C. Brand Identity

One of the factors that are determining purpose, direction, and meaning of the brand is brand identity. Aaker (2002, cited by Korhonen, 2010) said brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. Brand identity, however, should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self expressive benefits.

Brand identity consists of twelve dimensions organized around four perspectives – the brand as product (product scope, product attributes, quality/value, uses, users, country of origin), brand as organizational (organizational attributes, local versus global), brand as person (brand personality, brand-customer relationships), and brand as symbol (visual imagery/metaphors and brand heritage) (Aaker, 2002; cited by Korhonen 2010).

Ciceo Andreea (2013) once said that brand identity belongs to the sender side in which how the sender wants the brand to be perceived. Moreover, Kapferer (2012; cited by Andreea, 2013) highlighted that there are six facets of brand identity: physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection and self-image, comprised in the so-called “identity prism”.

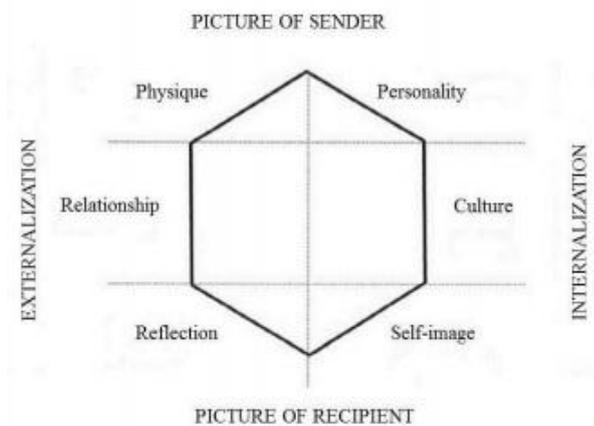


Fig. 1. Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism

When referring to the brand's physique, Kapferer (2012) alludes to the brand's backbone, its tangible value and its prototype, meaning the product relevant for the brand's qualities. Brand's personality is actually a result of the brand's communication and consists of those traits of human personality that could be attributed to the brand. The culture of a brand is the set of values by which all its actions are driven and what makes strong brands become real cult brands, enhancing their differentiation points vis-à-vis their competitors. The relationship facet is about the brand's style of behavior and conduct, which emerges from the way the brand acts, delivers services and relates to its consumer. Reflecting the consumer is different than describing the target, as the target refers to both the potential and actual consumers, whereas the consumer should be reflected as he wishes to be seen after using the brand. Self-image is the consumer's internal mirror, how “I feel, I am” in relation to the brand.

To be effective, a brand identity needs to resonate with customers, differentiate the brand from competitors, and represent what the organization can and will do over time (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; cited by Ghodeswar, 2008).

The most important thing to keep in mind about a brand identity is that it lives entirely in the mind of the beholder. An identity is not what marketers create, but what consumers perceive as what has been created (Upshaw, 1995; cited by Hassan and Hamid, 2008).

D. Brand Image

Brand image is the key driver of brand equity, which refers to consumer's general perception and feeling about a brand and has an influence on consumer behavior. For marketers, whatever their companies' strategies are, the main purpose of their marketing activities is to influence consumers' perception and attitude toward a brand, establish the brand image in consumers' mind, and stimulate consumers' actual purchasing behavior of the brand, therefore increasing sales, maximizing the market share and developing brand equity (Zhang, 2015).

The most important aspect of the brand image trap is that there is a clear difference between a brand image and a brand identity and they have to be distinguished from one another. A brand image means the public's conception of the brand, or in other words, how customers and the public perceived the brand. A brand image can provide useful and important information when a company is developing a brand identity (Aaker, 2002; cited by Korhonen, 2010).

According to Keller (1993), positive brand image could be established by connecting the unique and strong brand association with consumers' memories about the brand through marketing campaigns. In this regard, the brand knowledge should be built and understood before the consumers could respond positively to the branding campaign. If consumers have knowledge of a brand, the company could spend less on brand extension while achieve higher sales (Keller, 1993; cited by Zhang, 2015).

Chitty et al (2007; cited by Zhang, 2015) also empirically proved the dominant role of brand image in predicting

customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry. Moreover, the congruence between the brand image and customers' self-image would enhance customer satisfaction and customers' preference for the brand. Koo (2003; cited by Zhang, 2015) said that brand image is perceived as an important driving force of customer loyalty. For the supermarket industry, favorable store image is very helpful to foster customer loyalty.

Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place, they are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place (Kotler, Heider, and Rein, 1993; cited by Hassan and Hamid, 2008).

The image is a reflection, sometimes distorted, of its fundamental being, a measure of its health, and a mirror to its soul. It speaks to the way a country exists in people's minds and hearts as well as to the position it occupies in relations to other countries (Simonin, 2008; cited by Hassan and Hamid, 2008).

Destination image has a key role for tourism marketers. Several researchers have illustrated that destination image and tourists' purchase decisions are positively correlated; this is an important issue in an individual's travel purchase related decision making, since the individual traveller's dissatisfaction with a travel purchase depends on a comparison of his/her expectation about the destination or a previously held destination image, and on his/her perceived performance of the destination, it is an important determinant (Ritchie and Couch, 2003; cited by Hassan and Hamid, 2008).

E. Brand Loyalty

A brand's value to a firm is largely influenced by customer loyalty. In addition, brand loyalty is a key consideration when placing a value on a brand that is to be bought or sold because highly loyal customers are expected to generate predictable sales and profits (Aaker, 1996; cited by Yoon, 2004). For instance, many brands with strong customer loyalty have been market leaders for years, despite the fact that there have been considerable changes in consumer preference, attitude, and competitive activity over this period of time (Keller, 1998; cited by Yoon 2004).

According to Christopher, Payne, and Ballantyne (1991) customer loyalty is extremely important, as it is more expensive for a company to attract a new customer than to keep an existing one satisfied with the brand. Established customers tend to buy more and are willing to pay premium prices for a supplier that they know and trust (Pitta and Ktsanis, 1995; cited by Yoon, 2004). Satisfied customers provide brand exposure and reassurance at virtually no cost and make market entry difficult for competitors. In this sense, customer loyalty enhances brand equity.

Customer loyalty can be enhanced in different ways. One way to enhance the loyalty of the "fence sitters" and the committed customers is to either develop or strengthen their relationship with then brand. Factors, such as brand awareness, perceived quality and a clear brand identity are helpful in achieving this goal, as well as programs which can build

loyalty more directly. Of these programs, the frequent buyer programs have been utilized by a host of brands in a variety of different product classes. A frequent buyer program can provide direct and tangible reinforcement for loyal customer behavior.

These types of programs enhance the value proposition of the brand, and they can serve as a point of differentiation. In addition, they indicate that a company is committed to its loyal customers, and thus it is clear that their loyalty is not taken for granted. An even more intense customer loyalty level can be created with customer clubs. Similarly, like the frequent buyer programs, a customer club indicates that the company truly care about its customers. A customer club is potentially more involving when compared to frequent buyer programs, which are usually more passive and inclusive. A customer club enables customers to identify more with the brand, express their brand perceptions and attitude, and also share the brand relationship with other like-minded customers. Customer information can also be used for database marketing, which is more specifically targeted at narrow and focused segments. With database marketing, information such as news about new products or special promotions can be tailored to those customer segments which are most likely to respond to this information. Those customers who are targeted can also think that the company is connecting with them individually, which can increasingly strengthen the brand-customer relationship (Aaker, 2002; cited by Korhonen, 2004).

Destinations have to develop, and maintain a unique image that differentiates it from competing ones. There is strong correlation between positive image and intention to visit (Leisen, 2001; cited by Aziz et al, 2012). In order to maintain positive image, destinations should monitor sub-product qualities such as hospitality, infrastructure, and service. Memorable experience that is recalled with excitement, happiness, fun, and joy could lead to brand loyalty (Aziz et al, 2012).

F. Brand Equity

Brand equity is a set of brand assets and liabilities to a brand, its name, and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to firm and/or to that firm's customers (Aaker, 1991; cited by Aziz et al, 2012).

The major asset categories are: 1) Brand name awareness 2) Brand loyalty 3) Perceived quality 4) Brand associations (Aaker, 2002; cited by Korhonen, 2010).

Moreover, brand equity is the most common used to represent brand performance, and is measured in terms of a financial value on the corporate balance sheet. However, such intangible asset values are of little practical value to destination marketing organization (DMOs), albeit with the exception of potential licensing revenue. One alternative worthy of investigation by DMOs in brand effectiveness measurement is consumer based based equity (CBBE) promoted by Aaker (1996; cited by Pike, 2010) and Keller (2003; cited by Pike, 2010). CBBE measurement is based on the premise of developing an understanding of how marketing initiatives are impacting on consumer learning and recall of brand information (Pike, 2010).

By equity means the sum of factors (or dimensions) namely brand image, brand awareness, and brand loyalty that contribute to a brand's value in the consumer's mind. (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007). For example, awareness is most influential on the cognitive component. Without awareness there can be no brand equity. The dimensions of image and quality appear to be more influential on the affective component when attitudes and feelings what is known (awareness) are assessed. Loyalty (behavioral and attitudinal) comes into play in the conative component. If brand equity assessment is sufficient to result in behavioral or attitudinal loyalty all dimensions are influenced by conative component. That is to say, attitudinal or behavioral loyalty will allow for internal measurement adjustments on the dimensions of brand equity. The interrelationships plus the cumulative value of brand dimensions are what gives rise to the creation of brand equity (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

III. METHODS

This research aims to investigate the perception of all local tourists outside Jakarta over the TWAAK as a brand of destination by using a qualitative approach. Meanwhile, data collection in this research has been done with semi-structured interview with two resources have been purposively selected in which purposive sampling method belongs to non-probability sampling techniques that members are selected on the basis of their knowledge, relationships and expertise regarding a research subject (Freedman et al, 2007; cited by Langos, 2014).

Irham Faridh who was found at irhamfaridh.com and Johannes Randy who was found at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/123981141@N03/> have been selected as respondents of this research as they have visited the TWAAK (as it can be seen on their blog telling story about the TWAAK) and are living outside Jakarta.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Taman Wisata Alam Angke Kapuk (TWAAK) has been one of the iconic ecotourism destinations in Jakarta. According the executive of Jakarta administration, Ipih Ruyani (jakarta.go.id, 2011), the city has a 340ha mangrove woods that TWAAK has been a part of those. There are 2 millions of mangrove plants that are conserved at TWAAK.

Not only conserving the mangrove plants, TWAAK has also delivered entertainment as well as playing as a recreational site for tourism. In other words, TWAAK is a small conservation area of mangrove forests on the north coast of Jakarta. It was originally established by the Netherlands Indies government as a nature preserve on 17 June 1939 with an area of 15.04ha, and later expanded to 1,344.62ha in 1960s (Jakarta-tourism.go.id, 2015).

Although, it has been existing since long time ago, still less of Indonesian people aware of it. In this study, it was found that some of local tourists who live outside Jakarta knew nothing about TWAAK. Johannes Randy described that if he did not met a community that randomly has a plan to explore tourism sites in Jakarta through twitter account namely @KartuPos then he would not be having experience visiting

TWAAK Jakarta. In fact, he visited TWAAK once back in 2013. Randy admitted that the meeting with travelers at that community urged him to research more about TWAAK. Unfortunately, he said that there has been less information from the official authorities of TWAAK for tourists like him to give a comprehensive guidance to visit the site beforehand.

Those lacks of information are definitely bringing negative impacts as Randy does not know who the authority of the TWAAK is. He was also wondering the management of TWAAK regarding the Jakarta administration position.

Another respondent, Irham Faridh, who lives in Bandung, West Java, described quite similar answers with the first one. Irham said he does not know about the authorities of the TWAAK. Even more, he has no idea when was asked about the history and logo of TWAAK. He added that he put an effort to research about TWAAK ahead of visiting it. As a result, he knew the entry price tag of the site beforehand as he was prepare enough which is IDR25,000 is the price he has to pay to enter TWAAK. But still, whenever he enjoyed the site, he knew nothing about the safety of the place as there was no tour guides or sufficient information system at the site.

In place branding theory, the notion of identity is central, in that the core values that underpin it provide an anchor around which all communications should be built (Dinnie, 2008; cited by Hudson et al, 2016). In this particular study, the identity of the TWAAK seems to be neglected as local tourists have complained about it.

On the other hand, whenever asked about the facilities of the TWAAK, both of respondents have succeeded to mention some of those like public mosque, public restroom, public boat that can be used by paying some extra money, and also some spots for capturing the moments using photo or video camera.

As of the image of the TWAAK, both of respondents gave similar remarks in a positive way which they felt comfortable with the surroundings which are dominated by mangrove plants. It has been highlighted as a good value added to Jakarta city which has been dominated by air pollution. Indeed, the weather at the TWAAK has been considered very good.

Ritchie and Couch (2003; cited by Hassan and Hamid, 2008) explained that destination image and tourists' purchase decisions are positively correlated. Since the individual traveller's dissatisfaction with a travel purchase depends on a comparison of his/her expectation about the destination or a previously held destination image, and on his/her perceived performance of the destination, then destination image is an important determinant. The image of TWAAK could be dragged to a negative side as many local tourists especially who came from outside Jakarta felt unsatisfied with the services they had from the management of TWAAK.

Furthermore, Randy said that he would be visiting the TWAAK again in the future. However, he would hope to have a significant improvement whenever revisiting the site. This would be a very good opportunity for the authorities to have sort of a positive consumer behavioral intention to visit TWAAK.

However, in contrary, another respondent like Irham said he would never come to TWAAK in any conditions as he felt so terrible with the one and only experience he had at that site. As an unsatisfied tourist has emerged, then it should be paid with negative customer loyalty, which at certain point, it would make the site to be no more existing.

Satisfied customers provide brand exposure and reassurance at virtually no cost and make market entry difficult for competitors. In this sense, customer loyalty enhances brand equity.

V. CONCLUSION

This study is limited by the scale of research, that is, the findings are reflective of just two respondents who live outside Jakarta. Future research could use the same methodology to examine other destinations in different geographic locations. The use of mixed method research has also been suggested to have a more holistic perspective of the findings over the perceptions of local tourists on ecotourism destination brand.

However, the research has delivered an initial findings qualitatively over the destination brand at the TWAAK that some local tourists who live outside Jakarta felt satisfied being on the site yet they seemed to fell negative with the less information gave by the authorities.

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