The Many Faces of Wonderful Indonesia: Tourism Brand in Sixteen Countries Online News Sites

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Abstract


Introduction

Branding is a concept imported from marketing and has attracted great interest among researchers and practitioners since it is being transferred from the products to services and organizations. Though the practice of tourism/destination branding started almost a few decades ago in 1998, it is still considered a fertile area of research (Cai, Gartner, Munar, 2009; Tasci & Gartner, 2009). Destination image, place brand, and branding continue to receive attention from researchers and industry as well (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015).
Tourism/destination branding is one of 4 (four) perspectives in studying place branding. Whether it is a country, a region, a city or a smaller place, place branding are extremely complex in nature and has been approached from many perspectives beyond commercial settings. Thus, place branding is an instrument to plan and develop a place based on its own unique characteristics (i.e., identity) (Yananda & Salamah, 2014).

Four different perspectives of place branding can be distinguished, namely the country-of-origin approach (e.g., Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002), focusing on the role of the place in product branding; the destination-branding approach (e.g., Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011), primarily focusing on the tourism function and attracting visitors; the public-diplomacy approach (e.g., Sevin, 2013), examining the relationships between the place’s authorities and external stakeholders in order to enhance the place’s reputation; and the identity–based approach (e.g., Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013), focusing on interactions between internal and external audiences and how individuals attribute meaning to place brands (Kladou, Kavaratzis, Rigopoulou, & Salonika, 2015). This study emphasizes on destination branding approach through the tourism term is much broader than mere destinations.

A brand basically consists of three (3) elements: identity, image and positioning (Pyke & Ryan, 2004). Identity is what the brand is projected through positioning to create certain images. In a sense, brand positioning functioned as a bridge ranging from brand identity to brand image and had certain elements namely (place or destination) symbol and slogan. A name is the essence of a product brand (Aaker, 1991) and a good brand name is the first step to position and communicate the competitive advantage of a product (Ries & Trout, 1982) since the right words would convey the intended meanings.

Place brand image was constructed using of three (3) elements: primary communication derived from direct experience with the place, secondary communication through ads and public relations, and tertiary communication when a place was mentioned in chat and/or word of mouth (WOM) (Kavaratzis, 2004). Primary image was formed by direct experience (i.e., site visit) and secondary one was formed by information received from external sources (Goodrich, 1978; Phelps, 1986). Public relations is one of the effort to convey place or destination images, and was used intermittently with advertisements. Public relations campaign is one of the instruments to counter negative perception and proactively promote a positive image of a place (see Tilson & Stacks, 1997).

This research identifies the tourism brand image through media agenda setting concerning the brand. Media is one of stakeholders in terms of brand building, including tourism brand, and served as conduit for reaching out to other stakeholders such as consumers, tourists, investors, citizens, regulators, as well as communities. Researching media perspective about one brand may help destination marketing organization (DMO) making sense of their tourism brand and make the best for their communication strategy. News saliency in terms of visibility and sentiment would indicate how the media see the tourism brand ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ and the destinations as well. According to Avraham (2000), media portrayal has implications for the position of places in the growing international and international competition for various resources such as tourism, investments and businesses.

This research aims to contribute to destination branding approaches by focusing on country tourism branding effort to attract tourists via public relations. Though Pike & Bianchi (2016) had identified the lack of understanding of the effectiveness of slogans and logos as one of the main research gaps in the destination branding literature, slogans and logos are still the most played game in country tourism brand. Wonderful Indonesia, Malaysia Truly Asia and Amazing Thailand are examples of slogans and logos usage for country tourism brands to name a few.

Wonderful Indonesia is a ‘middle of the road’ tourism brand for not scoring as a total failure nor a success story. It does not completely fail in delivering its messages but some of the nation/tourism qualities are not yet interpreted as intended (Poyk & Pandjaitan, 2016). This study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of country tourism brand usage in promoting destinations in Indonesia through online news media. Destinations are products associated with the tourism brand of their countries though the attribution is unintentional. Moreover, destination product comprises a set of components that is larger and more complex than those sets of other products, including different services, places, people and other elements (Santos & Giraldi, 2017).

Literature Review

Though some prior analysis claimed Wonderful Indonesia as a nation brand (e.g., Pamungkas, 2015; Poyk & Pandjaitan, 2016), the logo and the slogan were widely used exclusively for tourism purposes. According to Yee (2009) nation branding is a relatively new term but the concept has been around in a form and an extension of destination branding and place branding. While place brand is broader than simply tourism, it may encompass all or some of the following: inward investment, exports, culture, sports, events, education, and immigration (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011).

In order to create images in the minds of certain publics, there are 6 (six) channels or areas of activity that countries generally undertake: (1) tourism promotion activity; (2) exported products and services; (3) policy decisions of their region’s government; (4) business audience; (5) cultural
exchange and cultural activity and exports; and (6) the people of the country themselves (Anholt in Anholt, 2011). Tourism requires image making and branding grounded in the place’s reality (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). A place only become a destination through the narratives and images communicated by tourism promotional materials. Tourists’ destinations are composites of services and natural socio-cultural landscapes and they exist on multiple geopolitical levels (Buhalis, 2000; Morgan & Pritchard 2004; and Pike in Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2011). Places looking to build or maintain strong reputations must consider holistic approach to their brand which incorporated tourism, economic development, and a sense of place. And if a place became a strong brand, it has a positive ‘reputation’ (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011). A strong yet dynamic brand have easier time attracting businesses and talents within the knowledge economy.

Lack of research in branding has not stopped destinations from attempting to brand themselves. Pride dalam Morgan, Pritchard, dan Pride (2007) pointed out that mere communication can influence reputation is a stretch, there is little evidence that international perceptions of countries can really be influenced by marketing communication techniques (Anholt, 2010, p. 2). Country branding and marketing is a challenge especially for a specific country has been the subject of prolonged negative media coverage (Avraham, 2009).

Anholt (2005) identify the different characteristics between a territorial actor, such as country, region, city and company. Unlike a company, a country is not generally free to choose its internal audience; its identity can hardly be modified in a top-down approach; in a democracy, voters and parliament elect the government; the government’s room for maneuvering is limited as it is held accountable to its electorate; its messaging is different from that of a company because a government cannot really select its internal audience; the country’s institution is binding (Anholt in Go & Govers, 2011).

Assessing a brand image and how it compares to its competitors’ images are necessary steps to design the country’s marketing strategy (Kotler & Gertner, 2011). Academic research has provided several steps and tools to offset the challenges and achieve successful branding. Some of the most critical can be summarized as projecting a simple, appealing, believable, and distinctive image; defining the attributes forming a basis for strong branding; developing an umbrella concept to cover the country’s separate branding activities; and catchy slogan, visual images or symbols, and special events to achieve higher level of awareness (Tasci & Gartner, 2009).

But first of all, awareness is a critical dimension for the renewal market and this dimension is still play a crucial role in tourism brand. Awareness is often enhanced through the use of destination images. For the repeat market, awareness is given but images are strong reminders used to elevate level of awareness or keep destination in the mind of the past tourists (Tasci & Gartner, 2009). Tourists’ evaluation of a destination can be understood as consumer-based brand equity that consists of awareness, image, perceived quality and loyalty dimensions (Ruzzier & Ruzzier, 2009). Consistent with numerous findings, image is the most important in the evaluation process.

Place nor destination visibility in the media create awareness for new tourism market. Place visibility in media is likely to predict higher loyalty and purchase intention since 2D (two dimensional) or text-based virtual information from online news media tend to predict higher telepresence (i.e. belief, affect and global affect) than word of mouth, past experience and DMO promotion. When an information source becomes increasingly more similar to direct experience, the degree of credibility for it increases (Hyun & Cai in Cai, Gartner & Munar, 2009, p. 42). Moreover, digital information sources provide relevant image formation and branding agents and thus, potentially impact travelers’ image and serve as platforms to communicate perceptions (Költringer & Dickinger, 2015).

Methods

This research aims to analyze the image of Indonesian tourism brand ‘Wonderful Indonesia’. It focuses on the news from online mainstream media in 16 countries; namely the main target market of Indonesian tourism. News saliency in term of visibility and sentiment indicate how the media see the tourism brand ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ and the destinations as well.

Content analysis was conducted on 378 news articles posted in mainstream online media in 16 countries respectively between May 2016 to May 2017 using Google (Google Custom Search) under keywords ‘Wonderful Indonesia’, ‘Tourism+Indonesia’ and 10 Indonesian popular destination. Destinations included in this study are: (1) Lake Toba, (2) Tanjung Kelayang, (3) Mandalika, (4) Wakatobi, (5) Morotai Island, (6) Kepulauan Seribu (Thousand Islands), (7) Tanjung Lesung, (8) Borobudur, (9) Bromo and (10) Labuan Bajo.

Below is the list of sixteen countries online news sites observed based on the highest readership/viewership according to various sources.

This research also compared ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ with tourism brand belong to other Southeast Asia countries such as Malaysian (‘Truly Asia’) and Thailand (‘Amazing Thailand’). Keywords used are ‘Truly Asia’, ‘tourism + Malaysia’, ‘Amazing Thailand’, and ‘tourism + Thailand’. Keywords for specific destinations are not used in Malaysian and Thai case.

Descriptive statistics are used to tally the number of news and relevant news to indicate
Table 1. Sixteen Countries Online News Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Online News Sites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td><a href="http://www.straitstimes.com">www.straitstimes.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>People Republic of China</td>
<td><a href="http://www.chinadailyasia.com">www.chinadailyasia.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.theitar.com.my">www.theitar.com.my</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td><a href="http://www.smh.com.au">www.smh.com.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td><a href="http://www.asahi.com/jgw/">www.asahi.com/jgw/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>english.chosun.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>United Stated of America</td>
<td><a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>gulfnews.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td><a href="https://www.theguardian.com/">https://www.theguardian.com/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td><a href="http://www.inquirer.net">www.inquirer.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>France</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lemonde.fr">www.lemonde.fr</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bild.de">www.bild.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td><a href="http://www.telegraaf.nl">www.telegraaf.nl</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>timesofindia.indiatimes.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bangkokpost.com">www.bangkokpost.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td><a href="https://www.kp.ru/">https://www.kp.ru/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Overall Search Result for Tourism Brand and 10 Top Destinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Number of News</th>
<th>Number of Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>News</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wonderful Indonesia”</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism + Indonesia</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danau Toba (Lake Toba)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjung Kelayang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandalika</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakatobi</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pulau Morotai (Morotai Island)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepulauan Seribu (Thousands Island)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanjung Lesung</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borobudur</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labuan Bajo</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Truly Asia”</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Amazing Thailand”</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

visibility. The two (2) indicators were used due to the fact that mere mentioning of the keywords is not a valid indicator since the overall content is also meaningful for analysis.

As for sentiments, news articles were analyzed using computational linguistics and text mining. **Sentiment Analyzer** made by Dr. Daniel Soper (http://www.danielsoper.com/sentimentanalysis) was used to rate news articles in values ranged between -100 to +100, from very negative to very positive. The system was designed to analyze texts in English language and automatically generate a sentiment value. A high value means positive sentiment, and low values means negative. The value was applied for news articles mentioning keywords such as ‘Wonderful Indonesia’, ‘Tourism+Indonesia’, ‘Truly Asia’, ‘Tourism+Malaysia’, ‘Amazing Thailand’ and ‘Tourism+Thailand’.

Results
Visibility

If visibility in the media creates awareness, then low visibility is the sign of low awareness among tourism market. All - inclusively, 378 news articles mentioned the keywords related to Indonesia’s tourism brand and destinations. Among them, only 35% are relevant in term of news content. At first glance, it is a promising number of articles. But these numbers had to be divided with 365 days and 16 countries. Without doing the equation, one can say that the number of news articles is very low. This finding suggests that Indonesia’s tourism brand as well as its destinations are not visible in media thus public awareness for those items is relatively very low.

The table shown below are the indicator for keywords used in this study and the overall results.

Wonderful Indonesia serves as country tourism brand and was used as an umbrella brand for Indonesia’s top 10 destinations. But this brand was mentioned only in 9 – 10 news articles per year and spread over 16 online news media in 16 countries. It was exceeded by destinations such as Lake Toba, Borobudur and Bromo. Borobudur is the number one destination in term of media visibility followed by Bromo and Lake Toba. The top 3 destinations has higher media visibility than the tourism brand itself.

As mentioned above, less than half (35%) of the online news are relevant with the country’s tourism brand. It indicates that the tourism brand visibility is only 0.3 relevant news per day and the news was concentrated within three (3) countries, which are Singapore, Australia and Malaysia.

Singapore with www.straitstimes.com is on the first place in mentioning Indonesia’s tourism brand and destinations with 150 news articles and 35 relevant news articles. Singaporean media comprises of 25.5% of both overall news articles and relevant news articles mentioning the brand and destinations. Australia is the runner up for mentioning Wonderful Indonesia’ dan the destinations in 28 news articles which are all relevant – via online version of Sydney Morning Herald a.k.a www.smh.com.au. The third place was filled by Malaysia via www.thestar.com.my. *The Star* gave attention to the brand and destinations through 19 news articles. The interesting fact about Malaysian media is it put ‘Truly Asia’ in a spotlight with 9 news articles, while ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ deserved 2 articles and ‘Amazing Thailand’ none at all.

On the other side of the coin, Russia, France, South Korea and Germany had nothing to say about Indonesia whatsoever in their most – viewed or read online news media.

The same tendency was also found in other brands, which are ‘Truly Asia’ and ‘Amazing Thailand’. Malaysia produce only few messages conveying Truly Asia in overseas online media though the same conclusion may not be drawn to Malaysian media. ‘Truly Asia’ only occured in countries like Australia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) besides Malaysia. As in Amazing
Thailand case, news about the brand occurred in Thailand, Australia and United States of America online news media.

Sentiments
Using an automatic system for calculating sentiment value, herewith the result for Indonesia as well as Malaysia and Thailand.

Findings related to sentiment value are good news for Indonesia’s tourism brand. The mean for sentiment indicates that news about this brand is heading to positive tone. Wonderful Indonesia is definitely stronger in term of the sentiment value compared to Malaysia “Truly Asia”. Surprisingly, news about Amazing Thailand brand is heading to negative side.

Discussions
Visibility in the media is the very first step and a part of basic sequence when it comes to building strong brand and reputation. ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ may use many promotion media as well as activities. But the fact that this brand still has low visibility in the mainstream online media in sixteen countries – which are the main target market for Indonesia tourism – indicated that Indonesia tourism brand hasn’t focused on public relations yet. Although the same case happen to Malaysia and Thailand tourism brand, both have better performance in numbers of tourists per year than Indonesia. This can only mean the two countries have managed to advance beyond awareness. According to Anholt (2011), tourism promotion activities is one of the key factors in image making and branding. But if these promotional materials cannot make it to the mainstream media, and in this case online mainstream media, then it hasn’t spilled over the targeted market which are the media and their readers. Promotion, engagement, media exposure, and public information must go hand in hand to build the tourism brand as well as maintain its reputation. A strong brand equals to a positive reputation (Morgan, Pritchard, & Pride, 2011) and in order to build both brand and reputation, one of the key stakeholders to bear in mind is mass media. Mass media exposure is a must considering some countries has suffered being the subject of prolonged media coverage (Avraham, 2009). Assessing brand image via media is one of necessary steps to identify strength and weaknesses of a brand. Awareness is a critical dimension for the new as well as renewal market (Tasci & Gartner, 2009). Awareness is the concept so powerful that it creates images for the intended public and serves as a strong reminder to keep the brand and the destinations in the public mind. No wonder that this concept is the first and foremost to evaluate a brand.

Conclusions
While conveying potentials to be a strong brand with positive images, ‘Wonderful Indonesia’ has a very low media visibility. This finding indicates a low level of awareness among tourism market. But this same tendency applied to Malaysian and Thai tourism brand, implying that news, especially online news, is not considered a mighty tool to promote one country’s tourism brand and destinations. Though theoretically (online) mass media is still one of the intermediaries for image making process, its effectiveness should be taken with a grain of salt. This finding also indicates that news placement and news making were not the game in town when it comes to marketing and PR – ing tourism brand.

It should be highlighted that online news has its own advantages due to gatekeeping process and its credibility, two things that are lacked in other media, especially social media. Newsworthy and trustworthy information can be sent via this media in no time, while it takes a while to build credibility in other many-to-many media.

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