



"International Conference ASEAN Golden Anniversary: Embracing ASEAN  
Community, Harmonizing Diversity"

## TOURISM BRANDING IN ASEAN COUNTRIES

Restu Karlina Rahayu, Ratnaningsih Damayanti, Irma Fitriana Ulfah<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

We know ASEAN motto is one vision, one identity, one community. For the purpose of ASEAN tourism, ASEAN using the tagline feel the warmth. Not only ASEAN trying to promote the tourism in the community but also each country in ASEAN has their own tourism slogan. Namely Brunei (Brunei, The Green Heart of Borneo, The Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures), Cambodia (Kingdom of Wonder), Indonesia (Wonderful Indonesia), Laos (Simply Beautiful), Malaysia (Malaysia Truly Asia), Myanmar (Mystical Myanmar), Philippines (It's More Fun in the Philippines), Singapore (Your Singapore), Thailand (Amazing Thailand, Always Amazes You), Vietnam (The Timeless Charm). According to Kotler (2008) brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller of a group the of seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors. In 1965 Association for Better New York launched campaign "The Big Apple". It was J FitzGerald a reporter in Morning Telegraph who started using the word The Big Apple in 1920. After the campaign New York had shown the significant increasing tourist number. Now days there are a lot of cities in famous country also using the branding too promote it tourism. Not only in developing country but also in develop country such as France, England, USA and others. This paper is trying to explain how city branding has been developing in almost all ASEAN country. But we will focusing on city branding in Indonesia. Literature study is used for this research.

**Key words:** branding, tourism, Asean

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In Today's Globalized world, cities, regions, and nations compete ever more intensely in attracting the visitor. There are many interesting tourist attractions and places worth visiting in ASEAN. Places such as Borobudur, Bali, Merlion Park, Hanoi, Pattaya Beach, and Angkor Watt are one of favorite tourist destinations for foreigners who visit ASEAN. ASEAN countries have similar characteristics of natural resources. Most of ASEAN countries are gifted with a lot of beautiful view of mountains and beaches. Natural resources aren't the only reason why so many foreign tourists love to visit ASEAN, but united ASEAN countries also have similar wealth culture. Tour of pagoda

<sup>1</sup> Government Department Faculty of Social and Political Science University of Brawijaya, Jl. Veteran Malang Indonesia. E-mail address: restu.karlina@ub.ac.id, ratnaningsih86@gmail.com, irmafitt@gmail.com





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and temples become one of the attractions for religious tourism available in all ASEAN countries.

Interestingly, the efforts to promote the tourism in each ASEAN country have been carried out since 1970 when Indonesia introduced a slogan of "Indonesia, there is more to it than Bali". Since then, each ASEAN country such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand keep competing with Indonesia to attract more foreign tourists. This tourism competition is then realized by ASEAN. By the end of 2012, ASEAN established ASEAN tourism forum and launched a campaign of "Southeast Asia, Feel the Warmth." This collective branding has been realized by one of the researchers.

*"Brand awareness of ASEAN as a holiday destination is low. When consumers think of ASEAN they are more likely to think of it as a political grouping or economic region than as a holiday destination. (This) may be traced to a number of underlying issues such as (1) a lack of sufficient and guaranteed funding to enable a branding campaign to take place and (2) a lack of marketing strategy and plan based on consumer and trade research and endorsed by relevant government stakeholders and the industry<sup>2</sup>.*

This article will try to describe the tourism branding that will be done by each country. When the branding campaign is launched and what is the impact it gives to the tourism in ASEAN countries after the launching of tourism branding. Furthermore, this article will try to observe the branding offered by ASEAN as one of the parts of the campaign in order to collectively attract the tourists. Since the writer comes from Indonesia and is currently living in Indonesia, this article will explain more and provide data about Indonesia.

## 2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

In recent years, more ASEAN countries are competing in using city branding. Reviewing the city branding is an interesting study to do. Comparing tourism branding between ASEAN countries has resulted in a research question that is "how far tourism branding is able to affect the tourists' interes in visitng visit the country?" This paper is a result of preliminary research. It can be said that this research needs to be continued and it has not done perfectly. This research also uses literature study. Literature study is a study conducted by investigating references relevant to this research. Data collection

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<sup>2</sup> Dr Noel Scott, University of Queensland, Impact Assessment of the Visit ASEAN Campaign, May 2007



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by comparing the website of each Asian country that promoted tourism. The website is the government's official website

### **City Branding**

According to Kotler, brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or service of the seller groups and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Brand is usually given by a company to a product that they offer to the buyer/consumer. Destination branding or place branding is a strategy on how to promote a region or city. According to Morgan et al<sup>3</sup> there are many ways that can be used in order to alter an image of a region such as advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, website, brochures, event organizer, filmmakers, destination marketing organization, and journalist.

According to Ali Hasan<sup>4</sup> brand is a tool to identify a product, service, people or place that appear in such a way that the buyer or user feels relevant to it. Unique added value should be in accordance with the consumer needs. Furthermore, Ali Hasan has stated that brand building is implemented to create an influence to the public opinion, and rebranding is sometimes needed for region with drastic environmental changes due to disaster or disaster caused by accidental human action. Branding of a destination is very necessary to improve the tourist destination and to increase the image of a city or country.

Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee have introduced a marketing concept in business practice to enter the public sector. In Indonesia, this concept is pioneered by Hermawan Kartajaya. Hermawan introduced a very famous PDB triangle of positioning, differentiation and brand. Hermawan is well known as consultant who has helped various regencies/cities in Indonesia to create their own brand. The question is that why a city needs a brand like a company? According to Yananda and Salamah<sup>5</sup> there are two reasons why a city needs an image. The first reason is because of political entity and the second reason is economic factor. Yananda and Salamah further explained it as follows:

*As a centre of economic growth, a city should be able to attract business actors and investors to develop a business and invest their capital. A city should also be able to attract the tourists to visit and spend their money. As a political entity, a city*

<sup>3</sup> Morgan, Nigel, Anette Pritchard, Roger Pride, ed (2002). *Destination Branding: Creating The Unique Destination Proposition*

<sup>4</sup> Hasan, Ali. 2015. *Tourism Marketing*

<sup>5</sup> Yananda, Rahmat dan Ummi Salamah. 2014. *Branding Tempat: Membangun Kota, Kabupaten, dan Provinsi Berbasis Identitas*



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*is obligated to do a public diplomacy and support the promotion of a product it produces.*

The official campaign launched by the government of New York City was carried out in 1977 by William S. Doyle by asking for advertising company namely Wells Rich Greene. A graphic designer named Milton Glaser made "I Love New York" logo. Meanwhile, its marketing strategy was delivered by Wells Rich Greene. This campaign proved to be successful with rising tourism revenue of 1.6 billion USD. The licensed use of "I ♥ New York" contributed to 1.83 billion USD in 2011 and 1.5 billion USD in 2010. The branding not only serves to attract the tourist but also to be the city branding attached to this day. It is expected that the city branding will attach to the city image in which New York City is a city worthy of being loved by its citizens, as it is able to create conducive working atmosphere and comfortable daily life.

Myanmar is a country that has been led by junta military for decades. In 1996 Myanmar launched a campaign of "Visit Myanmar 1996". This campaign was opposed by NGOs in Myanmar. Tourism has proven to increase the economic growth in Myanmar. However, the rapid growth in Myanmar has given negative impact of forcing the residents to be relocated to a village for the benefit of the tourist. Several historical sites were damaged due to infrastructure development. Thus, the NGOs persuade and invite the tourist to not visit Myanmar until it becomes a democratic state.

Then in 2013, Myanmar announced its latest campaign titled, "Let the Journey Begin".

*The creative thinking behind the 'Let the Journey Begin' slogan was to express Myanmar's current situation as well as acknowledging a wish to make progress after a period of isolation. There is also evidence of Myanmar delivering counter message to the negative stereotype. As the developers of the brand admitted, they wanted to focus on Myanmar's rich cultural heritage, because people were just not aware what the country had to offer<sup>6</sup>.*

The branding was designed by Irish international marketing firm called Image Diplomacy (iD) and it was launched in the World Economic Forum on East Asia aired by BBC world. There were around 70 taglines formulated by iD before deciding on the new campaign.

<sup>6</sup> Hudson, S. Let the journey begin (again): The branding of Myanmar. Journal of Destination Marketing & Management (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.06.002>





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### City Branding in ASEAN Countries

In this part, the author will try to expose the campaign promoted by each ASEAN countries. As described in the methodology section that this study is a preliminary study. This study only compares the tagline of the official government website.

#### 1. Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam started its campaign in 2014 with "The Green Heart of Borneo." Brunei uses more than one tagline and started introducing "The Kingdom of Unexpected Treasures." Located in Borneo Island along with Malaysia and Indonesia, Brunei used eco-tourism destination as its tourism approach. The promotion was introduced in the form of family trip packages. The goal is to introduce the beauty of Brunei that has not been widely communicated by people. So that families and children will love the nature more.

#### 2. Cambodia

Angkor Wat is a superior tourism of Cambodia. Most of the beauty of Cambodia can be seen through box office movie played by Angelina Jolie which is based on Tom Rider video game. 50% tourists who visit Cambodia will come to Angkor Wat. It is not surprising if Angkor Wat becomes the tourism icon in Cambodia. Cambodia inaugurated its tourism promotion in 2011. Cambodia chose the tagline "Kingdom of Wonder" due to the high number of temples there.

#### 3. Laos

Not much different with Cambodia, Laos also launched its tourism campaign in 2012 with "Simply Beautiful". Laos started promoting its annual festival due to its richness. This festival is related to the annual cycle of rice plant season. This festival not only relates to harvesting period but also the majority of religion adopted by Laos' community. Therefore, it is very common for them to perform rituals before the harvesting season. This is part of acculturation between culture and religion.

#### 4. Malaysia

In 1999, Malaysia started its campaign with "Malaysia Truly Asia.". Slightly different with other ASEAN country campaigns that aim at family, Malaysia aims at the corporate market. Thus, Malaysia built many infrastructure and facilities for MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions/events). This campaign is quite







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successful and Malaysia gained a significant amount of tourists. Malaysia rank in number 1 as ASEAN country with the highest number of visitors.

### 5. Myanmar

Myanmar is known as a conflict-ridden country. After the prolonged military coup, Myanmar started to improve its image in the world. In 2011, Myanmar promoted "Mystical Myanmar." However, this branding was considered to be unsuccessful due to low interest of foreign tourists. In the end, Myanmar started its rebranding in 2013 and launched "Let the Journey Begin." Through this campaign, it seems that Myanmar wanted to reduce the negative stereotypes inherent in Myanmar over the years. This campaign focused on the cultural wealth owned by Myanmar and this campaign was considered to be successful comparing to the first campaign. The number of tourists visiting Myanmar had increased rapidly and the tourism growth of Myanmar rank in the first position in ASEAN.

### 6. Philippines

"It's More Fun in the Philippines" was introduced in 2012 to replace "WOW Philippines." Philippines has been recognized by the world through its magnificent beaches. Philippines used hospitality approach to the tourists. Providing good tourism service and experience from its people's hospitality. Affordable price becomes one of its bargaining power of Philippines. Citizen of Philippines also respond friendly and honestly to the tourists.

### 7. Singapore

Singapore launched "Your Singapore" on March 5, 2010 and it is the evolution from "Uniquely Singapore" which became the brand from 2004 to 2009. Singapore focused on the service such as dining, shopping, natural and cultural attractions, and mix-and-match of multiple experiences. Singapore realizes that, as the smallest country in ASEAN, it will be difficult to compete with other ASEAN countries that have more natural resources. Therefore, Singapore focused on Global Financial Centre and start building a lot of artificial tourism infrastructure. Finally, Singapore is able to build an image as the financial center in ASEAN to compete with Malaysia.

### 8. Thailand

Thailand is one of the countries that often changes its branding. Every two years Thailand promotes its newest tagline. The recent tourism tagline of Thailand is





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"Amazing Thailand, Always Amazes You." This campaign is the supplement or part of the "Discover Thainess" campaign. "Amazing Thailand" is considered as one of the successful taglines in ASEAN. The number of tourists in Thailand is relatively stable because Thailand becomes one of favorite destinations in ASEAN today.

### 9. Vietnam

Vietnam launched "From Hidden Charm to Timeless Charm" campaign in 2012. The basic value of the Vietnamese tourism brand is "time," "intensity," "mystery," and "commitment," Developing diversified tourism forms such as sea-island, culture-spirit, community-based tourism, ecotourism, adventure sports tourism, and sightseeing countryside. Vietnam has to compete with Brunei, Laos, Cambodia, Philippines, and Indonesia. Thus Vietnam wants to introduce its natural resources that are capable to compete with other ASEAN countries.

### 10. Indonesia

In 1970-1980 Indonesia promoted "Indonesia, there is more to it than Bali," "Indonesia, Bali and Beyond", and "Indonesia, Bali plus Nine". After that, Indonesia introduced "Visit Indonesia Year (VIY)" in 1991. A year later, the branding changed into "Let's Go Archipelago" in 1992. One of famous tourism taglines of Indonesia is "Unity in Diversity" in 2008 and this branding was also used by ASEAN. Indonesia introduced the recent campaign in 2011 with "Wonderful Indonesia."

### 11. ASEAN

Currently, ASEAN uses the motto of "One Vision, One Identity, One Community." In 2009, the representatives of ASEAN countries signed MOU that marked the effort of tourism cooperation and promotion in ASEAN. Actually, this effort has been implemented since 1992 at ASEAN 25th anniversary. However, there was no significant improvement from the campaign.

*ASEAN member countries have been co-operating on regional tourism destination marketing and development, with varying degrees of commitment, over the past two decades. From 1988 to 1996, they funded an ASEAN Tourism Information Centre (ATIC). In 1992, they staged a "Visit ASEAN Year" promotion to recognize the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of ASEAN<sup>7</sup>.*

<sup>7</sup> Marketing The Southeast Asia Destination Brand. USAID Report. 2009





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Ultimately, "Asia's Perfect 10 Paradise" was promoted and in 2012 ASEAN introduced its new tourism tagline namely "Southeast Asia, Feel The Warmth" as well as introducing the ASEAN Tourism Forum. There is no comprehensive study that compares the branding of each country in Asean. Asian forums need to conduct further studies to measure the effectiveness of existing branding. So that the established branding will be cohesive as an Asian and not compete in an unhealthy way.

### 3. CONCLUSION

As stated previously, this article still needs preliminary research. The conclusion made is still far from perfect and it requires further discussion. There are few notes that we have made from this article among others:

1. Asean tourism forum has promoted integrated tourism in Asean
2. Tourism branding can increase the number of tourist visits
3. Branding is needed to distinguish the uniqueness of each ASEAN country
4. Asean countries branding has similarity in promoting cultural heritage, natural tourism, cultural attraction and traditional festivals
5. The study of branding is a study that is a rising trend. Because it can enrich the study of communication and tourism. We strongly recommend to do a study of deeper and more comprehensive branding

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