

Nation brand image and trust level of foreign citizens

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ABSTRACT

The state is an organization with a power structure and the population as members of the state. The state itself is an entity that interacts with other entities that can consist of other countries and their inhabitants, rules, and products. Because of this, a country needs an identity that can distinguish the country from other countries. The identity of a country is not the same as the identity of a product because a country is bound by history and images attached to foreign citizens' minds. This inherent image is usually used to form a nation's brand image. This study aims to discover how Malaysia's nation brand image contributes to the trust of foreign nationals visiting their country by using a constructivist qualitative approach as a research method. It turns out that the results of the study show that the most powerful thing in determining Malaysia's brand image is not tourism promotion. As a country with an image of different cultures, Malaysia will use this potential to visualize its tourism promotion to keep those images stronger. However, the experience of Indonesian citizens in interacting with the Malaysian state, with infrastructure, state norms, and citizens, is a determinant of how Indonesian citizens perceive Malaysia. What is inherent in the results of the experience of interacting in Malaysia is what Indonesian citizens will convey to others. Therefore, a comprehensive strategy is needed to build a national brand image of Malaysia because what sticks in mind as an image of Malaysia in foreign nationals will show their trust in the country.

Keywords: Nation; brand image; level; trust; foreign citizens

Nation brand image dan tingkat kepercayaan warga negara asing

ABSTRAK

Negara merupakan sebuah organisasi di mana di dalamnya terdapat struktur kekuasaan maupun penduduk sebagai anggota dari negara tersebut. Negara sendiri merupakan sebuah entitas yang memiliki interaksi dengan entitas lain yang bisa terdiri dari negara lain dan penduduknya, aturan, juga produk dari negara tersebut. Karena hal tersebutlah sebuah negara membutuhkan sebuah identitas yang bisa membedakan negara tersebut dengan negara lain. Identitas sebuah negara tidaklah sama dengan identitas sebuah produk karena sebuah negara terikat dengan sejarah dan image yang sudah melekat di benak warga negara lain. Image yang melekat inilah yang biasanya dimanfaatkan sebagai sebuah strategi pembentukan nation brand image. Negara menguatkan image tersebut melalui promosi pariwisata dengan menggunakan visualisasi sesuai dengan image yang sudah terbangun. Malaysia sebagai sebuah negara yang memiliki image perbedaan budaya menggunakan potensi tersebut dalam visualisasi promosi pariwisatanya sehingga image yang terbangun di benak warga negara asing semakin kuat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana nation brand image Malaysia berkontribusi terhadap kepercayaan warga negara asing yang mengunjungi negaranya dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif konstruktivis sebagai metode penelitian. Ternyata hasil yang didapat dari penelitian yang dilakukan, yang paling kuat dalam menentukan brand image Malaysia bukan lah promosi pariwisata, melainkan pengalaman warga negara Indonesia dalam melakukan interaksi dengan negara Malaysia baik dengan infrastruktur, norma negara maupun warga negaranya menjadi penentu bagaimana Malaysia dipersepsi oleh warga negara Indonesia. Hal yang melekat dari hasil pengalaman berinteraksi di Malaysia inilah yang akan disampaikan oleh warga negara Indonesia pada orang lain. Diperlukan sebuah strategi komprehensif untuk membangun nation brand image Malaysia, karena yang melekat di benak sebagai sebuah image Malaysia di warga negara asing akan menunjukkan tingkat kepercayaan mereka pada negara tersebut.

Kata-kata Kunci: Nation; brand image; tingkat; kepercayaan; warga negara asing

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INTRODUCTION

Nation branding is the process of forming a nation's brand image of a country. Nation brand image or country image is a result obtained from the efforts made by a country to obtain a positive impression of the public of the country, either the internal public, in this case, its citizens, or the external public, namely other citizens. For its citizens, the country's image is a national identity that will be seen from the attitudes and behavior of the citizen in his country or when dealing with other countries through public diplomacy. Nation brand image formed in foreign nationals will be shown through the behavior of foreign nationals in the desire to visit a country due to his sympathy for the country, the pleasure of visiting the country. A positive image is indicated by a good statement about the country so that the nation's brand image will encourage the establishment of the competitive value of a country with other countries in an international association.

The importance of a nation's brand image and national identity is very well realized by a country, especially if you look at the development of technology in this disruptive era; information that is very fast and easy to obtain makes every aspect of life easy to get, as well as information about the state of a country, making a country's reputation a vital capital to overcome a crisis

that may end the country. Building a state image is a must for the good of that country because any information can be shared and obtained by the public through any channel they choose, either through the media or by word of mouth. The experience that a person gets through media information, conversations with others, or that he has experienced himself will determine how the image of the country is formed in the minds of the public. Forming the image of a country is very dependent on the individual's experience when in contact with a country, so one's opinion becomes very important.

The process of forming the image of a state in the mind of the individual is not easy, several things will then encourage the individual to have sympathy for the country, including how the individual views and beliefs in the advantages of a country in terms of its economy and politics, believes in the values contained in that country, such as the culture, religion, and customs of the country, Also believe in the beauty of the country, especially when viewed from certain places that become icons of the country. The beliefs formed are obtained by a person from the results of the communication process either carried out by the concerned consciously and intentionally or unwittingly from the observations of others. The formation of individuals on these beliefs is key to how a country is judged and shaped by others in this

regard by outside citizens. However, can a country be branded? Because the country is like a commodity, which tries to attract the attention of the world community to come or give a good assessment of the country.

The formation of a country's brand image can be done in various ways, can be through products made and become characteristic of the country, such as Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola, which is identic with the United States, or *Volkswagen* which identifies with Germany, or introduces the country through international events or tourism that invites other citizens to visit the country to get direct experience related to that country. Tourism strategies from the past are most widely used to shape the country's image because it is considered the most effective, especially if the country has tourist destinations such as beautiful natural resources that other countries do not have, such as four seasons, etc. One's pleasure in adventure becomes its attraction to make nature a tourist destination for others, and every planned season will make people design.

Each country usually conducts a nation branding process through tourism promotion. In Indonesia, which is responsible for the development of tourism is the Ministry of Tourism, which during the latest cabinet name changed to the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, where the naming is expected in

addition to developing tourism as a program that can increase the country's foreign exchange through tourism can also develop creative industries that are believed to be owned by each region and are believed to increase the potential of the area. So far, in introducing tourism objects, Indonesia has always stuck to the concept of destination brands by using or creating regional events that are tourism destinations are assisted by optimization of media such as mass media and social media. However, it has been effective considering that the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) report reported that foreign tourist visits until September 2021 decreased by 67 percent compared to the same period last year (Wahyudi, 2021). The data is not appropriate when viewed in that year in almost all parts of the world were affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but BPS stated before the Covid-19 period the number of foreign tourists who visited Indonesia. It tends not to increase or even stagnate (Wahyudi, 2021). The data proves that the efforts of branding destinations carried out by the government through the Ministry of Tourism have not been effective enough in inviting foreign tourists to visit Indonesia.

Compared to Malaysia, the closest country to Indonesia, which has similar tourist attractions as Indonesia, with culture and climate almost identical, Indonesia lags quite far behind. In 2007, Malaysia began its destination brand

strategy by introducing the Visit Malaysia Year 2007 tagline (VMY 2007), which continued to be used annually until 2009. Indonesia made the same step in 2008 with the Visit Indonesia Year 2008 event. However, when Malaysia stopped VMY 2007, the number of tourists visiting Malaysia reached 23.6 million (Tourist Arrivals & receipts to Malaysia, 2010), while in the same year, the number of tourists visiting Indonesia only recorded a figure of 6.3 million (Indonesian Central Statistics Agency, 2011). In contrast, Indonesia has used the Visit Indonesia Year (VIY) brand event since 2008 (Bungin, 2017). The data further strengthens the ineffectiveness of the Indonesian government's branding destination strategy.

The data above shows the number of tourists visiting Malaysia and Indonesia, but what is interesting is that the number of tourists visiting Malaysia is mainly from Indonesia, even though it has been mentioned that Indonesia and Malaysia have similarities in climate, culture, and natural resources but Indonesian citizens choose to travel and travel to neighboring countries that are not too far from their own country.

Destination Branding and Nation Branding depart from the brand concept delivered by Aaker Myer (1991) to identify goods or services from one of the sellers or a group of sellers and distinguish the goods or services from those

of competitors (Blain et al., 2005). A brief and often cited definition is a definition given by Doyle, which states that a successful 'brand or brand' is a name, symbol, design, or combination which serves to identify a product produced by a particular company, where the brand or brand has sustainability with other products of that company so that it has differential advantages. The American Marketing Association gives the exact definition, i.e., a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of both intended to identify the goods and services of a single seller or group of sellers and to distinguish its products from competitors' products. Different definitions given by Macrae, Parkinson, and Sheerman state that a brand or brand represents a unique combination of the characteristics of a brand combined with added value, functional and non-functional, and has a meaning that is relevant and closely related to the brand, thus raising awareness in the brand itself, both consciously and intuitively (Dinnie, 2010).

Destination branding is a definition stated by Ritchie and Ritchie (1998) as a name, symbol, logo, wordmark, or other graphs that identifies and distinguishes goals; In addition, it conveys the promise of an impressive travel experience uniquely related to the destination, it also serves to consolidate and strengthen the memory of pleasant memories of the destination experience

(Blain et al., 2005). Destination branding is a new concept that had developed since the era of globalization when a place began to feel the need for an identity to attract the attention of others to visit the place. A place, regardless of scale (country, city, or smaller place) or adopted perspective (solely as a tourist destination or a broader perspective, is very complex. A destination brand is a name, symbol, logo, wordmark, or other graphics that identifies and distinguishes a destination (Kladou, Kavaratzis, Rigopoulou, & Salonika, 2017). Morrison and Anderson (2002) define destination branding as communicating a destination's unique identity by distinguishing destinations from competitors (Qu et al., 2011).

While nation branding can be said as a process of forming a country's brand, Ying Fan, in her article *Branding the nation: What is being branded?* Nation branding and nation brand are two different concepts. A nation has had an image, although without the process of nation branding, in fact, in this era of globalization is not easy to adopt product branding into *nation branding*; there must also be a distinction between nation branding and product-country image (Fan, 2010). Jaffe and Netenzahl (2001) stated that Nation branding aims to create clear, simple, and different ideas that distinguish emotional qualities that can be symbolized verbally and visually and understood by

diverse audiences in various situations. To work effectively, nation branding must include political, cultural, business, and sports activities. The political situation, environmental factors, the international political environment, and a country's economic and social situation are essential things that determine the design policies applied to promote a region, a country, or a city. Economic, political, social, and psychological parameters can contribute to a place's identity because places need to distinguish themselves from each other to affirm their unique and distinctive characteristics (Kladou et al., 2017). Several studies have shown that in the last twenty years, nation branding has evolved into a communication strategy aimed at foreign publics because these publics are the ones who will then have a particular image of the country (Merkelsen & Rasmussen, 2016).

Nation-brand image is a mental representation that people from different countries may have from different influencing factors. The first thing is that personal experience regarding a country through work or vacationing there can play a vital role in the image that a country has, or if there is no direct experience, word-of-mouth stories can affect the image of the country, as can many other inputs in the image formation process. Other inputs include previously existing national stereotypes, the performance of national sports

teams, political events, depictions of the state in film, television, or other media, the quality of products originating in that country, and the development of new media will also affect a lot how national identity is formed in its citizens, and will undoubtedly affect how foreign citizens perceive the country (Ershov, 2015), juga the behavior of individuals associated with a particular country, and so on. These inputs can all determine to a greater or lesser extent, a country's nation-brand image, even before one considers the potential impact of Jaffe and Nebenzahl's nation-brand advertising, promotion, and development in Dinnie revealing that country image is defined as 'the impact that generalizations and perceptions about a country have on a person's evaluation of the country products and/or brands (Dinnie, 2010).

The phenomenon shown leads research to discover how Malaysia's nation brand image contributes to the trust of foreign nationals visiting their country.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is constructivism, also called social constructivism, a perspective with a qualitative research approach. Paradigm believes that individuals seek an understanding of the world and the reality they believe in their environment. The

individual develops the subjective meaning of the experiences directed at an object and, in this case, the image of a state (Creswell, 2014). This research tries to construct the reality built by the sources on their experiences and the impressions gained from those experiences, thus helping the image of Malaysia in their minds

In-depth observations and interviews become the main instruments in data retrieval. The study used six sources: housewives, employees, entrepreneurs, and patients from Medan and Pekanbaru who had experience traveling to Malaysia and had a good understanding of the country. The source selection is based on an interview with the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), which stated that these two areas are the home areas of Indonesian tourists who visit Malaysia the most for treatment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the concept of destination branding that has been explained at the beginning, it is mentioned that destination branding is an effort to give the brand to a place that is expected to become a tourist destination. Cities need to accept that they are different from others and prefer to compete with cities within the country in the branding process. At this point, city identity appears as a must in city branding. Even

if various branding strategies are determined, communication networks are created, and necessary introductions are made, no permanent achievements will be achieved unless all these efforts are built on the city's identity. But the efforts of destination branding are the formation of the destination image. Destination image should be considered a predetermined concept for destination branding (Pike, 2009). The essence of destination branding is to build a positive destination *image* that identifies and differentiates goals by choosing a consistent mix of *brand* elements. The image of the destination brand can be described as 'the perception of the place as reflected and formed in the memory in the minds of tourists' (Qu et al., 2011).

Destination image is allegedly obtained from tourism promotion where the purpose of tourism promotion itself is: 1) Introducing services and products produced in the tourism industry as widely as possible; 2) Give the impression of attractiveness as strong as possible in the hope that people will come to visit; 3) honestly convey an interesting message to create high expectations (Efni Salam et al., 2019). Good tourism promotion is a promotion that will form the image of a tourist destination in the minds of other people who will travel to a certain place. Tourism promotion is expected to build someone's attention to become interested and travel to a certain place that is expected to

make them violent and make a deep impression on the place so that they are expected to return in the future. The expected tourism promotion is a promotion that can foster audience confidence in the information conveyed so that there is interest in visiting the place or planning to visit the place.

The results showed that the destination branding strategy is not enough to form the image of a place because foreign nationals already have an ingested perception of the country where the tourist destination is located. Jaffe and Nebenzahl in Dinnie reveal that the image of a country (country image) is defined as '*the impact that generalizations and perceptions about a country have on a person's evaluation of the country products and /or brands*' (Dinnie, 2010). Generalization and perception of a country can be obtained from various sources of information related to the country, both in the form of history, borders, icons, folklore, and others that represent the essence of a country. The initial perception is the initial knowledge of a country that will lead to how individuals have experience and have the judgment of the country because they like not to like the experience of individuals traveling to a city (tourist destination) leads judgment and forms confidence in a country.

Figure 1 wants to show that individuals



Source: Research Result, 2021

Figure 1 The Process of Individual Perception of Malaysian as a Country

are not without knowledge when perceiving a country with the amount of information that can be obtained from individuals from the media or from other individuals (*significant others*) to shape how the country is perceived individually. Individuals believed to influence individually are not just anyone but significant others considered to have experience and are trusted individually. Erikson's 1950 research revealed that four core principles occur in common beliefs about the level of trust in others: First, individuals measure the level of trust they can associate with partners when facing tension test situations, and when couples fight themselves — interested in relationship interests. Second, individuals can begin trust testing to see if other individuals guarantee the level of trust attributed. Third, individual

differences in orientation, self-esteem, or self-differentiation affect the dynamics of trust in relationships. Fourth, to fully understand the dynamics and levels of trust, the disposition and actions of both individuals must be considered. The now dispositional belief model is built around the disposition of partners, which then influences each stage of the trust's evolution. It begins with the stage of entering a situation of trust, followed by a transformation of shared motives and decisions, followed by a phase of attribution (and emotion and hope), which is then followed by a perception of trust, and finally followed by the perception in security (Leung, 2018). From the results of the study, it is seen that not everyone can be trusted as a person or individual who can influence other individuals, especially in giving assessments to a country.

Another thing found in this study is that the perception of Malaysia is also greatly influenced by the individual's experience in contact with the country. Interaction with Malaysia can be an experience visiting the country, although not for travel. Some sources say that visiting just to transit at an airport can give a perception of Malaysia as a country, although the reality shows that the airport will only see a small part of a country. Some may assume that it takes longer to assess a country, but some sources can give an assessment of Malaysia from the

existing infrastructure at an airport, even they can state the progress, modern, or not a country like Malaysia from the services they get at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. Visiting can also be interpreted as having visited Malaysia, even if only for a moment, setting foot either intentionally or unintentionally into the country so that it comes into direct contact with the citizen. In conveying this experience, many ways are done either conveyed directly to individuals who ask about their experiences during a trip to Malaysia, but the people of Indonesia can also see from the comments or statuses that appear on their respective social media accounts, which are then approved by the term *electronic word of mouth* or *e-WOM* where according to Agustine *e-WOM* It greatly influences how a brand is experience interpreted and has the power to increase its reader's trust in the brand in question (Agustine & Prasetyawati, 2020). As found in previous studies of this phenomenon, it can be concluded that word of mouth is an opinion that represents how the impression of Malaysia is formed in the minds of Indonesians. Everything that is conveyed through the story is part of marketing activities that will certainly benefit Malaysia (Damayanti et al., 2021).

The result showed that Indonesians would look for information first on people who have traveled to Malaysia before choosing the

tourist destination; they will ask the people they know closely, whether relatives, friends, or neighbors. But they do not deny that the search for information does not end in the information submitted directly, but they also actively seek information from media that they believe can provide information based on previous experience. It is known that they visit social media *@malaysia.truly.asia* to find out about tourist destinations in Malaysia or *@wisatahemat* to find a promo or cheap trip information that can be used. In addition, accounts managed by the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC) are also widely visited by Indonesians who have the purpose of doing health tourism. In addition to official accounts owned by government tourism agencies, Indonesians also diligently visit accounts that often review Malaysian tourism, especially vloggers who periodically deliver reviews both about Malaysian specialties and tourist attractions that are viral or new in Malaysia. The information they need is about location, how to reach, and cost. The review is very helpful for them in designing visits because the results of the study also show they try to travel without using a tourist agent, they prefer to travel independently, assuming Malaysia is a country that has a lot in common with Indonesia, so they feel no need to be awkward to visit the country.

This social media facilitates social

interactions carried out on private and public internet networks. Everyone in the network can send messages and share them with each other. Indonesians themselves are believed to use Instagram to seek inspiration, share experiences, and seek information, and for tourism phenomena, the most shared content is food eaten, goods or souvenirs purchased, photos or videos from family when they are in fun events according to them, places visited, as well as photos or videos from travel (Hakim et al., 2019). Things that are shared by others on social media, even though they do not know each other, turn out to greatly influence their decisions in determining tourist destinations. They believe that a photo, image, or video shared on Instagram is a depiction of reality or real reality, which is not coupled with promotional frills.

Travel experience has a very big influence in providing an assessment of the country because traveling requires preparation and motivation, so the process of choosing a tourist destination is not just done; many things are taken into consideration, one of which is trust in the country. The image or image of the place greatly influences behavior in determining tourist attractions. In tourism literature, it is widely recognized that the overall image of a destination is influenced by cognitive and affective evaluation. Cognitive evaluation refers

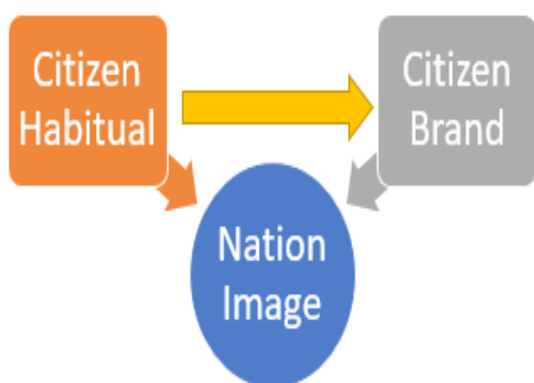
to belief and knowledge about an object, whereas affective evaluation refers to feelings about the object (Qu et al., 2011). It is important to consider the cognitive and affective components of a destination image to build a comprehensive destination branding model. Gartner's Image Formation Process (1993) can be considered the most comprehensive model for destination image. According to Gartner, destination images are shaped by three distinct but hierarchically interrelated components: cognitive, affective, and conative. The interrelationships between these components will determine the predisposition of the product. The cognitive image component is defined by Scott as an evaluation of understanding of a product or understanding of a product in an intellectual way (Scott, 1965). The affective component of an image *is* related to the motive a person has for choosing the destination of the place (tourist destinations). Motives determine what we want to gain from the object being considered, thus influencing the assessment of the object (Boulding, 1956). The conative image component is analogous to behavior because it is a component of action. Once all internal and external information is processed, a decision is reached. One goal of the decision set is chosen. The relationship of the conative component with the other two components is direct. It depends on the image being developed during the cognitive stage and

evaluated during the affective stage (Gartner, 2008).

The choice of tourist destinations is largely determined by individual perceptions of the place that are influenced by the perception of others and their own experiences obtained from media information or direct interaction and individual perceptions of the country. All the information that a person has is processed in him is adjusted to his needs and desires so that the process of determining a tourist destination occurs. Tourist activities carried out by the individual will usually leave an impression and perception of a country, which will ultimately determine how the individual feels and behaves in that country. The location that many Indonesians visit in Malaysia is not determined by the proximity of the location of residence because of the tendency of Indonesian people to choose a place that allegedly does not exist in Indonesia. It is no secret that Indonesia and Malaysia have similarities in culture, climate, and locations of natural tourist beauty. Malaysia's nature and its contents, such as trees and animals, are also found in Indonesia, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan, so the results of the study showed that Indonesians choose tourist sites that are considered not in the country, such as tourist sites that show the modernity of a country despite only trying Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) a sophisticated mode of transportation that began

operating since 2016. Kuala Lumpur MRT itself stretches for 51 kilometers with the total support of 31 stations. Currently, MRT has gone through several destinations in Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas, so MRT has become the most preferred transportation by tourists. In addition to MRT, most sources admit not to miss visiting Petronas Tower, because according to them, in addition to this iconic tower Malaysia as a country, they feel obliged to show to others as evidence has arrived in Malaysia to be shared on their respective social media accounts.

As stated at the beginning of the discussion, it is known that social media has its own function as a medium to interact with fellow individuals and things that can be used through social media; one of them is to share the experience of visiting a tourist spot, and according to sources one that must be shared on social media accounts is to take pictures in the Petronas Tower. In addition to the two places, the source also stated that they should visit *Tanah Genting* if they are going to Malaysia. Tanah Genting is located above the Titiwangsa mountains of Malaysia and is often considered the Las Vegas of Malaysia, which is considered difficult to find in Indonesia. Located not far from Kuala Lumpur, Indonesians use the opportunity to visit Tanah Genting just to enjoy interesting experiences that are not obtained in their own country. What is interesting is that Indonesians are diligently



Source: Research Result, 2021

Figure 2 The Process of Forming a Nation Image through Interaction with Citizens

looking for new tourist destinations which may be under construction or newly opened. Some time ago, many Indonesians visited Legoland and Hello Kitty Land in Johor, even though both places are fun parks that originally came from the United States and Japan. But that does not diminish the image of the country in the minds of Indonesians.

Another thing that determines how a person perceives a country is an interaction with the citizens of that country. In this study, it was found that individuals will meet foreign nationals either at home or while visiting the country. They realize that encounters and interactions with foreign nationals are observed by them by observing the behavior they exhibit. The behaviors they observe are not only behaviors when interacting with them but also daily behaviors that become their habits. There

is an impression of the country.

The process of perceiving a country is what will lead one to give an impression of a country. An impression or image is a process of memory left in a person's mind, which will affect his feelings in the country, and it is this feeling that will affect his confidence in the country. Meeting with Malaysian citizens is not only obtained from the experience of interacting directly when Indonesians are traveling to Malaysia but when they intersect with them on social media is also an interesting experience. The way they answer and the way they reprimand in the comment column becomes one of its own assessments because the use of slightly different languages makes Indonesian people interested in paying attention to the comments given. In addition, observing their daily behavior becomes something that is recorded in their mind, and they consider what is shown in daily life as something real.

As in the previous concept that states that a nation's *brand image* is the result of a person's evaluation of a country, in this study, it was found that the informants, in this case, Indonesian citizens, evaluate other countries through individual perceptions obtained from the experiences of others and their own experience in interacting directly either in visiting that country or interacting with their citizens, either when we meet in his country, or when they



Source: Research Result, 2021

Figure 3 The Process of Establishing a Nation Brand Image and Trust in Malaysian as a Country

meet in the country, the behavior exhibited by the citizen can also be referred to separately as the brand of the citizen, because he represents his country through the behavior shown. In addition to the experience of interacting with its citizens, interaction with infrastructure, services, and rules contained in the country is also something that is perceived individually by someone in that country because whether infrastructure, services, or rules are something that can be perceived differently by each person very much depending on where the individual comes from. Nation image itself is something that is already attached to the country, such as national identity, stereotypes, national borders, and others, which are already known in general by citizens of other countries. These two things determine how the country's *nation brand image* in the eyes of foreign nationals, and the

nation brand image will determine how foreign nationals trust the country. In this study, it was found that Indonesian citizens strongly trust Malaysia, especially in terms of the modernity of the country, comfort in services, and rules made by its government. Even expressly stated that Malaysia is better than Indonesia, not in terms of tourism but in terms of state management. This trust is also shown by always returning to travel, especially tourism, both visiting tourist destinations and medical tourism to Malaysia. This is evidenced by the increasing number of Indonesian tourists every year to travel to Malaysia. According to data taken from CEIC, Indonesian tourists are increasing by 111,057 people every month (CEIC, n.d.). This proves Malaysia is the most popular country visited by Indonesians, in addition to Singapore and Thailand, to travel. This belief is also shown by

the behavior of Indonesian citizens, who always support Malaysia and give positive assessments of the country.

Research conducted in the early days of COVID-19 hit almost all corners of the country, so data collection was limited only to the city of Bandung, although collecting several people from different regions (Jakarta, Medan, Riau, Bandung, Bogor), and continued with data collection on 96 people from almost all regions of Indonesia to strengthen the results of interviews and observations.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of branding explains the process of forming a brand in the mind of the individual is not a process in a linear form, and many things happen in the individual's mind, both knowledge of the brand object and experience in the object. Knowledge is derived from information that can be obtained from anywhere, both from the media and from others, while experience is something that is perceived by the individual himself. Knowledge gained from others, especially, is derived from the results of the person's perception of the brand object (in this case, Malaysia), and not everyone can easily influence others in what he has perceived; only the trusted person is believed to be able to change the individual's knowledge.

But although the perceptions of others influence an individual's perception of Malaysia, it is the experience itself that determines most how the impression of Malaysia is formed.

The image of Malaysia in the minds of Indonesian citizens, according to the concept of nation image, the image of a country is attached to the country because a country that is amid other state entities will certainly show its identity both in the form of symbols such as the country's flag, state emblem, and folklore that is conveyed by word of mouth or conveyed. Media such as books and films help form the identity or image of Malaysia in the minds of Indonesian people. The experiences that most influence an individual's perception are those that they can actively search for information on certain people or what they get from social media accounts.

In the concept of destination branding, especially in the tourism industry, usually, the main object is a place, such as an infrastructure, icons, or symbols that represent the place, but this study found that citizen brand determines how Malaysia is represented. The behavior of these citizens, both when interacting with Indonesian citizens and when showing daily behavior, greatly affects how Malaysia's image is formed in the minds of Indonesians. Citizen brand is not something that can be made intentionally or communicated with a particular

strategy because tourists feel firsthand how their behavior in their daily lives, and it turns out that behavior is considered a reflection of the state in treating its citizens so that the behavior is formed and represents the country.

Nation Image and Citizen Brand In this study, Malaysia's nation brand image is shaped in the minds of Indonesians, which results in a belief in the country. The comfort and assumption that Malaysia is better than Indonesia confirm how the behavior of Indonesians who choose Malaysia as a tourist destination even though it is natural, climate, and culture is not much different.

The results showed that the image of the Malaysian state in the minds of Indonesians has a positive contribution to how this country is trusted by Indonesian citizens as a more modern, better country, so they are willing to be the disseminators of positive information about Malaysia. The dissemination of this positive information is a big investment for Malaysia because they have made the Indonesian people the most powerful promotional tool to advertise Malaysia to other Indonesians.

Research yields suggestions on the importance of making a good communication strategy in informing about Indonesia because it turns out that the information is currently very easily spread and makes the initial knowledge about Indonesia. It should be realized that

this initial knowledge will determine how this country will be perceived by citizens of other countries. Trust in this country is largely determined by how the country's image is. Awareness of nation branding is not just destination branding that needs to be observed. It turns out that the image of a tourist destination will determine the country's image.

A positive and memorable experience turns out to be the most effective promotion compared to the promotion of any form because it is this positive meaning and impression that will lead to information that will be spread back to others and will help how the image of the country is formed.

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