



Rebranding of Tourist Destinations: A Case Study of Mount Kemukus

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This research aims to analyze the impact of (1) rebranding, (2) facilities, and (3) promotion on tourist visits to Mount Kemukus.

Methodology: The data sources in this research are primary and secondary data. Data collection techniques in this research are Interviews, Observations, and Documentation. Data analysis is conducted using Data Reduction, Data Display, and Conclusion Drawing.

Main Findings: This research indicates that: 1. The initial negative stigma originated from a miscommunication between the key keeper of Pangeran Samudra's Tomb and tourists from outside Java. 2. The management of The New Kemukus requires expansion and addition of parking spaces for tourist comfort. In terms of communication, there are already directional signs and information services to prevent tourists from feeling confused. The available services are sufficient for tourist comfort, and the environment is supportive of family tourism.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This research also concludes that rebranding efforts can be effective in changing the image of a tourist destination, but ongoing efforts are needed to maintain momentum and attract a steady flow of tourists.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of destination branding has received much attention in recent years from both academics and marketing practitioners themselves, many of whom consider it a powerful marketing management tool for rebranding tourist destinations, restructuring, repositioning, and even strategic destination management. Due to these characteristics, destination branding is considered very useful and helpful for local tourist destinations in their efforts to revive their poor or unfavorable tourism image [1]. Sragen is one of the regencies located in the province of Central Java. One of the tourist destinations in the Sragen region is Mount Kemukus. The Mount Kemukus tourist attraction is located in Soko Village, Kebayanan II, Pendem, Sumberlawang District, Sragen Regency, Central Java. Mount Kemukus is known for the rituals performed by visiting pilgrims. These rituals are generally carried out on Thursday night Pon and Friday Kliwon, two days considered sacred in the Javanese calendar. Many pilgrims who come to Mount Kemukus perform various forms of worship they believe in, from praying to performing certain rituals to obtain blessings and good fortune. One of the controversial and well-known rituals in Mount Kemukus is the 'Sex Ritual'. This ritual involves sexual relations between pilgrims and people who are not their legal partners, the belief being that by performing this ritual, they will receive blessings and good fortune in their lives.

This research aims to: Determine the influence of rebranding on tourist visits to The New Kemukus tourist destination. Determine the influence of facilities on tourist visits to The New Kemukus tourist destination. Determine the influence of promotion on tourist visits to The New Kemukus tourist destination. Determine the combined influence of rebranding, facilities, and promotion on tourist visits to The New Kemukus tourist destination. Some benefits of this research are: For Researchers: This research is expected to provide additional conceptual knowledge regarding the influence of rebranding, facilities, and promotion on tourist visits to The New Kemukus tourist destination. For Managers: This research is expected to provide useful information for managers about the elements that influence tourist visits. It is hoped that managers can develop and manage The New Kemukus even better. For Others: This research is expected to be a reference for other academics to conduct studies on rebranding, facilities, and promotion of tourist visits.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND AND FRAMEWORK OF THOUGHT

2.1. Rebranding

Due to a decline in visitors and the desire to erase the negative image, the Sragen Regency Government collaborated with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to rebrand Mount Kemukus into The New Kemukus. Rebranding efforts must be driven by a clear understanding of how the new brand identity will better serve customer needs and address their evolving preferences. This is evident throughout the book, where Kotler consistently emphasizes the importance of customer-centricity in all marketing activities [2]. According to Akifah et al., is an activity carried out when a brand is considered no longer relevant to the latest conditions on the ground. A tourist's destination image entails the emotional interpretation and evaluation that he/she has regarding a destination, resulting from personal knowledge and beliefs [4].

2.2. Facilities

According to Lupiyoadi [5] facilities are the appearance, capability of infrastructure, and the surrounding environmental conditions in demonstrating their existence to external parties, which include physical facilities (buildings), equipment, and tools. Facilities are an important aspect that must be possessed by a tourist destination. It is from the facilities provided that tourists can feel comfortable and have experiences and satisfaction when visiting a tourist destination.

2.3. Promotion

In order for a tourist destination to be known by the wider community, promotion needs to be carried out to introduce what is in the destination and to provide information. Laksana [6] states that promotion is a communication from sellers and buyers that originates from accurate information aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviors of buyers, from those who did not know to those who know, so that they become buyers and continue to remember the product.

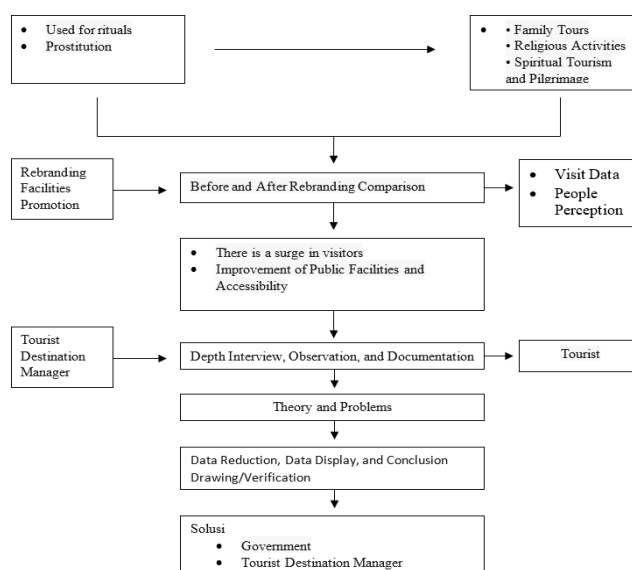


Figure 1. Frame of Mind

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Type

In this study, researchers used a qualitative method, namely by using an exploratory descriptive research approach. Exploratory descriptive methods are carried out when knowledge about a phenomenon to be investigated is still very lacking or even non-existent [7]-[9]. Sometimes this kind of research is called a feasibility study which aims to obtain initial data. Exploratory research is needed to find important factors as causative factors for the emergence of difficulties [10], [11]. Exploratory research can be considered as a first step that is expected to be used to formulate problems where the solution to these problems might be solved by using other types of research [12]. This research focuses on analyzing the influence of rebranding carried out at Mount Kemukus on tourist visits.

3.2. Research Subjects

The research location is the Mount Kemukus tourist attraction located in Soko Village, Kebayanan II, Pendem, Sumberlawang District, Sragen Regency, Central Java.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments and Technique

This research uses two types of data sources collected in the form of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews with in-depth interview techniques, observation, and documentation. The population in this study consisted of 30 people who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The interviews were conducted directly by the Person in Charge of Mount Kemukus, Mr. Wijanto, and several managers, then the rest were interviews with visitors to find out the visitors' perspectives. Observations were carried out directly to obtain an overview of field conditions related to activities at The New Kemukus. Secondary data were obtained from regulations, journals, books, and other reference sources. The analysis technique in this study uses Data Reduction, Data Display, Conclusion Drawing.

3.4. Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique of the Miles and Huberman model is data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing. Data reduction activities are the process of writing data that is already owned into the form of a report or the data is written in detail [13]. The preparation of reports is based on data obtained and reduced, summarized, the main things are taken, focused on important things [14]. Data display or data presentation is a technique that usually uses various forms, including tables, graphs and the like [15]. Furthermore, in data presentation, it can use the form of a brief description, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts, and others. Conclusion Drawing/Verification is the initial conclusions that have been put forward have a temporary nature and can change when the evidence obtained is not strong enough to support the next data collection stage [16].

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main attraction of this tourist object, apart from its natural scenery, is also the existence of a tomb and spring believed by the surrounding community as a sacred or holy place [16]-[18]. Apart from the main attractions possessed by The New Kemukus, it also offers various facilities that can make visitors or tourists visit comfortably by presenting very eye-pleasing natural scenery and there are also Culinary Tourism, Playgrounds, Gazebos which add to the attraction of this tourist object to be visited.

The New Kemukus has a dark history in the period before rebranding, this tourist destination was known by many people as a place to carry out controversial rituals carried out by visitors. These rituals are usually carried out on Thursday night Pon or Friday Kliwon, two days considered sacred in the Javanese calendar. However, the anxiety of the Sragen Regency Government and the community for years regarding this negative stigma. This is a driving factor for the rebranding into The New Kemukus. This rebranding is an effort by the Sragen Regency Government in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to try to change the negative image possessed by The New Kemukus. The factor behind why the rebranding was carried out, according to the Person in Charge of The New Kemukus, Mr. Wijanto on January 22, 2025, said that the mindset of visits to The New Kemukus was negative, which is why the government carried out rebranding to improve the mindset of visits to become positive tourism favored by families.

4.1. Miscommunication and Public Misunderstanding

This negative image or stigma originated from a story of miscommunication between the former key keeper and tourists from outside Java, this was stated by Hasta who is the Key Keeper of Pangeran Samudra's Tomb, he explained that his predecessor key keeper had difficulties or limitations in speaking Indonesian.

"My grandfather advised visitors to make a pilgrimage to Pangeran Samudra's tomb as if visiting a lover, which means that even rain, wind and storm are no problem. But the visitors misinterpreted it."

He explained, he also emphasized that there are no special requirements for visiting Pangeran Samudra's tomb, just bring flowers for the flower-sprinkling tradition and pray according to their respective beliefs.

"Don't ask Pangeran Samudra, just pray for him. Pray only to God Almighty!" Said Hasta when interviewed by the Sragen Regency Government.

Because of this miscommunication, rumors spread quickly in the general public and the name or image possessed by The New Kemukus was previously negative, therefore the Sragen Regency Government collaborated with existing stakeholders to rebrand Mount Kemukus with the hope that when it has been rebranded, the image possessed by Mount Kemukus will gradually disappear.

4.2. The Process and Preparation for Launching The New Kemukus

To make major changes to something large and long-established, it certainly requires a long and lengthy process, of course with various mature considerations, from various considerations the Sragen Regency Tourism Office finally received a program from the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to collaborate on rebranding Mount Kemukus into The New Kemukus. According to an interview with Wijanto as the Person in Charge of The New Kemukus, the Sragen Regency Tourism Office received a program from the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to build and revitalize The New Kemukus. He also added that when this rebranding process runs smoothly it is hoped that it can improve the economy of the surrounding community in the tourism sector, because the developments carried out by the Ministry of Public Works and Housing will indirectly involve and provide many positive impacts for the community around Mount Kemukus. Then indirectly after the rebranding and development there are more positive activities and in the end the existing negative image and stigma will begin to slowly disappear.

Table 1. Data of Visitors to Mount The New Kemukus

2019	2020	2021	2022 (Until July)
27.136 Visitors	15.223 Visitors	3.644 Visitors	113.379 Visitors

After Mount Kemukus was rebranded into The New Kemukus, which was completed at the end of 2021, there was a surge in visitors to The New Kemukus in 2022. This number of visits is very good news for managers and the surrounding community who live in The New Kemukus, because the addition of this family tourism is also supported and facilitated by MSMEs from Perindagkop (Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and MSMEs), which can increase the (Regional Original Income) in Sragen Regency, besides that it can also improve the community's economy in the tourism sector. However, this did not last long because lately The New Kemukus has experienced a decline in visitors, this is not without reason, according to Mr. Wijanto as the Person in Charge of The New Kemukus, he said that because the appeal of this family tourism has not been fully maximized because the strongest attraction is the Promenade which, when it was first rebranded, became a magnet for visitors to come, but as time went on, visitors became increasingly bored because it seemed monotonous.



Figure 2. Promenade The New Kemukus

Despite the obstacles, challenges, and recent decline in visitors, it is also important to note that various visitor perceptions are now more positive when they have visited The New Kemukus. Through interviews with visitors, they said that after this rebranding, The New Kemukus has become more comfortable to visit.

Tabel 2. Regional Original Income

2019 (Rp)	2020 (Rp)	2021 (Rp)	2022 (Rp) (Until July)
196,375,000	125,235,000	78,360,000	717,093,000

The proof, according to Mr. Wijanto, is that thanks to the Promenade's attraction, which has become like a magnet to attract visitors, so much so that in 2022 the Regional Original Income obtained doubled, meaning that indirectly, with more and more visitors coming to The New Kemukus, there are more opportunities to get a business for the community.

4.3. Friendly and Comfortable Management of The New Kemukus Tourist Destination

4.3.1. Accessibility

Accessibility is categorized as one of the essential components in supporting tourism development, marked by accessibility being a component related to cross-sectoral development and without accessibility in transportation, it would not be possible for a tourist attraction to reach tourists [19]. The road infrastructure that exists when heading to The New Kemukus tourist destination is asphalted and coarse, making it easier for tourists to visit the tourist destination. In addition, public transportation accommodation is also available, which from outside Java can easily get to The New Kemukus by taking Trans Jateng which has a route from Solo Terminal-Sangiran-Sumberlawang Terminal, before arriving at Sumberlawang terminal get off at Barong Bus Stop which is very close to The New Kemukus location, from the Bus Stop you can walk about 5-10 minutes or you can take a motorcycle taxi near the bus stop. Parking lots are one aspect that has an important factor because when tourists arrive at the location, tourists will leave their vehicles, whether cars or motorbikes [20]-[22]. The parking lot at The New Kemukus is also large, but when the situation is busy and the lower parking lot is full, it will be diverted to the parking lot above, which is managed by local residents, the disadvantage of this upper parking lot is the uphill and narrow road, tourists often feel worried and wary when they do not get the lower parking lot so they have to park at the top. The location of The New Kemukus is also on Google Maps, so for tourists who are visiting The New Kemukus for the first time, it is easy to go to the tourist destination.

4.3.2. Communication

The role of communication is not only in the marketing component, but also includes communicating accessibility, destinations and resources to tourists. Communication helps tourism marketing in various marketing elements, communication plays a role both in communication media and communication content. In communication media, ¹ various communication media are available as marketing channels as well as tourism HR and institutional media channels. Communication also plays a role in preparing message content that must be conveyed to the public or tourists, about what they should know about marketing media, destinations, accessibility and tourism HR institutions [23]. To support tourist comfort in understanding the information available at The New Kemukus tourist destination, there are directional signs so that tourists are not confused and there is an information board notice to maintain cleanliness by not littering.

4.3.3. Service

Service is an activity or benefit offered by one party, which is intangible and does not produce any ownership [16]. The services provided by The New Kemukus management have met the standards set to meet the needs of tourists, for example the existence of a mosque as a place of worship.

4.3.4. Environment

The environment can be interpreted as the sum of all objects and circumstances. This amount is in a space that is used as a residence by humans. This space can also affect life. The amount of living space is indeed unlimited in theory. But the number is practically limited. It is in accordance with the predetermined needs. Examples include natural elements such as rivers, seas, forests. It can also be elements in the political world and so on [24]. The managers must ensure and pay attention to the environment so that visiting tourists feel safe and comfortable when visiting [25]. The rumors that exist in almost all levels of society, the environmental aspect possessed by The New

Kemukus is uncomfortable because it has a bad image, but based on the research results, it is not like that, because in fact the community or local residents do not consider Mount Kemukus a place to do bad things. The Tomb of Pangeran Samudra and Sendang Ontrowulan have their own SOPs when tourists will visit the place, so the correct visit to Mount Kemukus is that the SOP is only to pray for Pangeran Samudra and Dewi Ontrowulan, after that you can pray according to the expectations from home, nothing else.

4.4. The New Kemukus Tourist Destination Management Strategy as a Religious and Family Tourism

4.4.1. Planning

In planning to manage a tourist object, planning is a supporting thing to manage a tourist destination, the first thing is to know the uniqueness and characteristics of the existing tourist destination because from these two things the attraction will appear [26]-[28]. Secondly, in planning the government can invite the local community to participate in jointly preparing the planning and development of The New Kemukus.

4.4.2. Management

For the management of The New Kemukus tourist destination, apart from the government, the local community is also involved in planning the management of this New Kemukus tourist destination. The management of this tourist destination can refer to the values of natural and historical preservation that are potential [29]. After planning, an equally important thing is that there must be an evaluation of the existing rides, for example, adding Flying Fox rides or water rides such as swimming pools because the most effective way if you want to attract family tourists is that the main thing is to make the children in the family happy and comfortable, the Tomb of Pangeran Samudra and Sendang Ontrowulan are not only used as religious tourism but also Cultural Tourism where there are guides or tour guides who explain the existing history, so that there are no more miscommunications with visitors.

4.4.3. Implementation of Destination Maintenance

This maintenance implementation is a follow-up action from the planning that has been designed and determined previously [30], [31]. The Sragen Regency Government may be able to facilitate training on tourist destination maintenance due to limited experts or human resources and to expand knowledge on how to manage tourist destinations.

4.4.4. Supervision

One of the most important things is supervision to provide assurance that all activities at The New Kemukus are in accordance with the plans that have been set. This supervision can be divided into two parts, the first is carried out directly by the Youth, Sports and Tourism Office as the manager of The New Kemukus and the second is carried out by the local community and becomes the main supporter for the Youth, Sports and Tourism Office to jointly have responsibility for the management and development of The New Kemukus.

4.4.5. Strengths and Weaknesses in The New Kemukus Management

The strength and main attraction of The New Kemukus is the Tomb of Pangeran Samudra and Sendang Ontrowulan, although the Promenade has been the mainstay of The New Kemukus for the past few years, but lately it has experienced a decline in the number of visitors so now The New Kemukus is still surviving as religious tourism.

In addition, the weakness of The New Kemukus is that the rides or tours that exist are just that and seem monotonous. Therefore, in development and management, it is hoped that The New Kemukus tourist destination can maximize its potential by adding something new so that tourists do not feel bored with just one or two visits. Maximizing this potential might be by adding something new such as children's games or building additional tourist forms such as outbound. Then you can also hold routine events such as art performances or theaters held every month by inviting several schools whose students are still looking for experience, so you can reduce the costs incurred when you do not want to incur large costs. Or you can also provide a place for street musicians who are quite proper to perform every weekend.

4.5. Impact and Limitation of this study

This study provides a number of significant academic contributions as well as practical implications for destination managers. From an academic perspective, the findings of this study can be a strong reference and a

valuable source of information for other researchers interested in the topics of destination rebranding, image management, tourist behavior, and the economic impact of local tourism. In addition, this study has the potential to enrich and develop theories related to destination rebranding, especially in the context of overcoming negative images originating from misinformation and rumors. This study also provides in-depth insights into tourists' perceptions of the rebranding efforts undertaken, which are crucial to understanding the effectiveness of the strategy. Not only that, this study has successfully identified a number of key factors in the success of rebranding, such as accessibility, communication, service, and environmental management.

Practically, the results of this study can help the Sragen Regency Government and The New Kemukus destination managers in evaluating the effectiveness of the rebranding strategy that has been implemented. This study also highlights areas that still need improvement, such as parking management, more active information communication, enforcement of SOPs in religious areas, improving service standards (halal food, prayer facilities, toilet cleanliness), and environmental maintenance. Understanding tourist perceptions can also be used to develop more effective marketing strategies in building a positive image of The New Kemukus. Furthermore, this study is the basis for further research on how rebranding can affect tourist loyalty and the economic performance of the local community.

Despite its significant contribution, this study has several limitations. First, this study is a single case study that focuses on one destination, namely Gunung Kemukus, so the results are difficult to generalize to other destinations with different characteristics. Second, the focus of the study is more on tourists' initial perceptions of post-rebranding changes, while long-term changes in perception and ongoing impacts have not been fully explored. Third, the data collection methods used, such as observation and interviews, have their own limitations; for example, questionnaires may not be able to capture the deep nuances of tourists' experiences, while interviews can be limited by the number of respondents. Fourth, information about circulating rumors relies heavily on respondents' reports, the accuracy and detail of which can vary. Fifth, although the potential economic impacts are mentioned, this study has not yet in-depth measured or analyzed the real economic impacts of the rebranding. Further research focusing on specific economic indicators is still needed. Sixth, tourists' perceptions and responses can be influenced by external factors that are constantly changing, such as tourism trends and socio-economic conditions, so this study only reflects conditions in a certain period of time. Seventh, the data collection process may face limitations in reaching various tourist segments or obtaining the expected level of participation. By understanding these impacts and limitations, this research on the rebranding of Mount Kemukus provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of tourism destinations and opens up opportunities for more comprehensive further research.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results regarding Destination Tourism Rebranding: A Case Study of Mount Kemukus, it can be concluded as follows: Rumors about Mount Kemukus as a place of instant wealth or sex rituals circulating in the wider community have given Mount Kemukus a negative image and stigma. However, these rumors are miscommunication between the former key keeper of Pangeran Samudra's tomb and visitors from outside Java, this miscommunication is because the former key keeper had limitations in speaking Indonesian. Then the Sragen Regency Government collaborated with the Ministry of Public Works and Housing to rebrand Mount Kemukus into The New Kemukus with the hope of eliminating the circulating negative stigma. Access or ease for visitors to get to The New Kemukus location has asphalt and cor roads making it easy for tourists to reach and giving a pleasant feeling when traveling. However, in this aspect there are still some obstacles and the need for improvements such as when the lower parking lot near the ticket counter is full, parking will be diverted to the upper parking lot managed by local residents, this parking lot often causes anxiety and worry from visitors because of the uphill and narrow road. Then in the communication aspect to support the comfort of tourists in understanding the information available at The New Kemukus, the manager places directional signs so that tourists do not feel confused and places information board notices to maintain cleanliness, the role of the manager must be more active in informing tourists that when visiting the Tomb of Pangeran Samudra and Sendang Ontrowulan there is its own SOP, which is only to pray for Pangeran Samudra and Dewi Ontrowulan. As for services, there is great potential related to the standards set to meet the needs of tourists, for example the availability of halal food, prayer facilities, regular toilet cleaning, and the absence of negative activities. Finally, the environment, the manager is obliged to always pay attention to and ensure the environment so that visiting tourists feel safe and comfortable when visiting.

For other researchers, may the findings of this research serve as a reference for future studies. This research hopefully can provide knowledge about how visitors perceive and respond to the rebranding efforts that

have been carried out at Mount Kemukus. This study can examine how influential rebranding is on the image of Mount Kemukus, tourist loyalty, and the performance of the local economy.

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