

Iconic Culinary as an Icon for Tourism Destination's Branding

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Abstract: A tourism destination, especially in developing countries faced a challenge to create a specific positioning that is different from other destinations. A potential way to establish is by looking into item that really attached with the destination specifically on culture and local wisdom, one of them is iconic culinary as part of the destinations culture. The objective of this research is to observe an understanding on the reason of iconic culinary could be used as tourism destination's icon and to analyze how it can take a part in destination branding process through qualitative methods. By investigating on symbolic and functional dimensions of iconic culinary and analyzing tourism destination branding process, this study found that iconic culinary has a tight association with destination. Moreover, it also performs as a primary role to represent tourism destination identity in destination branding. The purpose of this research is to observe an understanding on the reason of iconic culinary could be used as a tourism destination's icon. This study describes a thoughtful analysis on symbolic and functional dimensions of iconic culinary. It is also to understand and analyze on how the iconic culinary as a destination's icon takes part in tourism destination's branding process.

Key words: Icon, iconic culinary, tourism destination, destination branding, culture

INTRODUCTION

Culinary sector is one of the motivating factor for people to visit a destination, as well as the driving force behind the economic development of local community. Culinary is also acknowledged as a perfect promotion and positioning tools because it has a distinctive characteristics a source of competitive advantage and of a destination.

Iconic culinary act as a source of the identity of a place. Simultaneously, it is also served as a destination marker (Richards and Hjalager, 2002). Frochot (2003) submit an ideas that destination can utilize a culinary as a potential vehicle to represent cultural experience, cultural identification, status and communication. While a culinary product becomes iconic, it is indirectly serve as an identity marker. It is also instantly recognized as famous by any fully-fledged member of particular culture or subculture. It is able to evoke people's memory about the destination (Chandler, 2007).

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people's memory about the destination (Chandler, 2007). Therefore, it is realized that there is an opportunity to explore iconic culinary as a destination's icon in building destination's brand for tourism marketing. By involving local's iconic culinary as a promotional communication message, it could help to build the destination images (Hall, 1999).

In the context of Indonesia, a country with very riches and diverse tourism resources including culinary (Irwansyah and Febrina, 2015) research of tourism marketing communication has started to run. However, a study about iconic culinary to promote a destination remains unexplored in the perspective of communication or tourism. The use of iconic culinary as a destination's icon in actual practice is still limited. Besides, many researchers applied the extension rule to the model counting problem and many amended it so as to applied it into the TP of modal logic. Still some researchers improved the extension rule and put forward series of algorithms such as NER, RIER, etc. (Florek and Conejo, 2007; Aaker, 1991).

Extension-rule based TP method has commended considerable respect from many related researchers. For example, Murray (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007; Kochhar, 2008) has

applied the extension rule into the generation of the target language based on the knowledge compilation and achieved good results. Besides, many researchers applied the extension rule to the model counting problem and many amended it so as to applied it into the TP of modal logic. Still some researchers improved the extension rule and put forward series of algorithms such as NER, RIER, etc. (Florek and Conejo, 2007; Aaker, 1991).

It is important to run the research because as a part of developing countries, Indonesia (including provinces, cities, districts) as a tourism destination faced a challenge to create a specific positioning that is different from other countries. One way to establish is by looking into item that really attached with the destination specifically on culture and local wisdom (Irwansyah and Febrina, 2015). Culinary formed as part of the destinations culture. In Indonesia, iconic culinary has an identical association with the raw material or seasoning used and a place of origin.

This research referring to previous study from Soroka and Lominadze (2011) which states that there is an interrelationship between the phenomena of iconic product and destination brand. They argues that a destination could be branded through an iconic product. Based on the existing model, this study aims to have more analysis about the concept in the context of Indonesia, through the perspective of iconic culinary as a part of iconic product.

The purpose of this research is to observe an understanding on the reason of iconic culinary could be used as a tourism destination's icon. This study describes a thoughtful analysis on symbolic and functional dimensions of iconic culinary. It is also to understand and analyze on how the iconic culinary as a destination's icon takes part in tourism destination's branding process.

Iconic culinary for tourism destination's icon: According to Charles S. Pierce (Noth, 1990), icon is a sign that imitate represented object. It is also related to the object that has a symbolic meaning commonly called enduring symbols. Cultural icon is the easiest way to identify an image of any object or concept with a strong cultural meaning such as a person, building, artwork or other cultural artifact including traditional culinary (Ursyn, 2013). To be iconic, something or someone expected to be instantly recognized as famous by any fully-fledged member of a particular culture or subculture. The iconic mode of performance is one in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (Chandler, 2007). In the context of tourism destination, iconic products would be generally identified and associated with a particular destination (Soroka and Lominadze, 2011).

Culinary is a form of food product and it is believed to be expression of society and their way of live. Besides as the fulfillment of basic needs, food can also be a principal in communicating a culture (Tellstrom *et al.*, 2006). Culinary has a strength to enhance destination image and underline the uniqueness of tourism destination (Frochot, 2003). Iconic culinary has an association with destination. Tourism destination is a main place that visited by tourist while travelling with an actual perceived boundaries as a geographical unit that produced tourism statistics (Richardson and Fluker, 2004). By understanding above literature, iconic culinary refers as a culinary product (foods as well as its ways of making) which carries the value of a culture and identified as a representation of the destination.

Iconic culinary concept for this research refers to iconic product conceptualized by Soroka and Lominadze (2011). The iconic product attributes were grouped in two dimensions. Symbolic dimension consists of such attributes as cultural values, history, symbols. Functional dimension includes basic product features such as quality, taste, etc. Cultural values are referring to society's local wisdom in tourism destination (Hawkins *et al.*, 2007). History means a series of event that ever happened in related with destination (Kochhar, 2008). Symbols is something that represents an object.

Iconic product in a form of iconic culinary can truthfully characterize the destination and make its positioning less general and more tangible for average people. Iconic culinary positive associations might be identified with the place and might be used as a starting point for creating and developing a destination brand. While using it continually in marketing communications, the destination brand might be reinforced and enhanced (Florek and Conejo, 2007).

Tourism destination branding process by means of iconic culinary: In the marketing communication perspective, a product including tourism destination need to have "brand" because it has a role in terms of communication and identification. Brand can deliver perceived quality, influence purchase decision, helping customer in digesting product's information and build relationship between product and customer (Aaker, 1991). Branding formulates series of process or activity in creating a brand (Hasan, 2015). Identity is a basic instrument of branding that differentiate specific tourism destination among competitors.

The most thorough definition of destination branding has been proposed by Blain *et al.* (2005). Destination branding is the set of marketing activities that support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other

graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk. Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice.

In this study, destination branding refers to tourism destination branding. The core objective of destination branding as the production of a consistent, focused communication strategy, based upon the selection of a collection of core intangible values existing in the mind of the consumer (Hall, 1999).

Morgan *et al.* (2002) proposing five phases in destination branding. Phase one is market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations. During this stage marketers should evaluate to what extent the brand is contemporary or relevant to today's visitors and residents and its competitiveness with its key competitors. Phase two is brand identity and development. Establishment of destination identity that formed based on vision, mission, and desired images. Destination brand building is all about developing a rich, relevant brand personality. It has both a head and a heart: its head refers to the logical brand features, while its heart refers to its emotional benefits and associations. It is also related with brand positioning, brand architect and brand promise. Phase three is brand launch and introduction where the brand's essence is communicated via a range of marketing communication and promotional campaigns. Phase four is brand implementation as an effort to integrate all stakeholders involved and how they seek to apply brand promise settled. Phase five is monitoring, evaluation and review.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted through qualitative method. Since communication studies is a part of social science, qualitative techniques enable researchers to found a big picture and understanding on how and why a phenomena or communication reality occur. The author used a case study method based on the specific characteristic in keeping with the theme research. Sate Maranggi is an iconic culinary that has been officially used by Purwakarta's district government as their tourism destination icon in order to build the tourism destination brand. It is also included to 30 Indonesian Iconic Culinary Icons officiated by Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, Republic of Indonesia. In relation with their

promotional activities, Purwakarta's government consistently using Sate Maranggi's campaign to promote the city as a tourism destination such as held a Sate Maranggi's festival, Maranggi's hawkers competition, creating Maranggi's dance and song, developing Maranggi's food court, etc.

The instrument for finding data is through in-depth interview equipped by observation to probe as much information from informants. This study applied purposive technique to select seven informants based on their profession and contribution in development of Purwakarta's iconic culinary and destination branding. They are government officer, branding consultant, and hawker's.

The obtained data pass through process of open, axial and selective coding. Data were then managed by using thematic analysis methods so that it is possible for researchers of getting close to the data and developing some deeper appreciation of the content. Thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information. It helps researchers to move the analysis from a broad reading of the data towards discovering patterns and developing themes (Boyatzis, 1998).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Iconic culinary as a culinary product is predicted to carries the value of a culture and identified as a representation of the destination. It is possible because iconic culinary has a symbolic and functional dimension that makes an ordinary culinary becoming iconic culinary. Symbolic dimension is an attribute that closely attached to iconic culinary. Symbolic dimension are divided in to three elements: Cultural values, History, Symbolism.

In cultural values element, as a traditional dishes, Sate Maranggi is much fused with Purwakarta people's daily life. It has been hereditary tradition with no specific myths and legends. Sate Maranggi are very popular for daily food and almost every Purwakarta's people know how to make the dishes. Besides that, Sate Maranggi is also performing as a general main menu that is served on special occasions such as wedding, gathering, etc. The hawkers are spread all over the city with so many buyers especially during weekends. That findings show that Sate Maranggi meets the criteria of iconic culinary product.

Culinary as a cultural product was able to bring the behavioral values of local societies in which the culinary are growing. Purwakarta as a part of West Java has a strong Sundanese culture. Besides speaking the language, in addition to farming, Sundanese people also have farm animal mostly sheep. The culinary is becoming a representation of Sundanese farming that makes the

identity stronger because Sate Maranggi firstly made from sheep's meat. On top of that because it's a society's product, Sate Maranggi also carries behavioral identity of local community that are modest, efficient, and creative. Iconic culinary cannot stand alone because it was produced by local wisdom such as farming animals and herbs/vegetable for seasoning. Iconic culinary could be also an identity of society at tourism destination.

The original history of Sate Maranggi is not surely known. All informants revealed that they do not know exactly the history of this culinary but they feel confident to tell that Sate Maranggi is an authentic culinary heritage that has been passed a long from generation to generation. As a part of deeply attached culture in society and becoming a destinations specialty, in fact the majority of society do not know the origin of Sate Maranggi. It is realized that culinary has grown naturally and popular among local environment then become a part of local wisdom.

As for symbolism, a culinary may consistently exist when it is culturally accepted by the population of destination. Currently, Sate Maranggi still survives and the number of hawkers keep increasing. Sate Maranggi is capable of making tourists feel addicted. It has the ability to be a channel in communicating Purwakarta's culture. This power makes Sate Maranggi as a primary element of symbolism that represents Purwakarta as a tourism destination.

Functional dimensions of iconic culinary consist of two elements: basic product and features. Naturally, individuals need food intake in order to keep alive as well as reduce the hunger. The basic function of Sate Maranggi as a culinary product is to fulfill primary needs which are eating.

For the features, Sate Maranggi served completed with condiment made from soya sauce, onions, chili and tomato. Every areas have their own way to serve Sate Maranggi. For example, in Plered, it served with rice lead, but in Wanayasa area, it served with a sticky rice.

This study found that as an iconic culinary product, Sate Maranggi is satisfying the criteria of an icon to represent Purwakarta as a tourism destination. Symbolic dimension of Sate Maranggi are able to reflect local wisdom and culture as well as destination identity. Furthermore Sate Maranggi can fulfill functional dimension in the form of basic product and features. Basic product consists of product's benefit and unique way of food processing and presentation. For features, Sate Maranggi is uniquely completed with rice lead, sticky rice, and condiment to make the dishes more special. The hawker stall made from bamboo that delivers traditional Sundanese impression and experience.

Purwakarta's district government conducted a series of tourism destination branding process. The first process is market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendation. This phase was done in a simple way by looking in to visitor's number data and by observing societies phenomenon. The strategic recommendations are yet structured, sporadic, massive, dynamic and spontaneous.

The second process is brand identity and development. Purwakarta, as a tourism destination has a vision to become "window of Sundanese art and culture" city. The intended image is Purwakarta as a central of Sundanese culture including culinary culture. The city has not only primary strength on agriculture and livestock, but it has been symbolized by sate Maranggi. Through Sate Maranggi, Purwakarta strengthen its positioning as a destination with delicious authentic culinary and simultaneously creating popular lifestyle to visit Purwakarta and to taste Sate Maranggi. This study shows that iconic culinary could be used to build emotional connection between tourist and destination.

The third process is brand launch and introduction. Several elements of marketing communication mix including promotional mix were utilized in succeeding Purwakarta's tourism branding. The main tools that used are sales promotion through brand activation (event) and amplified by publication. A lot of Sate Maranggi activations were held such as Sate Maranggi Festivals, Steak Maranggi Festivals, Sate Maranggi Hawker Championship and Sate Maranggi Parade. By using an activation, destination brand could directly spread positive influence as well as sensing product experience and communicating brand message "remember Sate Maranggi, remember Purwakarta".

The fourth process is brand implementation. In terms of implementation to meet brand promise, the coordination between government of Purwakarta and all stake holders such as Sate Maranggi hawkers, hotels, travel agents, and restaurants have been running well. The implementation included the standard quality application for raw material, ingredients, services and hygiene.

The fifth process is monitoring, evaluation, and review. In case of Purwakarta's tourism branding, this phase was done limitedly, unstructured, inconsistent and still not holistic. The government has not yet owned long-term grand design in Sate Maranggi development for tourism branding.

CONCLUSION

Iconic culinary could perform as a potential icon to represent tourism destination. By being deeply attached

culture in society, iconic culinary has strengthen to carry the cultural values, local wisdom and has become a source of destination identity. Sate Maranggi as an iconic culinary which has symbolic dimension and functional dimension could fulfill human basic needs as well as be able to reflect local wisdom, culture, identity. That proposition could reinforce the association between iconic culinary and destination.

Iconic culinary as identity of a place could be utilized as a potential vehicle to represent cultural experience, cultural identification, identity marker and a tool to communicate a tourism destination. As for destination branding process, iconic culinary plays an important role in brand identity development. It helps to develop positioning and building brand personality so the logical features, emotional benefit, and association of product (head and heart) will accepted by potential tourist. It also plays a big contribution in brand launch and introduction where the main brand message is to communicate about a tight association between iconic culinary and destination, so once people think about iconic culinary, they instantly have a pictured of specific destination in mind, vice versa.

This study suggests to conduct further research about other iconic culinary that comes from traditional culinary. The study should also compare the traditional culinary which comes from different destination tourism. Therefore, further study may determine which specific iconic and traditional culinary for specific destination tourism as a part of gastronomy brand.

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