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The Role of Branding Strategy in Strengthening the Image of the Village Tourism in Bali

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the tourism village brand strategy in Bali can strengthen the village's image. The methods are descriptive qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (survey). Eight key informants who are involved in managing the tourism village were interviewed. The sampling technique for the survey was purposive, involving 126 tourists who have visited the tourism villages. Thematic analysis was conducted for the qualitative data; whereas, multiple linear regression was used to analysed the quantitative data. The findings are brand equity and conceptual branding strategy in tourism village have been implemented, however, they need to be optimized to strengthen the village tourism's image. The finding from the quantitative data shows that the brand relationship significantly strengthens the image of the tourism village. This research implies that there is a necessity for tourism villages in Bali to design and implement more specific branding methods and set specific purposes so that the new positioning will distinguish them from their competitors and hence, directly strengthen the image.

Keywords: branding, strategies, image, village tourism, Bali

1. Introduction

Village tourism is a form of tourism activity where a small group of tourists have the opportunity to live and experience the life of the local environment (Inskeep, 1991). Village tourism is one of the tourism industries that contributes to the rural economic equality. In an attempt to develop tourism villages, various strategies have been carried out by the government. One of them is through the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Kemenparekraf), which seeks to encourage the development of tourism villages as a strategy to revive the economy (kemenparekraf.go.id, 2021). In addition, this program is also supported by the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan

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(RPJMN), which is related to the improvement and management of destinations in rural areas as an effort to encourage the formation of tourism villages (Tarigan, 2020). It explains the obligation for developing a tourism village in a district scope, as long as it has the competence to support the operation.

Branding plays a significant role in creating a strong brand image for the village, which can provide positive benefits to the village community. Karta, Kusumawijaya and Kappola's (2020) latest survey on tourism villages, involving 100 respondents revealed most of them knew and visited Penglipuran Tourism Village in Bangli district due to its unique traditional housing design as the branding strategy. It reveals how the specified and robust branding of tourism villages can increase tourists' awareness and interest.

Kotler and Keller (2012) explain the importance of brand formation on a product. In general, a brand serves as an indicator of the quality of a product. However, apart from physical products (goods), brands also affect products in the form of tourist destinations (Chen and Tsai, 2007; Bigné, Sánchez and Sánchez, 2001). A comprehensive study needs to be carried out to produce a brand that is unique, attractive and can easily attract consumers, which in this case, are the tourists.

Among the branding strategies undertaken in tourism villages in Bali, the authors are interested in exploring Keller's (2013) strategic brand management concepts application in tourism villages. It explains how visitors feel about the tourism products of the village and what experiences they have, so that visitors can have more positive thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and beliefs towards the services of the rural tourism in Bali. This research is a continuation of Karta's study (2019) that explores the marketing shift in marketing tourism villages from conventional to digital. The results are expected to be able to provide a research roadmap on tourism villages in Bali – how the brand equity model, which consists of brand identity, meaning, response, and relationship strategy can be carried out by tourism villages in Bali to strengthen their images.

This study analyses how the brand equity model strategy (brand identity, brand meaning, brand response and brand relationship) conducted by a tourism village in Bali can strengthen their image. It uses the brand equity concept model by Keller (2013) as the general guideline, which will be compared with the six conceptual steps of brand strategy models by Kotler (2016) that are specifically applied to strengthen the destination image.

Based on the comparison of the two concepts, the formulated problem statement will discuss is "To what extent does the implementation of the brand equity model strategy in tourism village strengthen the village tourism's image?" This problem statement will be deeply explored within the scope of

three main topic areas: (a) How effective is the implementation of Keller's (2013) brand equity concept model in branding tourism village?; (b) How does the six-step branding conceptual model brand model by Kotler (2013) contribute to the branding of the tourism village?; (c) How does the brand equity in a tourism village influence its brand image? It is expected that the result of the study can help the tourism village's organizers utilize their potential and create an attractive tourist destination.

2. Literature Review

The marketing concept explains how a company achieving its goals by determining the needs and wants of target markets (Kotler *et al.*, 2019). The same concept also applies to tourist destinations (Cai, Feng and Breiter, 2004). The marketing carried out must be in accordance with the customer-generated set, which will act as an indicator of customers (in this case tourists) in determining the decisions they make (the destinations they want to visit) (Tasci and Kozak, 2006). However, just like various standard products on the market, tourist destinations also have similar offers such as beautiful views, adequate accommodation, and friendly local communities, which are not enough to attract tourists. Qu, Kim and Im (2011) stated that the concept of branding in marketing is fundamental to help a tourist destination identify and distinguish itself from other alternative destinations in this industry.

For tourism villages, the branding used usually relies on the marketing strategy in the form of a strong positioning because most tourism villages have similar components as the absolute criteria. Based on the study of tourism village criteria compilers, Arida and Pujani (2017) state that a tourism village criteria matrix consists of 8 components, which are biological resources, physical environment, culture, amenities, institutions, human resources, community life, and accessibility. The information illustrates that the eight components mentioned are the absolute composition of each tourism village. Therefore, a more specific marketing strategy is needed to be the indicators of the differentiation, such as positioning.

Marketing strategy in general consists of three elements: segmenting, targeting, and positioning (Kotler and Keller, 2016). With the absolute criteria possessed by tourism villages, the targeted segments tend to have similarities. In contrast with the positioning, the tourism village has the ability to position the destination based on its uniqueness. One of the positioning strategies that tourism villages have carried out includes highlighting one of the most prominent components, such as agricultural tourism, spiritual tourism, archaeological tourism, and others. One example is Kerta Tourism Village, Gianyar, which is

positioned with the tagline 'Green Paradise' to describe the green area in Kerta Village as a paradise for tourists to visit (Michandani and Arida, 2019)

The brand positioning of a destination is referred to as destination branding. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2001), a brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from their competitors. Aaker (1992) an expert in brand building, has suggested that a brand should not only define its functional purpose, the job that it is going to do, but also to express the brand's higher purpose.

As per Aaker's (1992) model, brand assets create value for both customers and the firms in different ways. A more important purpose suggests the existence of emotional and social benefits, which are generated from choosing that brand. Septiani's (2016) research about Bukalapak online shopping brands shows that brands also have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. However, when it comes to destination branding, it does not merely discuss the logo, symbol and tagline, but also how the value of the potential possessed by a tourism village can be clearly communicated. Cai (2002) conducted research related to destination branding that focused on efforts to build a positive destination image by choosing a consistent mix of brand elements. The study found that consistent brand elements can strengthen and function to unify the entire process of forming and building the image of a destination, including tourism villages (Cai, 2002).

Based on research conducted by Cai (2002), the brand elements covers the name, term, logo, sign, design, symbol, slogan, package, or a combination of these, where the name is the first and foremost reference. Especially for destinations, sometimes the brand is also relatively combined with the actual geographical name of the place. For this reason, this study tries to explore deeper into the other perspectives of brand elements, one of which is the concept of brand equity by Keller (2013), which explains the four steps of a pyramid strategy that reflects four fundamental questions that visitors always ask unconsciously about brands. The four steps consist of six blocks that respectively must be done in order to reach the top of the pyramid and develop the brand. The six blocks consist of salience, imagery, performance, feelings, judgments, resonance/relationship as detailed in Figure 1.

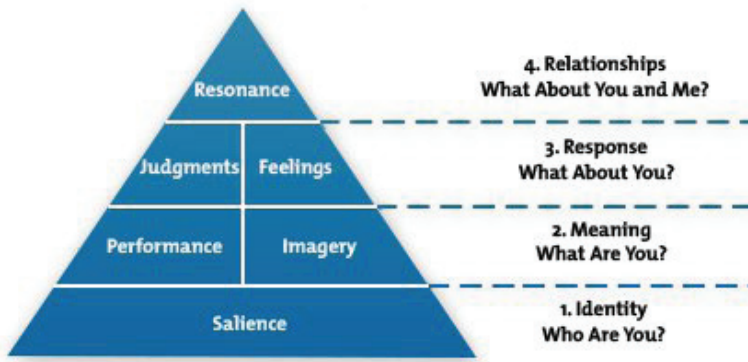


Figure 1. Keller’s Brand Equity Model (2013).

According to Keller (2013) the first step of a company goal is to create “brand salience” or awareness. The second step is how to communicate the brand, which refers to what it stands for. Performance and imagery define how well the product meets the customers’ needs. The third steps is making the customers’ responses of the brand into customers’ judgments and feelings. The last one is brand “resonance/relationship”, which sits at the top of the brand equity pyramid because it is the most difficult to achieve and the most desirable level to reach. Karta, Kusumawijaya and Kappola’s (2020) research found the vital role of stakeholders in branding tourism village, which influences the destination’s better image. Due to the importance of branding in tourism villages, every stakeholder must collaborate in promoting the good brand image. The contribution of stakeholders and the representation of harmonious relationships formed will reflect a positive atmosphere in the destination, which influences the goods/product brand image of the tourism village.

Apart from the four components in the Keller’s (2013) pyramid, Kotler (2016) states that when a firm launches a new product, it needs to carefully and creatively craft brand strategies and tactics to maximize the probability of success. Conceptually, Kotler and Keller (2012) also define the six stages of branding, which are depicted in the six steps of conceptual models branding as shown in the following Figure 2.

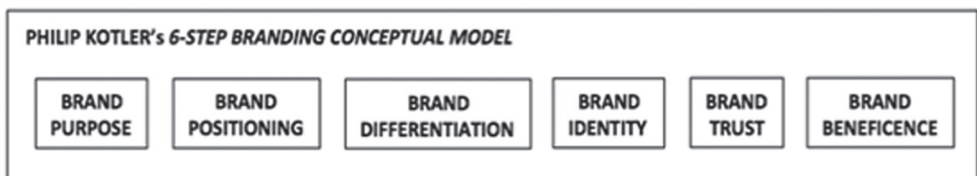


Figure 2. Six Step Branding Conceptual Model (Kotler, 2016).

In this model, Kotler (2016) explained that a company should not start by setting the *brand's identity*. The company should start by setting the *brand's purpose*. A brand purpose answers the question of what the brand promises to the buyers. The company needs to use *positioning* and *differentiation* to communicate the brand's purpose and ultimately enriching the brand's identity, with the hope that in the end, the customer will trust and get the benefits. These two models reinforce one another in the implementation of strengthening the company's brand. Hence, there are several adjustments that need to be considered. Since the tourism village is a blend of products and services, the brand image also includes the perception of the place that is reflected in the memories of tourists (Anderson, 2013). Hobart's (2011) finding explains that Bali's brand destination sometimes has good value for selling the products/services; hence, creating additional value to the product, which also includes the tourism village.

3. Research Method

This research employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data was obtained from five tourism villages in Bali which were selected as the research objects namely Penglipuran Tourism Village, Pinge, Bedulu, Taman Sari Buana and Belimbingsari. These tourism villages were chosen based on their popularity in industrial tourism and the large number of visitors compared to other tourism villages. Data were collected through interviews which were conducted with eight key informants, who have been involved in the management of the village's tourism. The data was analyzed along with descriptive study exploring aspects of branding strategy in the image of tourism village in Bali.

The quantitative analysis was applied to support the qualitative analysis and carried out in the form of characteristics analysis. Questionnaires are distributed to 126 respondents by using the purposive sampling technique and analyzed by using multiple linear regression. Regression analysis was carried out to calculate the effect of the implementation of the tourism village strategy brand on the strengthening of the tourism village image in Bali. The results of the analysis on the implementation of brand strategy in strengthening the image of tourism villages in Bali will later be used as a reference and recommendations in preparing tourism villages in building a positive image as competitive advantages in the tourism industry.

Figure 3 and 4 below is the research framework for the qualitative and the quantitative approach that will be conducted to analyze the influence of brand equity to the image of village tourism.

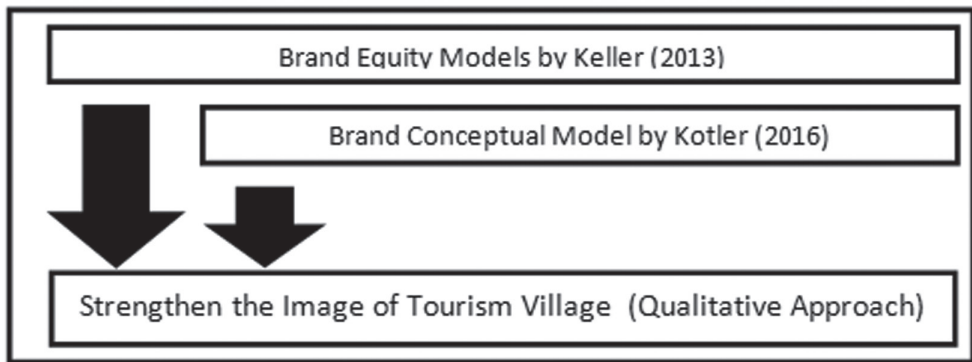


Figure 3. Qualitative Framework Karta (2020).

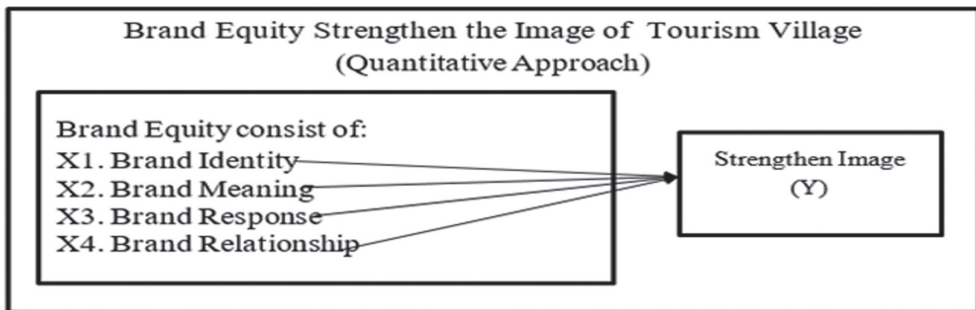


Figure 4. Quantitative Framework (Karta, 2020).

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Profile of Tourists Villages Studied in Brief

The following are the briefs of five villages tourism as research objects in Bali and each figure.

- a) Pengelipuran tourism village located in Bangli Regency, known as the most visited favourite tourist village in Bali. Residents' traditional houses with architectural heritage from antiquity that are still maintained are the characteristics of this tourist village.
- b) Bedulu tourism village centered in Puri Bedulu, in Gianyar Regency, known as an archaeological-based tourism village, has the history of Bali's iconic touristic performance Kecak Dance, which is known as originally created and performed the first time from Bedulu.
- c) Pinge tourism village located in Tabanan Regency highlights the activities of living in the countryside as the main activity of tourists. Pinge has many homestays managed by local people with buildings that are characterized

as the Balinese style.

- d) Taman Sari Buana tourism village located in Tabanan Regency offers cultural activities based on villagers' daily life such as inviting visitors to plant rice in the paddy field or cook traditional cuisines in a traditional kitchen. The tourism village has been managed professionally, and as a result they receive relatively better income.
- e) Blimbingsari tourism village located in Jembrana Regency with spiritual-based activities combined with activities to visit a bird park, chocolate plantation, and various local community SMEs.

4.2 Branding Tourism Village In Bali

As the key informant of this study, tourism village managers explain that tourism villages in Bali do not yet have a specific brand. The branding chosen as the destination packaging carried out by each manager varies according to the activities in favour of the related tourism village and is unspecified. Nevertheless, the survey results show that Pengelipuran is the most popular tourism village, which has been utilizing its natural architecture of the historical heritage as the specific branding strategy. The community still maintains its traditional life, such as unique norms, customs, and beliefs to regulate the social life of their community. This village is a real example of how the right fit and specific concept in the branding strategy greatly influences the popularity of the destination, in contrast to other tourism villages that are still not aware of nor apply a specific branding strategy.

In the Bedulu tourism village, the interview with Astawa (2019) revealed that the branding concept carried out by the Dharmodayana Foundation in Bedulu Castle is the concept of an archaeological tourism village. The Yeh Pulu relief is the Asia's longest relief, reinforced by several temples with relics of ancient objects. The connection of Bedulu Kingdom with Goa Gajah Temple as a relic of the Hindu kingdom era, further strengthens the existence of the Bedulu tourism village as an archaeological tourism village (Photo 1). Tourist activities and services in the tourism village of Bedulu are similar to the activities of tourists who travel in other tourism villages in Bali. Among them, tourists are involved in making traditional specialties, learning to plough the paddy fields, learning to dance, playing Balinese music instruments, nature exploration and tracking, painting eggs and visiting traditional markets. These attractions differentiate Bedulu from other tourism villages.



Photo 1. Yeh Pulu relief associated with Cave Goa Gajah (Photo: Ni Luh Putu Agustini Karta 2019)

During the interviews with informants in the tourism villages of Taman Sari Buana and in Pinge village both Mr Buana (2019) and Mr Receb (2019) respectively explained the similarities between the tourism villages. Both tourism village of Pinge and the tourism village of Taman Sari Buana are located in a cold rural area in Tabanan Regency (Photo 2). The branding of these two tourism villages focuses on tourism activities in the village. The relaxed, green and fertile village atmosphere provides a peaceful and calm ambiance for tourists. The main activities include dancing, drumming, cooking traditional food, making kites, making canang sari, and enjoying lunch. In the tourism village of Pinge, the community is very enthusiastic about preparing homestays for tourists who want to come and stay there. Almost in every house, residents allocate one or two of their rooms for rent to tourists. The gates of the houses are neatly arranged and depict a similar architecture as those in the Pengelipuran tourism village. The Pinge tourism village is managed by village community groups where each group consists of 5-6 people who have homestays and are ready to participate in various tourism village activities. Their contributions include being a cooking class instructor, ploughing guides, teaching dancing and playing music instruments, as well as providing traditional delicacies.



Photo 2. Home Stay in Pinge and the activity of plowing the fields and traditional tableware at Taman Sari Buana Tourism Village (Photo: Ni Luh Putu Agustini Karta, 2019)

Taman Sari Buana tourism village has differences in terms of the management, where individuals own this tourism village. Operationally, the

homestay is provided in a certain area, equipped with restaurant facilities that serve traditional menus combined with continental menus. Service equipments used are made from natural/traditional raw materials, including coconut shell, bamboo, rattan and woven sticks. Eating with traditional equipment is also a culinary brand in this tourism village. The management of Taman Sari Buana, which is by individuals tends to be more professional. This tourism village manages its website professionally so that it is able to reach the European and Australian markets at a reasonably high price. Bing branded as a tourism village with professional management enables Taman Sari Buana to strengthen its image. In contrast to the Pinge tourism village, in which the management is carried out by incompetent community groups, many homestays which have been built are rarely visited tourists. Constrained by promotional funds, marketing activities for this tourism village products are almost inexistent; thus the brand is not be well-formed.

Fibri (2019), one of the owners of homestays and restaurants in the tourism village of Blimbingsari stated that Blimbingsari spiritual tourism village has different characteristics from other tourism villages. The history of the village establishment is depicted as a newly opened village, discovered by exploring the wilderness, to be used as a settlement for Christians in Bali (Photo 3). Since the beginning of the construction of houses in this village, a certain yard area is regulated with a mandatory same designed gate model from one gate to another. So it looks like a tourism village Pengelipuran. Community members who intend to contribute to spiritual tourism village activities can build a homestay in their respective homes. Tourism activities carried out in this tourism village include retreat, visiting the bird park, sightseeing in cocoa plantations, coffee plantations, making coconut sugar and cooking cassava chips. The structure of the fertile plantation soil strongly supports the community's livelihood for gardening.



Photo 3. Church with Balinese architecture, bird garden and waterfall in Blimbingsari Village Tourism (Photo: Ni Luh Putu Agustini Karta, 2019).

According to the analysis conducted, the implementation of a brand theory of Keller (2016) should be started by setting the brand's purpose of the visitor. A brand purpose answers the question of what the brand promises to the visitors. Each village tourism's positioning and differentiation which are successfully implemented, will communicate the brand's purpose and ultimately enrich the brand's identity. Customer satisfaction with a well-communicated brand will be able to strengthen the image of the tourism village.

4.3 The Influence of Brand Equity in Strengthening the Image

4.3.3 Characteristic of Respondent

The data of the respondent swere collected using online google form. The respondents are those who have visited village tourism destinations in Bali. They are categorized based on gender, profession and age. Gender-wise, 60.3% of the respondents are male and 39.7% are female, as detailed on Table 1 below.

Table 1. Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	76	60.3	60.3
	Female	50	39.7	39.7
Total		126	100.0	100.0

Source: Data 2019

Based on the profession, 46.8% respondents are private employees and 29.4% are government officials, as described in detail in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Profession

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Civil apparatus	5	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Lecturers / Teachers	12	9.5	9.5	13.5
	Private employees	59	46.8	46.8	74.3
	Students	5	4.0	4.0	64.3
	Government Officers	37	29.4	29.4	93.7
	Businesspeople	8	6.3	6.3	100.0
	Total	126	100.0	100.0	

Source: Data 2019

Based on the age, 20.6% respondent are in range of 20-30 years old, 28% in range of 31-40 years old and 41.4% are older than 40 years old, as described in detail in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-30 years	26	20.6	20.6	20.6
	31-40 years	48	38.0	39.0	58.0
	➤ 40	52	41.4	41.4	100
Total		126	100.0	100.0	

Source: Data 2019

4.3.4 Determination Analysis

Based on multiple regression analysis, using SPSS program, the coefficient of determination (R_{square}) is 48.1%. The R_{square} shows the level of the independent variables' ability which is consist of brand identity (X1), brand meaning (X2), brand response (X3) and brand relationship (X4) to explain the dependent variable strengthened image (Y). Details are shown in Table 3 shows the R_{square} value of 0.481, which means that 48.1% independent variables have ability to explain the dependent variable. The total 48.1% the image strengthen are influenced by the brand and the remaining (100%-48.1% = 51.9%) is influenced by other variables. The significant value of the F_{test} (0,000 < 0,005) means that the independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable, as shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Determination Value

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of Estimate	F	Sig.
1	.694 ^a	.481	.464	.35616	27.393	.000 ^a

Sources: Data 2019

4.3.5 Multiple Regression Analysis

The results of the multiple regression analysis shown in the Table 5 below, describe that only one variable significantly influences the strengthened image of the village tourism in Bali.

Table 5. Regression Weigh & Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.665	.325		5.115	.000
Brand Identity	-.004	.084	-.004	-.046	.963
Brand Meaning	.026	.078	.030	.336	.738
Brand Response	.146	.071	.190	2.065	.041
B r a n d Relationship	.463	.068	.554	6.780	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Strengthen Image

Based on the results of multiple regression in Table 4 above, an equation can be created as follows.

$$Y = C + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4$$

$$= 1.665 - 0.004X_1 + 0.026X_2 + 0.146X_3 + 0.463X_4$$

This regression equation can be explained as follows.

- 1) The constant value of 1.665 means that if the independent variable of the brand equity strategy is constant, then the dependent variable - strengthened image will be worth 1.665.
- 2) Variable brand identity has a regression coefficient worth -0.004, which means, every increase in the implementation of brand identity strategy by 1%, will affect (weaken) the village tourism image 0.4%. In this case the village tourism in Bali does not have a specific identity which makes it more unique and different from other destinations. In this context, the village tourism in Bali's brand is not stand out, customers do not either recognize it or aware of it. It will not ensure that brand perceptions are correct at key stage of buying process.
- 3) Variable brand meaning, with the regression coefficient of 0.026 indicates that, every increase in the implementation of the brand meaning strategy by 1%, will affect (strengthen) the image of village tourism by 2,6%. This context describes the brand of tourism village, which still cannot meet with the customers' need at the social and psychological levels.
- 4) Variable brand response, with the regression coefficient of 0.146 means, every increase in the implementation of brand response strategy by 1% will have an impact but not significant on the strengthening of the image of village tourism by 14,6%. In this context, the brand responses of tourism village in Bali is very reflective of quality. All activities

which are based on the nature, culture, and which prioritizes the local wisdom are raised as a tourism village brand. Something that is unique and natural is very trusted by tourists as an added value of tourism resources

- 5) Variable brand relationship, with regression coefficient of 0.463 means every increase in the implementation of brand relationship strategy by 1%, will significantly increase (strengthen) the image on village tourism by 46,3%. Keller (2013) stated that brand “relationship” sits at the top of the brand equity pyramid because it is the most difficult and the most desirable level to reach. In this analysis the brand relationship contributes to the higher impact to strengthen the image. The brand relationship will be definite when the customers feel a deep psychological bond with the brand. The brand relationship should be the priority in keeping and strengthening the image.

5. Conclusions

Based on the brand equity models approach (Keller, 2013), tourism villages in Bali has already acquired all aspects needed in forming the brand equity for the destinations such as the product and service adjustments to be fully based on traditional-community destination concept. However, it has not been well integrated to the branding strategy in highlighting which selling points can differentiate one tourism village from the others. This phenomena have caused the failure of the tourism villages in raising their optimal identity, trustworthiness and benefits for the visitors.

In the quantitative perspective, the regression explains the brand equity can strengthen the brand image. Out of the four variable mentioned in brand equity results : 1) brand identity does not have any influence in strengthening the brand image, both 2) brand meaning and 3) brand responses do not significantly strengthen the image, and 4) brand relationship significantly strengthens the image of village tourism. In short, the key strategy in strengthening the brand image of tourism village is when it has already been able to establish the brand relationship with the visitors.

The implication of this research is that the tourism villages must carry out more specific branding so that the new positioning will differentiate themselves from their competitors and directly strengthen their image.

The limitations of this research are the aspects of participation and the number of respondents village tourism, which are limited. It is necessary to strengthen the branding strategy that engages all stakeholders so as to achieve optimal results. More branding strategies to increase competitive advantages

for tourism village need to be pursued in further research. Optimizing the brand equity will immediately strengthen the image of a tourism village.

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