



BRANDING STRATEGY OF 'SEVEN LAKES FESTIVAL' TOURISM BASED ON RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN SUPPORTING LOCAL ECONOMY

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Abstract:

Probolinggo Regency has a unique tourism potential through the concept of 'Seven Lakes' (Seven Lakes) which has not been maximized economically. This study aims to formulate tourism branding strategy 'Seven Lakes' by integrating the values of religious moderation as a competitive advantage. The use of moderation values is expected to create inclusive, harmonious and welcoming destinations for tourists from various backgrounds, while strengthening the social cohesion of local communities. The method used is the study of literacy/literature. Data were collected through literature review and documentation techniques. Data analysis techniques through data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion. The results of this research show that religious moderation-based branding strategies can be implemented through the provision of inclusive worship facilities, the promotion of local tolerance narratives, and the empowerment of the creative economy of communities that value diversity. This Branding is projected to increase tourist visits and directly have an impact on improving the local economy through employment and the development of MSMEs based on local wisdom.

Keywords: Tourism Branding, Seven Lakes, Religious Moderation, Local Economy.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is one of the countries that has a very diverse natural tourism. In line with the richness of the nation's cultural treasures, tourism in Indonesia is full of the value of local wisdom. Indonesia's natural tourism among them, natural tourism mountains, beaches and sea, Lakes, National Parks, to forests. According to the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA), the contribution of tourism to Indonesia's GDP was 4.67% in 2023 which showed a positive trend, while in 2025 it was 3.97% of total GDP which showed resilience amid global uncertainty (Kemenpar, 2026).

Probolinggo Regency is one of the regions in East Java province that has varied natural tourism potential. In addition to the worldwide Bromo Mountain natural tourism, coastal and marine natural tourism also dominates the Probolinggo region located along the Pantura (North Coast). such as Bentar Beach, Duta Beach, Bohay Beach, Gili Ketapang Island, and Tambak Sari Beach. On the south side of Probolinggo Regency also has tourism potential on the slopes of the Argopuro mountains, including Probolinggo Rafting, Breml Eco Park, and several lakes and waterfalls in the Tiris and Krucil areas.

Probolinggo Regency has the potential of Lake and waterfall tourism which has not been widely known by domestic and foreign communities. This made the Probolinggo Regency government hold a seven Lake Festival known as the Seven Lake Festival which was held for seven days at Seven Lakes and seven waterfalls in Tiris and Krucil districts. This activity aims to promote Probolinggo Regency tourism as a

national leading destination. This is in order to improve the economy of local communities through the tourism sector.

The Seven Lakes Festival presents the natural beauty and sociocultural uniqueness of the surrounding tourist communities. The natural atmosphere and local culture offer beauty that is more than just a tourist destination. Tourism Seven Lakes and seven waterfalls in Probolinggo besides not much known also not much visited by tourists. This is because tourism marketing communication is still low. With demimikian, the Seven Lakes Festival is part of Probolinggo Regency's tourism Branding efforts in the midst of a national tourist attraction competition.

Tourism Branding includes efforts to convey stories, images, and unique experiences from other destinations that involve identity formation including narratives, visuals, colors, and interesting messages that represent local values (Prasetya, et.al., 2025; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013). However, in the midst of intense global destination competition, natural attractions are no longer enough. A strong Branding strategy is needed to build a competitive destination image (Pike & Page, 2014). One of the innovative approaches that is relevant to the Indonesian context is the integration of religious moderation values into the destination Branding strategy.

Religious moderation is not just an effort to maintain harmony, but can be a Branding asset that shows the openness, security, and inclusiveness of a destination for tourists from various backgrounds (Kemenag RI, 2019). The Seven Lakes region, surrounded by people with diverse cultures and religions, has the opportunity to position itself as a harmonious multicultural tourist destination. This is in line with the concept of sustainable tourism that emphasizes the preservation of the environment, culture and value of local wisdom, as well as economic growth (Elda, et.al., 2024).

Previous research by Prasetya, et.al. (2025) on strengthening the identity of tourism villages through local potential Branding strategies found that the importance of building community understanding, joint commitment and collaboration in these strategies, thus strengthening the attractiveness and sustainability of Tourism. Research by Elda, et.al. (2024) also found that in an effort to implement a sustainable tourism Branding strategy, it is necessary to increase the role of the mass media to build the image and perception of tourist destinations, related to the beauty, uniqueness, usefulness, and sustainability of Tourism. Research related to religious moderation-based tourism also found that the main challenges are the lack of understanding of local communities about religious moderation, the influence of local traditions that sometimes conflict, and the lack of cross-cultural dialogue, so it requires strengthening the role of education, increasing the capacity of inter-religious dialogue, and active involvement of the community in community-based tolerance programs (Hujeari, et.al., 2025).

Economically, Branding based on a strong local identity is believed to be able to increase tourist visits, which in turn will stimulate creative economic growth and income of people around the lake (Kotler et al., 2017). However, the literature review that specifically links between religious moderation and tourism Branding strategies at the local level is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyze how religious moderation-based Branding strategies can be implemented in the Seven Lakes region of Probolinggo Regency in order to improve local economic welfare through a literature study approach.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative method in constructivistic paradigm, with library research approach. Konstruktivistik paradigm is used to provide sketches about the Branding carried out by the Probolinggo Regency government in constructing communities to promote tourist destinations through the Seven Lakes Festival. The literature study approach examines scientific articles and secondary data that discuss religious moderation-based tourism Branding strategies to improve the local economy. The references are analyzed descriptively with data analysis techniques in the form of content analysis to the disclosure of the results of the analysis according to the research topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The efforts of the Probolinggo Regency government, especially the Tourism Office in holding the Seven Lakes festival which aims to promote Lake and waterfall tourist destinations are not enough to highlight natural beauty alone. The competitiveness of national tourism with natural beauty is very competitive, in addition to the ease of access, facilities and accommodation facilities in adequate tourist attractions, there needs to be uniqueness offered to the public or prospective tourists. This can be done by marketing communication efforts on tourism potential.

1. Analysis of the potential of "Seven Lakes" as an inclusive tourist destination

a. Destination Overview

Lake tourism Branding with the theme of Seven Lakes in the form of a seven-day tourist festival at Seven Lakes and seven waterfalls is done to promote the destination to the wider community. Introducing and representing the travel story with the concept of seven ranu with seven days of interesting experience. As previous research stated that tourism Branding includes efforts to convey stories, images, and unique experiences from other destinations that involve the formation of identity including narratives, visuals, colors, and interesting messages that represent local values (Prasetya, et.al., 2025; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013).

The Seven Lakes are Ranu Agung, Ranu Betok, Ranu Segaran, Ranu Tlogo Argo, Ranu Merah, Ranu Gedang, and Ranu Paleran. While the seven waterfalls include Purba Tirai Bidadari waterfall, Hyang Darungan waterfall, Jaran Goyang waterfall, Kedaton waterfall, Kali Pedati waterfall, Dewi Rengganis waterfall, and Saketi waterfall. Branding the destination of the lake and seven waterfalls is the main theme in this Probolinggo nature tourism event. As stated by previous research that a strong Branding strategy is needed to build a competitive destination image (Pike & Page, 2014).

The seven waterfalls and seven ranu are located in Krucil and Tiris sub-districts, residential areas on the slopes of Argopuro and Tengger mountain. The geographical location of the two districts in the Highlands of Probolinggo Regency makes the people have distinctive sociocultural characteristics, strong local wisdom, and strong traditional values. Tiris and Krucil districts are rich in natural potential, but there are accessibility challenges that are not easy, compared to the coastal area of Probolinggo Regency. Based on field data, road improvements to the two districts have been implemented. The condition of public roads to tourist areas is good and supports the ease of mobility of the community, especially tourists.

The livelihood of the people of Tiris and Krucil is mostly coffee farmers, horticultural commodity planters, and dairy farmers, the rest work in the public

service sector of the local village. In addition to the abundant natural potential of plantations and agriculture, the people of the region have also begun to develop village and nature tourism, such as mountain tourism, waterfalls, ranu/lakes, and agritourism.

The socio-economic conditions of the Krucil and Tiris communities, the majority of which live in the agricultural sector, are prone to poverty. Tiris and Krucil areas were noted to have several underdeveloped villages which are often associated with limited infrastructure and accessibility. The development of natural tourism that is able to bring in Village Revenue (PADes) and support MSMEs is expected to be able to move the economy faster and more stable.

b. SWOT analysis of Seven Lakes Tourism Probolinggo

The development of Seven Lakes Tourism can be analyzed through aspects of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and threats or commonly abbreviated as SWOT

1) Strengths

- a) the uniqueness of natural ecosystems. It has seven lakes with different characteristics (such as Ranu Agung, Ranu Segaran, Ranu Bethok) in one adjacent geographical area.
- b) Social Capital moderation. The surrounding community has a strong tradition of tolerance (acculturation of Javanese and Madurese cultures and religious diversity) which creates a peaceful atmosphere for tourists.
- c) Local products. There are typical local commodities around the lake (such as mountain fruits and local culinary) that can be developed into tourist products.

2) Weakness

- a) infrastructure and accessibility. Some access points to the lake still need improvement, as well as supporting facilities (such as tourism standard toilets or information boards) that have not been evenly distributed.
- b) management of Branding that has not been integrated. There is no strong single identity that unites the Seven Lakes as a single destination (cluster).
- c) Limited Human Resources. There is a need for capacity building for pokdarwis (tourism conscious group) in terms of professional tourism management and digital literacy.

3) Opportunities

- a) slow trends in Tourism & ecotourism. The increased interest of post-pandemic tourists in nature, which is calm and not crowded, fits perfectly with the character of Seven Lakes.
- b) Government policy support. Strategic Program of Probolinggo Regency government in the development of village-based tourism sector and creative economy.
- c) Digital Marketing & Storytelling. The opportunity raised the narrative of "Harmony tourism" (religious moderation) on social media to attract a segment of tourists seeking spiritual and educational experiences.

4) Threats

- a. environmental damage. Risk of degradation of water quality and forest ecosystems if the visitor capacity (carrying capacity) is not managed properly (especially if the area is included in the conservation area).

- b. destination competition. Competition with other water or mountain tourism destinations in East Java that may have more modern facilities.
- c. cultural diversity. The risk that the values of moderation and local wisdom shift into a mere spectacle for the sake of the economy without preserving the essence of the original values.

2. Construction Of A Branding Strategy Based On Religious Moderation

The strategy to build Seven Lakes Branding as a tourism marketing communication in a heterogeneous society, not only positioning it as a natural tourism, but also strengthening the value of social harmony. This can be based on the concept of diverse moderation in building an inclusive and harmonious image of nature tourism. Branding the Seven Lakes which also contains the meaning of the Harmony Lakes for local people and tourists who come to visit. Religious moderation in this case is represented as an inclusive excellent service, so as to warmly welcome all tourists without any discrimination. In harmony with that, people and tourists can interact tolerantly despite differences in understanding, customs, culture or tradition, to religious practices.

Religious moderation is not just an effort to maintain harmony, but can be a Branding asset that shows the openness, security, and inclusiveness of a destination for tourists from various backgrounds (Kemenag RI, 2019). Religious moderation is a religious approach that emphasizes a balanced attitude (*wasathiyah*) in understanding and practicing religious teachings (Fahmi, et al., 2025). As the majority of Tiris and Krucil people are Muslims and Javanese-Madurese culture, but still have local traditions, such as Kara'an, Roket Bumi, Selamatan Village, Sunggi Susu, and Okol music that is preserved to this day.

The sociocultural reality and religious practices that take place in tourist areas are the crystallization of the noble values of the local people. The progressive development of natural tourism will open access for tourists or people outside the region to come and visit. Religious moderation applied in tourist bases to avoid possible conflicts and social tensions that can arise due to differences in cultural and spiritual values. As the discovery by Bruinessen (2018) and Hasan (2019) about the strengthening of religious purification movements that view some local cultural practices as "impure" or even "bid'ah".

This phenomenon can occur if the value and religious authority of the local community is weak and less responsive in addressing the differences that come. As explained by Hefner (2019), the weakening of traditional religious authority often goes hand in hand with the strengthening of religious understanding that is more rigid and less tolerant of differences. Whereas Indonesia has long developed a moderate religious approach, as explained by Azra (2020) that Indonesian Islam has a distinctive character that is accommodating to local cultures and tolerant of differences.

As the concept of religious moderation based on the local economy developed by Casram (2019) conveys that universal religious values when integrated with local wisdom will create social harmony. This is in line with the recommendation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2023) which mentions the importance of developing contextual and local wisdom-based religious moderation narratives. As the previous research found that the application of religious moderation is necessary to strengthen the role of education, increasing the capacity for inter-religious dialogue, as well as active involvement of the community in community-based tolerance programs (Hujeari, et.al., 2025).

Based on the analysis of researchers, tourism branding strategy based on religious moderation can be applied, including by:

- a) Provision of inclusive worship facilities. Clean, accessible, and representative worship facilities for various beliefs (e.g. the availability of comfortable prayer rooms and quiet/meditation spaces for the public) serve as tangible evidence of the value of moderation. Travelers feel valued for their spiritual identity. This lowers the psychological barrier for visitors from different religious backgrounds to come, thereby expanding market segmentation.
- b) Promotion of local tolerance narratives. Natural tourism products (lakes) can be imitated in other places, but the historical narrative and community harmony Probolinggo (cultural acculturation) is an asset that can not be plagiarized. Raising stories about how people of different faiths together to preserve Seven Lakes creates the image of a "soulless" destination. Changing the position of Seven Lakes from just a natural tourist attraction into an educational and cultural tourist destination. Tourists come not just to see the sights, but to "consume" the values of peace.
- c) Creative economic empowerment of people who value diversity. Ensure that the economic supply chain of tourism (culinary, craft, lodging) is managed without discriminatory practices. For example, the development of MSMEs that serve local cuisine that is friendly to various religious dietary rules (halal, vegetarian, etc.) or the involvement of various community groups in tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis). Tourists get an ethical consumption experience. When they buy local products, they know they are supporting an inclusive society. This creates a deeper satisfaction (high-value experience)

3. Branding Synergy In Supporting Local Economy Strong Tourism

Branding will make the quantity and duration of tourist visits will increase. This will make tourists need accommodation that can support the potential of the local economy, especially local MSMEs. As the results of research by Padang, Asmaul, & Yuhdi (2021) found that the tourism potential after city branding will make the trade sector by itself also increase, this is due to tourist visits.

The concept of sustainable tourism that emphasizes the preservation of the environment, culture and value of local wisdom, as well as economic growth (Elda, et.al., 2024). The development of tourism branding can support local economic growth because more tourists come to visit, it will bring demand for goods and services needed by tourists. Communities around tourism can take advantage of this opportunity to become a source of income. Thus, the wheels of the local economy can spin faster.

There are several main indicators of the local economy that can be used to see the impact of tourism branding on the economy of the surrounding community, including the following.

a) Increased Employment Opportunities

Tourist Branding increases the volume of visits, which automatically creates a demand for Labor to manage tourist facilities and services. Strong Branding creates job diversification, ranging from tour guides (tour guide), Inn managers, to conservation officers. The tourism sector is labor-intensive, so it is able to absorb local labor from various levels of Education. The transformation of the tourism sector through the right marketing strategy has proven to be a driving engine in creating new jobs, both directly at tourist

- attractions and indirectly in the supporting sectors (Prasetyo & Aziz, 2023).
- b) Growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)
Branding creates a product identity that allows local MSMEs to enter the tourism supply chain with higher added value. With tourism branding based on religious moderation and social harmony, MSMEs in Probolinggo Regency can develop creative products such as typical culinary and handicrafts that have stories (storytelling). Tourists do not just buy things, but buy "memories" of the destination. Community-based tourism supported by a unique brand identity encourages local entrepreneurship and strengthens the competitiveness of MSMEs through the provision of authentic creative products (Hidayah & Ramadhani, 2022).
 - c) Increase In Rural Income (PADes) Successful tourism Branding converts natural potential into an official source of income collectively managed by the village. Through the management of village-owned enterprises (BUMDes) in the Seven Lakes area, entrance fees, parking, and rental facilities become sustainable income. These PADes are then reused for the construction of village infrastructure, creating a self-sustaining development cycle.
 - d. Economic Multiplier Effect This indicator measures how one rupiah spent by tourists at Seven Lakes rotates many times within Probolinggo's local economy. This effect occurs when the homestay owner buys groceries from a local farmer, and the farmer uses the money for the school needs of the children in the village. Strong Branding ensures the flow of money remains in the local scope (local retention) rather than "leaking" out of the region. The economic multiplier effect of tourism is created when tourist spending triggers economic activity in the non-tourism sector, thus creating a sustainable wave of income for the wider community (Wahyuni & Saputra, 2024).

However, on the other hand, the importance of local involvement in contributing to developing tourism, maintaining religious moderation values, and utilizing business opportunities for local economic growth. It is also part of the community-Based Tourism empowerment efforts. The hospitality and moderate attitude will make the image of the destination will increase organically, both directly and through social media. This will increase marketing costs and increase local revenue.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of literature studies that have been conducted, it can be concluded that the strategy of tourism branding based on religious moderation is a very relevant and strategic approach to the 'Seven Lakes' area in Probolinggo Regency. The findings of this study indicate three main points, namely First, the integration of religious moderation values in the form of inclusive facilities and local tolerance narratives are able to create a unique and competitive destination identity (destination branding), which distinguishes it from other natural attractions.

Second, this strategy not only focuses on the spiritual aspect, but also mechanically encourages local economic growth through four main indicators, namely the expansion of employment, strengthening creative MSMEs, increasing Village original income (PADes), and creating a strong economic multiplier effect for the surrounding community. Third, the application of the concept of slow tourism in

harmony with the ethics of conservation and moderation is the key to economic and environmental sustainability in the Seven Lakes region.

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