

CULTURAL FESTIVALS IN BORNEO'S TAILS: A TOURISM POTENTIAL AS CITY BRANDING IN SAMBAS

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ABSTRACT

Sambas possesses significant potential for developing its natural resources into tourism assets, supporting local city branding initiatives. Efforts to promote Sambas as a tourist destination have included hosting culturally-rooted festivals, which stimulate the local economy by attracting visitors and creating business opportunities for residents. This study aims to assess Sambas Regency's tourism scope by identifying tourism areas in West Kalimantan, using a qualitative-descriptive approach. This approach focuses on the cultural festivals in Sambas Regency, which hold considerable tourism potential. The findings reveal that although various efforts have been made to promote Sambas, practical challenges persist. Visitor motivation can be enhanced by addressing factors such as festival cleanliness, food variety, beach conditions, and event program content. Despite these initiatives, most festival attendees are locals from West Kalimantan, with limited foreign tourist engagement. This study highlights both the progress and areas needing improvement in promoting Sambas as a unique cultural tourism destination.

Keywords: Cultural Festival, City Branding, Sambas Regency

A. INTRODUCTION

A festival is an event that has become a traditional symbol of an area that has usually been built by the local community and is held on the same day and month every year (Kwiatkowski et al., 2021; Ma & Lew, 2012; Warner, 2021). Festival events usually conduct exhibitions based on the local wisdom and culture of an area so that they attract visitors and tourists (Borowiecki & Castiglione, 2014; Woosnam & Aleshinloye, 2018). In promoting an area, the festival is the most effective strategy for growing the economy and benefiting the local community as visitors and tourists tend to shop (Loukaitou-Sideris & Soureli, 2012; Wilson et al., 2017). The festivals that are most popular with visitors and tourists are related to food festivals. According to Insun Lee & Charles Arcodia (2011) the role of regional food festivals is the most effective strategy for branding destinations that contribute to building the tourism sector. Moreover, local food in festival activities is able to improve the positive image of the destination and local food.

Several cities in Indonesia have carried out city branding to improve the community's economy through festivals such as art festivals in Kampong Bustaman, music festivals in several Indonesian cities, cultural festivals in Solo, the Cap Go Meh festival in Singkawang, and others (Akbar, 2022; Ong et al., 2017; Peny Meliaty Hutabarat, 2022; Santoso, 2020). Festivals that are carried out in order to attract the arrival of tourists can be done with diversity within a society. In this case, Indonesia, which is a very diverse country both ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously,

has the potential for regions in Indonesia to become cities. Moreover, some countries take advantage of ethnic diversity in city branding, such as in Leicester City, which suppresses the combination of marketing activities in urban environments. Thus, various ethnic groups are free to express and celebrate their own culture and become a multicultural city (Hassen & Giovanardi, 2018).

Despite having similarities with other regions in general, Sambas is still not optimally marketing the potential that exists in the region, especially in tourism. Moreover, Sambas was a post-conflict area in 1999, so in this case, city branding that embraces all ethnicities, religions, and cultures can be implemented in Sambas. Of course, this changes the positive image of Sambas as a post-conflict area into an area that has an attitude of tolerance, peace, security, multiculturalism, and others. It aims to attract tourists and visitors who come from different backgrounds. Economically, if this is done, then it is not impossible to invite investors to invest in Sambas. However, some of the cultural festivals in Sambas have the potential to build city branding in the Sambas Regency area. Some festival activities carried out in Sambas have the potential to help brand the city, such as the Lala Kuli Festival, Muare Ulakan Night Festival, Cap Go Meh Festival, Naik Dango Festival, Borneo Youth Culture Festival 2022, Sago Festival, and others. Therefore, through regional marketing, such as festival activities carried out in Sambas, a city can get out of the problems it faces. Through cultural-based festivals conducted in Sambas, it can encourage the city to become an open area for all ethnicities and religions, create a livable city, and grow the economic potential of local communities (Ahmadjayadi et al., 2016).

Moreover, Sambas is an area that has a variety of cultures, especially those of the ethnic Chinese, Dayaks, and Malays (Mee, 2017; Suratman & Arif, 2020; Suratman & Hamzah, 2022). Of course, this is a potential way for Sambas Regency to do regional marketing through city branding. Sambas, in the province of West Kalimantan, has geographical potential due to its location at the tip of Borneo, directly adjacent to the Sarawak region of East Malaysia. With a strategic area adjacent to other countries such as Malaysia and Brunei, Sambas should prioritize the tourism sector, which is an icon of the Sambas area (Mee, 2014; Muazir & Chang Hsieh, 2019). Therefore, this paper elaborates on the cultural festival held in Sambas.

Several studies, at least, have conducted similar studies to this paper that discuss city branding through festivals. Several studies have found that festival outcomes serve as a means and a location for people to connect personal geography with collective experiences. In addition, several studies have also shown that cultural festivals also have social, religious, economic, political, artistic, and educational aspects (Aristono et al., 2021; Blichfeldt & Halkier, 2014; Finkel & Platt, 2020; Kladou & Trihas, 2021; Nursanty et al., 2017). The difference between this study and previous studies is that cultural festivals have the potential to help the Sambas area build city branding as a tourism destination. The study was conducted in Sambas Regency, an administrative area of West Kalimantan province bordering Sarawak, East Malaysia

B. METHOD

To elaborate on its findings, this study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach. The qualitative approach taken in this study discusses how the cultural festivals in Sambas Regency have the potential to be city branding. The Sambas area seeks to become a tourism area in West Kalimantan, so the presence of cultural festivals becomes a potential in an effort to build a tourism area and as a city brand. Therefore, in searching and analyzing data, the author thinks qualitative methods are appropriate to support the research process carried out. In practice, qualitative research is a research process that produces descriptive data, especially in data analysis, which is carried out continuously until the data obtained is collected. Meanwhile, the data analysis techniques that the authors used in this study were primary and secondary data analysis that the authors obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as literature studies to strengthen the data that had been found. In the data analysis technique obtained, the author conducts interactive model analysis, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusions. The condensation of data carried out by the author on all data without reducing it is because the author considers all the data obtained to be important (Miles et al., 2020).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the author's search in an effort to build a tourism area, the Sambas District Tourism, Youth, and Sports Office launched the Albatross branding and tagline, adopted from the emblem of the Alwatzikoebillah Sambas Palace. Meanwhile, in promoting the Sambas area, the Tourism Office carries the tagline (#) with the slogan "Rindu Sambas". One of the reasons for using the slogan is that it is not only easy to remember but also



contains the meaning that people, both visitors and tourists, want to visit Sambas.

Figure.1 Sambas Regency Branding Logo in Tourism

Source: <https://disparpora.sambas.go.id>

The albatross philosophy symbolizes strength and is inspired by the power of the sea fleet in the glorious era of the Sambas Sultanate. Meanwhile, the Pesona Indonesia logo is used in the logo pattern to promote Sambas Regency, which has national standards. The meaning of "Rindu Sambas" is an effort by the Sambas Regency government to introduce tourism to the community in line with infrastructure development in the Sambas Regency area. In addition, the concept of "Rindu Sambas", a tourist attraction, and the development of an institutional concept that adopts the concept of experiential marketing (<https://disparpora.sambas.go.id>). Furthermore, the experience of tourists visiting a place must be properly managed, so that the concept of experiential marketing emerged as a result of changes in the business world and is

known as the experience economy. As a result, in order to project a positive image of a tourism destination, the experience provided to visitors must be memorable and touch on the emotional side of visitor satisfaction. If this is done, it will be in accordance with the slogan “Rindu Sambas”, which is intended to encourage tourists who have visited Sambas to return (Cudny, 2019; Miftahuddin et al., 2021). Table 1 shows the philosophy of the slogan “Miss Sambas”, which is the branding of Sambas Regency tourism.

Table.1. Sambas Tourism Branding Philosophy “Rindu Sambas”

No	Color	Philosophy
1.	Green	Creativity, environmental friendliness, and harmony
2.	Purple	Imagination, faith, unity of body and soul
3.	Yellow	Innovation, Spirit of Renewal, and Openness
4.	Blue	Universe, Peace, and Steadfast
5.	Magenta	Balance, common sense, and practical nature

Source: <https://disparpora.sambas.go.id>

In an effort to build a tourism area, the slogan “Rindu Sambas” is part of the city branding area of Sambas Regency. The potential of natural resources and human resources owned by the Sambas area, a strategy that can be carried out by developing the tourism sector and promoting it through festival activities. At least the author discovered some festivals in Sambas that have tourism potential and can be used as city branding for Sambas Regency. Here are some of the festivals performed in Sambas:

1. Sago Festival

The sago festival has the potential to be an attraction for tourists to visit the Sambas Regency area. The festival, which has been carried out twice, is the only sago festival in West Kalimantan. However, the sago festival held in Sambas Regency is still carried out at the village level, namely the one held in Sebangun Village, located in Sebawi District, from December 2 to 4, 2022. According to the author’s observations, the sago festival has potential for Sambas Regency tourism, with a track record of festivals being held on a regional and national scale. Based on the results of the author’s interview with the Head of Sebangun Village, it shows that there are efforts to hold a sago festival every year and make it more lively in 2023 (Interview with Sarbini, Head of Sebangun Village, December 2, 2022).

The festival aims to promote the potential of sago in Sambas Regency so that, in its implementation in 2021, it carries the theme “*Kanyang Dak’an Harus Nasek*” (Satiety does not have to eat rice). Meanwhile, in 2022, the sago festival committee will carry the theme “Let’s Be Creative with Sago” in attracting visitors to watch the sago festival in Sebangun Village. In addition, the committee also held competitions and exhibitions with processed products made from sago. The competitions carried out in the Sago Festival activities in Sebangun Village are as follows:

Table. 2 Sago Festival Competition in Sambas District

No	Competition	Information
1.	Sago Plate	This competition makes food called “sago plates” based on sago flour
2.	Culinary Sago Flour	This competition creates sago flour-based culinary items such as cakes, noodles, and drinks
3.	<i>Umbut</i> Sago Culinary	<i>Umbut</i> Sagu is the trunk of the head of the sago tree, which is where young leaves grow. The <i>umbut</i> part can be used as food in the Sambas community
4.	Culinary composition of sago caterpillars	Culinary competition serving sago caterpillars
5.	Sago Frond Raft Rowing Race	Boat rowing race originating from sago fronds
6.	Running a race in sago stalks	Running races are conducted on sago stalks that have been arranged in the river
7.	Race to overthrow sago stalks	The competition to overthrow sago stalks is carried out by the individual
8.	Competition to make a roof from sago leaves	A competition to make a roof from sago leaves was attended by participants, both men and women
9.	Creation dance competition	A dance competition was attended by female participants from the local community
10.	Storytelling competition	Storytelling competitions conducted by the local community

Source: Author Interview and Observation Results at the 2022 Sago Festival

In addition to holding a competition, the sago festival committee also conducted an exhibition of creative products, which was attended by the people of Sebangun Village, by setting up stands around the festival site. In addition to the activities that take place, entertainment events are also provided, such as live music, art, and cultural performances. The potential of sago festivals for social and commercial exchange is such that the activities carried out, if encouraged by the Sambas local government, provide an opportunity to put the community in cultural practice and build social change in Sambas. Furthermore, the sago festival is used to promote farmers and local products that are closely related to Sambas’ location and culture (Ascione & Fink, 2021). Based on the observations that the author made about the activities of the Sago festival, it would be more interesting if they were carried out in the urban center of Sambas. As a result, the scale of the festival is carried out not only at the village level, but also at the district level. When compared to the implementation of the festival in the village, the implementation at the district level will undoubtedly attract more visitors and facilitate public access to watch the festival.

2. Lala Kuli Festival

If the sago festival is held at the village level, then the lala kuli festival is held in the urban center of Sambas. Based on the results of observations made by the author, the lala kuli festival in 2022 has the opportunity to become a tourist destination for Sambas

Regency. Of course, if this festival is routinely carried out, then Sambas' potential as a tourism area will be realized and it will become the brand of the Sambas government. The lala kuli festival activities have more visitors than the sago festival because this activity is carried out in urban areas, so the visitors who come to date are also diverse. As a result, festival activities in urban areas can help to grow the economy of the lower middle class, which mostly trades during festival season.

The lala kuli festival activities will be held from October 5 to 9, 2022, and will be carried out at the Sambas Regent's Office complex. With the strategic location of the festival, this event is in high demand by many visitors. In the lala kuli festival activities, there are many exhibitions of traditional processed food products processed by farmers, such as coffee, cakes, *bubur pedas*, *amping*, and others. The lala kuli festival is not only to grow the post-Covid-19 economy but also to appreciate the farmers in Sambas because their agricultural products are processed into products that have a high selling value. Moreover, Sambas is known as the largest rice, orange, and dragon fruit growing area in West Kalimantan (Kurniawan & Suratman, 2018). This activity is also enlivened by musical entertainment during the activity, so that thousands of visitors every day attend the Lala Kuli Festival.

Therefore, in the activities carried out by the Sambas government, it must be able to market the Sambas area with the concept of "smart city branding" so that in practice promotional activities aim at regional development by attracting the interest of the public, locals, foreign tourists, and business people. Thus, city branding is not just a logo but an integrated concept, plan, and program from the Sambas area to encourage the achievement of regional development goals. As for indicators, smart city branding includes three dimensions, namely tourism, business, and appearance (Ahmadjayadi et al., 2016).

3. Muare Ulakan Night Festival

The Muare Ulakan Night Festival is an activity celebrating more than 1500 years of culture on the Sambas River. This activity took place on February 5, 2023, which also held an ornamental ship competition. The ornamental boat competition held was in the form of decorating a 7-meter-long ship and a boat. This festival activity is also enlivened by music entertainment organized by the committee. Muare Ulakan Night Festival, if it is carried out regularly and planned, it is not impossible that it will become a major event on a national scale. Moreover, Muare Ulakan has historical value, which adds to the public's interest in visiting the Sambas River. Therefore, the local government must develop and promote Muare Ulakan tourism as the main axis and add supporting infrastructure to the festival activities carried out. The Sambas River, or Muare Ulakan, located in Sambas' urban center, has potential in tourism and water transportation strategies in West Kalimantan. Moreover, rivers located in the middle of the city are not all owned by big cities in Indonesia.

Developed countries that have rivers develop them into tourist attractions to encourage economic development and take advantage of the unique geographical

environment of rivers located in urban areas so that they become tourism objects (Miller, 2017; Yang & Lin, 2020). Moreover, in Sungai Sambas or Muare Ulakan, there are traditional houses that stand along the river, which is also a potential tourist attraction. Therefore, between history, natural resources, and culture, it has the potential to be developed into a place for tourism. One of the countries that takes advantage of the combination is Albania, which in practice builds the countryside, combines history and knowledge, and becomes a sustainable tourism strategy in the region (Branko, 2022). The development of the river into a modern tourist attraction not only improves the economy of the Sambas community but also makes people aware of its role as a river keeper and revives the identity of the city, where the river is an important element in their lives (Zinaida, 2022). Moreover, regions are highly dependent on human capital capacity, literacy level, creativity, and innovation (Sihombing, 2021).

Rivers in several areas of West Kalimantan, according to Muhammad Syaifulloh and Basuki Wibowo (2022), have urban planning policies and tourism development in riverside areas. However, there are obstacles to unsustainable development due to the low awareness of the importance of the river, both historically and in terms of tourism. Currently, tourism and creative economy development have been carried out to respond to the enactment of the Asean Economic Community System and face the challenges of the 4.0 era. Through the development of tourism on the Sambas River, it is the responsibility of the government to provide an understanding of the importance of the river in Sambas to the community. Moreover, there are still many rivers in Sambas that are polluted by the disposal of gold mining waste in the upper reaches of the river in the form of mud that drifts into the current of the Sambas river (Yusriadi, 2017). For the Sambas people, the river has become their identity in social life. According to Rizal Mustansyir (2015), there are at least 3 reasons why the river becomes an identity for the Sambas people, namely: 1) the river culture that develops in the Sambas community is seen in activities with the river; 2) the symbolic meaning embodied in the river culture is seen in the embodiment of the language symbol; and 3) the river is part of the maritime in Sambas County, which creates various sources of inspiration for the creation of river-themed songs.

4. Jellyfish Festival

The jellyfish festival is held in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area at Camar Bulan, Temajuk Village, Paloh District. The jellyfish festival will be held from March 29–30, 2022, to coincide with the jellyfish catching season along the seashore of Temajuk Village, which ends in mid-May. The activity of catching jellyfish is used by the Sambas community in Temajuk as a local wisdom that can attract tourists (Sabahan & Erwandi, 2022). The jellyfish festival aims to introduce the potential of Temajuk as a tourist village that has culture and natural resources that can increase economic growth. In the jellyfish festival, various competitions are held, such as jellyfish culinary competitions, jellyfish catching competitions, jellyfish drawing and coloring competitions at the early childhood education level, folk game competitions, and others.

The jellyfish festival held in the border area has the potential to attract tourists from Malaysia and Brunei. Moreover, Temajuk Village is an area directly adjacent to Malaysia, so the festival that is held should invite many visitors. However, based on the results of the observations that the author made, this activity was still not optimal for inviting many tourists. In the context of planning tourism destinations, it has an important role to maintain the image of those destinations. In addition, the holding of festivals helps build the quality of life of local communities and can expand tourism infrastructure (Imron, 2015; Oh & Lee, 2012).

In the case of festivals that take place in border areas, they should pay attention to the target market of people who will visit the jellyfish festival event in Temajuk. When the festival corresponds to the characteristics of the target market, people will travel far and spend their money at the festival because they are looking for high-quality products and services (Krajíčková & Šauer, 2018). In addition, if the festival event does not adjust its target market, then people who are from Malaysia will not be motivated to visit. In addition, environmental characteristics such as food quality, planned program content, quality of adequate facilities, cleanliness of the festival area, resting places, variety of food, peace, the natural environment, and clean beaches influence the motivation of visitors to come to the jellyfish festival event in Sambas (Wan & Chan, 2013).

Almost all festivals that take place in Sambas Regency, including the jellyfish festival, are part of the concept of cultural tourism. According to Dias Satria and Angga Erlando (2018), the strategy of displaying local culture in the form of a festival is an activity that attracts tourists to visit an area. Moreover, the presence of tourists will have an impact on the economy and create business opportunities for local residents. It would be more interesting if every festival invited public figures, artists, YouTubers, and others who could promote tourism. According to Syaiful Huda (2022), in developing the potential of beach tourism, creative ideas are needed in developing the area, and if this is done, jobs will be open to local residents. so that young people who come from Temajuk Village do not need to work until they reach Malaysia if the tourism potential is managed optimally and profitably for the local community.

D. CONCLUSION

Sambas District has the potential to do regional marketing through city branding. Sambas is located in the province of West Kalimantan, geographically right at the end of Borneo, which is directly adjacent to the Sarawak area in East Malaysia. Sambas prioritized the tourism sector and became an icon of the Sambas area with the slogan “*Rindu Sambas*”. In an effort to build a tourism area, the slogan “*Rindu Sambas*” is part of the city branding area of Sambas Regency. The many potentials of both natural and human resources owned, the strategy that can be done by developing and promoting the tourism sector through festival activities of the several festivals carried out in Sambas, at least the author participated in several activities such as the Sago Festival, Lala Kuli Festival, Jellyfish Festival, and Muare Ulakan Night Festival. Therefore, in the activities carried out by the Sambas government, it must be able to market the Sambas area with the

concept of “smart city branding” so that in practice promotional activities aim at regional development by attracting the interest of the public, locals, foreign tourists, and business people. Thus, city branding is not just a logo but an integrated concept, plan, and program from the Sambas area to encourage the achievement of regional development goals.

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