

## National Identity Attributes as Desired Future Image of a Nation

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**Abstract:** Although national identity attributes can be used for nation building and branding the nation, little study has been explored on enriching branding the nation perspectives. This study aims to demystify the role of national identity attributes as a nation desired future image. Utilising interview for exploratory pre-test and followed by field survey, Indonesia national identity attributes are explored. The finding indicates that national identity attributes may be emerged as the essence elements for developing the desired future image of a nation. Particularly, this study suggests for desired future image to be established, the inclusion of self-perception must be in line with the actual projected image. Overall, this study highlights the importance of national identity attributes as desired future image of nation, which is useful for mapping a nation's positioning. Therefore, it is deemed appropriate to strategically integrate self-perception and the actual projected image.

**Key words:** National identity attributes • Desired future image • Nation • Indonesia

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### INTRODUCTION

In the context of key perspectives of nation image, desired future image signifies positioning [1-14]. A nation positioning is developed based on the perception of internal and external publics. Among techniques that past studies recommend, a nation's positioning can be achieved through offerings shared values to publics and its stakeholders and/or involvement on global issues [1]. Arguably, shared values that could be derived from national identity attributes [15-24] may not only plays role as brand differentiation [18, 19] but more importantly it may be emerge as the essence for desired future image of a nation [25-48]. Even though the studies from other domain e.g. Brown, Dacin, Pratt and Whetten [7] can be adapted and is useful in mapping the spectrum of branding the nation (and/or nation branding perspectives), to date, research into national identity in relation with desired future image of a nation received scant attention. In this vein, past studies indicate the conceptual exploration on the intertwining variables of national identity attributes, in which is part of shared values in the branding the nation domain with the desired future image of a nation [49-51]. Therefore, we posit that national identity attributes as the key essence of developing the desired future image of a nation.

In order to examine that proposition, the structure of this paper is as follows. First, the methods of the study are outlined, followed by literature review and the exploratory pre-test. Next, findings and the current state of the study context and its images are outlined. Eventually, Future Spectrum of Indonesia Desired Future Image and recommendation for future study are drawn.

**Methods of Study:** Among the six key perspectives of nation image that Fan [10] recommended, this study utilises two key perspectives namely the self-perception (identity) and actual image in which derived from reputation or stereotype to form the desired future image (positioning). Presumably, this desired future image would shape positioning [10, 14]. However, in order for national identity attributes as nation brand differentiation to be impactful, this nation brand differentiation should be embedded with a visible interpretation of a national identity attributes that involves equation of the actual image that perceived by international publics and the a nation's desired image. Indonesia's profile in which is distinguished as a multi-cultural nation that embedded with multi-faith society is used as unit analysis. For that reasons, mixed methods with consecutive mode i.e. exploratory pre-test and field survey are employed. Particularly, the depth-interview feedback that analysed

by content analysis is used for questionnaire development. As for data analysis of the field survey, factor analysis and mean scores that SPSS provided are used.

**Literature Review:** Branding the nation or also well-known as nation branding not only denotes the need to be authentic but also must embedded the philosophy stands out from the crowd and stands for certain shared values [35]. Further, Anholt [1, 2] suggests that a nation projected image can be developed through an involvement for/towards global issues such as humanity, freedom of speech and minority issues. The involvement on global issues presumably would determine a nation's competitive identity which may contribute to nation brand image (NBI) formation [1-48]. In addition, literature also indicates that the concept of shared values could also be derived from authenticity. Further, while studies by Olins [35] claims shared values as a form of authenticity in general notion of a nation's profile, Kaneva [24], Fan [10] indicates national identity as focal point in nation branding domain which would turn to not only emerge as nation's brand differentiation which mediates the relationships of national dimensions i.e. tourism and/or export and NBI [19, 48], but also may be predictor for NBI [24].

Arguably, shared values would not only signify brand differentiation but also indicates the core essence for NBI formation [35]. The shared values in this vein are considered relevant for a nation-people and its stakeholders and/or its external publics [51]. In general the concept of shared values that considered attached with authenticity is national identity attributes that every nation owned. National identity is defined as national authentic characteristics and/or shared values that signify a nation's profile and unite a nation's people which at the same time also differentiate them with other nations e.g. belief structures, national heritage and cultural homogeneity [28, 47].

National identity is existed in international marketing literature [44]. This indicates the existence of national identity attributes in the development of country-image and/or halo effect on export product offering of a nation in the international market and how it gives brand image to a nation e.g. study of Porter [38] and Rendon [41].

Presumably, national identity can be defined as the core component that differentiates a nation over others. Not only because it generates nationhood to its people, but because it is also used as a distinctiveness that

attached with a nation's profile. The distinctiveness assists international publics in identifying a nation's profile according to belief system, historical figure & events in, ideology, geographical & landscape which forms its vision as a nation. This is in line with a existing branding theory which suggests that in order to create a brand image; a product must have a brand differentiation that makes it as the identity (30, 29). Not only that, Romaniuk, Sharp and Ehrenberg [43] suggest that distinctiveness of a brand as alternative for not neglecting the traditional aspect of branding, which currently focus too much on developing the meaningful perceived differentiation. In this vein, it is argued that distinctiveness assist the international publics in personifying a nation's profile, which could emerge as perceived image of a nation.

Arguably, national identity is defined as a 'sense' of culture [27]. In addition, Smith [47] points out national identity as a set of features which consist of an historical territory, or homeland, common myths & historical memories, a common, mass public culture, common legal rights & duties of all members and a common economical with territorial mobility for members [28]. In this sense, national identity is a set of meanings owned by a given culture that sets it apart from other culture. To sum up, national identity is considered as self-perception of a nation which derived from belief structure, cultural homogeneity, national heritage; consumer ethnocentrism as elements [49-51].

These belief structures, cultural homogeneity, national heritage and consumer ethnocentrism are considered as elements that differentiate a nation over the others. In general, related works use national identity to examine the relationship between country of origin (product- country image) products and national brands at global market. The studies finding shows consumer ethnocentrism influence patriotism, self-identification in relation to global consumers [26], world mindedness, internationalism. In this sense, ethnocentrism significantly affects product choice of certain group of people which signifies usefulness in establishing patriotism and nationalism towards their own national product offering. Consequently, it is inappropriate to be included as dimension for this study. Conversely, belief structures, cultural homogeneity and national heritage refer to similarities and differences which make them as a nation.

Further, several studies indicates the intertwining variables of tourism dimension with national identities, Frew and White [13] argue that the domain of national identities and tourism dimension seem to be overlapping.

In this sense, both features may at the same time attached to one and another. Particularly, the attractions feature such as museums and heritage centers according to Wheeler, Laing, Frost, Reeves and Frost [50] can be symbolised national identities and/or to form national identity. In this instance, belief structure in India is used by government to shape the national identity in which is believed also useful for tourism [5]. This implies that national identities and tourism attributes are interrelated because national identities attributes may also derived from some of tourism and hospitality attributes. Goulding and Domic [15] argue that heritage is more than just a means of cultural or national identification. More specifically, heritage carries ideology, rooted in selective version of history. For instances, heritage tourism is considered important in creating national identity [3, 5, 23, 34, 37, 39]. According to Bossen (6) Singapore and Malaysian government have applied touristic representations to foster nationalism which it is also at the same time is used by international publics as identification attributes of nation's profile.

In addition, past studies suggest to examine on how the favourable evaluation of a foreign country (i.e. positive country beliefs and affect) by consumers with a strong sense of consumer ethnocentrism outweigh the domestic country bias expected to be exhibited by such consumers in terms of product evaluation and/or choice [44]; This issue is related to the experiential hierarchy of an individual towards foreign country product offerings. In this sense, evaluation that assessed by an individual is done through country-related norms and/or national identity dimensions (for instance consumer ethnocentrism). The sequences process of experiences is from consumer ethnocentrism-cognitive (doing)-cognitions (knowing) -and affect (feeling). However, in order to propose this construct, it is deemed appropriate to examine the features of national identity construct that match with this present research objectives.

As mentioned in the introductory section, this study aims to demystify the role of national identity attributes as a nation desired future image. In this sense, the study of Bandyopadhyay et al., [5] indicates religious identities of a nation which is in other study is identified as belief structure [27] is reflected into the cultural heritage and architectural splendour. Hence, religious heritage sites become tourist attractions. However, this belief structure can be considered as inextricably related to the national identity. On the other hand, of the other three features of

national identity, ethnocentrism is considered irrelevant due to its conceptualisation in which it is not in line with the study context.

As it discussed ethnocentrism is basically defined as consumers' evaluation and attribution towards foreign product offerings which in this sense tends to generate patriotism and nationalism. In this sense, it involves insiders' evaluation based towards foreign product offerings and it is contrary to this study (which examine how international publics, e.g. international tourists perceived national identity in forming their association towards a nation after their visitation). For this reason, it is not applicable to be included into national identity features for this study context. Because this present study focuses on the features of national identity, that makes differences and/or similarities over other nation. Currently, national identity seems to be associated with authenticity of a nation that would give brand differentiation. This partly because authenticity indicates uniqueness attributes and originality frame that could be derived from elements of national identity.

According to Olins [35] the homogeneous characteristic of the world in which suppressed by the globalisation actually forces global market players to be not only competitive, but also must be attached with authenticity. Authenticity in this case refers to differentiation, uniqueness, relevance and provenance. For instance, among nations that embraces Islamic religion and acknowledged by the constitution, Indonesia's profile is different to other nation as religious ritual that Indonesians practice is indirectly is influenced by previous belief structure. This can be traced by the existence of "Islam Kejawen" in Java Island. Even though, one can argue that religious rituals that is practiced believers over the world share similarity that it is attributed towards it projected image; belief structure that a nation embraces may be influenced by existed cultural rooted in which previously practiced. This image(s) would be attributed and emerge as national identity that build identity of a nation' people and at the same time would differentiate them over another nation. Subsequently, national identity attributes would also be seen as element of authenticity that indicates "the real thing" of not only for what a nation is attached with certain image but more importantly signifies of why a nation is embedded with certain image. To sum up, the national identity attributes that are included for this study are belief structure, cultural homogeneity and national heritage.

**Analysis and Findings:** Analysis and findings of the study is as follows. Firstly, methods of interview and its depth-interview feedbacks are presented. Next, detail of the field survey and its findings are outlined.

**Methods of Interview and its Depth-Interview Feedbacks:**

As it mentioned that national identity attributes are grouped into three namely; belief structures, national heritage and cultural homogeneity, therefore the question to be asked aims to map whether the interviewees link their associations about a nation with national identities attributes namely belief structure that a nation, cultural homogeneity and national heritage [27]. Do the national identity attributes appeared into their mind when they perceive a nation as a brand and/or as product offerings.

In terms of subject to be interviewed, while judgemental sampling is applied, foreign students are employed as the subject. The literature classified international publics as business travellers, tourists, foreign students and the faces of very important people, public figures, celebrities and politicians [9, 31, 36, 38, 51]. Therefore, this study interviewed 32 foreign students who have travelled to Indonesia.

As for data analysis, this study applied guidelines suggested by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (16) in which points out the saturation as indication for the interview to be stopped. This is due to the consideration when saturation occurred, normally the meta-themes of the research objective are already achieved and ready to be analysed. Particularly, the saturation occurred on the first 17 conversations with subject of the in-depth interview. In this sense, the occurrence of saturation refers to the appearance of meta-themes pattern that the researcher was seeking to clarify the reviewed literature. Subsequently, the responses of the interview were transcribed and analysed using content analysis approach. The themes were grouped into several relevant constructs. According to Richards [42] ways of seeing data and testing synthesis and patterns can be done via coding and category handling; via modelling; via writing; via case study; via typologies; and via matrices. Among these six ways of seeing data, the handling data via coding and category is selected albeit checking frequencies of occurrences and the specific cases that occur (which denotes the matrices way of seeing data) is inevitably important. Therefore, coding & category and checking frequencies of occurrences & the specific cases are employed as well in this exploratory study.

Several patterns are found i.e. the “belief structure” which embraces by Indonesia as a nation, is frequently mentioned as national identity. The most mentioned is

personifying Indonesia as pluralistic nation. While the second most frequent mentioned is associated Indonesia with the word of Muslim, Islamic country, populated Muslim seem to be the most word associations that being mentioned by the interviewees. Specifically, the interviewees indicate Indonesia as the Muslim population is the biggest in the world with the strong religious characteristics. In addition, while the religious and Muslim are associated with Indonesia, the religiosity personification seems to be inseparable with heritage cultural embedded with Indonesians. In this vein, these findings denote the Indonesia national identity is in line with the literature that mentioned belief structure, cultural homogeneity and national heritage. Based on his/her visitation experience to many places in Indonesia, he/she can differentiate Indonesia accordingly between belief structure, cultural homogeneity and national heritage.

In addition, an interesting meta themes that links syncretically with cultural rituals that emerges as ceremonious of cultural events, wherein, ethnic groups in some part of Indonesia is acknowledged as national identity of Indonesia. Moreover, it also appears that this aspect assists them to differentiate Indonesia identity over other nations. Specifically, one of the interviewees noted: “Although, I have some reservations for the word religious because I believe that the religious lifestyle of Indonesians is more attached with culture. But you would see some traits of religiosity in them” (Respondent 17). While some of the interviewees indicate syncretically as one of the distinctiveness characteristics of Indonesia, the diverse aspect of a nation is commented by one of the respondents that noted as follows:

“I see this country is like very diverse. It contains a lot of cultures, a lot of tribes and a lot of people. So what I am trying to say is, whenever there is mixed cultures, the general culture of the country or the overall culture of the country should be attractive. Why? because the result of mixing of many cultures together. And when the cultures talk together, it would be very attractive, special and unique, because cultures come together” (Respondent 18).

The comments indicate the syncretic as an identity that made Indonesia different and at the same time it is highlighted the distinctiveness characteristics, coupled with the diversity aspects and its size as a nation. This is partly because Indonesia acknowledges 5 religions and these religions are very much influential albeit the practice of religious rituals is embedded with locality of geographical location, ethnic groups and its multifaceted

elements. In other words, it is appeared that the fact that religion(s) that embraced by a nation (which in this case is embraced by vast majority of Indonesia) and how it is mixed with cultural attributes, denote the saturation occurrence that variability within the data followed similar patterns.

In addition, the interviewees also indicate the originality of Indonesia's national identity formation. In this sense, the term 'originality' is in line with the essence of brand differentiation in which reviewed in the literature. Specifically, when the interviewer asked what comes to his mind when he heard about Indonesia, the interviewee noted: "The originality of the culture and the language" (Respondent 7). This implies, that the fact that Indonesia as a diversified nation in which consists of mixed various culture and language, is considered as element of originality that made up as national identity attributes. They seem to have a nation's identity (an imaged community) of certain nation according to heritage attractions. E.g. monuments and historical sites are of the most mentioned attributes that seem to have overlapping domain. These in line to the literature that have mentioned heritage attraction is not only establish the national identity but also could be included into tourism and hospitality attributes [37, 39, 13]. The meta-themes of national identity attributes that have been mentioned by respondents, is summarised as in Table 1.

**Field Survey Findings:** The questionnaire is developed based on the three attributes of belief structure, national heritage and cultural homogeneity. The respondents were asked to rate 11 item of questions with Likert scaling from strongly disagree [1] to strongly agree [5]. Report of the factor analysis and followed by the mean scores of each attributes are as follows.

The KMO's of national identity is .864 with three rotated factors, namely belief structure, national heritage and cultural homogeneity. Each of the factors has .737 and .735 and .681 respectively. Belief structure consists of three constructs and has rather good loadings with one construct has cross loading (ceremonies of cultural events). However, as it shows big range, hence ethnic groups should be placed in factor 1. The cumulative variance for this factor is 59.77% with eigenvalues of above 1.

The statistics means score of belief structure (Table 2) reveals all the three attributes rating are in the level of 3.51. Ethnic groups are perceived as the highest among the three attributes. This could be because the mixture of the multifaceted ethnic groups that Indonesia embraced with religious practice. This is in line with the

exploratory study in which mentioned the essence of fluidity mixture of belief structure with the multifaceted nature of ethnic groups that embedded with Indonesia identity. In other words, this ethnic group's attribute becomes part national identity is due to its fluidity mixture with set belief that a nation embraced. Presumably, this aspect would set up brand differentiation for a nation.

In terms of national heritage component (Table 3), the means score indicate range of 3.63 to 3.37 in which placed traditional material arts as the highest mean score (3.63) and followed by local language (3.45); folklore (3.37); traditional sport (2.85).

On the other hand, in cultural homogeneity component (Table 4) indicates that local food (4.28 with mode of 49% rating on strongly agree) and historical sites (4.17 with mode of 45.8%; rating on strongly agree) have rather high means score compare to religious sites (3.93 with mode of 39%; rating on agree) and traditional ceremonies of festivals (3.68 with mode of 43.8%; rating on strongly agree).

#### **The Current State of the Study Context and its Images:**

Located in the south-east Asia, Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world in which consists of 17.508 islands with hundreds distinct native, linguistic groups within the 34 provinces. It is a multi-cultural nation and distinguished as a multi-faith society. Indonesia acknowledged 5 religions namely Islamic religion, Christianity, Catholic, Buddhism and Hinduism that made it. This multi-cultural nation is derived from the philosophy of 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (means 'unity in diversity') in which is basically much more speaking about nation building to its people for absorption and immersion of national identity attributes. In other words, this unity in diversity indicates nation's identity in which refers to self-perception of Indonesia as a nation or could be identified as constructed image. Constructed image is defined as perception that a nation's people believe that other nations hold about their nation [10, 11].

In terms of actual image which can derived from reputation or stereotype, Indonesia's image is inseparable with the fact that majority of Indonesians are believers. As a matter of fact, Indonesia is biggest Muslim population in the world. However, the long history of Indonesia as a multi-faith society indicates mixed of religious practice with cultural is also stereotype that attached with Indonesia. This could be traced from religious rituals and/or ceremonies of cultural events. Among the most exposed stereotypes, Islam Kejawen in Jawa Island, Nyepi, Galungan, Ngaben in Bali indicate the mixture of religious rituals and cultural traditions.

This aspect of religious rituals and cultural traditions emerge as projected image(s) as they reflect the reality of Indonesia as a nation. Moreover, as it is also being communicated to the world via tourism sector this aspect may emerge actual image and/or desired future image.

**Future Spectrum of Indonesia Desired Future Image:**

As it mentioned that national identity attributes could be used for not only nation building but it apparently could be useful as the essence for development of desired future image to a nation. This study examination on national identity attributes as desired future image of a nation has shown that the perceived national identity attributes may be the

elements for developing desired future image to a nation.

Particularly, the exploratory study and the field survey findings indicate that the desired future image of a nation could be developed by managing the mental associations about national identity attributes that held by its people (regardless it is developed through the interpretation of ruling government perception) and the projected image of national identity attributes that is perceived by the outsiders and/or projected image by its people.

In terms of Indonesia as the study context, the findings denote that Indonesia as a multi-cultural nation that embedded with multi-faith society that is perceived as identity that shapes a nation’s profile.

Table 1: Meta-themes of tourism and national identity attributes

No.	Name of the Attributes mentioned	Remarks of the attributes	Respondent Number
1.	...they seem to mix the religious with their heritage culture that embedded with them.	-Indicate belief structure.	-Informant 11
	...the most populated Muslim country in the earth.	-Indicate belief structure.	-Informant 14
	...most of Indonesian is Muslim.	-Indicate belief structure.	-Informant 5
	...there is a lot of Muslim there, unlike China...	-Indicate belief structure	-Informant 6
	...it is an Islamic country.	-Indicate belief structure.	-Informant 12
	...it has a big population. Another thing, it has a lot of Muslim population and they are also produce sarong.	-Indicate belief structure and cultural homogeneity.	-Informant 15
	...the Muslim population is the biggest in the world... they have religious characteristic.	-Indicate belief structure	
	...majority Muslim population country in the world.	-Indicate belief structure	-Informant 16
2.	Indonesia has rich culture	-Indicate cultural homogeneity.	-Informant 21
3.	Indonesia is religious. Although, I have some reservations for the word religious because I believe that the religious lifestyle of Indonesians is more attached with culture. But you would see some traits of religiosity in them”.	-Indicate belief structure and national heritage	-Informant 17
4.	...very diverse. It contains a lot of cultures, a lot of tribes and a lot of people... mixed cultures. Overall culture of the country should be attractive...and when the cultures talk together, it would be very attractive, special and unique, because cultures come together.	--Indicate belief structure and cultural homogeneity.	-Informant 18
6.	...the originality of the culture and the language.	--Indicate cultural homogeneity.	-Informant 7

Table 2: Mean Score of Belief Structure

	Ethnic groups		Religious rituals		Ceremonies of cultural events		
N/Valid	384		384		384		
Missing	0		0		0		
Mean	3.55		3.51		3.51		
Median	4.00		4.00		4.00		
Mode	Frequency/%		Frequency/%		Frequency/%		
	1	14	3.6	16	4.2	17	4.4
	2	41	10.7	42	10.9	46	12.0
	3	120	31.3	122	31.8	120	31.3
	4	139	36.2	137	35.7	127	33.1
	5	70	18.2	67	17.4	74	19.3
Total	384	100	384	100	384	100	

Table 3: Mean Score of National Heritage

	Traditional material arts		Local language		Folklore		Traditional sport		
N/Valid	384		384		384		384		
Missing	0		0		0		0		
Mean	3.63		3.45		3.37		2.85		
Median	4.00		4.00		3.00		3.00		
Mode	Frequency/%		Frequency/%		Frequency/%		Frequency/%		
	1	9	2.3	24	6.3	28	7.3	48	12.5
	2	53	13.8	55	14.3	39	10.2	95	24.7
	3	91	23.7	103	26.8	136	35.4	139	36.2
	4	149	38.8	130	33.9	126	32.8	70	18.2
	5	82	21.4	72	18.8	55	14.3	32	8.3
Total	384	100	384	100	384	100	384	100	

Table 4: Mean Score of Cultural Homogeneity

	Local food		Historical sites		Religious sites		Traditional ceremonies of festivals		
N/Valid	384		384		384		384		
Missing	0		0		0		0		
Mean	4.28		4.17		3.93		3.68		
Median	4.00		4.00		4.00		4.00		
Mode	Frequency/%		Frequency/%		Frequency/%		Frequency/%		
	1	6	1.6	8	2.1	6	1.6	10	2.6
	2	10	2.6	12	3.1	19	4.9	39	10.2
	3	41	10.7	64	16.7	82	21.4	91	23.7
	4	139	36.2	124	32.3	165	43.0	168	43.8
	5	188	49.0	176	45.8	112	29.2	76	19.8
Total	384	100	384	100	384	100	384	100	

**RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE STUDY**

Considering this study findings indicate the existence of the self-perception, projected image and desired future image, therefore the future study can explore the other three of key perspectives of nation image that Fan [10] proposed i.e. perception of significant other(s), a nation's constructed images, a nation's actual images. In addition, the national identity attributes of other nation could be used as a study context for testing the robustness of the three attributes namely belief structure, national heritage and cultural homogeneity as essence for developing desired future image of a nation. However, utilising this study context and modify it with another approach such as ethnography or phenomenology would make this study more holistic and meaningful. Lastly, as the reviewed literature indicates the overlapping domain of national identity attributes with tourism attributes, therefore it may be worth to research this issue.

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