

## **Strategic Brand Positioning Through Cultural Event Programming at Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park**

**Erica Pricilla Tjiadarma<sup>1</sup>, Ilma Aulia Zaim<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding author e-mail: [erica\\_tjiadarma@sbm-itb.ac.id](mailto:erica_tjiadarma@sbm-itb.ac.id)

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**Abstract:** This study examines cultural event programming as a strategy to strengthen brand positioning at Garuda Wisnu Kencana (GWK) Cultural Park in the domestic market. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining interviews with four internal stakeholders and surveys of 400 domestic visitors (2022–2025). The analysis applied Cai’s brand positioning model, McKercher and du Cros’s cultural tourist typology, and Getz and Morrison’s participatory event framework. Findings show that while GWK is widely recognized, its cultural image is narrowly associated with the iconic statue, and the visitor experience is often perceived as static. A misalignment between GWK’s cultural mission and commercial focus further weakens its cultural appeal. This study proposes a repositioning model based on symbolic narrative integration, participatory cultural programs, and targeted visitor segmentation. The findings contribute to cultural tourism by introducing an integrated branding-programming model that emphasizes internal alignment to deliver more authentic and immersive cultural experiences.

**Keywords:** Cultural Tourism, Brand Positioning, Programming Strategy, Visitor Engagement, Segmentation

## **A. Introduction**

The global tourism industry was one of the hardest hit sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions in 2020 led to an unprecedented decline in international tourist arrivals and GDP contribution. However, by the end of 2024, international tourism was projected to recover to nearly 99% of pre-pandemic levels, indicating a quantitative rebound (UNWTO, 2025). Beyond this recovery in volume, the pandemic catalyzed a deeper transformation in tourism behavior. Tourists are now increasingly motivated by immersive, meaningful, and culturally rooted experiences, with greater attention to sustainability and authenticity (WTTC, 2024; Company, 2024). This shift requires destinations to deliver not only physical attractions but also symbolic and emotional value through engaging narratives and experiential design.

In the Asia-Pacific region, which accounts for approximately 24% of global international arrivals (UNWTO, 2025), countries like Thailand and Vietnam are leading in cultural product innovation through experiential, story-driven tourism strategies. For Indonesia to remain competitive, it must enhance not only visitor volume but also the cultural and symbolic depth of its tourism offerings. Cultural and heritage tourism has proven to be one of the most resilient segments post-pandemic, attracting younger generations who seek authenticity and meaningful connections with local traditions (UNESCO, 2023; Kim & Lee, 2021). However, this growth also brings the risk of cultural commodification, where traditional practices are reshaped to meet tourist expectations, often at the cost of their original meaning (Wang & Yang, 2021).

Bali, Indonesia's flagship tourism destination, continues to attract international attention for its natural beauty, cultural richness, and spiritual identity. In 2024, it recorded 6.3 million international arrivals, a 20.1% increase from the previous year (Bali Tourism Office, 2024). However, the success has placed pressure on

infrastructure and the environment, particularly in popular areas such as Ubud, Canggu, and Kuta. In response, the Garuda Wisnu Kencana (GWK) Cultural Park was developed as a strategic initiative to reinforce cultural tourism. Envisioned as a national icon and educational tourism hub, GWK has gained visibility through its monumental statue and high-profile events. Nevertheless, the visitor experience is frequently described as static, with the cultural value limited to visual appreciation of the statue. Emotional engagement and participatory experiences are minimal, and a disconnect remains between GWK's cultural mission and its commercial priorities.

This study aims to address this gap by examining how curated cultural programming can be utilized to reposition GWK's brand in alignment with the evolving expectations of post-pandemic travelers. While recent studies have explored destination branding (Lyu & Wang, 2021) and cultural tourism engagement (Qiao et al., 2023), there remains a lack of integrative models that combine brand strategy with participatory programming within a domestic cultural context. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study proposes a branding-programming framework grounded in symbolic narrative integration, participatory experience design, and audience segmentation strategies targeting domestic cultural tourists.

Theoretically, the study contributes to post-pandemic tourism literature by developing a hybrid model of cultural brand positioning based on internal strategic alignment and emotional engagement. Managerially, it offers actionable insights for cultural destination managers seeking to revitalize static heritage sites into dynamic, immersive experiences aligned with modern tourism values.

## **B. Method**

This study employed a mixed-methods case study design to investigate the brand positioning of Garuda Wisnu Kencana (GWK) Cultural Park through its cultural programming strategies. The case

study approach was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration of a single cultural tourism destination in its real-life context, particularly relevant in post-pandemic adaptation settings.

The research design combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis conducted in parallel, followed by integration at the interpretation stage. This concurrent triangulation model was adopted to enhance the validity of findings and to offer both contextual depth and generalizability (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The qualitative component consisted of four semi-structured interviews with key internal stakeholders from GWK's cultural, marketing, and operational divisions. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their strategic roles and direct involvement in GWK's decision-making. Each interview lasted between 45–60 minutes and was conducted in Indonesian at either the ASRI Jakarta or GAIN Bali office. All interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire distributed to 400 domestic visitors of GWK between 2022 and 2025. The survey was designed to capture visitor perceptions of GWK's brand image, engagement with cultural programming, and alignment with their expectations. The sampling was non-probabilistic and based on voluntary participation, with questionnaires administered both offline (at the GWK site) and online (via community networks and social media). The sample size was determined to ensure statistical validity for multivariate analysis, with a minimum of 10 respondents per variable, aligning with best practices in tourism research (Veal, 2022).

The questionnaire comprised 35 closed-ended questions using a Likert scale, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation to identify trends and perception gaps. This study was guided by multiple theoretical frameworks. Rather than

relying on early models, the study adopted the contemporary framework proposed by Konecnik Ruzzier & Petek (2021), which emphasizes a multi-dimensional approach to destination brand identity and image alignment. To interpret visitor segmentation within cultural tourism, this study applied the updated typology of cultural tourists introduced by Richards (2021), which incorporates shifting post-pandemic motivations, digital engagement, and hybrid consumption patterns. Getz & Page (2022) participatory, authentic, interactive, and emotionally engaging event model supported the assessment of programmatic strategies. Finally, Middleton et al., (2020) 12Ps of tourism marketing informed the design of practical recommendations across internal and external dimensions.

This multi-framework integration allowed the study to link organizational insights with visitor perspectives and offer a comprehensive strategy for repositioning GWK as a dynamic cultural tourism destination.

### **C. Result and Discussion**

#### **Key Findings: Segmentation and Brand Gaps**

The quantitative phase confirmed strong internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.9) and construct validity through Exploratory Factor Analysis (KMO > 0.8). Five key constructs were identified, including symbolic perception, emotional engagement, program relevance, and brand clarity. K-means clustering segmented respondents into three perceptual-attitudinal clusters: Cluster 1: Disengaged Visitors (28%); Cluster 2: Neutral Visitors (29%); Cluster 3: Engaged Cultural Tourists (43%).

Cluster 2 emerged as a strategically important segment with low emotional connection and symbolic recall. Discrepancy analysis revealed a gap between visitor expectations and brand delivery,

particularly regarding participatory experience and emotional resonance.

Qualitative interviews supported these findings. Internal stakeholders highlighted inconsistent program curation, underdeveloped narratives, and operational misalignment with the park's cultural mission. SWOT analysis indicated strong external assets—location and iconic symbolism but revealed internal weaknesses in knowledge integration, experience design, and segmentation practices.

### **GWK and the Knowledge Management (KM) “Initiation Stage”**

GWK currently operates in the Initiation Stage of the Knowledge Management maturity model. Characteristics include siloed knowledge practices, limited feedback loops, and lack of standardized cultural interpretation mechanisms. Key constraints identified were: (1) People: Limited internal knowledge sharing; program staff and guides lack common narrative training. (2) Process: Absence of data-informed programming and segmentation. (3) Leadership: No central ownership of cultural storytelling or symbolic brand strategy. This stage requires foundational KM interventions: shared narrative databases, program design frameworks, and routine knowledge-sharing rituals.

### **Strategic Priorities and Business Solutions**

Drawing from the triangulated findings, this study proposes three interrelated strategic priorities to reposition GWK Cultural Park as a more engaging and meaningful cultural destination. First, narrative integration is essential to transform visitor experiences from passive observation into immersive engagement. This can be achieved by embedding Balinese mythology and local philosophies, such as Tri Hita Karana, throughout the visitor journey. The

narratives should be consistently conveyed through live storytelling, interpretive signage, and digital media to ensure symbolic coherence and emotional resonance across all touchpoints.

Second, instead of relying solely on geographical segmentation between domestic and international visitors, GWK needs to adopt a psychographic segmentation strategy. This involves tailoring program design and messaging to reflect different motivational profiles derived from the cluster analysis. For example, the personas of “Pak Wijono,” “Sari,” and “Mas Dimas” represent a spectrum of visitor interests and cultural involvement. Designing experiences that match these personas allows GWK to deliver more relevant, targeted, and impactful cultural programming.

Third, the strategy calls for the expansion of participatory cultural programming. Rather than presenting culture as a static display, GWK should facilitate co-created experiences through regular cultural workshops, community-based performances, and a curated calendar of thematic events. These programs must be designed to encourage active engagement, emotional connection, and long-term memory retention. Together, these three strategic priorities—integrated narrative design, motivation-based segmentation, and participatory programming provide a comprehensive framework to strengthen GWK’s brand positioning and increase its value proposition in the evolving landscape of post-pandemic cultural tourism.

To implement the proposed strategic priorities, this study outlines a phased three-year roadmap that aligns with GWK’s internal capacity and the evolving expectations of cultural tourists. In the short-term phase, spanning the first twelve months, the focus is placed on consolidating brand identity through pilot programs that are rooted in narrative storytelling. These initiatives are accompanied by internal training to align cross-divisional

understanding of GWK's symbolic vision and to foster a unified cultural narrative across departments.

Moving into the intermediate phase, which covers the period between the twelfth and twenty-fourth month, the organization is expected to institutionalize seasonal programs that thematically highlight Balinese culture. During this phase, GWK also aims to enhance the visitor experience by incorporating systematic feedback mechanisms into program evaluation and by activating new cultural spaces such as galleries and interpretive exhibition areas.

Finally, in the long-term phase, covering the final twelve months of the roadmap, GWK will shift its focus toward digital transformation and strategic partnerships. This includes the development of a digital cultural archive to preserve and disseminate cultural knowledge, the pursuit of cultural accreditation to solidify its status as a national icon, and the establishment of international collaborations to enhance GWK's global presence and reputation. Together, these phased initiatives aim to gradually reposition GWK as a dynamic and participatory cultural institution that reflects both heritage authenticity and contemporary visitor expectations.

Using an STP approach (Kotler & Keller, 2021), GWK's new brand position is articulated as: "More than a monument, Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park is Indonesia's living stage of culture." This is delivered through five brand pillars: Culture in Motion, Icon of Myth & Nation, Join the Journey, Made for Everyone, and Where Stories Come Alive.

## **Discussion**

The results reveal a strategic disconnect between GWK's cultural mission and visitor experiences, especially among Cluster 2. These findings align with recent literature emphasizing that cultural brands must transcend physical symbols and generate emotionally

resonant narratives to foster deeper audience connection. As highlighted by Richards & Marques (2020), the success of a cultural destination is increasingly measured by its ability to deliver immersive and meaningful experiences, rather than simply showcasing iconic structures. In the case of GWK, monumental architecture alone proves insufficient without consistent storytelling and participatory formats that emotionally engage visitors across diverse motivations.

Furthermore, the study supports updated models of cultural tourist segmentation, such as those proposed by Marujo and Leal (2021), who argue that psychographic and behavioral data are critical in understanding how different tourist groups engage with cultural content. Relying solely on demographic or geographic variables limits the destination's ability to personalize offerings. In GWK's context, the motivational spectrum revealed through clustering confirms the necessity for segmentation strategies that reflect varying levels of cultural curiosity, emotional involvement, and participatory preference. This approach ensures better alignment between program design and visitor expectations in the post-pandemic era of experience-based tourism.

In the context of Knowledge Management, GWK's position in the Initiation Stage requires attention to systems and leadership. Nonaka and Takeuchi's SECI model suggests that tacit knowledge (e.g., local rituals, narrative traditions) must be externalized and shared through organizational routines. At GWK, this means implementing structured post-event reviews, internal learning forums, and shared content development.

From a managerial standpoint, GWK's evolution from a landmark into a "living stage" demands integration of people, process, and technology. Emotional programming and narrative consistency should be driven by collaborative leadership and community involvement. Richards & Marques (2020) highlight co-creation as

essential in post-pandemic cultural tourism, ensuring both authenticity and adaptability.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study concludes that the current brand positioning of Garuda Wisnu Kencana (GWK) Cultural Park remains suboptimal in engaging cultural tourists, primarily due to fragmented symbolic narratives, limited emotional resonance, and a lack of participatory programming. While GWK holds monumental symbolic value, particularly in its physical structure, this potential is not yet translated into immersive cultural experiences that align with the expectations of modern domestic visitors.

Quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that only the Engaged Cultural Tourists (Cluster 3, 63.7%) exhibit strong emotional and symbolic attachment to GWK, while the Neutral Visitors (Cluster 2, 29.0%) represent a strategically significant group with high potential for engagement if addressed through personalized narratives and emotionally meaningful programs.

This study contributes to the literature by offering an integrated model of brand positioning through cultural programming tailored for domestic cultural tourists, combining narrative strategy, segmentation insights, and internal alignment. From a managerial perspective, five core strategies are recommended: (1) reconstruct GWK's identity as "The Living Soul of Balinese Culture" through cross-media storytelling; (2) activate Cluster 2 potential via participatory, persona-driven program design; (3) expand and diversify emotionally engaging cultural programs; (4) align program flow spatially and thematically across the park; and (5) build structured collaboration with local cultural communities through a Curatorial Council to ensure authenticity and sustainability.

Looking forward, GWK's transformation requires a long-term Knowledge Management (KM) vision, positioning the park not only as a destination but also as a knowledge-based cultural institution. This includes establishing integrated information systems, revising operational procedures to embed symbolic meaning, and cultivating a knowledge-sharing culture supported by leadership and continuous learning. These actions are essential to support adaptive innovation and ensure cultural integrity amid evolving visitor expectations.

Future research may explore the longitudinal impact of such branding-programming integration, assess visitor emotional engagement over time, or investigate KM-driven transformations in other heritage-based tourism destinations.

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