

**EXPLORING DESTINATION BRAND IDENTITY  
OF LENGGONG VALLEY WORLD HERITAGE  
SITE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL  
COMMUNITY**

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**by**

**NORFARDILAWATI BTE MUSA**

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*"HasbiyAllahu laa ilaaha illa huwa alayhi tawakkaltu wa huwa Rabbul arshil adheem"*

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMA	American Marketing Association
CHMP	Cultural Heritage Management Plan
CVB	Convention Visitors Bureaus
DB	Destination Branding
DMO	Destination Management Organisations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
KK	<i>Ketua Kampung</i> (Headmen)
LVWHS	Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site
MP	Member of Parliament
MOCAT	Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
MoTour	Ministry of Tourism
MTPB	Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board
MTTP	Malaysian Tourism Transformation Programme
NEP	National Ecotourism Plan
NTA	National Tourism Administration
NTO	National Tourism Office
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
PM	Perak Man
RO	Research Objectives
RQ	Research Questions
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural OrganiSation
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation, United Nations
WHS	World Heritage Sites

WKG	<i>Wanita Kampung</i> (Female Participant)
WTO	World Trade Organisation
YB	<i>Yang Berhormat</i> (The Honorable)

# **MENEROKA IDENTITI JENAMA DESTINASI TAPAK WARISAN DUNIA LEMBAH LENGGONG DARI PERSPEKTIF MASYARAKAT SETEMPAT**

## **ABSTRAK**

Penjenamaan destinasi yang mantap dan mampan adalah penting bagi sesebuah destinasi untuk kekal berdaya saing dalam industri pelancongan semasa. Walau bagaimanapun, kewujudan pelbagai pemegang taruh dengan kecenderungan yang berbeza memberikan cabaran yang rumit. Selain daripada kesukaran untuk mengenal pasti ‘pemilik’ destinasi yang pelbagai, mendapatkan persetujuan dalam kalangan pemegang taruh untuk identiti destinasi juga terbukti adalah amat sukar. Komuniti setempat sebagai antara pemegang taruh utama, dan tuan rumah sesebuah destinasi, memainkan peranan penting dalam memacu pembangunan pelancongan dan memberikan pengalaman bernilai kepada pelancong. Oleh itu, konseptualisasi mereka tentang dimensi identiti jenama destinasi adalah kritikal dalam membentuk pembangunan pelancongan yang mencerminkan nilai komuniti setempat dan warisan mereka. Penyelidikan ini mengetengahkan sebuah kerangka untuk menjelaskan tentang dimensi identiti Tapak Warisan Dunia Lembah Lenggong (LVWHS) dari perspektif penduduk tempatan. Menggunakan kaedah kualitatif, kutipan data dibuat dalam dua fasa – (i) temu bual mendalam untuk meneroka dimensi identiti destinasi dari perspektif mikro; dan (ii) perbincangan kumpulan terfokus (FGD) untuk menjelaskan perspektif makro, terutamanya tentang bagaimana komuniti mencapai kata sepakat untuk identiti jenama sesebuah destinasi. Peserta untuk penyelidikan ini telah dipilih secara persampelan bertujuan, yang terdiri daripada ketua-ketua kampung dan wakil wanita untuk menggambarkan perspektif penduduk setempat. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik 6-langkah. Dapatan kajian

menunjukkan bahawa persepsi penduduk setempat terhadap identiti LVWHS berkisar kepada pertembungan identiti diri dan identiti sosial. Paling penting, dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa apabila peluang diberikan kepada penduduk setempat, penduduk setempat dapat menimbang antara identiti diri dan identiti sosial untuk mengimbangi kepentingan strategik sebuah destinasi pelancongan. Kerangka konsep yang telah diguna pakai dalam kajian ini telah menemukan elemen-elemen identiti teras dan tambahan yang amat bernilai kepada komuniti, dan jika diaplikasikan akan menghasilkan situasi ‘menang-menang-menang’ untuk penduduk setempat, organisasi pengurusan destinasi dan pelancong.

**EXPLORING DESTINATION BRAND IDENTITY OF LENGGONG  
VALLEY WORLD HERITAGE SITE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF  
LOCAL COMMUNITY**

**ABSTRACT**

Strong and sustainable destination branding is critical for destinations to remain competitive in the current tourism industry. However, the existence of multiple stakeholders with different interests poses an intricate challenge. In addition to the challenge of identifying the multiple ‘owners’ of the destination, getting their consensus on the identity of the destination also proved to be difficult. Local community, as one of the destination’s key stakeholders and as the host of the destination, plays critical roles in stewarding tourism development and in providing rewarding experience to tourists. Therefore, their conceptualisation of the destination brand identity dimensions is critical in shaping tourism development in ways that will exude the values of the community and their heritage. This study proposes a framework to elucidate the Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (LVWHS) dimensions of brand identity from the perspective of the local community. Adopting the qualitative method, the data collection was conducted in two phases – (i) in-depth interviews in exploring the identity dimension of destination from the micro perspective; and (ii) focus group discussion (FGD) in explaining the macro perspective, particularly in how the residents as members of a community arrive at a consensus on the brand identity of a destination. The participants of this research were purposively selected, consisting of the headmen and representatives of female residents to represent the local community’s perspectives. The data were analysed using the 6-step thematic analysis. The findings revealed that residents’ perception of

the dimensions of the LVWHS's identity revolves around the intersection between their self and social identities. Importantly, the study has shown that when given the opportunity, the local community was able to consider their self and social identity to balance those with the strategic imperatives of a heritage tourism destination. The conceptual framework used during the study results in a value-rich core and extended identity elements that are highly meaningful to the community that if applied in practice will result in a *win-win-win* situation for the local community, destination management organisations, and the tourists.



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This research focuses on exploring the brand identity dimensions of the Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site, Perak, from the perspectives of the local community. Chapter one explains the background of the study, scope of the study, statement of problem, followed by the research questions and research objectives, significance of the study, definition of concepts applied in the research and the organisation of this thesis.

### **1.2 Background of Study**

Tourism is one of the top three exports for most developing countries and contributes to the economic growth in these countries (Barak et al., 2019; Garcia et al., 2012; UNWTO, 2017). Tourism is employment intensive and contributes to the economy of a country in significant ways. For example, it contributes directly to poverty reduction - notably among women, a fact recognised by policy makers both at the national and international levels (Almeida et al., 2017; Bianchi, 2018; Manzoor et al., 2019; Rahmafitria et al., 2019; UNWTO, 2020). To stay competitive in this rapidly developing industry, tourism destinations need to gain the attention and build an image of respect and trust among potential investors, visitors, the media and governments of other nations. Positive and strong destination branding has been proposed as one of the strategies to achieve those objectives (Armstrong & Kotler, 2014; Garcia et al., 2012; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019; Keller & Kotler, 2012; Séraphin et al., 2019). Increasing competition among tourism destinations around the

world has placed destination branding as an important strategic tool in tourism management.

Colombia, Australia and Virginia (USA) are among destinations that have been successful in applying destination branding strategies for tourism marketing. The positive impacts of branding for destinations from the economic perspective is illustrated in Colombia's 2004 campaign, "Colombia is passion!". The new brand identity launched by Colombia contributed towards the twofold increase of foreign tourists in 2006 (Garcia et al., 2012). The 'Colombia is passion' campaign had successfully improved perceptions of the country that was often associated with cocaine trafficking, kidnapping and civil wars (Proexport Colombia, 2009). Colombia new image was successfully upheld because it had strong domestic stakeholder engagements with both the public and private sectors thus making the identity propounded in the campaign viable and credible (Zaharna, 2011).

Australia had also pursued intense branding campaign with a new identity, "Australia – a different light", in the nation's branding campaign launched in May 2004 (Global Market Insite Inc., 2005). It was recognised at the time as the world's number one nation brand in 2005 (Global Market Insite Inc., 2005). Around the same time, the Gold Coast, Australia began a new branding effort worth \$2.3 million in November 2004, which since then had placed it as the most popular tourist destination in Queensland (Griffith University, 2015; Queensland Government, 2011) and Australia's 5th most visited destination by international tourists (Tourism Australia, 2016). Gold Coast produced its new identity, "VeryGC", to improve the negative image that has been associated with the products offered at the destination. According to Karjalainen (2004), products, as tangible components of destinations,

are often the strongest manifestation of brand identity, and therefore can generate the consistent or inconsistent brand associations that indicate the performance of the brand (Neumeier, 2003). Through the brand “VeryGC” and a significant investment in a communication campaign to support it, the Gold Coast was able to ensure that the stakeholders, including tourist operators, were consistent in the image that they project and the products that they offer.

Another example of successful destination branding is the ‘Virginia is for Lovers’ campaign which has been one of the most highly recognised tourism slogans in the world (Virginia Tourism Corporation, 2012). Forty years after its initial launch, the branding campaign was still going strong and still ranked as one of the top travel campaigns in history (Morrison, 2013b, 2018; Virginia Tourism Corporation, 2012). The brand identity was successful because it has been supported by superior products and vacation experiences.

Destination branding is a burgeoning field of study, with studies tracing back to the late 1990s (Kasapi & Cela, 2017; Konecnik et al., 2014; Marrison, 2018). As an emerging area of study, many of the frameworks in destination branding are borrowed from the consumer product and service marketing and branding literature (e.g., Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Sharpley, 2014; Wang & Xu, 2015; Zenker et al., 2017; Zhang & Smith, 2019). In borrowing those frameworks, much of the research in destination branding emphasises that visitors’ needs and interests drive visitations and that the brand image is determined by visitors’ perceived values and images. It has been argued that focusing too heavily on visitors’ perspective results in tourism that is driven by the imagined reality rather than the objective reality of the destination (Bailey et al., 2017; Chen & Li, 2018; Ivlevs, 2017; Lyu et al., 2018;

Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2018). More research and understanding are required to provide a more holistic perspective and models in destination branding. The local community perspectives, as one of the key stakeholders of destinations, have yet to be fully explored towards building such understanding and models on destination branding. Hence, this study is geared towards incorporating the perspectives of local community in destination branding, focusing on their perspectives on destination brand identity.

At the core of branding strategies is the identification and the development of brand identity (Aaker, 2014; Kavartzis & Hatch, 2013; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Nangru et al., 2012; Qu et al., 2011). Brand identity refers to the set of unique associations that represents what the brand stands for and encapsulates the brand owners' promise of value or benefit to the customers (Aaker, 2014; Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 2012; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). A brand may have numerous elements associated with it; however, only the most salient among these associations form a brand's identity (Keller, 2012; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020). These salient elements will then act as the identifying factor and differentiate the brand from the rest of the competitors (Aaker, 2010; Keller, 2012; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

According to Wheeler et al. (2011), brand identity is inherently related to the internal stakeholders (i.e., those other than the customers or tourists). In this present research, the local community is considered as the brand owners as it is integrally involved in delivering the brand experience and in the formation of the sense of place. On the other hand, tourists are considered as the external stakeholders, whose values reflect the marketing or economic and demand perspectives and may contradict or vary with the internal stakeholders' perspectives (Morgan et al., 2003).

Nevertheless, the local community needs a well-articulated description of the aspirational image for the brand and what it wants the brand to stand for in the eyes of the visitors.

### **1.3 Destination Brand Identity and Local Community**

Brand identity research emphasises the need to project the essence of the brand from the owners' perspective. Destination brand identity needs to represent the promise of what will be experienced at the destination (Morrison, 2013b; 2018). In the context of heritage destinations, part of this promise is delivered through visitors' interactions with the local community and the intangible and tangible heritage that they have to offer. Wheeler et al. (2011) have argued for destination brand identity that resonates with the values and identity of the local community such that it will facilitate the brand experience and formation of sense of place for the visitors.

In tourism management, the local community's perspective on the multi-components of destination brand identity is essential in delivering distinctive, compelling, memorable and rewarding experiences to visitors. Visitors' experience is the key to destination branding (Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017; Campelo et al., 2014; Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Kasapi & Cela, 2017; Pereira et al., 2012) and their experience often include interactions with the local community. In helping shape positive experiences, the local community needs to have a sense of ownership of the destination for any activities and promises planned for the visitors (Campelo et al., 2014). The local community will more likely to have a sense of ownership and support a destination tourism development if the brand identity reflects needs and values that are meaningful and brings positive outcome to the community (Chen &

Šegota, 2015; Konečnik et al., 2012; Van't Klooster et al., 2004; Wheeler et al., 2011; Zenker & Petersen, 2014).

There have been emerging calls for more emphasis on incorporating the view of the local community in developing brand destination identity as it has direct consequence in injecting the sense of place, the essence and authenticity of the destination (Campelo et al., 2014; Hanna & Rowley, 2015; Liu & Cheung, 2016; Palmer et al., 2013; Sharpley, 2014). Furthermore, incorporating the views of local community on the destination identity will encourage them to assume stewardship and participate in ongoing and future development of the destination (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017; Lucarelli, 2018; Martinez et al., 2016; Noor et al., 2018; Zenker et al., 2017).

#### **1.4 Study Location**

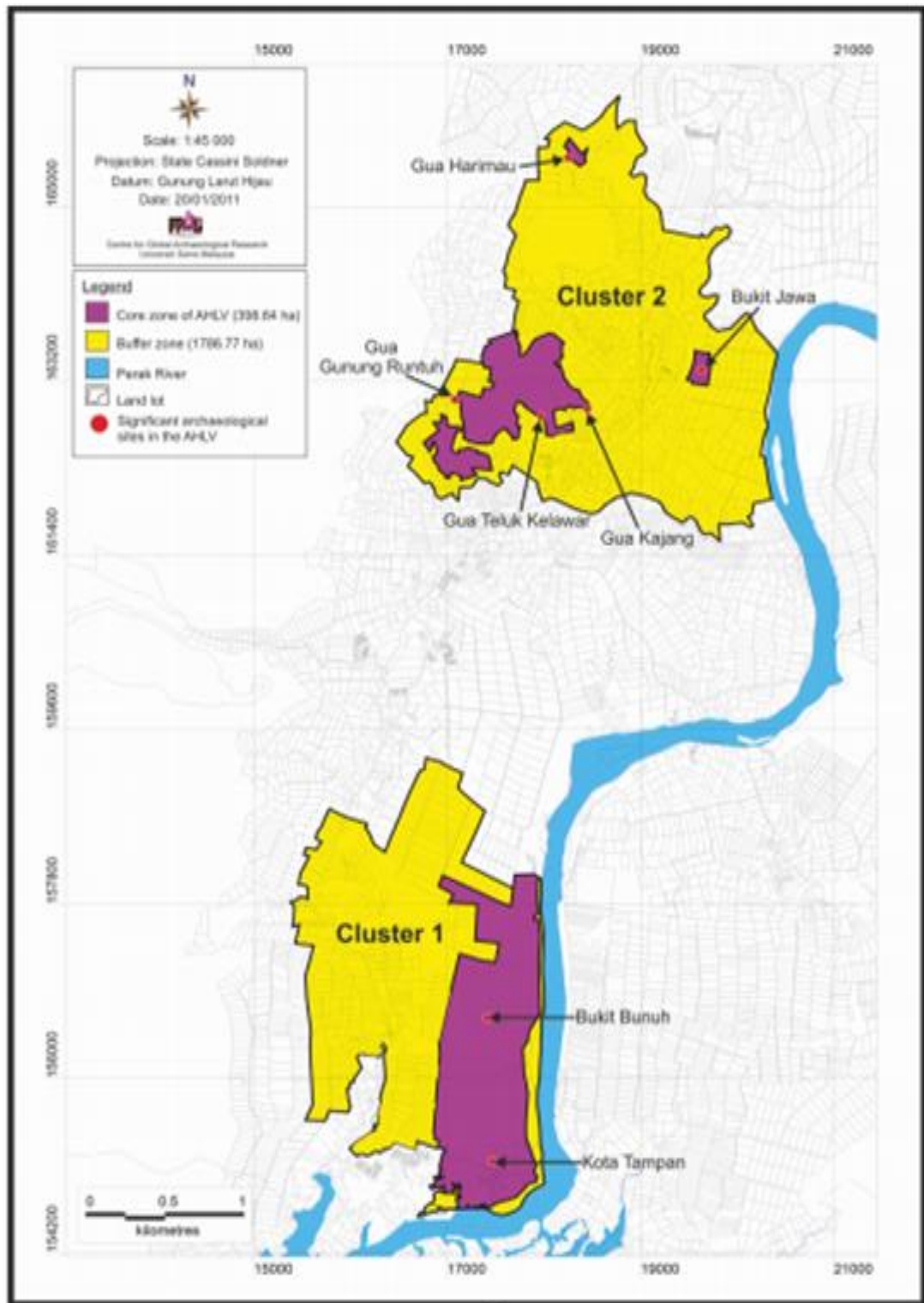
To explore how a local community interprets and perceives the identity(ies) of a destination, this present research focuses on the Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (LVWHS). The LVWHS in Perak is the earliest and one of the most important archaeological and paleontological sites in Malaysia. It was inscribed as a UNESCO cultural World Heritage Site during the 36th World Heritage Committee Meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2012 for its archaeological heritage (Department of National Heritage, 2012). LVWHS is among the few archaeological sites in the world that encompassed extremely long prehistoric sequences spanning from the Palaeolithic period to the Metal Age (Goh, 2015; Mokhtar, 2012; Zuraina, 2005).

The current destination brand identity of Lenggong Valley reflected in official documents and promoted by local and federal authorities is heavily centred on its archaeological and paleontological heritage. Much of the communication and promotional materials of Lenggong Valley, including those in the UNESCO World Heritage Website (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1396/>), the National Heritage Department website (<http://www.heritage.gov.my/warisan-arkeologi-lembah-lenggong-perak.html>) and Tourism Perak website (<https://www.tourismperakmalaysia.com/place/Q1Y/lenggong-valley-the-world-heritage-site>) emphasise on the archaeological and paleontological findings with the Perak Man and pre-historical artefacts such as stone axes and flints as the key identity elements. The identifications are aligned to the initial and formal description of the Lenggong Valley heritage described in the UNESCO World Heritage Site nomination dossier which highlighted such artefacts which reads as follows:

*[...]'. It is a serial nomination formed by two major clusters and consists of seven individual archaeological sites (refer Figure 1). These are comprised of three open sites and four cave sites, covering a core area of 399 hectares and a buffer zone of approximately 1787 hectares. Cluster 1 consists of two Palaeolithic open sites — Bukit Bunuh and Kota Tampan, while Cluster 2 comprises a Palaeolithic open site of Bukit Jawa, and four cave sites, namely Gua Gunung Runtuh, Gua Kajang, Gua Teluk Kelawar, and Gua Harimau (ICOMOS, 2012; pp. 157-158).*

According to the Department of National Heritage (2012), this area has been divided into three zones which include the core zone, buffer zone and buffer to buffer zone. Most of the geosites are located in the core zone (except Bukit Sapi area, Lata Kekabu and Sungai Perak) that is divided into two clusters (Cluster 1 and 2), located 5 km apart along the Sungai Perak and separated by the Lenggong Town (Figure 1.1). Cluster 1 consists of the Bukit Bunuh-Kota Tampan core zone and its own buffer zone, while Cluster 2 consists of three core zones, namely Bukit Kepala Gajah, Bukit Gua Harimau and Bukit Jawa, all enclosed within a single buffer zone. All the areas outside of Cluster 1 and Cluster 2 is known as “buffer to buffer zone”. The shared lithic tradition in the two clusters serves as the common element to hold the two clusters together as a single nominated property. Both clusters contain villages that are located within the core zone itself and the buffer zones. The core zone includes protected areas, as they act as reference points on the natural state of the archaeological elements. The buffer zone refers to the area that surrounds or adjoins the core areas (Department of National Heritage, 2011; Goh, 2015). The area located between the boundary of the core zones’ buffers and the boundary of the Special Area Plan (SAP) is known as buffer to buffer zone (Department of National Heritage, 2011). The boundaries between the core zone and the clusters, as well as the buffer zone are depicted in Figure 1.1.





Source: Department of National Heritage (2012)

Figure 1.1 The Boundaries of the UNESCO World Heritage Site: Archeological Heritage of Lenggong Valley

From the aspect of brand identity, the interpretation and presentation of Lenggong Valley have been mainly drawn from the archaeological data generated by archaeologists focusing on archaeological perspectives and values (Department of National Heritage, 2012; Dermawan, 2012; Goh, 2014, 2015; Mokhtar, 2012). Consequently, its heritage interpretation is mainly derived from the tangible elements related to the archaeological sites and artefacts. The intangible elements of the Lenggong Valley as a cultural heritage site such as the social connections, living traditions, cultural and spiritual beliefs connected to the people living in the area have not been emphasised.

Although the importance of the local community's perspectives on destination identity has been acknowledged in the literature, there has yet to be much explanation on how their perspective can be aligned or co-exist with the local authority's construction of identity. Such quandary is particularly prevalent in destinations where the identity espoused by the local authority emerge from sources external to the community (i.e., archaeologists and geologists) and based on elements that are largely unfamiliar to the community. Such as the case at Lenggong Valley World Heritage Sites whereby the destination's identity as a world heritage site rests on the paleontological heritage dating to as far back as one million years old, capturing the cultural heritage of stone age-civilisations that are far removed from the contemporary way of life. Even the relatively much younger skeleton of the Perak Man found at the site, dated to be around 14,000 years is of a time too far away to resonate with the contemporary culture of the local community, except for the Orang Asli who has claimed ancestral links. Smith (2006; 2015) contends that the meaning making of heritage relies on the capabilities of the local community to create experience with the visitors. The people or local community of such area

should be able to understand their surroundings (Braun et al., 2013) and should be well-versed about the heritage being promoted to discover the sense of place before they can share the experience with others. As such, problems arise when the local community themselves could not fully relate to identities that are unfamiliar to them.

Brand identity development is a crucial step for destination management providers in developing a strong brand and promoting the destination. Given that branding a destination requires the involvement of the local community in reflecting their contribution to the visitors' experience and executing or fulfilling all the promises made to entice visitation, more studies should be conducted to provide greater understanding on the roles of the community in destination branding and subsequently the destination management. Knowing that the destination management planners and organisations are heavily promoting Lenggong to the destination market, it is critical to also understand the identity of Lenggong from the local community perspective as they are the people who are most in contact and interact with visitors. Their input on the identity of the Lenggong Valley and their projection of that identity is crucial towards creating memorable experiences for the visitors.

Studies on stakeholder's collaboration on destination brand identity development is a critical missing link in the literature related to the process of destination branding (Cai, 2002; Wheeler et al., 2011). The complexity and problematic destination concept are the reasons for the underdeveloped brand identity discussion in the context of destination. Although it may be time consuming and difficult to bring the stakeholders to collaborate and communicate their perception and understanding of the identity and value of a destination, it is certainly a fundamental and critical process. This study is thus positioned to address this gap,

with LVWHS, located in the northern state of Perak, Malaysia chosen as an example of a newly established world cultural heritage destination and which is in the process of developing a strong destination brand identity.

As a site with the nation's and one of the world's earliest archaeological and paleontological heritage of human evolution, more effort must be placed on branding the destination to ensure that it will be widely recognised as one of the key heritage destinations. According to the then Tourism Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen, the local council and tourism players need to step up their promotional efforts on Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site (The Star Online, Oct., 2012). Likewise, the local community voiced that more things need to be done to promote the Lenggong Valley (The Star Online, 30 Aug. 2013). The LVWHS is in the process of developing its brand identity to market the site as a new tourism destination in Malaysia. In the case of Lenggong Valley, it is crucial to investigate the local community perspectives on the destination brand identity given that Lenggong Valley as a tourism destination needs to encompass more than the archaeological heritage. The stakeholders' perspectives should be considered in developing its brand identity to avoid any conflicts that could jeopardize the sustainability of the site as a tourism destination (Dredge, 2006; Lemmetyinen & Go, 2009; Pforr, 2006).

## **1.5 Statement of Problem**

As one of the primary internal stakeholders affected directly and indirectly from the development of a destination, the local community's support is crucial and necessary to ensure the survival of a destination brand (Hemmonsbeay & Tichaawa, 2019; Houghton & Stevens, 2011; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010; Waligo et al., 2013, 2015). The local community has the highest potential to threaten the management of

destinations when the success of the destination is highly dependent on the internal stakeholders' market knowledge and intelligence, product delivery, and participation in the programmes (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Therefore, understanding the local community's perspectives on the identity of a destination is crucial in developing the building blocks in tourism destination management. The gap that is addressed by this research can be divided into three interrelated areas: the lack of understanding on the perspectives of the local community on the dimensions of a destination brand identity; the lack of understanding on how the local community responds to the destination identity imposed by the authorities; and the lack of understanding on the local community's perspectives on the destination brand identity as a collective group and in relation to their social identity. The gaps are addressed in the following discussions.

The significance of the local community participation in the decision-making process at tourist destinations has been continuously emphasised in the literature (e.g., Chen & Segota, 2015; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019; Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). However, most of the studies on local community in tourism destination focus on their perception of the impacts of tourism (e.g. Jeuring & Haartseen, 2017; Lai et al., 2018; Morrison, 2018; Peters et al., 2018; Schweinsberg et al., 2018) and their attitude towards tourism (e.g. Chen & Segota, 2015; Morrison, 2018; Movono et al., 2015; Wassler & Hung, 2017; Wassler et al., 2019). Research on the perspectives of local community related to destination brand identity development have been limited (Braun et al. 2013; Choo et al., 2011; Pike, 2009; Wassler et al., 2019).

Past studies have highlighted conflicts arising from community pushback against destination planners' practices at heritage tourism destinations that are not aligned with the perspectives of the local community (Greer et al., 2015; Hodges & Watson, 2000; Ozawa et al., 2018; Waterton & Smith, 2010; Zhang & Smith, 2019). For heritage destinations such as the Lenggong World Heritage Site, the local community's perspectives on the destination brand identity are particularly important given that it is their heritage in their own backyard that has become the subject of interest in the development of the destination (Noor, Jaafar & Balan, 2018). With the exception of Noor et al., (2018), tourism research on Lenggong Valley community's perspectives mainly focuses on the opinion and attitude of the community towards Lenggong Valley becoming a tourism destination, gathering community input or suggestions on tourism development and community knowledge and awareness (e.g., Jaafar et al., 2015a; Jaafar et al., 2015b; Jaafar et al., 2020; Noor et al., 2013; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). These studies, although related, did not investigate the community's perspectives on the brand identity of Lenggong Valley from brand identity frameworks. Therefore, in addressing the dearth of coverage in the literature, this present research will investigate the conceptualisation of a destination brand identity by the local community as a process of understanding and communicating personal and social values of the community.

As part of the service providers who often have face-to-face interaction with visitors, the authorities need to understand or explore to what extent the community is knowledgeable or conversant about the heritage and their feelings of the place (Gentry & Smith, 2019; Harvey, 2001; Macdonald, 2013; Smith, 2006). However, the practice of decision-making in developing destination brand identity is often determined through a top-down process by the authorities with little consultation

with local community despite their direct influence on the destination (Eshuis et al., 2014; Hudson et al., 2017; Rehmet & Dinnie, 2013; Pedeliento & Kavartzis, 2019; Zenker et al., 2017). Often, the voices of the local community are drowned by those of the businesses and the authorities who are driven by economic imperatives including business profitability and investment opportunities (Wheeler et al., 2011). This situation may not only lead to potential disagreements, lack of stewardship or support for the destination's tourism development, but also contributed to an unbalanced view, misunderstanding and oversights concerning the possibilities and limitations of tourism destination branding (Bregoli, 2013; Inch & Stuart, 2015; Konecnik & Go, 2008). Nevertheless, it is important that the identity of Lenggong Valley as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is not developed distinct to the archaeological and paleontological heritage that have been identified by the local authorities. Therefore, this research will examine the juxtaposition of the two perspectives – the local community and the local authority's – in proposing a framework for destination identity that will communicate balanced perspectives.

The literature has also demonstrated the importance of incorporating elements related to the social identity of the community in capturing the essence of the destination (Dioko, 2015) which will result in a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination (Seraphin et al., 2018). The relevance of the community's social identities to the destination identity is postulated to be central to the local community's participation in the tourism development at the destination. The local community will get involve if they are passionate about promoting the attractions available to them (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000; Kotler & Gartner, 2002). They will be more than willing to support any effort in promoting those attractions if the community's interests, perspectives and perceptions are considered and reflected

in the brand development process. By promoting an identity that the community is familiar with, a special feeling among them is provoked (Ruzzier & De Chernatony, 2013), and its significance can provide a distinctive experience to tourists; which directly or indirectly makes the place easily recognizable, thus reflecting a superior place image. The existing literature, however, has yet to fully explain how local community's own self-identity and their collective social identity intersect and contribute towards their perspective on the destination identity. To address this issue, this research will focus on understanding the local community's perspectives on the Lenggong Valley World Heritage Sites destination identity, with particular attention to the dimensions within that identity and how the identity relates to the community's social identities.

To date, there has yet to be a widely accepted model on destination brand identity, particularly one that incorporates the local community's perspectives. As such, in addressing the gaps and issues discussed above, this research will be guided by the Kapferer's brand identity prism (2012), one of the prominent models in explaining brand identity. Additionally, the theory of social identity will be used in explaining the local community's perspectives on destination brand identity and specifically on how the local community interprets and make meaning of the identity of a destination. On those premises, the following research questions and objectives have been developed to address all the issues discussed above.

## **1.6 Research Objectives**

The goal of this research is to develop a new knowledge base for destination brand identity within the context of heritage destination from the local community's perspectives.



The specific research objectives (RO) are as follows:

- RO1: To identify the dimensions of destination brand identity of Lenggong Valley from the perspectives of the local community.
- RO2: To analyse the Lenggong Valley local community's response to the destination brand identity imposed by the local authority.
- RO3: To examine the perception of the local community on the Lenggong Valley brand identity in the context of their social identity.

### **1.7 Research Questions**

- RQ1: What are the identity dimensions of LVWHS perceived by the local community?
- RQ2: How does the local community respond to the LVWHS identity imposed by the local authority?
- RQ3: How does the local community perceive the brand identity of LVWHS in the context of their social identity.

### **1.8 The Significance of Research**

This research contributes to the theoretical development of destination brand identity and provides insights on how the local community interprets or evaluates the identity of the destination based on the perspectives and beliefs that they hold.

Secondly, the research will bridge the gaps in destination branding literature that lacks a model and framework that can be used as a platform in guiding brand identity development (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). As suggested by Cai (2002), a brand identity is a critical missing link between branding and image building. The

missing link contributes to inadequate process of a successful destination branding (Ashworth et al., 2015; Lucarelli, 2018b; Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019).

Thirdly, the research will also contribute to the methodology for the evaluation or interpretation of destination identity among the local community. It will help to examine how the local community wants the destination to represent their values. Through this research, the local community's responses towards the authority/DMO position on the destination identity may be disclosed. Based on this, the acceptance or rejection of the local community can be identified. It will also determine to what extent the local community is willing to accept and support the identity(s) suggested by other stakeholders such as the archaeologists and the heritage department.

Finally, the research will also help any respective or prospective party that wants to brand the LVWHS as a successful and sustainable tourism destination by taking into consideration what the local community feels about the destination. The results of this research will contribute towards the process of branding development of the LVWHS. In addition to this, the local community's involvement will help in redefining the identities and values attached to the salient attributes of the destination, with or without altering the *status quo* (Bonaiuto et al., 1996).

Considering other interests of stakeholders in making any decision is crucial for a destination in order to engender special meaning to them. At the same time, this will help the destination management planner and organisations to identify the added values that can be derived from the destination by considering the local community's perceptions, knowledge and understanding of the destination. The brand identity of LVWHS has to be developed with various stakeholders in mind, extending beyond

the needs of tourists because the support from other stakeholders, such as the local community, local government and archaeologists are imperative in ensuring the sustainability of tourism in the area. A research on the needs, requirements and aspirations of stakeholders, including the local community, is necessary so that the tourism industry in the Lenggong area would create opportunities for exchange that will benefit all.

Transforming LVWHS into a brand identity that reflects the local community's interests does not only make sound economic sense but, with a strong brand identity framework it will also contribute to the sustainability of the archaeological heritage. The meaning making process driven by the brand identity development process will allow the local community to relate better to the archaeological heritage and motivate them to take stewardship in preserving and promoting the heritage. Thus, to gain the local community support for the future endeavours and good communication with the visitors of the destination, local community involvement is not just an option but a necessity.

## **1.9 Definition of Concepts**

In this research, the following are the concepts applied. Detailed definition of each concept is discussed below:

### **1.9.1 Local Community**

Local community refers to a group of individuals who live or work in the same geographical area that practices similar cultures and have mutual interests. In the context of tourism destination, the local community is part of the internal or primary stakeholders that affect and are affected by the survival of a destination

(Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2019; Houghton & Stevens, 2011; Ooi & Pedersen, 2010; Sheehan et al., 2007).

### **1.9.2 Destination Branding**

This concept is defined as the multidimensional assortment of functional, emotional, relational, and strategic elements (Aaker, 1996) which collectively generates a unique network of associations in the minds of visitors (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998). The process of destination branding involves a combination of services created and provided in cooperation with local stakeholders (Beritelli, 2011; Haugland et al., 2011; Perkins et al., 2020) which contribute significantly to the quality of the experience (Hudson & Ritchi, 2009; Singh & Mehraj, 2018). Therefore, destination branding is a process that can be employed by destination marketers to attract tourists or gain a competitive advantage over other similar destinations (García et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2007).

The fundamental of destination branding strategy is to recognize the cultural characteristics of the place, understand the people who live in that place, and to appreciate how a shared sense of place is constituted and experienced. Considering the purpose of destination branding is to strategically position places to be visited and consumed, the development of this strategy requires a deeper understanding of the peculiarities and distinctiveness of the place to better represent its complexity. Destination branding is a mode of communication involving representations of the destination identity as informed by a place's culture, economy, history, and people (Anholt, 2010; Gilmore, 2002; Kladou et al., 2017; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004).

### **1.9.3 Brand Identity**

Brand identity is the idea of what a brand should be, what it aspires to and defines the directions for all activities that will be implemented with regard to the destination as a brand. Kapferer (1992) referred to brand identity as a brand's meaning projected by the internal stakeholders. Kapferer focused on the function of differentiation and influence on consumers that specified the facets of brands' uniqueness and value (Ianenko et al., 2020). This research focuses on the identity prism introduced by Kapferer to analyse the identity of LVWHS. The involvement of local communities has been proposed as the most authentic manner to express the real soul of a place (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

### **1.9.4 Social Identity**

The term of social identity refers to how people perceive and categorise themselves based on the group that have been designed and constructed by society (Abrams & Hog, 2006; Tajfel, 2010; McLead, 2008). In general, social identity consists of an individuals' beliefs about a group and the social relationships that they form and maintain (Tajfel, 1981). Conceptualized as a narrative that provides spatial and temporal understanding of who people are, where they came from, and what they might be (Turner, 1975), individual and social identity are inextricably linked through the interpretation of the cultural symbols used to construct meanings (Dittmar, 1992). Consistent with the group identity, or the degree to which people feel connected with a group's character or purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), community identity is the shared social identity at the group level internalized by individual members who depersonalize their individual identity (Lantz & Loeb, 1998). This research analysed the data based on this social identity theory (Tajfel &

Turner, 1979) to understand the perspective or perception of local community in interpreting the identity of LVWHS.

### **1.9.5 World Heritage Site**

According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), World Heritage Site (WHS) refers to the:

*“places on earth that are of outstanding universal value (OUV) to humanity and as such, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy”* (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/faq/19>).

Heritage is human legacy from the past, what we live today, and what we pass on to future generations. To be listed as one of the WHS, UNESCO uses the outstanding universal criteria (OUV) since 2005 as the standard to evaluate world cultural heritage site suitability. The sites worthy of UNESCO preservation as well as the parameters used to demonstrate OUV are diverse.

Two of the guidelines recommended by UNESCO for a proper cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) are focusing on the community values and attitudes as well as stakeholders and community participation (Goh, 2015). For this reason, the process of developing brand identity of LVWHS from the perspective of local community in this research focuses on the local community’s perspective as part of the efforts in communicating their values and belief about the place.

### **1.9.6 Internal Stakeholder and External Stakeholder**

In the context of this study, the terms internal sources and external sources are derived from studies in organisational management that explain sources of identity in reference to whether they are derived from internal stakeholders (i.e. internal sources) or external stakeholders (i.e. external sources).

According to Surbhi (2017), internal stakeholders refer to the individuals and parties, within the organisation. They are people whose interest in an organisation or event comes through a direct relationship, such as employment, ownership, or investment (Fernando, 2021). External stakeholder is defined as the parties or groups that are not a part of the organisation, but gets affected by its activities (Surbhi, 2017). In this study, the term of internal sources reflects any identity elements given or perceived by the local community of a destination due to their position as the internal stakeholders for the place. This term also reflects the 'ownership' of the local community on the destination and their knowledge about destination identity. As the 'owner' and host of a destination, the local community is well-versed with the sense of place. The term of external sources reflect any identity elements proposed by the authorities as the external stakeholders of a destination. In the context of Lenggong, the Perak Man and archaeological sites are the identity that have been promoted by the authorities since it was inscribed as a UNESCO cultural World Heritage Site on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2012.

## **1.10 Structure of the Thesis**

There is a total of five chapters in this thesis. Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter, which provides the background of the study, statement of research problems, research questions, research objectives, and followed by the definition of concepts applied in this current research. The chapter also includes a description of the study location (Lenggong Valley World Heritage Site) and the significance of the research.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature with the main aim of developing the schematic design for this research based on the gaps in the literature. It begins with sections on Tourism Destination Management, Brand/Branding, Destination Branding, Brand identity, Brand Identity Models including the Kapferer's Identity Prism, Theory of Social Identity, Research Gap and lastly the Conceptual Framework proposed for this research.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of this thesis. It begins with research philosophy, consisting of the research paradigm, research approach, qualitative method applied, research location, data collection method and the method of analysis, and lastly, trustworthiness.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the research. It consists of five section which starts with the introduction, analysis procedure, in-depth interview results that cover the identity dimension of LVWHS and local community responses on the identity imposed by the local authority, followed by the results of the focus group discussion. The data analyses were guided by the objectives of the research.