

Co-creation in Creative Tourism: Adding the Value of Batik

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the co-creation process in creative tourism of batik and the impact of this tourists experience on tourism experiences, suppliers, and the value of batik. This exploration is based on the case study research in Pekalongan, the member of creative cities network by UNESCO. This study found that in terms of experience, the tourists interactively learn about batik guided by local artists. Additionally, they have a chance to apply traditional equipment of batik. At the end, the tourists can experience the authenticity of batik, conserve batik, and learn the culture and identity of Pekalongan.

Keywords: *co-creation; tourism experience; creative tourism; batik; Pekalongan*

INTRODUCTION

For Indonesian, Batik is one of popular traditional cloth. The unique pattern of batik that is different in each region in Indonesia is the main factor of batik attractiveness. Batik has become the identity of each region and Indonesia, such as Batik Semarang, Batik Cirebon, Batik Madura, and Batik Pekalongan that are represented coastal batik. This attractiveness contributes the rise of batik's popularity among Indonesian that leads to the local economic development strategy to develop batik industry and its related industries, such as fabric, dye, canting, and metal stamp.

Promoting batik as the main local product is also applied in Pekalongan, one of a coastal city in Java. In terms of policy, the Pekalongan local government promotes clusters for small scale industries of batik, opens a museum of batik, and a special market for batik, as well as provides skilled labor through opening a vocational college of batik. These strategies have lead Pekalongan gaining its membership in the creative cities network of UNESCO in 2014.



Figure 1. Some examples of Pekalongan's batik pattern

Related to promoting batik as Pekalongan's product of excellence, Pekalongan also introduced learning batik as the attraction for visitors. Here, the visitors can learn about Batik Pekalongan and how to make batik. Museum Batik Pekalongan, Batik Village Pesindon, and Batik Village Kauman are the providers for this learning activity.

In the context of the tourism industry, learning batik can be classified as an experience economy (Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). This type of economy aims to gain market that seeks a unique experience that is different than a serial reproduction of cultural products. A memorable experience is a rationale for this kind of economic activity.

Furthermore, in the discourse of creative tourism, the scholars emphasize co-creation (Alves et al. 2016; Binkhorst and Den Dekker 2009; Cabiddu et al. 2013) as the key element of this type of experience. The visitors can construct their experiences based on their context and needs or preferences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). The relationship between suppliers and customers/visitors has shifted from an unequal relationship into an equal relationship in creating the value of visitors' experiences.

Co-creation in traditional textile, including batik, has been perceived as the effort to conserve and pass on the aesthetical values of batik. Rather than keeping the traditional textile as an un-altered traditional art, this strategy is more effective to conserve it. The young generation as the target can develop their interest and creativity (Rusu 2011) related to this cultural identity. Co-creation will bring batik closer to this generation.

Given that co-creation is an interactive activity, this article argues that it has a significant impact on both sides, i.e. visitors and suppliers. This point of view has not been discussed in the previous studies. Thus, this study aims to explore the co-creation process in creative tourism of batik and the impact of this tourists experience on tourism experiences and suppliers.

This article is based on the study of creative tourism in Pekalongan with the main focuses on three locations where tourists can actively learn about batik. These locations are the Museum Batik Pekalongan, Batik Village Pesindon, and Batik Village Kauman. This study applied mixed method design, 105 visitors are asked to fill in questioners. This data collection is also supported by interviewing the key

persons (local government officers, batik’s business owners, and museum’s manager), observing the activities in batik industries and Museum Batik Pekalongan, and analyzing the content of documents, including websites. The data collection process was conducted in May-June 2015. The data was analyzed descriptively to illustrate the visitors’ perception of their experiences, as well as to elaborate the result of interviews with the key actors.

MUSEUM BATIK AND BATIK VILLAGES AS THE CASE STUDIES

Batik Museum of Pekalongan was established on 12th July 2006 and located in the center of Pekalongan. More than 1.700 batik patterns were collected in this museum. This building is equipped with showroom, audio visual room, library, merchandise shop, meeting room, and workshop room. The management of the Batik Museum provides this workshop room for the visitors to learn how to make batik. There are two types of target visitors for this attraction. The first one is regular visitors who want to learn about batik, and the other is students in the group who have a particular program related to learning batik. Recently, the Museum has accommodated two types of a group of students, that is, the group who can reserve their program before their visit and a group of (local) students who have a regular program related to batik.

Related to this regular visitors, the Museum Batik Pekalongan has a program called as *‘museum goes to school’* since 2005/2006 particularly for the schools in Pekalongan from kindergarten to high school level. This program includes batik as the local content of the curriculum in those schools. Hence, the students can learn how to make batik based on their capacities, such as simple drawing for the kindergarten students and complete process of batik for the high school students (Damayanti and Latifah 2015).



Figure 1. Kindergarten students learn batik with the guidance of the Museum Batik’s staff
Source: UNESCO (2009)

Batik Village Kauman and Batik Village Pesindon are the center for batik in Pekalongan and designed as tourism village since 2009 and 2011 respectively. The numbers of small and medium enterprises who produce batik in these villages are 14 and 30 respectively. In this village, we can find the firms producing batik as well as the firms creating clothes, bags, sandal, purses, and other domestic goods from batik.

Several big firms in these villages also provide a package to learn about batik for the visitors. These firms provide a workshop in their store for this activity. In this place, the visitors can learn how to make batik in the small fabric, such as a handkerchief, small-size cloth, scarf, or t-shirt. The fee for this course is quite affordable and varied based on the size of the fabric. This fee is from Rp 35.000 (US \$ 2,70) to Rp 75.000 (US \$ 5,77) per person (note: US \$ 1 = Rp 13.000). The tourism activities in these villages are organized by the community organization called as *pokdarwis* (*kelompok sadar wisata*) that consists of the representative of the batik firms.

CO-CREATION IN LEARNING BATIK

The terms of ‘batik’ are not only represented a type of traditional pattern of cloth but also illustrated the whole traditional process of making the clothes (Adam 1934; Amalia 2010; Sekimoto 2003). Two traditional techniques of making batik are well-known among the batik artisan. The wax-painting, the first technique, uses canting—a pen-like instrument as the main tool to apply hot wax. The artisan will draw the pattern on the fabric (usually cotton) and then the hot-wax will be applied following this pattern using canting. The product is well-known as ‘batik tulis’ (literally translated as a ‘written batik’). On the other hand, in the wax-stamping technique, the patterns are crafted or shaped in metal, particularly copper. The hot wax is applied by pressing the metal stamp containing wax on the cotton. For both techniques, the next step after applying the hot wax is dyeing the cloth with preferable colors and then drying the clothes. Afterward, the wax will be removed by boiling or scraping the wax. This process will show the un-dyed parts of the cloth where the artisans can apply different colors on it. This dyeing process can be repeated several times until desired patterns and colors appear.

These traditional techniques are presented as the main activities of creative tourism in Pekalongan. The visitors can learn how to make batik traditionally that is guided by the artisans prepared and hired particularly for this activity. Firstly, the visitors will get some introduction about the process of making batik (for both using canting and cap/stamp) from making a pattern, applying wax, dye, until finishing. Additionally, the visitors also gain some information about original patterns of Batik Pekalongan as well as the tools in making batik. Furthermore, the visitors will have an opportunity to make their own batik through guided activity by the batik artisan. The visitors can make their own design or copy the motif as introduced previously. At the end, the visitors can bring home their own batik. Co-creation of batik is conducted from the interaction between the batik artisan who guides the batik process and the visitors who learn how to make batik. Here, the visitors’ experiences are constructed by the visitors with the guidance of the artisan. The visitors can decide the media of their batik, i.e. handkerchief, small-size cloth, scarf, or t-shirt, as well as the motive and method in making batik. Each visitor may have a different experience based on their preferences.

IMPACTS OF LEARNING BATIK

Impact of ‘Learning Batik’ for the Visitors

The impact of learning batik for visitors can be seen from their different perspective on batik before and after learning batik activity. This research found that more than 90% of respondents (visitors) agree that learning batik is an interesting as well as an authentic experience that can be gained only in Pekalongan. These visitors also consider that their experience can enhance their creativity particularly in the art of making batik.

Impact of ‘Learning Batik’ for the Batik Artisan

Interaction among the visitors and artisan also give an impact for the artisan. Previously, they tended to work in a closed area, but now, they need to work with the visitors as their tutors. The artisan needs to shift their perspective on visitors, from an outsider who buys their products into a partner in making a unique/memorable experience. Thus, hospitality towards visitors is the critical skill of the artisan, as well as their willingness to share their knowledge about batik. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) emphasized this high-quality interaction is the key to creating visitors’ unique experience. Furthermore, the understanding or artisan on the characteristics of the visitors is also significant. Given that, the visitors have a limited capacity in learning batik, as most of them are the first learner, the artisan is encouraged to develop patterns and colors of batik to be more attractive (Latifah and Damayanti 2015) and easier to learn.

Impact of ‘Learning Batik’ on Batik and Its Related Industries

Here, through learning batik, they can learn more about batik, as well as the culture and identity of Pekalongan. These visitors also stated that after learning about batik, they can give more appreciation to Batik Pekalongan. Hence, the value of batik has been added from a traditional cloth into a cultural identity of Indonesia. ‘Learning batik’ can widely promote Batik Pekalongan as well as the art of making batik. This is promising as most of the visitors in the Museum and Batik Villagers are not from Pekalongan (Latifah 2015).

Additionally, ‘learning batik’ activities by visitors also give significant impact on the batik related industry. Similar to the production process of making batik by the artisan, ‘learning batik’ uses a material such as fabric, *canting*, metal stamp, wax, and dye. These materials are produced by other industries, most of them are located in the other villages in Pekalongan, such as Landungsari and Kuripan Villages that produce *canting*. Thus, ‘learning batik’ will give multiplier effects on these related industries in Pekalongan. This creative tourism activity can enhance the local economic development and provide employment opportunity in Pekalongan.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research found that the batik enterprise has shifted their perspective in interacting with customers. Previously and it still exists, the enterprise works in a closed area, and the outsiders are prohibited from seeing the process of making batik. The visitors are buyers of batik as tangible goods (*something to buy*). When more people curious about batik, the enterprise gives an opportunity for the customers to see the process of making batik. They allow customers to enter their workshops and see how the artisan works (*something to see*). This strategy has added the value of batik as the visitors give more appreciation on batik through their observation. The most recent perspective is by giving an opportunity for the visitors to learn and try how to make batik (*something to do*). Unique/memorable experience (Pralhad and Ramaswamy 2004) of the visitors is an added value of batik for the visitors. This experience can contribute to the visitors' appreciation on batik not only as a traditional cloth pattern but also as a multifaceted process of making cloth. Here, learning batik, particularly for the youngsters such as students, can contribute to the effort to preserve batik as the cultural identity of Indonesia. Furthermore, this visitors' positive perspective is the indication that learning batik is a promising tourism activity in Pekalongan. Thus, the batik industries and policymakers are supposed to extend the efforts to develop and support this activity.

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