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Cultural Tourism and Knowledge Management: The Importance of Epistemological Awareness in Cultural Tourism Destination Management

_Cakra Ludra Marhomi_

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Risalatul Hukmi, Rangga Kala Mahaswa, M. Rodinal Khair Khasri, Putu Pradnya Lingga D. (eds)
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Cakra Ludra Marhomi
Dinas Pariwisata Provinsi Kalimantan Utara, Tanjung Selor, Indonesia

e-mail: cakra.ludra@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstract

Tourism is an industrial sector that is proliferating and promises benefits to large groups of people. This growth encourages the formation of tourist destinations consisting of infrastructure, supporting communities, and tourist attractions in many places. Some tourist destinations highlight the culture of the people as part of a tourist attraction. Using local culture as a tourist attraction will inevitably lead to a shift in the values and meanings of the culture. Culture consists of three dimensions; artifacts, behaviors, and ideas. Dimensions of ideas from culture include, among others, beliefs and knowledge that are owned and passed down from generation to generation through formal and non-formal education processes.

In the context of culture as a tourist attraction, the dimensions of local cultural ideas will adapt to the tourism paradigm. Local beliefs will become a part of an economic system that emphasizes uniqueness in its interactions with other beliefs. Local knowledge, which includes factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge, initially a process of adaptation of local communities to their environment, is now part of the tourism paradigm. Because of its global nature, the tourism paradigm is a paradigm that has universal standards. Therefore, epistemological awareness is needed to meet the dimensions of local cultural ideas and the global tourism paradigm. This epistemological awareness can be stimulated through knowledge management of the supporting community in the tourist destination by utilizing existing educational institutions and local organizations.

Keywords

cultural tourism, epistemological awareness, tourism paradigm, knowledge management

1 Background

Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industrial sectors in the 21st century. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recorded an increase in world tourists in 2018, more than 50 times the number of world tourists during the post-Second World War period. This number is predicted to increase more than ten times by 2030 (Wendt, 2020).

The increasing number of tourists shows the high human interest in 21st-century travel. This growth encourages the emergence of various tourist destinations as a supply in response to the demand in the tourism market. There are several definitions of tourism destination. In the simplest terms, a tourist destination can be defined as an independent geographical unit visited by tourists (Burkart & Medlik, 1988). Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) describe that in addition to being a geographical entity, a tourist destination must also be able to provide various tourist experiences to tourists who visit it. Tourist destinations are also an economic and management entity. It can be said that a tourist destination is a unique network interconnection of various elements that require cooperation in its sustainability (Zemla, 2016).

Tourist destinations have several essential elements that make them attractive and can support the activities of tourists. These elements include attractions, amenities, accessibility, image, price, and human resources (UNWTO, 2007). Attractions or tourist attractions are anything that can attract tourists to come and do activities at that destination. Amenities are facilities and infrastructure that support the needs of tourists while in the destination. Accessibility is transportation that tourists can use to go to, return, and
move within destinations. An image is a form of unique character promoted and introduced to tourists. Price is an essential element that shows that tourists can purchase the products produced by the destination. Human resources are community and institutional readiness to support all processes of tourism activities at destinations.

Tourist attractions are the most critical elements of a destination. Attractions are tourists’ initial focus and motivation to come to a place. Attractions can take the form of attractive natural features such as beaches with beautiful views, a comfortable climate, or unique bio-diversity. Buildings made by humans specifically to attract tourists, such as monuments or playgrounds, can also be called attractions. In addition, the culture that belongs to a community in a destination is also a tourist attraction called cultural tourism attractions (UNWTO, 2007).

The global COVID-19 pandemic has weakened the world tourism industry in recent years. A decrease in the number of international tourists was recorded by up to 74% in 2020. Apart from weakening the economic sector, this decline has indirectly affected tourism trends and market demand for tourism products (Vanzetti & Peters, 2021). This change is an opportunity to review the direction of tourism development, such as improving tourism facilities and infrastructure, increasing the diversity of tourism products, building professional and sustainability-oriented resources, and developing and determining new tourism directions (Nepal, 2020). One thing that needs to be considered for its development direction is the use of culture as a tourist attraction.

Various efforts have been made to preserve local culture amidst the currents of change brought about by the rapid development of tourism. Conservation of cultural heritage, revitalization of local traditions, and rehabilitation of cultural areas are just a few examples of preservation efforts by governments and academics in the past years. However, the efforts made are often separated from community empowerment in tourism management. Tourist destination communities are taught how to manage destinations based on the tourism paradigm but are rarely involved in the knowledge-production process. In order to address this issue, the communities need awareness about their local and global knowledge.

This paper will discuss the effect of using culture as a tourist attraction on the cultural idea dimension. Furthermore, this paper will see the importance of epistemological awareness for communities that support cultural tourism activities. Finally, this paper will try to compile a scheme for managing local knowledge together with the modern tourism paradigm.

2 Cultural Tourism and Culturisation of Tourism

Cultural tourism is a type of tourism that focuses activities on cultural tourism attractions. Cultural tourism attractions are all forms of culture that can attract tourists. This attraction can be in the form of cultural heritage from the past (sites/heritage) or living cultural values (Suwena & Widyatmaja, 2010). This form of tourism is probably the earliest emerging form of tourism in the world and is likely to be the focus of tourism development in the future (Richards, 2003).

Culture is something that cannot be separated from human life. As individuals, culture shapes human identity and personality. Meanwhile, as a cultural group, it becomes socio-cultural and forms communities (Kistanto, 2017).

In simple terms, the 19th-century anthropologist, Edward Taylor, defined culture as “Something complex which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and many other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” (Tylor 1871 in Kistanto 2017). This definition shows how broad the dimensions of cultural coverage are. Humanities studies often divide it into material and non-material dimensions (Hahn, 2018).

The material dimension of culture or material culture is also often called artifacts, objects, or things. This dimension includes all kinds of natural and artificial objects (Hahn, 2018). All physical objects involved in human activities, such as shelter, clothing, and tools, are classified as material culture.

Material culture is the cultural dimension most easily seen as an object of tourist attraction. Tourist visits to museums to see collections of historical relics or exotic ethnic objects are one example. Historical and archaeological sites, traditional buildings, and monuments are other examples. Technically an artificial tourist attraction such as a ride for games is material culture.

The non-material dimension is all forms of traditions passed down from generation to generation, such as knowledge and skills, performing arts, and oral and written traditions (Wei et al., 2007). The non-material dimension can be divided into behavioral and ideal dimensions. The behavioral dimension is all
physical activity carried out by people to fulfill their life needs and express their ideas and beliefs. While the dimensions of ideas are all forms of knowledge, beliefs, skills, and norms passed down from generation to generation.

Traditions or behavioral dimensions in the form of performing arts and traditional ceremonies are often used as tourist attractions. The transformative tourism trends that have emerged recently have made tourists want to experience a more profound experience of traveling. Travelers are now more motivated to travel for experiences with meaning, purpose, and a sense of self-fulfillment that change their lives. This experience can only be obtained through a connected, personalized, and authentic journey (Gustafson, 2018). This trend can be seen in forms of tourism that are becoming increasingly popular in the 21st century, such as volunteer tourism where tourists are involved in social activities at tourist destinations (Wearing, 2003). Rural tourism, a form of tourism which makes suburban life a tourist attraction also gained some popularity recently (Nilsson 2002 in Ayazlar and Ayazlar 2016).

The idea dimension is an abstract realm that is more complicated to describe. In the 20th century, scholars often divided ideas into two categories; normative and cognitive (Sesonske, 1956). Ideas categorized as normative are concepts related to values and norms in life. These ideas can be social regulations, laws, beliefs, and religions. In comparison, the cognitive category is used to refer to practical, conceptual, and metaphysical aspects of knowledge.

The relationship between dimensions of ideas and tourism is a complicated one. John Urry (Urry, 1995) depicts the boundaries of culture and tourism as a line that is increasingly unclear and difficult to distinguish. This is due to two processes that occur simultaneously, namely; the culturization of society and the cultivation of tourist practices (Stewart et al. 2018 in Richards 2003). The acculturation of tourism practices is an effect of the production of cultural signs as part of the formation of tourist destinations (Richards, 2003).

In the context of cultural tourism, the commodification of culture is a fact that cannot be denied. The thing to worry about is not questioning the purity of local culture, but rather questioning the meaning of authenticity and how people determine the authenticity of their culture (Shepherd, 2002).

3 Local Knowledge In The Global Tourism Context

To discuss cultural authenticity, an epistemological awareness or understanding of what is known by society and its boundaries is needed. In tourism context, the people of a tourist destination need to know what constitutes their local knowledge and understand their position within the global tourism knowledge framework and paradigm.

Local knowledge is the knowledge that exists in a particular place, is owned by the local community, and becomes a cultural system that builds common sense. In general, local knowledge is not experimental knowledge that seeks to explain the laws of the universe. The focus of local knowledge is to find meaning interpretively (Geertz 1985 in Susanto 2019).

One of the important cultural theories in modern understanding is the view of culture from an evolutionary perspective. The majority of scholars who support this understanding agree on several things; First, culture is a system that links the human community with its ecological environment. Second, cultural change is a process of adaptation from natural selection. Third, technology, economic subsistence, and social organization related to production are the essence of cultural adaptive elements. Finally, the ideational component of culture has consequences for the adaptability of society (Keesing, 1974). From this perspective, local knowledge which is an element of local culture is a system of human groups adapting to their environment. Within local knowledge, there is a technological formulation, economic system, social, and other ideational elements that are designed for generations specifically to deal with local challenges such as climate, biotic ecosystems, and natural disasters that often occur in the environment where the community lives.

Knowledge has various definitions and classifications. Some scholars view knowledge through the perspective of cognitive theory, some others see knowledge based on its function in an epistemological context (De Jong & Ferguson-Hessler, 1996). To better understand local knowledge, an epistemological approach that tries to describe knowledge based on its function in the work context is the most appropriate. De Jong and Ferguson-Hessler (1996) try to emphasize the definition of knowledge as a problem-solving effort. Based on detailed observations of the completion of physics tasks, they categorize knowledge into four groups; situational knowledge, conceptual knowledge, procedural knowledge, and strategic knowledge.
Situational knowledge is about situations or facts often appearing in a domain. In the context of local knowledge, the domain in question can be a place, weather, or other natural and social conditions. For example, a community in a village may know that a river has more crocodile populations than other rivers, know that at a specific time of year, the river will flow more swiftly, the types of fruits that are poisonous or edible, and signs - natural signs that indicate the occurrence of a disaster.

Conceptual knowledge is about concepts, principles, or laws that apply to a particular situation or domain. In the context of local knowledge, knowledge can apply to social situations and natural conditions faced daily. For example, the people of a village understand that in a river with a fast current, there is a principle that causes boats to go faster.

Procedural knowledge is knowledge of actions or manipulations that can be performed in a situation or domain to solve a problem phase. This knowledge is like a technical guide that is passed down orally to solve daily challenges in the local community. Simple examples such as how to pick certain fruits, how to catch fish in the river, and so on.

Strategic knowledge is more general knowledge utilized in organizing steps to solve more complex problems. For example, determining what procedures need to be carried out at each problem-solving phase. In contrast to the other three categories of knowledge, this knowledge can be applied in general to several similar situations (De Jong & Ferguson-Hessler, 1996).

Defining local knowledge as an epistemological system in dealing with local challenges is indeed a major simplification. In local culture, there are ideational elements that are not difficult to understand as an effort to optimize the potential for survival in dealing with the environment. Some cultural elements have consequences for reducing the adaptability of society (Keesing, 1974). It is often found that ideational elements in a society’s cultural system arise as a result of cultural diffusion.

Cultural diffusion is a process of spreading cultural elements due to interactions between cultures. This generally occurs as a result of migration which encourages the exchange of cultural elements such as art, language, knowledge, and religion. Other causes such as trade and other forms of social interaction can also trigger diffusion (Coşkun 2021).

Tourism as a bridge of interaction between tourists and local communities will lead to an inevitable diffusion process. This interaction between the guest and the host allows both parties to imitate one or more elements from the other. This phenomenon which is also often considered part of the globalization process, is also a threat to the sustainability of local culture and knowledge. Therefore, along with tourism, efforts to preserve local culture are often carried out to maintain local cultural elements. (Coşkun 2021).

Apart from being a bridge for the interaction of tourists and locals, tourism is also a large industry that has its principles. Modern tourism is tourism that upholds the paradigm of sustainability. UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as tourism that takes into account its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts and takes into account the needs of tourists, industry, environment, and host communities in tourism activities. (UNWTO, 2013).

UNWTO further elaborated that sustainable tourism needs to achieve several goals. These targets include economic viability, local prosperity, employment quality, social equity, visitor fulfillment, local control, community well-being, preservation of cultural wealth, physical integrity, biological diversity, resource efficiency, and environmental purity (UNWTO, 2013). Although it does not explicitly regulate tourism activities, local culture certainly has ideational elements that guide social interaction, distribution of wealth, environmental conservation, and various issues emphasized in the paradigm of sustainable tourism. This local knowledge will appear in the unique forms of each destination in carrying out their tourism practices. This uniqueness is sometimes seen as a tourist attraction. However, if it differs significantly from the paradigm of sustainable tourism, it is often seen as an obstacle in tourism development that needs to be changed.

This modern tourism paradigm can be likened to an ideational element that belongs to the culture of the tourism industry. The convergence of local knowledge and modern tourism paradigms is an interaction that has the potential to cause diffusion. Local cultural change resulting from this diffusion process is inevitable, but the direction and results can be managed.

4 Managing The Local Knowledge

Tourist destination management is defined as an effort of various parties to jointly plan and develop competitive and sustainable tourist destinations. The parameters used are socio-economic growth,
satisfaction of tourist expectations, and environmental preservation (Andrades et al., 2015). Although in principle destination management should involve various stakeholders, in practice the roles of each party are not equal. For example, socialization and training carried out by the government to increase the understanding of the tourism destination community towards tourism is a one-way process in which academics facilitated by the government instills a mindset about how tourism should be developed in their destinations. Furthermore, people’s understanding, knowledge, and skills will be standardized with labor certification.

The arrival of a modern tourism paradigm instilled directly in the community will undoubtedly trigger changes in local culture and knowledge. If this continues, this process will produce knowledge that does not follow the community’s needs in dealing with their local challenges. Then an effort should be made to manage the direction and goals of cultural change. There is a need for a process that emphasizes local communities’ involvement in shaping their understanding of tourism and their local knowledge. One strategy that can be taken is to apply knowledge management.

Knowledge management is a process of processing and utilizing information and growing it into useful knowledge in an organization (Darudiato & Setiawan, 2013). There are various expert opinions regarding knowledge management. O’Dell and Grayson define it as a strategy that is consciously carried out to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and efforts to encourage the sharing of knowledge from each group member to improve organizational performance (O’Dell & Grayson, 1998 in Girard & Girard, 2015). This definition emphasizes the existence of awareness in developing strategies for disseminating information to members of the organization to improve organizational performance which will provide added value to all group members.

Devenport & Prusak (1998) illustrate that knowledge management takes resources that the organization may already have in the first place (Girard & Girard, 2015). In the context of cultural tourism destinations, the resources in question can be in the form of unwritten local knowledge. Communities that support this culture may not yet have epistemological awareness of their knowledge. So the first step that needs to be done is to raise public awareness of their local knowledge.

Individuals have an important role in the knowledge management process. In an organization, new knowledge always starts with individuals. Intuition formed by long work experience will produce valuable knowledge that, if managed properly, will become an asset in the advancement of the organization (Nonaka & Toyama, 2015). Therefore, each individual needs to be allowed to contribute their knowledge to new knowledge that is to be formed through the knowledge management process.

The individual’s knowledge is subjective, intuitive, and not based on systematically structured information, Nonaka & Toyama (2015) call it tacit knowledge. The knowledge management scheme developed by Nonaka emphasizes exploring this kind of knowledge to make it explicit knowledge.

Explicit knowledge is knowledge that is systematically documented. An explicit knowledge framework has a clear structure so that it can be communicated easily to others. The content and information contained in explicit knowledge become part of the development and formation of this knowledge (Darudiato & Setiawan, 2013).

Nonaka & Toyama (2015) observed a cycle of habits that often exist in organizations that can be applied in the process of converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge. The cycle can be divided into four stages; 1) socialization, the stage where a person learns tacit knowledge. 2) articulation, where those who already understand the epistemological position of tacit knowledge discuss it to understand the structure of that knowledge. 3) combination, the stage where knowledge that has been understood is structured and documented in learning media (books, textbooks, video tutorials, etc.) systematically so that it can be learned by more people. 4) internalization, namely the process by which the knowledge that has been obtained during the process of making this knowledge becomes tacit knowledge of the parties involved.

This cycle should be imitated and applied to communities supporting cultural tourism destinations to document local knowledge and adapt it to the modern tourism paradigm. In carrying out this process, it is necessary to obtain an agreement with the parties involved on several matters. First, the community supporting tourist destinations is an organization with a common goal. Second, the organization’s common goals are something that comes from within the community itself and not something dictated by external authorities. Finally, the new knowledge that will be formed is the knowledge that increases the value of the community supporting tourist destinations by their goals, whatever they are.

By agreeing on these three things, the community that supports cultural tourism destinations has the opportunity to carry out a knowledge management process through the following stages:
Socialization is a process by which members of groups supporting cultural tourism destinations learn local knowledge and knowledge related to the development of the modern tourism paradigm. This can be done through observation or informal learning in everyday life.

Articulation is a phase where group members who have learned then express what they have learned. This information is then discussed internally. In this process, facilitation from formal institutions such as schools or discussion forums provided by government agencies may be needed. However, it should be emphasized that the direction and purpose of forming new knowledge is something that is determined internally by the organization.

Combination is a phase when the results of the discussions are documented to be used as learning resources. In this process, academics can be further involved by helping to compile knowledge through learning media that are easy to understand and accessible.

Internalization is the phase when the learning media that have been prepared are used and distributed. At this stage, local knowledge and the tourism paradigm have been integrated into new knowledge that is by the needs and goals of the organization (a community that supports cultural tourism destinations) and is integrated as a cultural element.

5 Conclusion

The utilization of culture as a tourist attraction can trigger cultural change. One effort that can be done in managing the direction and process of change is to implement knowledge management. In this process, the community supporting cultural tourism destinations works like an organization and tries to document, discuss, and analyze the local culture and modern tourism paradigms that come with tourism activities in their area.

One of the appropriate knowledge management models to use is the model popularized by Nonaka & Toyama (2015). In this model, internal knowledge possessed by individuals is analyzed, documented, and then disseminated through a cycle facilitated by the organization. This model is suitable for use in managing local knowledge because of the unwritten nature of local knowledge and some of it has not been systematically structured. This knowledge management model is not perfect, but it is the best choice for empowering communities that support tourist destinations in determining the goals and direction of establishing their community. The central government, local government, and academia can play a role in facilitating the stages in this cycle.

There are several possible schemes to implement this concept. First, through community initiatives to preserve local values. In this scheme, people with self-funding carry out the socialization stage to learn modern tourism paradigms to be discussed and adapted to their local understanding and knowledge. This scheme is not practical for tourist destinations that are already far developed and exposed to various global developments due to tourism activities.

The second scheme is through local authority initiatives. In this scheme, the local government utilizes permanent institutions according to their authority and integrates them with social institutions engaged in tourism activities to implement knowledge management processes. For example, it integrates school learning in tourist destinations with tourism awareness groups to discuss local knowledge in extracurricular activities. The weakness of this process may be the slow implementation of the process because it depends on the implementation of activities in existing government institutions.

Another scheme is to utilize government authority in the tourism sector. If the government's routine activities are socializing tourism values such as tourism awareness and Saptapesona, replacing or adding material with a knowledge management model can be done. Applying the knowledge management model should be easier because only a little new knowledge is given to the local community; they are only taught to know what they already know. This is different from instilling new values such as Saptapesona, which incidentally is an effort to change people's behavior.

Somewhere, maybe a cultural tourism destination has implemented this concept even though they haven't realized it yet. Epistemological awareness is needed to encourage more people who support tourist destinations to implement it. This epistemological awareness may be difficult to implement, therefore it requires large resources and the support of authorities to implement it. Finally, further studies are needed from various scientific perspectives to see the accuracy of using knowledge management models in managing local knowledge. A controlled experimental model may be an effective way to see the effectiveness of this model. With the available resources, some adjustments to this concept may be required.
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