

TOWARD A "TOURIST VILLAGE": LESSONS LEARNED FROM *DUSUN* GUNUNG MALANG

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to examine the potential of Gunung Malang Sub-village (Dusun) in Lombok to become a Tourist Village. The researchers tried to examine the factors that must be done both in terms of production, marketing, and the obstacles that exist to become a Tourist Village. This research uses a qualitative methodology, which includes in-depth interview with seven cultural practitioners in Dusun Gunung Malang. The researchers also conducted an ethnography study, where one of the researchers stayed there for one month to make observations and gain an understanding of the phenomenon. The results showed that a series of follow-up actions were needed to increase production, marketing and overcome obstacles to making Dusun Gunung Malang as a tourist village.

Keywords: *tourist village, weaving fabric, production, marketing*

BACKGROUND

Dusun (sub-village) Gunung Malang, Taman Ayu Village, is located in the Gerung District, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. This *dusun* has been known to produce high quality weaving fabric for the West Lombok area and its surroundings. According to one of the village elders, Mr. Nurhadi (74 years), as long as he could remember, since the days of his grandmother, she had already been a weaver. Since it has been passed down through generations and is done manually by the hands of skilled weavers who have been weaving since their early age, the quality of weaving fabric in Gunung Malang is of high quality and markedly different compared to the weaving fabrics found in other regions. This is also confirmed by Ms. Oni (43 years), who is a keen observer of weaving fabrics in Mataram.

However, when the researchers conducted observations to the location throughout 2018 and in mid-2019, it was discovered that the production of woven fabrics in *Dusun* Gunung Malang was not well developed to the point where it even diminished both in terms of production and the willingness of young people to become weavers. One of the most noticeable examples is the demise of weaving fabric made with special materials called "*ulat bide*", which are no longer produced in the village. In fact, these days, there are no more weavers in *Dusun* Gunung Malang capable of making these *ulat bide* fabrics.

This is unfortunate considering that the fabric is not just an ordinary one, but there is a deep-rooted local wisdom contained in it. In ancient times, all houses used the *ulat bide* material to cover the wall and roof, which also showed that humans are very dependent on nature, so that the environment must be maintained and preserved. However, along with the development of an increasingly modern era, where the plaque is replaced with a wall, the fabric that must be done with a high degree of difficulty and takes a long time makes the price of the fabric expensive, so that no more weavers want to make it and today, no one with the ability to make the fabric using the *ulat bide* material is left.

That being said, the production of woven fabric which is still done manually and does not use machines and still uses traditional dyes should be able to attract tourists to attend and buy high-quality woven fabric which will eventually push *Dusun* Gunung Malang into a Tourist Village that could potentially boost the local economy.

With this background, this study aims to understand the various factors that cause the underdevelopment of *Dusun* Gunung Malang as a tourist hamlet and also the factors that cause stagnation and even the decline of woven fabric production in Gunung Malang.

Research question:

1. What are the factors that contribute to the stagnation or even the decline of the production of woven fabrics in *Dusun* Gunung Malang?
2. What are the factors that hinder the sale of woven fabrics in *Dusun* Gunung Malang?
3. What are the factors that hamper *Dusun* Gunung Malang from becoming a Tourist Village?

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

1) Tourist Village

Murdiyanto [1] explained that Tourist Village is basically a form of village development by utilizing various components in the community and village so that they can play an active role as an integrated tourism product attribute and reflect various characteristics of the village. A village can be categorized as Tourist Village if the area is capable of displaying local wisdom based on aspects such as socioeconomic, sociocultural, customs, architecture, building, or other activities that are unique and interesting, both in the form of performance art, accommodation, food and drinks, as well as other uniqueness that has added value.

According to Dewi, Fandeli, dan Baiquni [2], Tourist Village basically a form of local community-based tourism (CBT) development that is forward-oriented. The development of Tourist Village is expected to be a catalyst for the realization of equitable tourism development in a sustainable manner. Tourist Village also has a positive side because it is

able to develop the values of the local wisdom of the village without damaging the local cultural ecosystem. In addition, Nalayani and Ayu [3] explained the important role of the Tourist Village in advancing the community's economy and increasing the equitable development of the village. To achieve this, a balance is needed between the social and economic environmental values in order to ensure future sustainability. The potentials of Tourist Village can also be categorized into environmental tourism, cultural tourism, as well as artificial (manmade) tourism.

On the other hand, the challenges faced in the development of Tourist Village are related to human resources, institutions, and infrastructure. The human resource aspect emphasizes the importance of increasing motivation, understanding, involvement, and regeneration of the Tourist Village community in carrying out and developing the cultural values contained therein. Second, the institutional aspects related to the management and organization of a Tourist Village to be able to actualize and sell a variety of interesting cultural potentials. The last is infrastructure, which is related to the development and maintenance of tourism supporting infrastructure in the village through funding efforts, equipment improvements, and expanding access to promote existing cultural potential [4].

The participation of community (CBT) in developing the Tourist Village is one of the main prerequisites because they are related parties who best understand the culture, local wisdom, and potential of the region. Support from local residents is also important to be able to ensure the development of a Tourist Village that is in line with the needs of local residents [5]–[7]. In addition, careful planning is also the key to success so that Tourist Village can become an impressive tourist attraction for tourists who come [8].

2) Culture-based products

In his article entitled “The Tourism Product”, Smith [9] explained that the development of culture-based products is a major prerequisite for being able to meet the demands of a changing tourism market and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the industry. Under ideal conditions, culture-based products will meet with demand in the market, be produced at an efficient cost, and be based on local wisdom found in the area. There are at least five elements of culture-based products that need to be considered, among others: building the physical, service, hospitality, freedom of choice, and involvement.

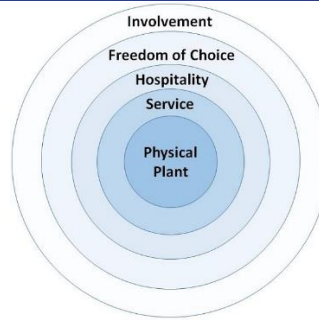


Figure 1. Culture-Based Product Model (adopted from Smith, 1994)

Professional tourism industry players generally emphasize the importance of innovative and varied cultural products, which in turn leaves a positive impression on consumers. From the perspective of marketing, product-based culture is a variety of things that are used to meet the needs of tourism and promoted to the market [10]. To be a good tourist destination, culture-based products need to be developed as a pull factor that can make tourists interested in visiting the area. In general, tourists expect that the cultural experience is related to various ritual and socio-cultural characteristics found in the tourist destination. However, the tourism industry can also create a new cultural product that is not directly related to the tourist destination [11].

In developing products based on culture, local wisdom of homegrown culture should be a top priority because it is considered able to provide added value to the tourism business, which in turn could create a competitive advantage that is based on cultural authenticity local [12]. In addition, to ensure that tourists can enjoy the authenticity of the local culture, it is necessary to ensure the experience of 'artifacts' (for example, clothing, food, or shelter) and 'mentifact' (for example: arts, beliefs and values). Therefore, product-based culture need to ensure the existence of these two distinct experiences [13].

3) Marketing of cultural products

Marketing third world countries is an inevitability, and some of the tourist destinations with the highest growth rates are situated in these regions [14]. In the context of marketing, how this is understood by consumers and suppliers becomes very important, because of its nature that must be mutually beneficial to both parties [15]. In order to improve the image and identity of a tourist destination, cultural product marketers can implement "product concentration", by determining only one or a few main cultural products/attractions within an area. It can also improve understanding and wealth of cultural products owned by the local community, coordinate for faster and easier provision of facilities and infrastructure, and also the possibility of achieving economies of scale, for example through the development of a standardized package [11]. However, the lack of choices in the marketing of cultural products that implement product concentration system

can reduce the possibility of offering services that are tailored to the needs of incoming tourists [16].

According to Taylor [17], when a culture is determined as a tourist attraction, the level of authenticity tends to decrease. Cole [18] explains that ethical aspects and values of the culture was adjusted to meet the demand of tourists, the culture becomes commoditized. According to Macdonald [19], people use the commoditization of culture as an approach to strengthen the identity, building a narrative about their culture, and emphasized the importance of local experience in the area. According to Widyastuti [20], in a capitalist society, this is common, because the commoditization of culture can affect anyone and make culture a market object and is designed to meet consumer culture . In general, the distribution of cultural products includes a series of activities to carry out cultural commoditization, create values, deliver messages, and promote products to customers effectively [21].

In the context of cultural marketing, marketing strategies require decisions about specific target customers. In addition, the marketing mix consist of product, price, distribution, and promotion can also be developed to be value proposition that is able to attract the attention of the market by putting yourself (positioning) is superior to other competitors. Furthermore, to be able to ensure the sustainability of cultural development, marketing needs to be 'holistic' by considering the social and economic dimensions of society. This can be done by combining the access and empowerment and creativity culture [22].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study utilizes two qualitative approaches to answer the proposed research problem. First, the researchers used in-depth interviews conducted during September 2018 as well as July 2019 with several key informants who were believed to be able to provide a more complete picture of the phenomena that was taking place. The key informants are: (1) Mr. Nurhadi (74 years). Mr. Nurhadi was chosen because he was once the head of the village back in 1984 and is currently the only puppeteer left in the village and one of the most senior elders in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. (2) Cultural activist from Gunung Malang named Mr. Ramli (37 years). Mr. Ramli been selected since his family is an instrument maker in Gunung Malang, and he himself is an artist gamelan player. (3) Mr. Ahmad Darwilis (72 years), who is a cultural activist, is the only shadow puppet maker in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. (4) Sastro bin Darwilis (35 years), who is the son of Mr. Ahmad Darwilis and a likely successor for the production of the shadow puppets. (5) Ms. Oni, a junior high school teacher in Mataram who has a keen interest in Gunung Malang's woven fabric and often conducts research on woven fabric in Lombok. (6). Mr. Nur Hidayat (53

years), who is the head of the hamlet (*Kadus*) in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. (7). Mrs. Aminah (32 years) who is one of the remaining *tenun* crafters in *Dusun* Gunung Malang.

Second, this study also uses the ethnography approach, which is an observation conducted by one of the researchers for a month, back in September 2018. The observations were made to see the production process, marketing system, and to understand the local values in the *Dusun*.

The results of these observations have been recorded in a documentary film while reexamining if there are any elements in the study that are missed out.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION RESULT

Decreased Production of Gunung Malang Woven Fabrics

From the researchers' in-depth interviews and direct observations, it was discovered that the production of woven fabrics in *Dusun* Gunung Malang was indeed decreasing. For instance, just like what the researchers have mentioned before, there is the demise of the woven fabric using *ulat bide* as the fabric. This particular type of woven fabric had been passed down from generation to generation in the form of fabric used for clothes. Only this specific fabric that was originally intended to create clothes while the other fabrics are more intended for *sarong* (a type of fabric wrapped around the waist) or blanket. The loss of this *bide* woven fabric is partly due to the difficult production process, resulting in high prices of the product. Furthermore, because nearly all the buyers were basically local residents of *Dusun* Gunung Malang, the *bide* woven fabric slowly became unaffordable and impractical to make, to the point where it was finally no longer available and turned extinct.



Figure 1. Pak Nurhadi, an elder of *Dusun* Gunung Malang, in a *sarong* fabric

"...Right now, there is nothing else that can be used to make the fabric, but during my childhood, my grandmother still made it, but today, nobody can (do it anymore). My wife, when she was young, could also make it while helping her mother out, but now, since she's out of practice, she can't do it anymore. Nobody can." (Mr. Nurhadi, 74 years old, community elder)

The researchers' investigation has also shown that there are some factors which makes the production of woven fabric in *Dusun* Gunung Malang decreased. First, the researchers discovered that the relatively poor sales were one of the main factors that contributed to the decline in the production of woven fabric in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. From the researchers' observation and interview results, it turned out that there were many woven fabrics (typically more than five in one household) that got piled up and failed to sell for months on end, making the weavers disincentivized to make new ones. The problem was, the majority of the buyers were local residents and there were hardly any orders from outside of the *dusun*. If they continued to produce but there were no orders, then their capital would eventually deplete while they still needed to put foods on the table and fulfill their daily needs. Mr. Ramli explained:

"...If there is an order, of course the weavers will be excited to make woven fabric regularly. However, because the demand was low the and the fabrics just piled up, our money (to produce the woven fabric) eventually ran out, especially since most of the people in this village come from a lower-middle income bracket. If our resources got sucked into the woven fabric (without any income), then how can we eat? (Ramli, 37 years old, cultural activist).

This finding is interesting because it turned out that weaving work in *Dusun* Gunung Malang is considered as a side job, which is basically work in leisure time when there are no other important activities to do. If there are agricultural activities such as planting rice or harvesting, then the weaving activity stops. Likewise, when a neighbor dies or has a wedding ceremony, all the villagers will work together to help out and leave the work of weaving.

Second, there is a low interest of young people in the village to become weavers. They tend to choose to work in the city or even go abroad as a household assistant which are more "promising" and filled with a modern lifestyle. Many young people feel that there is no hope if they continue to live in the village with a monotonous lifestyle. The influence of outside culture through television and other media makes young women interested in working in the city so that now the remaining weavers in *Dusun* Gunung Malang are almost exclusively older people. If this generation passes one day, it is not impossible that the story of *Dusun* Gunung Malang as one of the first centers of woven fabric in West Lombok will only remain as a distant memory from the past.

"...Young people here prefer to work in cities or abroad. They thought that if they worked in the city, they would get a large salary and not be 'outdated' (Nur Hidayat, 53 years old, Head of *Dusun* Gunung Malang).

Third, there is a change in culture and norms in Gunung Malang. This woven fabric is mainly used in certain occasions such as weddings or meeting in-laws for the first time, and so on. But now, because of the choice of printing fabrics that are much cheaper with

more diverse models and many of them are similar in style to traditional woven fabrics, a lot of villagers prefer to buy the printed fabric products instead. Likewise, the existence of a factory-made *sarong* or blanket that is much cheaper to make woven fabric slowly but surely abandoned. These factors have made the marketing of woven fabric in *Dusun* Gunung Malang particularly challenging.

The Marketing Difficulties

After observing intensively by living together with the locals at *Dusun* Gunung Malang and based on a series of interviews the researchers conducted, the researchers have drawn some conclusions about the difficulties of marketing woven fabric products as follows:

First, the motifs are less varied. At present, the production of woven fabric is still carried out separately in individual households even though they are living in the same hamlet. This makes their production somewhat limited and only based on their personal experience and knowledge. This factor makes woven fabric products to be pretty much the same throughout so that variations are negligible. This is also the case since most of the buyers are only local residents of *Dusun* Gunung Malang, so they are also only aware of existing homegrown motifs such as *ragi seganteng*, *bugis*, *ragi ketap*, and *ragi kutik*.

Figure 2 below shows how the woven fabrics they produced have a limited variation.



Figure 2. The motifs of some "premium" woven fabrics which do not possess any distinctive qualities

Second, the price is relatively more expensive compared to the market. From the researchers' observations, the quality of Gunung Malang woven fabric is indeed better than the average woven fabric in general. But the price applied is also relatively more expensive than woven fabrics from some other regions in Lombok. Likewise, when compared to batik woven fabrics from Cirebon, Solo, Pekalongan or Lasem, the average price of the woven fabric in *Dusun* Gunung Malang is relatively costlier. Based on interviews that the researchers conducted with the local weavers, there is the impression that the pricing of the products is based on approximation because there was never any precise calculation of the amount of costs incurred.

"...the price is only approximate. There's no fixed price. It's always been that way too..." (Mrs. Aminah, 32 years old, weaver of woven fabric).

In addition, the researchers also observed that most if not all of the weavers could be said to have never left the Gunung Malang area. As such, they do not have a thorough understanding of competitor's prices and external motifs.

Third, the researchers also noticed that in *Dusun* Gunung Malang, there is no centralized "showroom" or a dedicated place at which to display the local woven fabrics. The fabrics are still scattered in each weaver's house, so that if there were incoming visitors or tourists who wanted to see and buy the woven fabrics, they would have a hard time to do so.



Figure 3. Local people showed their woven fabric on top of a motorcycle due to the absence of an appropriate place to display the products

Fourth, the production of fabrics that do not match market demand. Currently, all the weavers at *Dusun* Gunung Malang just make fabrics for *sarong* and blankets. Although the fabrics can be used as material to produce clothes (for example clothes for men or women), tailors will have difficulty because of the non-standard size of the fabric. Currently, there is a high demand from potential customers for clothes made from the woven fabric, while the demand for *sarong* and blankets are much more limited.

"...Here, we only make woven fabrics for *sarong* and blanket. We used to have the fabrics for clothing material, but there were only a few of them, and now we don't have them anymore." (Nurhadi, 74, a village elder).

Toward a Tourist Village?

Some of the findings above could partly explain about some of the causes of sub-optimal sales in *Dusun* Gunung Malang. On the other hand, there are several factors that hamper *Dusun* Gunung Malang from becoming a Tourist Village. Based on the researchers' research, the researchers notice a few factors that hinder the development of Gunung Malang as a tourist village, namely:

First, there is not any particular "specialty" from *Dusun* Gunung Malang. Although there is quite a few weavers remaining, but they are spread out too thin within the village and still somewhat "sporadic" in nature. To become a proper Tourist Village and ultimately

boost the sales of woven fabric, they need to manage the production of woven fabric by improving the variety of products sold, establishing an integrated showroom/display space, as well as ensuring a standardized and competitive pricing strategy.



Figure 4. Placement of the loom at the porch of the house

From Figure 4 above, it can be observed that the weaving activity is merely a part-time job during the break/leisure time outside of their main occupation on the rice field as farmers.

Secondly, there is still a lack of commitment and support from the government, in this case the local government and district government, to turn *Dusun* Gunung Malang into a Tourist Village, despite the many potentials that the *dusun* possesses to become an attractive Tourist Village. For example, in addition to the woven fabric production by local weavers, the *dusun* has the only shadow puppet crafters in all of West Lombok which have attracted many foreign and local tourists who are more than willing to pay a premium to buy from these shadow puppets. Almost every house in the *dusun* also has a “*bale-bale*” to receive guests which is unique and interesting to tourists. Unfortunately, the promotion efforts of these unique cultural markers are still limited to word-of-mouth without any formal marketing activities.

CONCLUSION

Through a series of research that the researchers have conducted, it is discovered that *Dusun* Gunung Malang has tremendous potentials to be developed into a tourist village. Woven fabric production which has been handed down for generations, its tranquil location on the slope of mountains, as well as the presence of other cultural products such as the shadow puppets, have made *Dusun* Gunung Malang very promising if developed seriously. It should be able to become a tourist village that attracts local and foreign tourists alike. However, it requires the support and commitment from various stakeholders, including the government and local residents who are devoted to transforming the village into a proper Tourist Village.

This study utilized qualitative approach to describe the phenomenon at *Dusun* Gunung Malang and is still in the early stages to provide some systematic inputs on how

to transform the small hamlet into a Tourist Village. The researchers' findings show that there is still much to be done, both in terms of production, marketing, and also a comprehensive set of actions to transform *Dusun* Gunung Malang and improve the livelihoods of the local community.

The researchers envisage that this article would be able to attract more researchers to conduct further research on how to develop *Dusun* Gunung Malang into a Tourist Village. In doing so, the researchers believe that young people would no longer have an urgency/need to work outside of the village or even abroad just to make ends meet. More importantly, the village could be able to sustainably preserve its valuable local heritage and cultural products so that they will not go to waste in the future.

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