

CULTURAL COMMODIFICATION FOR TOURISM IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION

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Abstrak

Komodifikasi budaya merupakan fenomena global yang signifikan dalam pengembangan pariwisata berbasis masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana elemen budaya lokal dikelola sebagai aset pariwisata yang berkelanjutan dalam menghadapi tantangan era disrupsi global. Studi ini penting karena menawarkan wawasan tentang keseimbangan antara pelestarian budaya dan manfaat ekonomi bagi masyarakat. Lokasi penelitian di Desa Waluran Mandiri, Kabupaten Sukabumi, Indonesia. Pendekatan kualitatif diterapkan melalui studi kasus, dengan pengumpulan data dari wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumen terkait. Fokus penelitian meliputi proses komodifikasi budaya, dampaknya terhadap masyarakat, serta peluang dan tantangan yang muncul. Hasil utama menunjukkan bahwa komodifikasi budaya, seperti pengemasan hanjeli sebagai produk wisata, telah meningkatkan pendapatan masyarakat hingga 40% dan mendorong revitalisasi tradisi yang hampir punah. Namun, distorsi nilai budaya dan ketergantungan ekonomi pada pariwisata menjadi tantangan yang perlu diatasi. Media digital terbukti efektif dalam promosi budaya lokal, tetapi menghadirkan risiko homogenisasi nilai budaya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun komodifikasi budaya memberikan manfaat ekonomi dan sosial yang signifikan bagi masyarakat, pendekatan holistik yang berfokus pada keberlanjutan diperlukan untuk memitigasi dampak negatif. Implikasi penelitian ini mencakup strategi pemberdayaan masyarakat lokal, pengembangan infrastruktur yang ramah lingkungan, dan pemanfaatan teknologi digital secara bijak untuk mendukung pelestarian budaya sekaligus mendorong kesejahteraan masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Era Disrupsi Digital; Komodifikasi budaya; Pariwisata berkelanjutan

Abstract

Cultural commodification is a significant global phenomenon in the development of community-based tourism. This research aims to understand how local cultural elements are managed as sustainable tourism assets in facing the challenges of the era of global disruption. This study is important because it offers insight into the balance between cultural preservation and economic benefits for society. The research location is in Waluran Mandiri Village, Sukabumi Regency, Indonesia. A qualitative approach is applied through case studies, with data collection from in-depth interviews, field observations, and analysis of related documents. The focus of the research includes the

process of cultural commodification, its impact on society, and the opportunities and challenges that arise. Key results show that cultural commodification, such as the packaging of hanjeli as a tourist product, has increased people's incomes by up to 40% and encouraged the revitalization of nearly extinct traditions. However, the distortion of cultural values and economic dependence on tourism are challenges that need to be overcome. Digital media has proven to be effective in promoting local culture, but it presents the risk of homogenizing cultural values. The study concludes that while cultural commodification provides significant economic and social benefits to society, a holistic approach focused on sustainability is needed to mitigate negative impacts. The implications of this research include strategies for empowering local communities, developing environmentally friendly infrastructure, and using digital technology wisely to support cultural preservation while encouraging community welfare.

Keywords: *Cultural commodification; Era of Digital Disruption; Sustainable Tourism.*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of global disruption, digital transformation and technological advancements have affected many sectors, including tourism. One of the phenomena that has become a highlight in the tourism industry is cultural commodification, where local cultural elements are packaged to attract tourists and create economic benefits. According to MacCannell (1976), cultural commodification in the context of tourism creates "staged authenticity," or authenticity that is packaged to meet the expectations of tourists, but often does not represent the original essence of the culture.

Cultural commodification is one of the important topics in tourism studies, especially when it is associated with global changes that occur due to technological disruption. Globalization and the development of information technology have accelerated the exchange of culture, information, and technology around the world. On the one hand, this provides a great opportunity for tourist villages such as Waluran Mandiri Village in Sukabumi Regency to promote their local culture globally. However, on the other hand, globalization also brings challenges, especially in maintaining the authenticity of local culture which is at risk of being eroded due to the commodification process. Cultural commodification can be seen as a process in which traditional cultural elements – such as customs, crafts, culinary, and rituals – are transformed into commodities that are sold for tourism purposes. MacCannell (1976) in his book *The Tourist* explains that tourism, in many cases, leads to "staged authenticity", where elements of culture are displayed and polished to attract tourists, without regard to the original values of the culture.

Waluran Mandiri Village is one of the tourist destinations that is starting to develop by relying on the potential of local culture as the main attraction. However, in the era of global disruption, the challenge faced is how local communities can balance between preserving their culture and commodifying it to improve the economy. Waluran Mandiri Village in Sukabumi Regency is an interesting example of how a local community uses its cultural potential as a tourism asset. Hanjeli, a local plant that is the main symbol of the village, was raised as a major tourist attraction

which was then followed by cultural promotions, such as handicrafts, local cuisine, and traditional ceremonies. This shows that cultural commodification is one of the approaches in facing the challenges of globalization. Cultural commodification has become a very prominent phenomenon in tourism in the era of global disruption. Where local cultural elements are transformed into commodities that are sold to tourists for economic purposes. MacCannell (1976) in *The Tourist* mentions that modern tourism often creates "staged authenticity" or packaged authenticity. With the rampant development of digital technology, tourist villages such as Waluran Mandiri Village in Sukabumi must adapt to global challenges, where local culture is often used as a tourism product.

Waluran Mandiri Village in Sukabumi Regency is an example of how the potential of local culture is utilized to develop the tourism sector. With its rich traditions and nature, the village carries a community-based tourism approach, which aims to empower the local community and improve the village economy. However, behind the economic opportunities, cultural commodification also presents challenges related to the preservation of local cultural authenticity.

The focus of this research is the process, impact, as well as challenges and opportunities of cultural commodification for tourism in the Era of Disruption that occurred in Waluran Mandiri Village. This study aims to explore and analyze Cultural Commodification for Tourism in the Era of Disruption in Waluran Mandiri Village as an effort to encourage the development of geotourism in Indonesia. In addition, this research is expected to have a positive impact on the development of sustainable tourism in Waluran Mandiri Village and its surroundings. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of sustainable tourism in Indonesia, by utilizing the potential of Waluran Mandiri Village as a case study. In addition, cultural commodification for tourism is also expected to improve local welfare and strengthen the relationship between local communities and the tourism industry.

Cultural Commodification

Cultural commodification, as explained by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989), refers to the process by which culture is transformed into an economic commodity. In the context of tourism, this commodification usually occurs when cultural elements—such as rituals, traditional clothing, or typical foods—are transformed into marketable attractions for the benefit of tourists. As explained by Cohen (1988) in the article *Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism*, cultural commodification often leads to a distortion of the original meaning of a culture. Cultural elements that previously had a deep symbolic or spiritual value, were transformed into "performances" to meet the expectations of global tourists.

Cultural commodification occurs when cultural elements that initially have no economic value are converted into commodities to be sold in the tourism market. David Harvey (1989) in *The Condition of Postmodernity* states that cultural commodification is a phenomenon that arises along with the development of capitalism, where all aspects of life, including culture, are monetized for profit. In the context of tourism, local culture is often packaged and promoted to meet the

expectations of global tourists. Cohen (1988) states that in the process of commodification, cultural elements often undergo distortions, where the original values and meanings inherent in those elements are eroded or even lost. For example, rituals or festivals that were once part of a religious or community tradition are now performed solely for commercial purposes.

According to David Harvey (1989) in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, commodification is a process in which something that was not previously sold becomes a commodity in the market. In the context of tourism, Greenwood (1977) argues that cultural commodification can cause distortion or loss of the original value of the culture when it is marketed to tourists. In Waluran Mandiri Village, this commodification process occurs when local traditions such as art performances, typical foods, and traditional rituals are packaged as tourist attractions.

Cultural-Based Tourism

Cultural tourism is one of the types of tourism that is growing rapidly around the world, where tourists are interested in exploring and understanding the local culture of a destination. Richards (1996) in *Cultural Tourism in Europe* explains that cultural tourism plays an important role in the preservation and promotion of local culture, but also carries the risk of commodification. According to Smith (2009) in *Cultural Tourism: Global and Local Perspectives*, cultural tourism can bring significant economic benefits to local communities, but it can also lead to adverse social changes if local culture is treated only as a commodity.

Tourism and Global Disruption

The era of global disruption is characterized by rapid technological developments and changes in tourist behavior that are increasingly dependent on digital information. According to Gretzel et al. (2015), in the book *Tourism in the Disruptive Digital Economy*, digital technology, especially social media and online travel platforms, has influenced the way tourists seek information and interact with destinations. Tourist villages, such as Hanjeli, are faced with opportunities to promote themselves through digital channels, but they also face pressure to meet global expectations for the "authenticity" of local culture.

The era of global disruption, fueled by advances in digital technology, has brought about major changes in the tourism industry. Travelers are now using technology to plan, book, and even experience trips. According to Buhalis and Law (2008) in *Progress in Tourism Management: Twenty Years on and 10 Years after the Internet*, digital technology has changed the way tourist destinations are promoted and consumed, accelerating the globalization of tourism and increasing tourists' expectations for the authenticity of local culture.

Technological developments bring opportunities for small destinations such as Waluran Mandiri Village to reach the global market without having to rely on large agents. However, it also puts pressure on local communities to adapt to the demands of global tourists that often run counter to traditional values. The development of digital technology has drastically changed the landscape of the tourism industry. Gretzel et al. (2015) in *Tourism in the Disruptive Digital Economy* highlight that the

digital era has opened up great opportunities for tourism villages to promote themselves through social media platforms and digital marketing. However, technological disruption also brings challenges in maintaining cultural authenticity as tourists can easily influence local cultural trends through online platforms.

Community-Based Tourism

The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) aims to integrate local communities into sustainable tourism management. As explained by Tolkach and King (2015) in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, community-based tourism emphasizes local community empowerment, sustainable resource management, and cultural preservation. Waluran Mandiri Village is one example of how local communities actively participate in managing tourism potential, so that the economic impact can be felt directly by the community. Community-Based Tourism (PBM) or *Community Based Tourism* (CBT) is a tourism management model that puts local communities as the main actors. Tolkach and King (2015) in the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* stated that this model is not only oriented to economic benefits but also cultural and environmental preservation. Waluran Mandiri Village carries this approach with the hope of advancing the village in a sustainable manner through active community participation in tourism management.

Cultural Authenticity Theory

The concept of authenticity in tourism as two types, namely objective authenticity of the and existential authenticity (Cohen, 1988). In the context of Waluran Mandiri Village, tourists may be looking for an authentic experience that exists, but the reality is that what they encounter is a culture that has undergone commodification, where authenticity is often sacrificed for economic interests.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This study focuses on Waluran Mandiri Village as a research object to analyze the impact of cultural commodification in the era of global disruption. Data was obtained through interviews with local stakeholders, tourists, and direct observation of tourism activities in the village.

There are three data collection techniques carried out by the author, namely (1) Interviews conducted with local communities, tourism managers, and tourists to get their views on cultural commodification. (2) Field observations were carried out on tourism activities in Waluran Mandiri Village, especially those related to cultural attractions. (3) Literature Studies, which are secondary data, are obtained from academic journals, books, and government reports on tourism and culture.

The author conducts data analysis techniques by means that the data obtained is analyzed descriptively using theories of cultural commodification, authenticity, and community-based tourism. This research is located in Waluran Mandiri Village which is in the area of Sukabumi Regency, West Java Province. The object of this study is Cultural Commodification for Tourism in the Era of Disruption in Waluran Mandiri Village.

This qualitative data analysis allows researchers to explore the meanings, concepts, and patterns that emerge from the data in depth. By using techniques such as theme analysis, narrative analysis, and cross-referencing analysis, qualitative research can generate a deep understanding of the phenomenon being studied and allow researchers to explore the complexity and diversity of existing perspectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Cultural Commodification Process in Waluran Mandiri Village

Referring to the theory of "packaged authenticity" by MacCannell (1976), the cultural activities in this village have been designed to meet the expectations of tourists. Traditional rituals that were originally sacred are now part of regularly scheduled tour packages. For example, traditional ceremonies that used to only be held at certain times are now staged at the request of tourist groups. The commodification process in Waluran Mandiri Village starts from the identification of local cultural potential that can be developed as a tourist attraction. Elements such as hanjeli, as a local plant, are packaged into various products such as snacks, souvenirs, and educational materials for tourists. In addition, traditional arts such as local dances and traditional ceremonies are also adapted into performances that can be enjoyed by visitors. This packaging not only utilizes the aesthetic value of culture but also creates a historical narrative that appeals to tourists (see Figure 1, 2 and 3).

Social media is the main tool in the process of cultural commodification in Waluran Mandiri Village. The village's social media accounts promote local culture through photos and videos featuring residents' activities, hanjeli festivals, and art attractions. The increase in the number of tourists which reached 30% in the last year is directly related to the success of this digital campaign. In addition, the use of platforms such as tourism applications expands the reach of promotion to the international market. The commodification process cannot be separated from the collaborative role between local communities, local governments, and the private sector. Local governments provide training and infrastructure assistance, while the private sector assists in marketing and providing venture capital for local artisans.



Figure 1: Cultural Commodification Enjoyed by Nusantara/Domestic Tourists



Figure 2: Cultural Commodification Enjoyed by Foreign Tourists



Figure 3: Cultural Commodification enjoyed by tourists

The Impact of Cultural Commodification

Cultural commodification has a positive impact on the economy of village communities. Survey data shows an increase in income of up to 40% for families directly involved in tourism activities. Processed hanjeli products are one of the main sources of income that are in demand by local and foreign tourists. In addition, the creation of new jobs such as tour guides and souvenir craftsmen also improves people's welfare. Culture-based tourism activities encourage closer relationships between residents. Mutual cooperation to organize cultural festivals or improve public facilities further strengthens social ties. Public awareness of the importance of cultural preservation is also increasing, especially among the younger generation. Commodification encourages documentation and revitalization of traditions that are on the verge of extinction. Many young generations have returned to learn about the arts and customs of their ancestors because of the demand from the tourism sector.

Cultural adaptations to meet the needs of tourists often lead to distortions of original values and meanings. For example, some traditional dances that have spiritual value are now only considered entertainment. Dependence on the tourism sector creates a high risk of a decrease in tourist visits due to external factors such as pandemics or natural disasters. Conflicts related to the sharing of profits and responsibilities in tourism management appear in several community groups.

Interviews show that about 25% of residents feel that they are not fairly involved in the decision-making process.

Challenges and Opportunities

The process of commodification often clashes with cultural preservation efforts. Rural communities face pressure to present their culture in accordance with market expectations, which sometimes contradicts their original values. Modern travelers tend to seek authentic experiences but with comforts that conform to global standards. This forces local communities to adopt innovations that may not be in line with their traditions. Supporting infrastructure such as roads, accommodation facilities, and sanitation systems in the village are still inadequate to accommodate the increasing number of tourists. The increase in tourism activities poses challenges in disruption digital era (see Figure 4 and 5).



Figure 4: Digital Promotion of Tourism

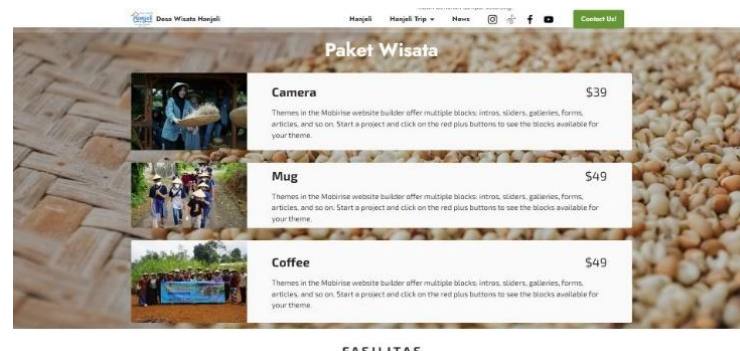


Figure 5: Unfinished Promotional Website

With proper management, cultural commodification can continue to increase people's income and create new business opportunities. Waluran Mandiri Village has a great opportunity to utilize digital platforms to reach international tourists. The unique diversity of local cultures is a selling point that is difficult to find anywhere else. The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) provides an opportunity to maintain a balance between economic development and cultural preservation. The active participation of the community in tourism management ensures that they remain the main owners of local culture. Villages can develop new attractions such as educational tourism or ecotourism that combines cultural experiences with respect for nature. Through careful management and collaboration between parties, Waluran

Mandiri Village can harness the great potential of cultural commodification to achieve economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

Discussion

Cultural Commodification Process

Cultural commodification has become a rapidly growing phenomenon in the tourism industry, especially in the era of global disruption. Waluran Mandiri Village is one of the real examples of how local culture, such as hanjeli, is adapted into a tourist attraction. This process includes packaging hanjeli into products such as snacks, crafts, and educational materials. In addition, traditions such as traditional dances and rituals are adapted to become accessible attractions for tourists, which often presents the phenomenon *of staged authenticity* as described by MacCannell (1976).

However, the digital age has brought major changes to the way this culture is commodified. Recent research by Gretzel et al. (2021) highlights that digitization not only improves information accessibility, but also accelerates the process of cultural homogenization, which threatens the authenticity of local cultures. In Waluran Mandiri Village, social media has played a key role in promoting local culture, increasing tourist visits by up to 30%. Digital platforms are used to create cultural narratives that appeal to international tourists, but they also create pressure for local communities to meet global market expectations.

The Impact of Cultural Commodification

The impact of cultural commodification can be categorized into positive and negative impacts, both of which are significant to the sustainability of local communities. Cultural commodification has increased the income of the people of Waluran Mandiri Village by up to 40%, especially from the sale of hanjeli-based products and services such as tour guides. This data is in line with research by Richards (2022), which confirms that culture-based tourism is able to have a substantial economic impact on local communities, especially if supported by digital marketing strategies. The process of commodification also encourages the revitalization of a culture that is on the verge of extinction. Many young generations in Waluran Mandiri Village are now learning about the customs of their ancestors. A study by Cohen (2019) found that tourism can be a tool for cultural preservation if local communities are actively involved in its management. Collaboration to organize cultural festivals, improve public facilities, and promote local culture through digital media has strengthened relations between residents. The research of Gretzel et al. (2021) also shows that culture-based tourism can increase community awareness of the importance of preserving local culture.

The commercialization of traditional culture often leads to the loss of the original meaning of cultural elements. Traditional dances that were once sacred are now only considered entertainment, as highlighted in Greenwood's (2018) research on the effects of cultural distortion due to commodification. Dependence on the tourism sector creates a high risk for the people of Waluran Mandiri Village, especially if external factors such as the pandemic occur. Research by Sharpley (2020) shows that the COVID-19 pandemic shows the economic vulnerability of people who are too

dependent on tourism. Cultural commodification also creates conflicts in society, especially related to the distribution of profits from tourism activities. Around 25% of the people of Waluran Mandiri Village feel uninvolved in decision-making, as revealed in a local survey. These conflicts often arise due to a lack of justice in the distribution of tourism revenues, as highlighted by Tolkach and King (2019) in the context of community-based tourism

Challenges and Opportunities

Cultural commodification presents challenges as well as opportunities for local communities. Cultural adjustments to meet market expectations often clash with efforts to preserve original values. Research by Richards (2022) shows that tourists' needs for authentic experiences are often not in line with local cultural values. Waluran Mandiri Village still faces limitations in road access, accommodation facilities, and sanitation systems. This hampers the village's potential in attracting international tourists who need more comfort. The digital era provides a great opportunity for Waluran Mandiri Village to promote its culture globally. By utilizing social media platforms, the village can reach international tourists looking for a unique experience. The development of hanjeli-based ecotourism and educational tourism can be a new attraction. Research by Gretzel et al. (2021) suggests that diversification of tourism products is an effective strategy to extend the duration of tourist visits.

Implications and Recommendations

This research provides several important implications, namely that education and training for village communities are needed to ensure that they have adequate capacity in managing tourism potential. The government needs to support the development of infrastructure that is not only environmentally friendly but also supports the economic sustainability of local communities. Digital technology must be used to promote local culture without sacrificing cultural values. Governments, communities, and the private sector need to work together to create strategies that integrate cultural preservation with economic benefits.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of cultural commodification in Waluran Mandiri Village has shown how local culture can become a significant economic asset through proper adaptation and packaging. This commodification has a positive impact on improving people's welfare and cultural preservation, although it also brings challenges such as distortion of cultural values and internal conflicts. Waluran Mandiri Village has a great opportunity to develop as a culture-based tourist destination by utilizing digital technology and a sustainable approach.

Local governments and tourism managers need to work together to ensure that the preservation of local culture remains a priority, for example by documenting indigenous traditions and educating tourists. Improvements to public facilities such as roads, sanitation, and accommodation must be carried out to support an increase in the number of tourists without damaging the environment. Communities and

governments need to integrate sustainability principles in all aspects of tourism management to maintain a balance between economic, social, and environmental. Training and education for local communities on good tourism management and digital promotion will help them maximize the benefits of the tourism sector. Developing new types of tourism such as educational tourism, ecotourism, and agrotourism to provide a variety of attractions for tourists and extend their visit to the village.

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