

Tourists' Perceptions towards Cultural Tourism Development in Kraton, Yogyakarta

Azila Azmi, Nor Shuhada Ngadi, Anderson Ngelambong

Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

Received: February 26, 2015

Accepted: April 30, 2015

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism in the world. In Southeast Asia, Yogyakarta is second most important destination after Bali and also recognized as cultural tourism destination. One of the most visited places in Yogyakarta is Kraton or refers as Sultan's Palace. This study focused on tourists' perceptions towards cultural tourism development in Kraton. The result reveals 2 main themes of tourists' perceptions, which are important of guiding the tourists and interpretation at the destination. Thus, suggestions for improvement of Kraton are discussed in the study.

KEYWORDS: Kraton, Cultural Tourism, Tour Guiding, Tourism Interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

In Southeast Asia, tourism industry is fiercely competitive between Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia. Until 2013, Indonesia had received about 8.8 billion of tourist arrivals [1]. In Indonesia, Bali is recognized as the first major tourist destination and Yogyakarta becomes the second most important destination. This is due to attractions of Prambanan and Borobudur Temple that are located in Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta is the center of Mataram Kingdom. The first king, Sultan Hamengku Buwono I began the building of Kraton Yogyakarta which was to occupy the extensive 140-hectare site [2]. Kraton is a Sultan's palace, and it is a residence complex of the reigning king of Yogyakarta Sultanate [3]. It is also used as meeting place between the Sultan of Yogyakarta and the people which known as Manunggaling Kuwulo Gusti [4].

Due the uniqueness of the culture and heritage in Kraton, it becomes the second important destination in Indonesia to be visited by tourists from all over the world. Yogyakarta is a popular tourist destination that located in the center of the island of Java. The international tourists also know Yogyakarta as a heart of Javanese culture and traditions. As previously mentioned, Yogyakarta is the second most important tourist destination after Bali. With the unique architectures, urban designs, heritage and historic public spaces, it is the perfect example that reflect the Javanese culture in the Javanese city. In terms of historic public spaces, Kraton is recognized to be the heart of cultural traditions and until today, it remains as the residences of the present Sultan of Yogyakarta. The main purpose of the study is to gain better understanding about the tourists' perceptions towards cultural development in Kraton. How the tourists' reviews Kraton after their post-visit, either positively or negatively. Through this, it enables the researcher to determine the perceptions and create better understanding about the tourists' preferences, instead of only focusing on the development of cultural tourism in Kraton.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural Tourism

Tourism provides a symbiotic relationship between economic success and cultural survival in a sustainability activity. According to [5] stated that cultural tourism related to 4 main points including the use of assets of cultural heritage, tourism, consumption of experiences and products and also tourists. Meanwhile, in [6] quoted Dictionary of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Terms that cultural tourism defined as a general term referring to leisure travel motivated by one or more aspects of the culture of a particular area. In addition, in [7] defined cultural tourism as a style of special interest tourism based on the search for participation in new and deep cultural experiences, whether aesthetic intellectual, emotional or psychological. For centuries, visitors embarked on excursions around the world that explore ancients and current cultures. Apart from that, they also explore about the craft, cuisine, architecture, literature, arts, customs, as well as traditions. For instance, India has been considered to be a land with rich cultural heritage. The people of the country who represent a wide range of culture, religions, customs and languages represent the attracting unity. The mysterious among them cannot be done solved in words, but can surely be understand with experience [8].

Kraton as Cultural Tourist Attraction

Yogyakarta has been introduced by the Indonesia government as the cultural heart of Java, and a suitable destination to lure both international and domestic markets [9]. Moreover, Yogyakarta is located in one of the greatest productive agricultural regions on land, with countryside population density is the highest in the world [10] and a middle-sized city with almost half million of population [11]. As mentioned before, Yogyakarta is a second largest tourist destination after Bali and generally, cultural tourism attractions are located surrounding Kraton. Due to this reason, the central government made efforts to develop the city's

Corresponding Author: Azila Azmi, Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia,
E-mail: azila.azmi@ppinang.uitm.edu.my

communications and transportation systems, to construct hotels and improving the shopping facilities, to restore historic relics, to establish monuments of the “revolutionary period”, to preserve cultural artifacts and art forms pervaded by a traditional Javanese quality [10]. Yogyakarta symbolizes the different spiritual and ethnic customs that categorized the region over the ages. It represents as a heroic city that fights for freedom and internal union. As a historic and cultural city, it exemplifies the exclusivity of a traditional Javanese community.

Kraton or Sultan’s Palace is a cultural center that refers to the cultural life of Mataram Kingdom (Rahajeng). Kraton is located at the center of the metropolis, which embraces a population of over 30,000 people. The palace was designed and constructed in phases, in the middle of 1756 and 1790 by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I, the founder of Yogyakarta. After Independence, Kraton is known as a center for artistic creation and culture. The Kraton and the surrounding quarter were attractive to tourists for both domestic and international, which includes Bird Market, Water Palace, and homes of batik artists and craftspeople [4]. Additionally, the Kraton area is the most significant tourist attractions in the inner city of Yogyakarta [9]. Kraton was built for the royal family of first rulers of the island of Java. Kraton is the key attraction of Yogyakarta where it is the center of Yogya’s traditional life. Other than palace itself, the performances of gamelan music, the production of batik and the Ramayana ballet and the shadow puppet plays also been promoted as tourist attraction that represent Yoganese cultural assets [12].

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted qualitative approach whereby content analysis was used to analyse the data. Researchers used TripAdvisor as a medium to accumulate the information. TripAdvisor is a travel site offering reviews of travel-associated substance. It also provides interactive travel forums known as TripAdvisor forums. The tourists’ reviews after their post-visit to Kraton were analysed in order to interpret their perceptions and identify the theme for the study. The total numbers of respondents are 61. The researcher only selected 25 respondents as the responses reached saturation points where the respondents keep repeating the similar information and nothing new information collected based on the study. In addition, researcher review related journals, books, articles and dissertation to provide an insight view on the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Important of Guiding the Tourists

As a status of Javanese cultural city, Yogyakarta received tourists from around the worlds every year especially in Kraton that represent real Javanese history. Due to this, guiding becomes an important issue among the tourists where the respondents have different perceptions towards this. Some of the respondents are satisfied with the guiding services provided in Kraton due to the guides are well-trained and most respondents cited the guides as follow:

“A palace guide is inclusive with the entrance ticket. Although most of the guides are old, they took us around the palace giving us good explanation.”

(Respondent 1)

“We had an excellent guide, a lovely lady who spoke good English and provided a very interesting commentary of the history of the place.”

(Respondent 18)

“The tour guide explained everything that we saw. To our surprise, they provided tour guides with many languages.”

(Respondent 57)

Tour guides are becoming interpreters. Some of them persuade tourists to smell, listen, see, taste and feel the other culture. They are also not “translators” of the cultures [13], but mediators that allow tourists to experience the other culture [10]. Other than that, in [14] points out by giving good explanations the guide can influence the visitor’s impressions and attitude. At the same time, it boosts their appreciation and understanding of their surroundings.

In contrast, there are several respondents not satisfied with the guiding services provided in Kraton. The respondents expressed that they cannot earn trust from some of the guides where they demand for extra fees at the end of their service. According to the respondents, some of them are accidently misleading the tours to earn more money from tourists. For instance, when visiting the batik shops near the Kraton. Some of their comments are:

“Just beware of the shifty guides who promise they do not charge a fee, then immediately demand a fee as soon as they finish the tour.”

(Respondent 6)

“After we left the batik shop, the guide pointed us to direction of the other entrance and kept demanding us for money before we left.”

(Respondent 26)

“As we went to the wrong place, the “guide” just misleading us for only to get money from his little work.”

(Respondent 49)

“Don’t get fooled by the random guides trying to lure tourists. Always get the official guide. It always better if you can go with a local friend to avoid getting tricked.”

(Respondent 56)

In this case, in [15] points out that in order to receive commissions, some of the guides are even engaged in tricking the tourists by taking them to specific souvenirs shop. A number of guides are much more business-oriented and only interesting in promoting knowledge, status, ideology, contacts, access, authenticity and selling themselves through prostitution [11].

Interpretation at the Destination

The responses show that most respondents were not really satisfied with the explanation and translation on the signs that provided in Kraton. There is no English translation on the display signs where the management only provides “Bahasa Indonesia”. Thus, it affects the tourists’ intention to understand the display items and most of them are rely on their guides. Most of them said that:

“Getting the tickets took a while and once inside I realized not a single thing is described in English.”

(Respondent 11)

“There is no English signage which makes the visit pretty meaningless.”

(Respondent 20)

“There are hardly any English explanations beside the displays. It was really hard to understand what was it is all about.”

(Respondent 39)

“English language interpretation can help the tourists to understand the place more. Currently, the tourists have to rely on the guide to explain to them.”

(Respondent 62)

In cultural tourism, it requires high quality of translations as to guarantee an effective and clear communication between culture and tourists. Disappointingly, the quality of texts usually not attained due to the mistakes and blurred information, lack of information and mistakes in spelling [16]. Additionally, in [17] stress on the purpose of English translation which is to give opportunity to tourists to read, understand and obtain information of culture through their mother tongue. Due to the rapid growth of international tourism, there is an increasing need for multilingual interpretation that addresses the needs of foreign tourists [18].

Apart from that, it is important to record there are respondents who disappointed due to lack of information provided in Kraton. There is not much information that explains about the Kraton, which at the end leading to confusion and missing of information. The respondent mooted as follow:

“Very little information is available to you once your inside, leading to a lot of confusion over whether you actually within the site or missing something else. It is very underwhelming especially compare to other sites near Yogyakarta like Borobudur.”

(Respondent 12)

Interpretive signs offer advantages in communicating with visitors since they may offer more in-depth information about the cultural sites. They are on duty 24 hours a day and 7 days a week [19]. Cultural destinations are usually diverse and complex. Cultural tourists can easily misunderstand ignore or not even notice the cultural aspects if there is no proper interpretation to help them [20]. At the end, they rely on travel information guides or friendly locals to help in interpreting the cultural elements. Other than that, by using other interpretation media such as activities and events, publications, video and audio other than signs may enhance understanding and excitement by appealing to different levels of experience and knowledge of the tourists [21].

CONCLUSION

The development of cultural tourism in Yogyakarta should be improved in order to enhance the quality of tourism industry. By doing this, it can sustain and protect the existing culture and buildings. At the same time, it may increase the number of tourist arrivals. In term of guiding, the tour guide services seem very important at Yogyakarta, specifically in Kraton. It needs improvement in many aspects including the quality of services, level of knowledge and personality or character of the tour guides. This is where most of the tourists facing the problems in understanding and adapting the information provided by the guides. Proper training and courses should be implementing to each guides to improve their skills and knowledge before they serve as a guide. Other than that, by improving the guiding service system, it may also help in managing the tourists when visiting to Kraton. Meanwhile, the development of digital guides was started in the 1990s and the new technology introduced was more flexible than the traditional interpretation [22]. Digital picture frames may be used indoor for showing images, especially for historical photos in order to enhance tourists’ understanding [23]. Mixture of audio-visual presentation will attract more visitors and they tend to absorb more information rather than reading the text only. Other than that, in [24] added that non-personal media available as interpretive

program such as self-guided audio tours and modern technological devices which including computer-based interpretation and electronic media. Through individual audio tours, tourists can re-listen and develop their own progress about the information.

Apart from that, in the context of interpretation, by providing clear information about the destination may enhance the tourists' understanding, and as well as their appreciation towards the local culture. Brochures are the best medium for interpretation due to its mobility and cost effective way of communicating to the tourists. Brochures printed in other languages such as English will help to cater for groups or individuals who do not speak Bahasa Indonesia. The management also must take into consideration about the signage system in Kraton. Proper signage will help the tourists to explore the palace by themselves without relying with the tour guides to explain and giving directions. Interpretive signs are important tools that will provide information to the tourists at display areas [18]. Placards at historical or cultural site may provide in-depth information about the display items and allowing the tourists to get an overall view of that place. In addition, planning of interpretation should be based on several principles; including safety of tourists and employees. The selected interpretive media must maximize the tourists' experience and should not harm the natural and cultural environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank Mr Zairi Ismael Rizman for his guidance and assistance in getting this paper published.

REFERENCES

1. Statistics Indonesia, 2015. Number of foreign visitor arrivals to Indonesia by country of residence, 2002-2013. Retrieved from <http://www.bps.go.id/linkTabelStatis/view/id/1388>.
2. Ernawati, J., 2012. People's Impressions of a Tourist-Historic District. In Proceedings of the 2010 International Conference on Architectural Research, pp: 143-151.
3. Widiyastuti, D., 2012. Memorable Square: Identities, Meanings and the Productions of Urban Space in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In the Proceedings of the 2012 17th International Conference on Urban Planning, Regional Development and Information Society, pp: 1291-1300.
4. Nuryanti, W., 1999. Yogyakarta Case Study: The Role of Tourism in Adaptive Re-Use and Development of Historic Public Spaces. In the Proceedings of the 1999 Economics of Heritage: UNESCO Conference on the Adaptive Re-use of Historic Properties in Asia and the Pacific, 9: 17.
5. B. McKercher and Hilary D. Cros, 2002. Cultural tourism: The partnership between tourism and cultural heritage management. Haworth Hospitality Press.
6. Cosma, S., C. Pop and A. Negrusa, 2008. Tourists' Perception Regarding Cluj-Napoca as a Cultural Tourist Destination. In Proceedings of the 2008 WSEAS International Conference on Cultural Heritage and Tourism, pp: 66-70.
7. Stebbins, R.A., 1996. Cultural Tourism as Serious Leisure. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23 (4): 948-950.
8. R. Chawla, 2004. *Tourism and development series: Cultural tourism and development*. Sonali Publications.
9. H. Dahles, 2013. *Tourism, heritage and national culture in Java: Dilemmas of a local community*. Routledge.
10. Dahles, H., 2002. The Politics of Tour Guiding: Image Management in Indonesia. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (3): 783-800.
11. Salazar, N.B., 2005. Tourism and Glocalization: "Local" Tour Guiding. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32 (3): 628-646.
12. Hughes-Freeland, F., 1993. Packaging dreams: Javanese perceptions of tourism and performances. In: *Tourism in South-East Asia* (eds M. Hitchcock, V. King and M. Parnwell) pp. 138-154. Routledge, London.
13. J. Urry, 1990. *The tourist gaze: Leisure and travel in contemporary societies*. Sage Publications.
14. Gurung, G., D. Simmons, P. Devlin, R. Butler and T. Hinch, 1996. The evolving role of tourist guides: The Nepali experience. In: *Tourism and Indigenous Peoples* (eds R. Butler and T. Hinch) pp. 107-128. International Thomson Business Press, London.
15. Bras, C.H., 2000. *Image-building and guiding on Lombok: The social construction of a tourist destination*, Phd thesis, Tilburg University.
16. Muñoz, I.D., 2012. Analysing Common Mistakes in Translations of Tourist Texts (Spanish, English and German). *Onomázein*, 26 (2): 335-349.
17. Cui, S., 2012. Research on Tourism English Translation Based on Cultural Difference. In the Proceedings of the 2012 International Conference on Future Information Technology and Management Science & Engineering, pp: 3017-311.
18. Timothy, D.J., 1997. Tourism and the Personal Heritage Experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24 (3): 751-754.

19. Stone, C. and N.L. Vaugeois, 2007. Welcome! A manual to enhance community signage and visitor experience. Retrieved from http://ruraltourismmarketing.com/Community_signage_new.pdf.
20. Ooi, C.-S., 2001. Decoding and Manufacturing Cultures: Interpreting Singapore for Tourists. *CAUCE: Revista de Filología y su Didáctica*, 24: 617-635.
21. Heritage Council of New South Wales, 2005. Heritage information series: Heritage interpretation policy. Retrieved from <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritagebranch/heritage/interpretationpolicy.pdf>.
22. Bohlin, M. and D. Brandt, 2014. Creating Tourist Experiences by Interpreting Places Using Digital Guides. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 9 (1): 1-17.
23. Graeve, G., F. Surtherland and K. Dodds, 2008. An interpretation plan for the Catlins tourism area of Southland & South Otago, New Zealand. Retrieved from <http://www.catlins.org.nz/userfiles/file/pdf-downloads/Interpretation%20Plan%20for%20the%20Catlins.pdf>.
24. Timothy J. Dallen, 2011. *Cultural heritage and tourism: An introduction*. Channel Views Publications.