

Preserving Siak Cultural Heritage Through Interior and Furniture Design as Reinforcement Identity for Indonesian Tourism

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ABSTRACT

It is crucial to develop and reinforce the local tourism destination identity that support the competitive benefit and the sustainability of Indonesian tourism. By preserving local cultural heritage as unique design inspirations, it is potentially supporting the additional values of local tourism identity. This research explains that the unique design plays a role in strengthening the identity of local tourism area through local folklore exploration as part of design development process. In developing creative outcomes and delivering positive benefits, iterative design development processes become a robust aspect. The method used in this research is by gathering various literature data review of unique local culture and folklore, field work survey and observation, case study, iterative design, including prototyping process. The result of this research is the new understanding of interior and furniture design inspired by a case study of local folklore in Siak Regency, Riau Province that potentially reinforce the local identity of tourism destination area. The research presents the local folklore design as inspiration that are benefit for product's competitiveness, community welfare, local cultural preservation that support Indonesian tourism.

Keywords: *Indonesian tourism identity, Siak folklore preservation*

1. INTRODUCTION

The competitive benefit and sustainability of the Indonesian tourism sector need to be supported, among others, by developing and strengthening the local characteristics of the tourist destinations. In this case, the development of world tourism also influences the Indonesian tourism development. As one of the major countries that has diverse natural tourist destinations, Indonesia is one of the world's favourite that has the potential to attract native tourists. Along with the increasing contribution of the tourism sector in Indonesia, there is also an increasing tourist's need with their supporting facilities such as accommodation, restaurants/cafe, retail shops, and other public facilities. As a complement to such facilities and other public facilities, a well-planned interior design is crucial so that tourists can comfortably carry out activities in the room along with their activities and room functions. Interior design also includes furniture design and interior accessories design that are integrated with local culture and wisdom to create typical local atmosphere in the room that could enhance emotional expectation in increasing memorable experience. The memorable experience is expected to

strengthen local identity and become a competitive benefit for Indonesian tourism.

This study located in Siak regency, Riau Province. In Indonesia, Siak regency is one of the tourist destinations that potential to become cultural heritage tourism. Siak is rich of many attractive tourism destination in many area, such as natural view, Malay culture, Halal tourism/Muslim Friendly Tourism (MFT), religious buildings, arts, crafts and culinary. The diversity of tourism has made Siak as a promising regency in improving the welfare of local communities, and the development of creative economies and creative industries. In this study, cultural heritage related to heritage buildings which have valuable local values and local folklores that have local insights. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), cultural heritage could be intangible (local custom and way of life), tangible (buildings and surrounding), and covers entire earth-friendly environment. For all human beings, the diversity of cultural heritage in the world is an irreplaceable source of spiritual and intellectual well-being so that its protection is considered important for the development of humanity [1]. Some cultural heritage buildings in Siak such as Siak Palace, Madrasatun Nisa, and Balai Kerapatan have valuable interior design, furniture and interior accessories design. Siak Palace is the residence of

the Sultan of Siak, Sultan Syarif Kasim II, who was crowned as Sultan in 1915. In 1946 the Sultan handed over the palace to the Indonesian government along with almost all the wealth of the Sultanate of Siak Sri Inderapura, including the crown of the King [2].

Siak also has a variety of folklore, however, the legendary folklore has not been further explored to be an added value as the inspiration for interior design, furniture and interior accessories design. Through the profound meaning of folklores implementation, it would potentially strengthen the local culture identity and has a positive impact on local communities, tourists and the sustainable tourism development in Indonesia. In this study, the interior design sub-sector becomes an important role in preserving and reviving local culture by integrating the local wisdom folklore exploration into the interior atmosphere that enhance the memorable experience of indoor spaces.

This study explains that the unique design plays a great role in strengthening the identity of local tourism area through local folklores exploration as part of design development process. In developing creative outcomes and delivering positive advantages, iterative design development processes become a significant aspect that potentially supporting the atmosphere of local culture uniqueness in a space. Through creative talents, local cultural heritage and economic aspects, this study also expected that a strong local identity is potential to enrich the attractiveness of the tourism sector, improving society welfare and the sustainability of the creative industry sector in Indonesia.

By applying the values of local folklores, the development process of interior design and furniture has been carried out during the collaborative activities with skilled local craftsmen, local communities, UMKM and local Government. Through several stages, the study identified challenges in problems mapping, ideas developing, including prototyping process, delivered solutions, and provided potential aspects in Siak. The overall process is conducted to search for the essence of the unique culture and local wisdom in Siak, especially the exploration of Siak's folklores. Products that are implemented the exploration of folklore are developed in the context of dining room and bedroom furniture in a community-based homestay mock-up room. It is expected that the results of the collaboration would potentially affect the preservation of sustainable local culture, be replicated by local communities to improve the welfare of local society, support unique tourism experience and add the local culture values and contribute a competitive benefit to tourism in Siak.

2. METHOD

The method used in this preliminary study is by collecting data from various literature data review of unique local culture and folklore, fieldwork survey and observation, iterative design, collaborative production process with local communities and UMKM (Micro Small Medium Enterprises) including prototyping process and in exhibition participation as a pre-evaluative assessment. The literature study is the beginning of identifying the

problems and local potentials mapping. The study took place in Siak Regency, Riau Province. As the part of the process of the problem and local potential mapping, a direct survey to the field was conducted in Siak Palace area, one of the tourist destinations in Riau province. It was also conducted to several wooden, rattan and weaving craftspeople in order to find the local potential artisans in Siak. To produce optimal creative work that related to folklore implementation in design development process for final design concept, the survey also searched for the future potential to collaborate with UMKM. For an optimal result in revealing the uniqueness of the local culture especially the meaningful insights of Siak's folklore narratives, an iterative exploration step in design development process with series of discussions were conducted at a collaborative work that engaged artisans/craftspeople, UMKM, academics, and local governments. Finally, an exhibition was held to evaluate the public response for further design development in the future.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Interior Design and Tourism Opportunity

The increasing strength of world tourism development has resulted in special attention to the quality of tourism sector from governments in many countries. Along with the increasing interest of tourists in visiting various places in many countries, such as for business purposes, visit the wonders and the beauty of the world, the tourism sector has become one of the world sectors that contribute significantly to the economy of a country. With a contribution of 9.9% of total employment in the world and 10.4% of the world's Gross Domestic Product, tourism has been able to generate jobs and arouse exports [3]. As one of the world's tourist destinations, Indonesia has also potentially enlarged the world's community in visiting Indonesia. By meeting the needs of visitors and tourists for accommodation and public commercial facilities, visitors are expected to get memorable experiences. A memorable experience for visitors is crucial in developing and creating added value and competitive benefit [4]. According to the level of attraction experience, the values would be impressed by customers during and after the experience occurred [4]. Designers, then, can play a role in providing guidance that can influence customers' perception and behaviour in the creation of a specific experience. Moreover, interior design could strengthen the identity of tourist accommodation facilities, such as bedroom, living room, and other tourist facilities by creating a unique design with a touch of local culture ambiance to support the memorable experience for tourists. Along with the increasingly educated tourists, there is also a growing interest of new tourists that have an impact on the development of quality tourism experiences that influence on world tourism. However, the implementation of quality experience is a challenge because it is related to meeting the tourist's needs. The experience in tours (tourism experiences) is an emotional experience and learning that recorded as a mental footprint [4]. Thus, the development of the tourism sector also has

an important impact on the cultural, social and economic aspects of a country that could be reinforced by increasing the added value and competitive benefit of the tourist facilities through interior design unique ambience.

3.2. Interior Design and Tourism Identity

Kotler states that cities have to compete with each other to be an attraction for tourist destinations, places that are rich in culture and others [5]. Additionally, there are three ways to promote the cities: restoration, cultural mega events, and promoting heritage and the landmark buildings construction [6, 7]. City branding, then must be focus on the integration of culture and history, infrastructure, architecture, landscape, environment, economic growth and social development into identities that can be promoted and accepted by everyone [8]. There are three main based aspects for the city branding: picture, unique characteristic, and originality. As branding created to support marketing and promotion strategies that identical to the products, Kotler states that, “places are products whose identities and values must be designed and marketed’ as products [9]. However, to meet the needs of tourists, there is a need for a unique local identity as added value and competitive benefit for the tourist destinations. Identity, then, contribute significant role in reinforcing the city branding, including tourist destinations to support the Indonesian tourism development.

Identity refers to distinction which consists of pictures and remembrance of various city aspects that noticeable at first glance, easy to remember as memorable experience, such as public spaces, monumental buildings, and other special characteristics [10]. Identity is “the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places” [10]. Furthermore, the identity also related to natural, social, people, and other human factors [11]. For this study, the distinction also includes interior, furniture, and interior accessories that are located inside the monumental buildings in public areas. Therefore, in this study, furniture, and interior accessories are also potentially enhanced the local identity by implementing elements of local culture including local folklore in the design development process. Interior and furniture design, then have the potential contribution in preserving the local cultural heritage, consequently increasing added values and product competitiveness that affect the welfare of local community.

3.3. Preservation of Local Cultural Heritage

As part of the integration between tourism standard facilities and the design concept, the interior and furniture design, has the opportunity to be developed into series of design that strengthened the identity of local cultures. According to Partners and Tourism Strategies, there are several strategies to support the success of cultural heritage tourism: 1) Collaborate: working together with all stakeholders. 2) Find the fit: meet the needs of residents and visitors so cultural heritage tourist could benefits everyone. 3) Focus on quality and authenticity: the importance of storytelling of an area or objects that potentially add value and attract visitors/tourists. 4) Preserve and protect: the historical, cultural and natural resources of a community are very valuable and frequently

incapable to be replaced [12]. Preservation of tradition is important to be able to tell stories of people who have settled in the area. Furthermore, the cultural heritage preservation could reinforce the interconnection among tourists, local community, local government, business, UMKM, and might retain local artisans and local artifacts in urban area as a unique local identity that support the activities of sustainability environment, tourism development, and creative economy development in Indonesia [1].

Related to the importance of preserving tradition by telling local stories, folklore is one of the inheritances of culture and local wisdom, which can be used as a unique inspired narration in interior, furniture and interior accessories design implementation. The application of folklore theme can be integrated into design plan, such as furniture, colours, floor patterns, walls, ceilings, and in other interior accessories design and details that can strengthen the atmosphere of a distinctive local ambience space. The implementation of local folklore is expected to increase the emotional experience and deliver special memories for visitors. The implementation is also expected to create intimacy with the surrounding environment that potential to stimulate and trigger the imagination, perception and desire to have an interactive experience to society. In addition, a creative work that have functions and solutions, is also needed to encourage emotions so that can be preserved and passed on to the next generation [13]. Thus, people’s perception would enhance the interior design concept in supporting memorable experience for tourists.

In this study, the creative potential design was integrated by involving several creative economic sub-sectors, including architecture, interior design, product design, fashion, crafts, and performing arts. Interior design plays a role in applying elements of local culture to support a room that has a unique local ambience. By applying interior elements which come from local folklore inspiration, will be experienced by the tourists or visitors once entering the rooms.



Figure 1 Akosiak Bedroom set of furnishings (doc: IKKON Siak 2018)

The aimed of the interior design plan, is also to preserve the local cultural values and local wisdom, that contained in folklores meaning, while also providing added value and contributing to preserve the environment and the sustainability of UMKM (micro, small and medium enterprises) in the creative sector and tourism sector development in Indonesia. Additionally, elements of interior design that could encourage the active interaction of the community and the environment through perception were included in spatial layout, furniture, components, materials, color, ornaments, modeling,

lighting and interface features [14]. Perception is the basis of the relationship between humans and space. Perception is a process that is based on feelings that support people to express and understand the environment [15]. Furthermore, humane space that meet customer needs and gain customer's recognition can be generated through the application of perception into the interior design. This is an intangible power associated with the sustainability and development of and generated economic and social benefits to hotels [15].

3.4. Local Wisdom Elements Implementation

Design is one of the cores of creative industries which is considered capable in driving other industries that relate to the creative economy development [16]. In addition, interior design is also an activity that provides solutions to problems of function and interior quality. In design process implementation, an interior design can contribute significantly to cultural, social, economic and environmental fields. By exploring the local wisdom, including local workers, UMKM and women empowerment using environmentally friendly materials, interior design potentially increases the added value and competitive benefit of creative products that benefit their sustainability in future. This study explores several local folklores in Siak, illustrated a strong identity that is meaningful for design inspirations. The example of inspirations is including the authentic Malay culture with Islamic spirituality and the existence of Siak Palace as an iconic architectural heritage and place where the safe-cabinet is located and the use of river as one of important ways for public transportation. The design inspirations are important aspects in design that can provide a memorable local uniqueness experiences for visitors and tourists and potential in strengthen the identity for local tourism. Therefore, a focus story for this study is about the Sultan of Siak who threw the key of a safe-cabinet into the river and never be found until today. The unique essence of the story is implemented in interior design, including a set of dining table and chairs for local home and a stage design for traditional dance performance.

The folklore exploration in furniture design and interior accessories are implemented based on the strength of local folklore related to rivers, sultanates and Malay nuances. In this study, the furniture design is inspired by the form of furniture inside the Siak Palace and combining "the palace style" with the peculiar shape of the winding and undulating river. The typical form of the river is applied to the armrests and backrests. While the colors of the seat cover and dining table cover use fabrics with distinctive Malay colors that contain elements of red, yellow and green.



Figure 2 Akosiak Royal dining set of furniture and table runner (doc: IKKON Siak 2018)

As for the dance performance stage, applying the sails' shapes that illustrate the Sultan's ship (Kato Ship) while sailing down the river. This form is applied as a stage decoration especially as a background for dance performances. To strengthen the nuances of Malay and the application of comprehensive folklore, Malay elements also applied in overall dance performance, such as dance themes, dance clothing designs and stage lighting colors. Thus, the exploration of local folklore can be applied to daily life as well as commercial ones with the support of several creative industries sub-sectors including interior design, product design, fashion and music. It is expected that the exploration of folklore becomes part of the direct contact with visitors or tourists, therefore it can become a competitive benefit and further strengthen the local tourism identity.

The production of interior design, furniture and interior accessories mentioned above are carried out through a collaborative process with local craftsmen, communities and UMKM due to the limited skills of local workers. The collaboration is expected to support the preservation of local culture, improve community welfare, and deliver added-value as a competitive benefit for the sustainability of the business in the future. Interior design also produces creative works by exploring the specific identity of local wisdom from renewable materials and utilizing recycled materials accompanied by the absorption of local skilled workers. It can be said that the interior design sub-sector has important contributions and opportunities to the economic, social, cultural and environmental fields.

4. CONCLUSION

By integrating space, objects and a special atmosphere of a space, interior design also has the potential in creating a memorable experience. Interior design, thus, can strengthen local identity for the development of Indonesian tourism, among others by offering valuable unique experience that resulted in a unique memorable experience.

This study produced recommendations on the study of interior design, including furniture and interior accessories design that implemented the local folklore for unique local tourism experience in Siak regency.

The interior design subsector and nation-global issues, then, can be used as part of exploring creative solutions to the problems faced, beyond multidisciplinary research collaborations. Additionally, the growth and development of local tourism could potentially be encouraged by the interior design subsector through the exploration of local folklores in a space and objects that could promote a memorable experience. The study is also expected to contribute to national tourism development, and have a convincing impact to local heritage preservation, local people's welfare, and environment sustainability. The result of this research is that the new understanding of the significance of storytelling of interior and furniture design is inspired by local folklore in Siak regency that potentially reinforce the local identity of tourism destination area. This study also potential in providing

valuable aspects and strengthen the identity of local tourism that could be replicated to other destination as well. In this case, for UMKM, especially in creative design sectors, has a potential chance as a driving force among other creative subsectors, in terms of fostering multi-disciplinary collaboration. It is expected in the future, that the local wisdom content can be harmonized into interior design and other creative works from UMKM as the part of solutions to national and global issues, and also obtain added values to support competitive benefit for the sustainability design from UMKM in Indonesia.

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