Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Travel Management
Volume 4 No 2, 2026: 44-59
DOI: 10.58229/jthtm.v4i2.504
https://jurnal.integrasisainsmedia.co.id/JTHTM

A Creative Tourism Strategy Based on Local Culture to Create a Memorable Tourism Experience in the Margacinta Tourism Village

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Abstract

Purpose-*This study aims to analyse how creative tourism activities in Margacinta Tourism Village, Pangandaran Regency, contribute to the quality of the tourist experience through the integration of cultural heritage, creative economy, and participatory tourism practices.*
Methodology -*A descriptive qualitative approach was employed using observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Data were collected from key tourism stakeholders, including village tourism managers, MSMEs, cultural arts groups, and tourists. The analysis focused on understanding how participatory creative tourism activities shaped tourists' experiences and supported local community development.*
Findings-*The findings indicate that creative tourism activities—including Badud Cultural Arts performances, Ecoprint Dahon Batik workshops, direct honey-harvesting experiences, Liwet Jolem culinary experiences, and interactive storytelling sessions—significantly enhanced the quality of the tourist experience by encouraging active participation rather than passive consumption. Cultural immersion through traditional performances strengthened perceptions of authenticity, while hands-on workshops enabled the co-creation of memorable tourism experiences. These activities increased tourist satisfaction, reinforced the destination's cultural identity, and generated economic opportunities for local communities through community-based creative tourism packages.*
Research Limitations/Implications-*As a qualitative case study conducted in a single tourism village, the findings are context-specific and may not be directly generalisable to other destinations. Future studies could employ comparative or mixed-method approaches to evaluate the effectiveness of creative tourism across different rural tourism destinations.*
Practical Implications-*The study provides practical insights for destination managers, local governments, and community organisations in designing participatory tourism products that integrate cultural heritage, local creative industries, and community empowerment to enhance destination competitiveness and sustainability.*
Originality - *This study contributes to the creative tourism literature by demonstrating how the integration of cultural arts, local economic activities, and participatory experiences can simultaneously improve tourist experience quality, strengthen destination identity, and support sustainable community-based tourism development in rural destinations.*

Keywords: *creative tourism; tourist experience; community-based tourism; cultural heritage; rural tourism; Pangandaran.*

INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry has experienced a substantial shift from mass tourism to experience-based tourism, in which memorable experiences have become the primary driver of destination competitiveness (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Richards, 2021). Contemporary tourists increasingly seek authentic, immersive, and participatory experiences rather than simply consuming tourism attractions. Consequently, destinations are challenged to design tourism products that actively involve visitors in local culture, traditions, and everyday community life while creating meaningful emotional connections (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012).

Creative tourism has emerged as an important response to this transformation. Richards and Raymond (2000) define creative tourism as tourism that enables visitors to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences that are unique to the destination. Unlike conventional cultural tourism, creative tourism positions tourists as active participants rather than passive observers, allowing them to co-create experiences alongside local communities. This participatory approach not only enriches visitor experiences but also strengthens cultural preservation, community empowerment, and destination sustainability (Richards & Wilson, 2007; Richards, 2021).

Margacinta Tourism Village in Pangandaran Regency possesses considerable potential to implement this approach. The village combines rich Sundanese cultural traditions, community-based creative industries, and local economic activities into tourism experiences, including Badud Cultural Arts performances, Dahon Ecoprint Batik workshops, educational honey-harvesting activities in Kampung Madu, and the traditional culinary experience of Liwet Jolem. These attractions encourage tourists to participate directly in local cultural production and community life, creating opportunities to generate memorable tourism experiences while simultaneously supporting local livelihoods.

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of cultural participation in shaping memorable tourism experiences. Septiana et al. (2023) found that knowledge and local culture were among the strongest dimensions influencing memorable experiences in tourism villages. Likewise, Liyushiana et al. (2025) reported that diversification of cultural attractions strengthened destination competitiveness and community-based tourism sustainability. Furthermore, Denny and Liyushiana (2025) showed that authentic interaction between tourists and local communities significantly enhanced the dimensions of meaningfulness, novelty, and local culture within memorable tourism experiences.

Although these studies confirm the importance of local culture in tourism development, they primarily examine the outcomes of memorable tourism experiences or destination development separately. Limited attention has been given to understanding how multiple creative tourism components—including traditional performing arts, creative industries, educational activities, gastronomy, and community interaction—can be integrated into a coherent strategy for producing memorable tourism experiences in rural tourism destinations. This gap is particularly evident in Margacinta Tourism Village, despite its diverse cultural and creative resources.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze how creative tourism activities rooted in local culture contribute to creating memorable tourism experiences in Margacinta Tourism Village. By examining the integration of cultural arts, creative industries, local gastronomy, and participatory community experiences, this research contributes to the growing literature on creative tourism while providing practical insights for developing sustainable community-based tourism destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creative Tourism

Creative tourism has evolved from conventional cultural tourism by emphasizing active participation rather than passive observation. UNESCO (2006) defines creative tourism as travel that provides authentic and participatory learning experiences rooted in local arts, heritage, and the distinctive character of a destination. This perspective was further developed by Richards and Raymond (2000), who argue that tourists should be directly involved in creative activities that allow them to acquire new skills while interacting with local communities. Accordingly, the "creative turn" in tourism shifts destination development from attraction-oriented products toward collaborative and experience-based tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2007).

Recent studies reinforce this perspective by highlighting creativity as a mechanism for value co-creation between tourists and host communities. Duxbury et al. (2021) argue that creative tourism transforms local culture into participatory experiences that strengthen both destination authenticity and community empowerment. Likewise, Li (2024) suggests that creative tourism enables visitors to develop their creative potential while simultaneously generating social, cultural, and economic value for local communities. Thus, creative tourism extends beyond entertainment by integrating learning, interaction, and cultural exchange into tourism experiences.

Local Culture as Creative Capital

Local culture represents one of the most important forms of creative capital in community-based tourism. Traditional knowledge, performing arts, handicrafts, gastronomy, and local wisdom provide unique resources that set rural destinations apart from standardised tourism products. Previous studies demonstrate that communities capable of transforming local cultural assets into creative tourism experiences tend to achieve higher destination competitiveness while preserving cultural identity (Kikky Vuspitasari et al., 2023; Wahyu Hidayat et al., 2024).

In Margacinta Tourism Village, this creative capital is reflected through both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Nurrohman and Weishaguna (2025) identified diverse cultural resources, including Badud traditional performances, Dahon Ecoprint Batik, kolotok awi handicrafts, traditional Sundanese architecture, and Liwet Jolem gastronomy. Although these resources possess considerable tourism potential, their utilization remains constrained by limited managerial capacity, tourism facilities, and destination promotion. Consequently, transforming these cultural assets into integrated creative tourism experiences becomes an important strategy for strengthening destination competitiveness while maintaining cultural authenticity.

Memorable Tourism Experience

The concept of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) was introduced by Kim et al. (2012), who proposed seven dimensions: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty. These dimensions explain why certain tourism experiences remain positively remembered long after the visit and subsequently influence satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intention. Subsequent studies have consistently confirmed the importance of MTE across different tourism contexts. Lee and Lee (2021) demonstrated that memorable experiences strengthen family cohesion in rural tourism, whereas Huong et al. (2022) found that MTE positively influences revisit intention among domestic tourists. Similarly, Juliana et al. (2022), Chen et al. (2022), and Trinanda et al. (2022) reported that emotional engagement, local culture, and tourists' active participation significantly contribute to memorable experiences and destination attachment. Collectively, these studies indicate that authentic cultural interaction is one of the strongest antecedents of memorable tourism experiences.

Richards (2009) further argues that memorable creative tourism experiences depend not only on the attractions themselves but also on how destinations organize participatory activities. He proposes four principal forms of creative tourism experiences, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Typology of Creative Tourism Experiences

Basic Activity	Type of Experience
Learning	Learning
Workshops	Workshops
Tasting	Tasting
Experiences	Experiences

Source: Richards (2009).

This typology illustrates that creative tourism integrates educational, sensory, experiential, and aesthetic dimensions into a holistic tourism experience. Rather than functioning solely as recreational activities, these experiences facilitate knowledge exchange, cultural appreciation, and collaborative value creation between visitors and local communities.

Conceptual Synthesis

The literature suggests a strong theoretical relationship between creative tourism, local culture, and memorable tourism experiences. Creative tourism provides the mechanism through which local cultural resources are transformed into participatory tourism activities, while local culture serves as the primary source of destination authenticity. Through active engagement in cultural performances, creative workshops, gastronomy, and community interaction, tourists develop memorable experiences characterized by meaningfulness, knowledge acquisition, involvement, and novelty (Kim et al., 2012; Richards & Wilson, 2007). Building on this perspective, the present study examines how integrating Badud Cultural Arts, Dahon Ecoprint Batik, Kampung Madu, and Liwet Jolem as creative tourism products contributes to the creation of memorable tourism experiences in Margacinta Tourism Village. This study extends previous research by analyzing creative tourism as an integrated destination development strategy rather than evaluating individual tourism attractions in isolation.

METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative design to explore how locally rooted creative tourism contributes to the creation of memorable tourism experiences in Margacinta Tourism Village, Pangandaran Regency. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interactions within the natural setting of community-based tourism. Data were collected in 2026 using three complementary techniques: field observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Field observations were conducted during major creative tourism activities, including Badud Cultural Arts performances, Dahon Ecoprint Batik workshops, Kampung Madu honey-harvesting experiences, traditional coconut sugar production, and Liwet Jolem culinary activities. These observations focused on tourists' participation, host–guest interactions, cultural practices, and the delivery of tourism experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using purposive sampling with key stakeholders who were directly involved in tourism development. The participants consisted of Badud performers, Ecoprint Batik artisans, honey producers, traditional culinary practitioners, tourism village managers (*Pokdarwis*), and representatives of the local government. Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' informed consent. The interviews explored perceptions of creative tourism development, community participation, cultural preservation, visitor engagement, economic benefits, and future development

opportunities. To complement the primary data, documentary evidence was collected from tourism promotional materials, village reports, policy documents, photographs, videos, brochures, and official social media content. These materials were used to triangulate findings and provide contextual understanding of tourism activities and destination development.

The data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2021). Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed, along with observation notes and documentary materials, through an iterative coding process. Initial codes were generated inductively and subsequently grouped into broader themes reflecting the principles of creative tourism and the dimensions of memorable tourism experiences. The emerging themes were continuously refined through repeated comparison across different data sources to ensure conceptual coherence and analytical depth.

The trustworthiness of the study was ensured using the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba. Credibility was strengthened through methodological triangulation across interviews, observations, and documentary evidence. Transferability was supported by providing detailed contextual descriptions of Margacinta Tourism Village, while dependability was enhanced through systematic documentation of the research process. Confirmability was maintained by grounding interpretations in empirical evidence obtained directly from participants and multiple data sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The thematic analysis identified that the integration of local cultural heritage, participatory tourism activities, and community-based creative economic initiatives fundamentally drives the development of creative tourism in Margacinta Tourism Village. Rather than functioning as isolated tourism attractions, cultural performances, creative workshops, traditional gastronomy, and nature-based activities collectively form an experiential tourism system that actively involves visitors throughout their journey. The findings indicate that tourists are positioned not merely as consumers of tourism products but as active participants who engage in learning, cultural exchange, and creative production alongside local communities.

Field observations and interviews consistently revealed that the experiential value of tourism in Margacinta Village is generated through direct interaction between tourists and local stakeholders. Community members—including cultural performers, artisans, honey producers, culinary practitioners, and tourism village managers—play an active role in facilitating authentic experiences through storytelling, practical demonstrations, and collaborative activities. This participatory approach strengthens the destination's authenticity while simultaneously creating economic opportunities for residents by developing creative tourism products.

The spatial distribution of these creative tourism resources further demonstrates that the village possesses a diverse portfolio of attractions that support experience-based tourism. As shown in Figure 1, the tourism assets are distributed across different locations within the village, integrating cultural, natural, and creative economic resources into a complementary tourism system. Rather than concentrating tourism activities in a single attraction, this spatial configuration encourages visitors to explore multiple community-based experiences during their visit, thereby enriching the overall tourism experience.

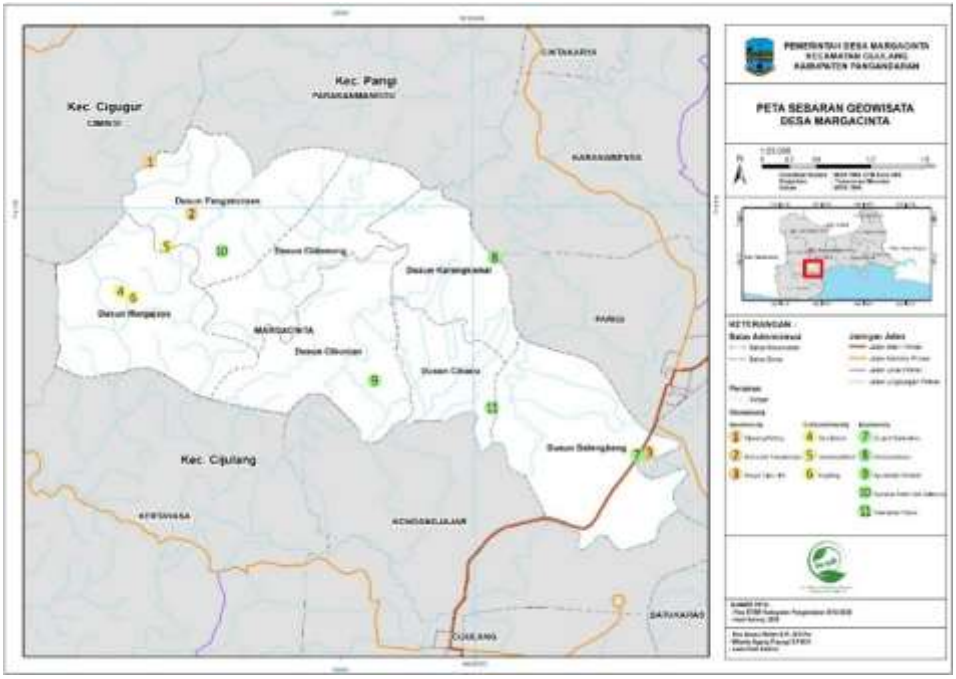


Figure 1. Spatial Distribution of Creative Tourism Attractions in Margacinta Tourism Village
Source: Richards (2009).

Authenticity Through Cultural Participation

The findings demonstrate that authenticity in Margacinta Tourism Village is constructed through active cultural participation rather than passive observation. Cultural authenticity is not presented as a static heritage asset but as a living practice in which tourists are invited to interact directly with local traditions. This participatory approach distinguishes the village from conventional cultural tourism destinations, where visitors generally consume performances without meaningful engagement.

Field observations revealed that three cultural assets—Badud Cultural Arts, Gondang Buhun, and Angklung—constitute the core of the village's creative tourism experiences. These traditional arts are integrated into tourism activities through performances, interactive demonstrations, and storytelling sessions that explain their historical origins and cultural significance. Rather than limiting tourists to the role of spectators, local artists encourage them to participate in traditional dances, play musical instruments, and engage in informal dialogue regarding Sundanese cultural values. As illustrated in Figure 2, these activities transform cultural performances into collaborative experiences that facilitate direct interaction between visitors and the local community.

Interviews with cultural practitioners consistently highlighted that visitor participation creates a deeper appreciation of local heritage than conventional stage performances. One Badud performer explained that involving tourists in the performance allows them to experience the cultural values embodied in the dance rather than simply watching it from a distance. Similarly, tourism village managers observed that visitors who actively participated in traditional performances tended to spend more time interacting with residents and expressed greater curiosity about the history and philosophy of Sundanese culture.

These findings suggest that authenticity arises from social interaction and shared cultural experiences rather than from the mere preservation of traditional performances. This interpretation supports the concept of creative tourism proposed by Richards and Raymond (2000), which emphasizes active participation and experiential learning as fundamental to the experience. Likewise, UNESCO (2006) argues that authentic tourism experiences emerge when

visitors engage directly with local arts, heritage, and community life. The present findings further reinforce Richards and Wilson's (2007) argument that cultural authenticity is co-created through collaboration between visitors and host communities rather than through staged cultural displays.



Figure 2. Cultural Participation through Badud, Gondang Buhun, and Angklung Performances

Beyond enhancing visitor experiences, cultural participation also contributes to the preservation of local heritage. The active involvement of tourists creates incentives for local artists to continue practicing and transmitting traditional knowledge to younger generations while simultaneously generating additional economic opportunities through cultural performances, workshops, and community-based tourism services. Consequently, cultural tourism in Margacinta Village functions not only as a conservation strategy but also as a mechanism for sustaining local livelihoods and strengthening community identity.

From the perspective of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) framework, participatory cultural activities activate several key experiential dimensions identified by Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012). Direct involvement in traditional performances enhances engagement by encouraging active participation, while storytelling sessions strengthen knowledge through cultural learning. The opportunity to interact closely with local artists reinforces the local culture dimension, whereas experiencing traditional performances firsthand provides a strong sense of novelty and meaningfulness. These interconnected dimensions explain why tourists frequently described their cultural encounters as the most memorable aspect of their visit.

Overall, the findings indicate that cultural participation represents the primary foundation of creative tourism development in Margacinta Tourism Village. Rather than treating traditional arts solely as cultural attractions, the village transforms them into participatory learning experiences that simultaneously preserve local heritage, strengthen community engagement, and generate memorable tourism experiences. This finding extends the creative tourism literature by demonstrating that authenticity in rural tourism destinations is not simply inherited from cultural

resources but is continuously produced through collaborative interaction between tourists and local communities.

Co-creation of Tourist Experiences

The findings indicate that the quality of the tourism experience in Margacinta Tourism Village is shaped through a process of co-creation, in which tourists actively collaborate with local communities to produce tourism experiences. Rather than functioning as passive consumers of tourism products, visitors participate directly in creative activities that combine local knowledge, environmental awareness, and cultural interaction. This participatory process creates experiential value that extends beyond the purchase of tourism products, enabling visitors to engage meaningfully with the village's people, traditions, and natural resources.

One of the most distinctive examples of this co-creation process is the Dahon Ecoprint Batik Workshop, where tourists are involved at every stage of production. Local artisans guide visitors in selecting leaves and flowers from the surrounding environment, arranging natural motifs on fabric, applying eco-printing techniques, and observing the colouring and finishing processes. Throughout the workshop, artisans explain the ecological philosophy underlying ecoprint production, emphasizing the sustainable use of natural materials and the cultural significance of environmentally responsible craftsmanship. Consequently, tourists do not simply purchase handicrafts but actively participate in creating products that embody local knowledge and environmental values.

The participatory learning process is also evident in Kampung Madu, where visitors experience honey harvesting alongside local beekeepers. Rather than observing demonstrations from a distance, tourists learn about bee cultivation, interact with local farmers, and participate directly in harvesting activities under professional guidance. This combination of practical learning and interpersonal interaction transforms agricultural activities into meaningful tourism experiences, increasing visitors' appreciation for local livelihoods and environmental conservation.



Figure 3. Co-creation Activities in Margacinta Tourism Village

Interviews with ecoprint artisans and tourism village managers consistently indicated that visitors who actively participated in creative workshops demonstrated stronger emotional attachment to the destination than those who merely purchased finished products. According to one artisan, tourists frequently expressed greater appreciation for local craftsmanship after experiencing the production process firsthand, becoming aware of the creativity, patience, and environmental knowledge required to produce each item. Tourism managers similarly observed that participatory workshops encouraged longer visitor engagement and facilitated informal conversations between tourists and residents, enriching the overall tourism experience.

These findings reinforce the concept of creative tourism proposed by Richards and Raymond (2000), which emphasizes learning and creative participation as essential characteristics of tourism experiences. They also support Richards (2009), who identifies workshops and hands-on activities as central mechanisms through which creative tourism generates experiential value.

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with Duxbury et al. (2021), who argue that creative tourism is fundamentally a collaborative process in which visitors and host communities jointly create cultural value through interaction and shared experiences.

Beyond enhancing visitor engagement, the co-creation process contributes to destination sustainability by integrating environmental education with local creative industries. The use of natural materials in ecoprint production and the educational approach adopted in honey-harvesting activities demonstrate how tourism can simultaneously promote environmental awareness, preserve traditional knowledge, and strengthen local economic activities. Rather than treating sustainability as an abstract concept, Margacinta Tourism Village incorporates environmental values directly into the visitor experience through practical participation.

From the perspective of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) framework, these co-created experiences primarily strengthen the dimensions of involvement, knowledge, novelty, and meaningfulness (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Visitors actively acquire new skills, interact with local experts, and participate in creative production processes that differ substantially from everyday experiences. The emotional satisfaction derived from producing ecoprint batik or harvesting honey independently contributes to the formation of memorable experiences that are likely to remain in visitors' long-term memory.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that co-creation functions as the principal mechanism through which creative tourism generates experiential value in Margacinta Tourism Village. By integrating participatory workshops, environmental learning, and close interaction between tourists and local communities, the village transforms ordinary tourism activities into collaborative experiences that strengthen destination authenticity, enrich visitor learning, and support sustainable tourism development. These findings extend the creative tourism literature by demonstrating that co-creation is not merely a feature of tourism activities but the process through which meaningful and memorable visitor experiences are constructed.

Community Empowerment Through the Creative Economy

The findings demonstrate that creative tourism in Margacinta Tourism Village generates value not only for visitors but also for the local community by empowering creative economic actors. The integration of traditional arts, handicrafts, gastronomy, and nature-based tourism into a unified tourism experience has broadened economic opportunities for residents while strengthening community participation in destination development. Rather than functioning solely as suppliers of tourism products, community members actively design, facilitate, and interpret tourism experiences, thereby becoming key actors in the village's creative tourism ecosystem.

Field observations revealed that the creative tourism value chain involves multiple local stakeholders, including Badud performers, Ecoprint Batik artisans, honey producers, culinary entrepreneurs, and members of the Tourism Awareness Group (*Pokdarwis*). Each stakeholder contributes distinct knowledge and expertise, collectively enriching the visitor experience. This collaborative structure enables tourism benefits to be distributed across different community groups while reducing dependence on a single tourism attraction or business sector. As a result, creative tourism has evolved into a community-based economic system that integrates cultural preservation with local entrepreneurship.

The contribution of the creative economy is particularly evident in the development of Dahon Ecoprint Batik, which has evolved beyond a handicraft product into an educational tourism experience. Visitors participate in the production process while simultaneously purchasing locally produced batik, creating additional income streams for artisans. A similar pattern is observed in Kampung Madu, where educational honey-harvesting activities increase the market value of local honey products while introducing tourists to sustainable beekeeping practices. Likewise, Liwet Jolem has been transformed from a traditional household meal into a gastronomic tourism

experience that strengthens the identity of Margacinta Village while creating business opportunities for local culinary entrepreneurs.



Figure 4. Community-Based Creative Economy Supporting Creative Tourism

Interviews with tourism village managers indicated that integrating local MSMEs into tourism packages has increased community participation and encouraged greater collaboration among tourism stakeholders. Rather than competing independently, artisans, performers, farmers, and culinary entrepreneurs work together to develop complementary tourism experiences that encourage visitors to spend more time within the village. According to one tourism manager, this collaborative model has strengthened the local tourism economy by attracting visitors who no longer come only to observe attractions but also to participate in creative activities and purchase locally produced goods. This interaction generates multiplier effects that extend beyond tourism businesses to benefit households that support economic activities.

These findings support previous studies highlighting the importance of the creative economy in strengthening the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations. Kikky Vuspitasari et al. (2023) argue that community-based creative industries represent a strategic resource for destination development because they transform local knowledge into economic value while preserving cultural identity. Similarly, Wahyu Hidayat et al. (2024) identify community creativity as a fundamental driver of tourism village sustainability, whereas Junaedi and Rojali (2024) emphasize that strengthening entrepreneurial capacity enhances the commercialization of local cultural products. The present study extends this literature by demonstrating that the economic value of creative tourism is generated not only through the sale of creative products but also through tourists' direct participation in their production and interpretation.

From a community-based tourism perspective, the findings indicate that community empowerment is an integral component of destination sustainability rather than a secondary outcome of tourism development. The active involvement of residents in designing and delivering tourism experiences strengthens local ownership, preserves cultural knowledge, and increases community resilience by diversifying income sources. This participatory governance model ensures that tourism development remains embedded within the village while maintaining the authenticity that constitutes the destination's primary competitive advantage.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that community empowerment indirectly contributes to the formation of memorable tourism experiences. Tourists consistently expressed appreciation for opportunities to interact with artisans, performers, farmers, and culinary practitioners, as these encounters offered personal insights into local culture and everyday village life. Such interactions enhanced visitors' emotional attachment to the destination, reinforcing perceptions of authenticity and thereby strengthening the experiential outcomes discussed in the previous sections.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the creative economy functions as the institutional and economic foundation of creative tourism development in Margacinta Tourism Village. By integrating local entrepreneurship, cultural preservation, and community participation, the village has established a sustainable tourism model that simultaneously improves local livelihoods, reinforces destination identity, and enriches visitor experiences. This evidence suggests that the long-term success of creative tourism depends not only on the uniqueness of cultural resources but also on local communities' capacity to transform those resources into collaborative, economically sustainable tourism experiences.

Integrating Creative Tourism into Memorable Tourism Experiences

The findings demonstrate that memorable tourism experiences in Margacinta Tourism Village emerge from the integration of cultural participation, experience co-creation, and community empowerment rather than from individual tourism attractions. Instead of operating as separate tourism products, traditional performances, creative workshops, local gastronomy, and community-based economic activities collectively form a holistic visitor experience that encourages continuous interaction between tourists and local communities. This integrated approach transforms tourism from a series of recreational activities into a meaningful process of cultural learning, creative engagement, and social exchange.

The thematic analysis suggests that each component of creative tourism contributes to different dimensions of the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) framework proposed by Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012). Cultural participation through Badud performances, Gondang Buhun, and Angklung primarily strengthens the dimensions of local culture and meaningfulness, enabling visitors to develop a deeper appreciation of Sundanese cultural heritage. Participatory workshops, including the Dahon Ecoprint Batik experience and honey-harvesting activities, reinforce involvement, knowledge, and novelty by encouraging visitors to acquire practical skills while interacting directly with local artisans and producers. Meanwhile, community-based creative economic activities generate a sense of authenticity and emotional attachment through continuous interaction with residents and their everyday livelihoods.

The findings further indicate that memorable experiences are created through a cumulative experiential process rather than a single tourism activity. Visitors gradually build an emotional attachment as they move between cultural performances, creative workshops, culinary experiences, and community interactions. Each activity complements the others by offering distinct experiential value, enabling tourists to experience the destination from multiple perspectives. This sequential engagement explains why many visitors described their journey as educational, emotionally meaningful, and fundamentally different from conventional sightseeing experiences.

These findings extend previous studies on memorable tourism experiences by demonstrating that MTE should be understood not merely as an outcome of destination attributes but as the result of an integrated creative tourism system. Previous studies have established that local culture, novelty, emotional engagement, and knowledge contribute significantly to memorable experiences (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Lee, 2021; Huong et al., 2022). However, they have generally examined these factors independently. The present study shows that these experiential dimensions are activated simultaneously through the interaction of cultural participation, creative collaboration, and community involvement within a community-based tourism destination.

The findings also reinforce the creative tourism perspective proposed by Richards and Wilson (2007), who argue that authentic tourism experiences emerge through collaboration between visitors and host communities rather than through the passive consumption of cultural attractions. Nevertheless, this study advances the literature by demonstrating that community participation functions not only as a characteristic of creative tourism but also as the mechanism

that links cultural authenticity with memorable visitor experiences. In other words, authenticity alone is insufficient to generate memorable experiences unless opportunities for active participation, collaborative learning, and meaningful social interaction accompany it.

Based on these findings, this study proposes an integrated creative tourism framework in which cultural participation, experience co-creation, and community empowerment operate as mutually reinforcing processes that collectively generate memorable tourism experiences (Figure 5). Cultural participation provides authenticity, co-creation facilitates experiential learning and visitor engagement, while community empowerment ensures that tourism development remains economically and socially sustainable. The interaction among these three components ultimately strengthens destination identity, enhances visitor satisfaction, and encourages positive behavioural outcomes, including revisit intention and electronic word of mouth.

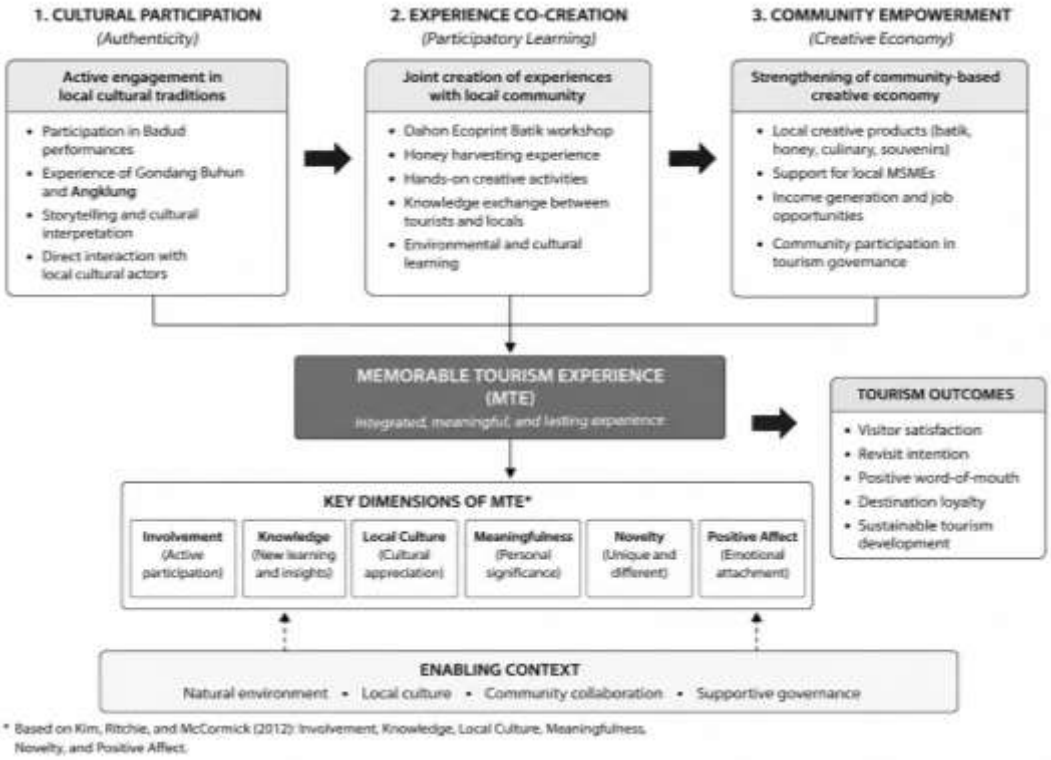


Figure 5. Integrated Creative Tourism Framework for Creating Memorable Tourism Experiences

Overall, the findings suggest that the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations depends not only on the uniqueness of their cultural resources but also on their capacity to integrate cultural authenticity, participatory experiences, and community empowerment into a coherent creative tourism system. This integrated perspective provides a broader understanding of how creative tourism contributes to sustainable destination development while simultaneously enriching the quality and memorability of visitor experiences.

Discussion

The findings further suggest that the effectiveness of creative tourism lies not in the uniqueness of individual attractions but in the integration of multiple participatory experiences into a coherent visitor journey. While previous studies have generally examined cultural performances, local gastronomy, handicrafts, or community participation as separate determinants of tourism experiences (Lee & Lee, 2021; Huong et al., 2022; Trinanda et al., 2022),

the present study demonstrates that memorable experiences emerge from the cumulative interaction among these components. Tourists gradually build an emotional attachment as they engage in different creative activities, with each experience reinforcing the next through continuous engagement with local people, culture, and place. This finding suggests that memorable tourism experiences are dynamic and relational rather than being generated by isolated attractions.

Another important finding concerns the role of local communities as experience facilitators instead of merely tourism service providers. Existing creative tourism literature has consistently emphasized community participation as a prerequisite for sustainable destination development (Richards & Wilson, 2007; Duxbury et al., 2021). However, this study's findings indicate that community members actively influence the quality of visitor experiences through storytelling, informal interaction, cultural interpretation, and knowledge sharing. These social interactions create emotional authenticity that cannot easily be replicated through standardized tourism products. Consequently, the competitive advantage of creative tourism depends not only on cultural resources but also on local communities' capacity to facilitate meaningful interpersonal experiences.

The findings also contribute to the conceptual relationship between creative tourism and the Memorable Tourism Experience framework. Previous MTE studies have predominantly treated memorable experiences as behavioural outcomes influenced by destination attributes or tourists' psychological responses (Kim et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2022). In contrast, this study positions creative tourism as the experiential mechanism through which the dimensions of involvement, knowledge, local culture, novelty, and meaningfulness are simultaneously activated. Rather than viewing creative tourism and MTE as separate concepts, the findings indicate that creative tourism provides the operational pathway through which memorable experiences are constructed in community-based destinations.

From a broader theoretical perspective, this study proposes an integrated model of rural creative tourism in which cultural participation, experience co-creation, and community empowerment function as interconnected processes rather than independent tourism attributes. Cultural participation provides authenticity, co-creation strengthens visitor engagement, and community empowerment ensures that tourism generates local social and economic value. Their interaction ultimately produces memorable tourism experiences that reinforce destination identity and support long-term sustainability. This integrated perspective extends the existing creative tourism literature by demonstrating that sustainable tourism competitiveness is built through the simultaneous integration of cultural, social, and economic dimensions rather than relying solely on the uniqueness of tourism attractions.

Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the growing literature on creative tourism, community-based tourism, and memorable tourism experiences. First, it extends the creative tourism literature by demonstrating that cultural authenticity is not solely derived from the preservation or display of traditional cultural assets but is co-created through active participation between tourists and local communities. While previous studies have emphasized participatory learning as a defining characteristic of creative tourism (Richards & Raymond, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2007), this study's findings show that authentic tourism experiences emerge through continuous interaction, storytelling, and collaborative engagement during cultural and creative activities.

Second, this study contributes to the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) literature by explaining the mechanism through which memorable experiences are formed in community-based tourism destinations. Previous studies have primarily identified the dimensions or antecedents of MTE (Kim et al., 2012; Lee & Lee, 2021; Huong et al., 2022), whereas the present

study demonstrates that creative tourism functions as the experiential process that simultaneously activates multiple MTE dimensions, particularly involvement, knowledge, local culture, novelty, and meaningfulness. This finding provides a more integrated understanding of how participatory tourism activities generate enduring visitor memories.

Third, the study advances the conceptual relationship between creative tourism and community-based tourism by positioning local communities not merely as beneficiaries or tourism service providers but as experience facilitators and co-creators of value. The findings suggest that the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations depends less on the uniqueness of cultural resources than on the community's capacity to transform them into interactive, educational, and emotionally engaging tourism experiences. This perspective enriches existing community-based tourism literature by highlighting the strategic role of community knowledge, cultural interpretation, and social interaction in creating destination value.

Finally, this study proposes an integrated conceptual perspective in which cultural participation, experience co-creation, and community empowerment operate as interconnected processes that collectively produce memorable tourism experiences. Rather than treating these concepts as independent constructs, the findings indicate that they reinforce one another in the development of sustainable rural tourism. This integrated perspective offers a theoretical foundation for future studies examining creative tourism in community-based destinations and provides a framework for understanding how cultural, social, and economic dimensions interact to enhance destination competitiveness and sustainability.

Managerial and Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for destination managers, local governments, tourism practitioners, and community organizations seeking to strengthen rural tourism competitiveness through creative tourism development. First, tourism village managers should shift from designing attraction-oriented tourism products toward developing participatory tourism experiences. Rather than presenting cultural performances solely as entertainment, activities should be structured to encourage tourists to actively engage in local traditions through workshops, storytelling sessions, cultural interpretation, and hands-on learning. Such participatory experiences foster stronger emotional engagement, increase visitor satisfaction, and enhance the destination's memorability.

Second, local governments should recognize creative tourism as a strategic instrument for sustainable rural development. Policy interventions should focus not only on improving tourism infrastructure but also on strengthening local communities' capacity through training in experience design, storytelling, interpretation, hospitality, digital marketing, and creative entrepreneurship. Supporting community-based creative industries can simultaneously preserve local cultural heritage while generating broader economic opportunities for rural communities.

Third, the findings highlight the importance of integrating diverse creative tourism products into coherent tourism packages rather than promoting individual attractions separately. In the context of Margacinta Tourism Village, cultural performances, ecoprint workshops, honey-harvesting experiences, traditional gastronomy, and community interaction can be combined into thematic visitor journeys that offer richer and more immersive experiences. Such integrated packages are likely to increase visitors' length of stay, encourage higher tourism expenditure, and strengthen the destination's competitive positioning.

Fourth, local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) should be positioned as strategic partners within the tourism value chain rather than merely suppliers of souvenirs or local products. Encouraging tourists to participate directly in production processes enhances the perceived value of creative products while strengthening the connection between visitors and local producers. This experiential business model provides opportunities to diversify local income sources and improve the economic resilience of tourism villages.

Finally, the study suggests that destination marketing strategies should emphasize authentic experiences instead of focusing exclusively on physical attractions. Promotional content should communicate opportunities for visitors to learn traditional skills, interact with local communities, participate in cultural activities, and experience everyday village life. User-generated content, digital storytelling, and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) can be strategically utilized to reinforce the destination's image as an authentic creative tourism destination and to reach experience-oriented market segments.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the long-term competitiveness of tourism villages depends not only on the availability of cultural resources but also on destination stakeholders' ability to transform those resources into participatory, authentic, and community-driven tourism experiences. By integrating cultural preservation, creative entrepreneurship, and visitor engagement, rural destinations can simultaneously enhance tourist satisfaction, strengthen community welfare, and achieve more sustainable tourism development.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that locally rooted creative tourism can create memorable experiences when cultural resources are transformed into participatory, educational, and community-led activities. In Margacinta Tourism Village, traditional performing arts, Dahon Ecoprint Batik workshops, honey-harvesting experiences, local gastronomy, and direct interaction with community members enable tourists to move beyond passive observation and become active participants in the production of tourism experiences.

The findings identify three interrelated mechanisms underlying this process. First, cultural participation strengthens authenticity by connecting visitors directly with local traditions and cultural practitioners. Second, experience co-creation enhances involvement, knowledge, novelty, and meaningfulness through hands-on activities and interpersonal interaction. Third, integrating local MSMEs, artisans, farmers, cultural performers, and tourism managers supports community empowerment and enables tourism value to circulate within the local economy. Collectively, these mechanisms contribute to memorable tourism experiences, strengthen destination identity, and support community-based tourism development.

The study therefore concludes that the competitiveness of rural creative tourism destinations depends not only on the availability of distinctive cultural assets, but also on the capacity of local stakeholders to organize those assets into coherent and participatory visitor experiences. The proposed framework positions cultural participation, experience co-creation, and community empowerment as mutually reinforcing components of sustainable creative tourism development.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations. First, it was conducted as a qualitative case study in a single tourism village. The findings are therefore closely connected to the cultural, institutional, and socioeconomic characteristics of Margacinta and should not be generalized automatically to other rural destinations. Comparative studies involving tourism villages with different cultural resources, levels of development, and governance structures would help assess the transferability of the proposed framework. Second, the qualitative design provides an in-depth understanding of stakeholder experiences but does not quantify the relative influence of cultural participation, co-creation, and community empowerment on memorable tourism experiences. Future research could develop and test a quantitative model to examine how these dimensions affect tourist satisfaction, place attachment, revisit intention, positive word of mouth, and destination loyalty.

Third, the study primarily captures experiences and perceptions within a particular period of destination development. A longitudinal approach would be valuable for examining how

creative tourism initiatives evolve over time and whether they produce sustained improvements in community income, cultural preservation, visitor engagement, and destination competitiveness. Fourth, future studies should examine potential tensions associated with creative tourism development, including cultural commodification, unequal benefit distribution, limited community capacity, and the possible loss of authenticity as visitor numbers increase. Greater attention should also be given to differences among stakeholder groups, particularly between tourism managers, creative entrepreneurs, cultural practitioners, residents, and visitors.

Finally, subsequent research could investigate the role of digital storytelling, social media engagement, and electronic word-of-mouth in extending creative tourism experiences beyond the physical visit. Testing the proposed framework across different cultural and geographical settings would further refine its theoretical relevance and practical applicability for sustainable rural tourism development.

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