

Balinese Arts and Culture as Tourism Commodity in Bali Tourism Promotion Videos

DESAK PUTU EKA PRATIWI, PUTU NUR AYOMI, KOMANG DIAN PUSPITA CANDRA

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Industri pariwisata di Bali terus meningkat sejak tahun 1970. Hal ini didukung tidak hanya oleh keindahan alam pulau Bali tetapi juga seni dan budaya Bali yang begitu memukau. Bali memiliki kekayaan seni yang menakjubkan, budaya yang dinamis dan berbagai tradisi unik yang begitu terkenal di seluruh dunia. Banyak orang, khususnya orang asing, yang ingin melihat karya seni Bali yang artistik dan mengalami sendiri budaya masyarakat Bali. Hal tersebut mendorong mereka untuk berwisata ke pulau Bali yang juga dikenal sebagai pulau surga. Budaya memiliki memiliki peran yang kuat dalam dunia pariwisata yang berfungsi sebagai alat promosi secara internasional, sebuah peran yang sering menjadi bahan perdebatan para ahli. Beberapa ahli berpikir bahwa dengan berubahnya fungsi budaya sebagai atraksi wisata dapat mengakibatkan hilangnya keaslian atau originalitasnya karena mengalami modifikasi untuk menyesuaikan dengan kebutuhan wisatawan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana seni dan budaya Bali dikemas sebagai komoditas pariwisata dalam video promosi pariwisata Bali yang telah dipublikasikan secara internasional oleh Dinas Pariwisata Bali. Data dikumpulkan dengan metode observasi dan kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teori dari Kotler and Armstrong (2008). Temuan dan pembahasan dipaparkan dengan metode formal dan informal. Secara umum temuan kami menunjukkan bahwa video pariwisata Bali terdiri dari empat dimensi, yaitu: (1) *essence of product*, (2) *real product*, (3) *processed real product* and (4) *additional product*, yang dijelaskan dalam sub bab pembahasan.

Kata kunci: seni, budaya, komoditas, promosi, pariwisata

Tourism industry in Bali has increased significantly since 1970's. It is supported not only by its stunning nature of Bali but also its fascinating arts and culture. Bali has incredible arts, vibrant culture and unique traditions which have been very famous all over the world. Many people especially foreigners want to see Balinese's artistic artworks and experience their culture. It motives them to travel to the island which also well known as the island of paradise. Culture has a compelling role in tourism functioning as an internationally promoted commodity, a role that has often been the subject of disputes among academics. Some people consider that the changing of culture become tourist attractions will cause the loss of culture's authenticity through modification. Many scholars say that cultures that are performed as tourist attraction will lose its originality to adjust the tourist demand. This study aims at analyzing how Balinese arts and culture are packaged as tourism commodity in Bali tourism promotion videos which internationally Published by Bali tourism board. The data were collected through observation method and note taking technique. The data were analyzed by using levels of product theory by Kotler and Armstrong (2008). The findings and discussions were presented through formal and informal methods. Our findings show that Bali tourism promotion videos consist of four dimensions: (1) *essence of product*, (2) *real product*, (3) *processed real product* and (4) *additional product*, as described in the discussion.

Keywords: art, culture, commodity, promotion, tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

Bali is known as the island of thousand temples where spiritual activities happen day and night. Almost all aspects of Balinese life are very inspiring, including their way of life, incredible arts, vibrant culture and unique traditions. Balinese life cannot be separated from cultural practices as well as religious ceremonies. The connection between art and religion suggesting Balinese art is in fact part of religious celebration, an offering to God. The unity of art and religion ensures that the art is constantly practiced and becomes part of Balinese life. Gamelan, songs and dances are performed in the temple to worship the almighty God. The paintings, carving and statues are mostly inspired by the manifestation of God and Goddess. Even flying kite is the expression of their gratitude to God (Pratiwi and Arka, 2006). The uniqueness of Balinese cultural life becomes a magnet for travelers and results in the development of mass tourism in Bali. In addition, the Bali local people are very warm and friendly which strongly support the development industry in Bali.

It is widely common for destinations to use the aspect of culture as a means to attract tourists. This means making culture a commodity and hence packaging and selling it for consumption (Cole, 2007). In fact, Shepherd (2002) states that the increasing tourism demand inevitably leads to the commoditization of cultures, as the tourists want to experience cultures which different from their own. A widely supported view in the literature is that this commoditization actually destroys the local culture making it inauthentic. Bali has strong cultural sociology which becomes the strength of tourism industry in Bali. On the other hand, the rapid growth of tourism industry in Bali is alarming. The sacred values of Balinese arts and culture could be decreased as the result of commodification. This phenomenon is very interesting to discuss, particularly taking tourism industry in Bali as the case study.

Specifically the objective of the study is to analyze how Balinese arts and culture are packaged as tourism commodity in Bali tourism promotion videos. It is crucial to see the picture of Bali in advertisement and find out how the government and local people keep the sustainability of Balinese arts and culture in this globalization era. It is very substantial to identify the characteristics of culture as a product since culture as a product manifests characteristics

that create a different entity from the classic concepts of product or/and service. It is executed by using a model which is develop in the basis of Kotler and Armstrong's (2008) levels of product theory which elaborates and presents the basic concept of product as having different dimensions. The first central feature is the "core" product, relates to what is bought by the consumer in term of benefits gained; the second level is the "actual" product, relates to what identifies and distinguishes the product in the form of package, quality, style, physical features and brand. The third level is the "augmented" product, relates to the additional elements and benefits to the core product. The analysis of Balinese arts and culture as a product in tourism advertisements is presented in the discussion.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

The main data were taken from Bali tourism promotion videos Published by Bali Tourism Board. The promotion videos from Bali Tourism Board were used as the main data source since they explicitly promote Balinese arts and culture as tourist attractions. The videos were taken from YouTube on July 2017. The data were collected through observation method and note taking technique. The data were analyzed by using levels of product theory by Kotler and Armstrong (2008). The findings and discussions were presented through formal and informal methods.

III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

According to Eaglen (2009) special qualities distinguish culture from other products: culture is actualized by encoded meanings in symbolic representations; it is externalized with tangible and intangible elements; it covers a range of components in its represented product mix. Moreover, its production is not always related to a distribution chain. The ownership of the acquired product is prevalently related to the gaining of knowledge rather than possession of the product transferred from suppliers to consumers. Its consumption is related to acquisition of knowledge within a cognitive interpretation of individual sensorial experiences. The following analysis is presented based on Kotler and Armstrong's (2008) levels of product theory which generally consist of four dimensions: (1) essence of product, (2) real product, (3) processed real product and (4) additional product.

1. The Essence of the Cultural Commodity

The core product, as stated by Kotler and Armstrong (2008), refers to that which the consumer receives to fulfill a need. In the case of culture, the fundamental benefit is the “essence of product”. It could be seen in the satisfaction of the need for knowledge. In the case of the purchase of high culture, for instance art, the essence could be related to the understanding of art techniques and values. Therefore the “essence” of the product culture could be construed as the result of the satisfaction of need of interacting and understanding different social realities in the environment where those social realities normally take place. The satisfaction of the consumer could also be summarized as “education”. It implies the enhancement of viewpoints, widening of horizons, development of skills, awareness and analysis, retention or rejection of information received. For example, Bali tourism promotion video shows sacred dances such as *rejang dewa* (figure 1) and *topeng tua* dance (figure 2).



Figure 1



Figure 2

The video promoted those sacred dances as tourist attractions. *Rejang Dewa* dance is ancient dance which performs only in a temple anniversary in inner courtyard of the temple expected to delight and entertain the visiting Gods and spirit. *Topeng Tua* which usually performed before *Topeng Sidakarya* is also per-

formed in Hindu's temple for completing the ritual or the ceremony. This dance is performed at the end of ceremonial process and this dance will take big part for the successful of the ceremony on that temple. It shows that Balinese religious life cannot be separated from arts. As also described by the verbal messages in the video, “*Not a single day we spend without worshipping to the creator. And no single activity that we do not dedicate to the God.*” Almost every religious activity always accompanied by particular dances. For Balinese, dance is an “offering”. Balinese consider art of dancing and music is as important as other aspect of life. Dance, music, and art performances become part of their social and religious life. The “essence” of the product culture gained by tourists who watch the sacred dances is experiencing high culture of Balinese. They may learn not only about the artistic values but also the religious values of the sacred dances in Bali. They gain knowledge that the dances are not simply an art performance but they have significant roles in completing the ceremony in Hindu's temple. Some sacred dances also have magical energy. Even every movement and ornament used by the dancers has symbolic meaning.

Offerings as part of Balinese culture are also highlighted in the Bali tourism promotion video, as seen in figure 3 and 4. It is also supported by verbal messages in the video, “*Love, happiness, dedication, and offerings are parts of Balinese life that spread the warmth and peace to the community.*”



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 3 shows a picture of *canang sari*. It is one of the daily offerings made by Balinese Hindus to thank the God in praise and prayer. *Canang sari* will be seen in the Balinese temples, on small shrines in houses and on the ground or as part of a larger offerings. While figure 4 shows an offering made of colorful rice and each color has its own meaning and function in a religious ceremony. Visiting the island and interacting with the inhabitants give the opportunity for tourists to see Balinese way of life including their unique rituals. It enhances their knowledge and understanding about Balinese culture. They can discover why Balinese do the rituals and why they are important for Balinese life. For instance, why *canang sari* as an offering not only found in temples or shrines but also can be seen everywhere, on the ground, on the vehicle or even on sidewalk. Or why Balinese always give some of their food as offering before they eat it. These are simple questions which frequently asked by foreigners. By observing Balinese daily life, tourists can get new insight about the meaning and values of Balinese offerings, from the smallest offering into the biggest one.

Balinese also preserve their ancestor unique traditions very well. Balinese cultural heritages are also promoted in Bali tourism promotion video. The ancient traditions still keep happening nowadays, as seen in figure 5 and 6.

Figure 5 shows Balinese tradition called *melukat*. It aims to cleanse the human's mind, body and soul. It is believed to help get rid of the bad energy that might be lingering around that person. This ceremony usually takes place by a spring, a river, or by the sea, as the Balinese believe that water is the most powerful means with which to restore and purify your energy. One of the top destinations for *melukat* is Tirta Empul Temple in Tampak Siring (as seen in the picture). Figure 6 shows a unique tradition called *mekare-kare* or *perang pandan*. It is practiced by the Bali Aga population of Tenganan village to respect the Hindu God of War, The Indra. The core or the essence of the product culture gained by tourists undertaking visitation to Tirta Empul or Tenganan village might lie in the learning from the simple understanding of the existence of the tradition, the historical background and the whole process of those traditions.

Balinese also do several ceremonies for human being from baby born to cremation ceremony. In other words, Balinese run life cycle ceremonies which also exposed in Bali tourism promotion video, such as tooth filling, marriage, and cremation ceremony. Balinese life cycle ceremonies cannot be seen as easy as watching stage performances or Bali Arts Festival which regularly held in Bali since the life cycle ceremonies are occasional events.



Figure 5



Figure 7



Figure 6

Figure 7 shows tooth filling ceremony. It is a very important life passage for all Balinese and must be completed before they get married. It is done when a Balinese boys or girls reach puberty. They would symbolically leave their childhood and enter adulthood through this ritual. Led by Hindu high priest, the tooth filling ceremony is aimed at eliminating negative human characteristics such as greed, lust, anger, confusion, jealousy, and drunk. Figure 8 shows



Figure 8

ngaben ceremony. *Ngaben* is a cremation ceremony in Bali which is very famous not only in Indonesia, but worldwide. Actually, cremation ceremony is also done by the other religions besides Hindu. However, it is only in Bali that the cremation ceremony is done uniquely, vibrantly, majestically, and artistically. No wonder that ***ngaben ceremony in Bali*** always attracts tourists to observe it directly. For Balinese, *ngaben* is a sacred and important ceremony because by doing *ngaben* the deceased could free his/her soul from worldly ties. By this ceremony the family hopes that their relative will go to heaven and could reincarnate as a better person or even *moksha* (united with God). If they are lucky, the tourists can see the ceremonies during their holiday in Bali or even involved in the ceremonies. By observing these ceremonies from the beginning to the end, the tourist can get clear idea about the essence of the ceremonies. It gives deeper understanding about Balinese life cycle rituals.

In addition, Bali also has annual religious ceremonies and cultural festivals which potentially become one of the most attractive tourist attractions in Bali. As seen in figure 9 and 10, there are a picture of annual ceremony called *melasti* and a picture of *ogoh-ogoh* festival which closely related to *Nyepi* or Balinese silent day.

Melasti (in figure 9) is held once a year, three to four days before *Nyepi*. Hundreds of local Balinese people will parade along the road heading to the beaches nearby. They will carry sacred ornaments like sculptures (*pratima* and *pralingga*) and statues from the family temples. The parade becomes more colorful with the appearance of some painted flags (*umbul-umbul*) that will stand out among the white traditional Balinese outfits they wear on the day. This ceremony is a symbol of the purification for the Balinese Hindu, to cleanse human body and soul and



Figure 9



Figure 10

the entire universe from the bad spirits. While *ogoh-ogoh* (in figure 10) are statues made of bamboo and normally have form of mythological beings, mostly demons. They are carried by teenagers along the main street on the eve of *Nyepi*. During the procession, the *Ogoh-ogoh* is rotated counter-clockwise three times. This act is done at every T-junction and crossroad of the village. It is intended to ward off bad spirits from the environment. The main purpose of these ceremonies is to welcome the Balinese Hindu's Saka New Year on *Nyepi* day with a clean heart, soul and surroundings.

Nyepi is a public holiday in Indonesia, is a day of silence, fasting and meditation for the Balinese. It is a day for self-reflection and anything that might interfere with that purpose is restricted. The main restrictions are no lighting fires, no working, no entertainment and no travelling. The effect of these prohibitions is that Bali's usually bustling streets are empty. There is little or no noise from TVs and radios, and few signs of activity are seen even inside homes. The only people to be seen outdoors are the *pecalang*, traditional security men who

patrol the streets to ensure the prohibitions are being followed. Balinese silent day has inspired the world to celebrate it all together with all people around the world since it can save the world from climate change. This annual event is very interesting for foreigners since it only exists in Bali and cannot be found elsewhere in the world. The tourists can arrange their holiday to experience Balinese silent day and to see many religious ceremonies, cultural parades and attractions held before the silent day. Unique culture can be motivator for tourists seeking to learn and to specifically participate in cultural events. These activities are allegedly undertaken by educated people whose primary motivation to travel is knowledge (Richards, 1996a).

Bali is also rich with historical buildings which also considered as cultural heritages. These historical buildings are also promoted in Bali tourism promotion videos. As seen in figure 11 and 12, the video shows some iconic buildings such as *Uluwatu* temple and *Taman Ujung* water palace.



Figure 11



Figure 12

Generally, the historical buildings include temples and Balinese royal legacies. *Uluwatu Temple* (in figure 11), one of six key temples believed to be Bali's spiritual pillars, is renowned for its magnificent location, perched on top of a steep cliff approximately 70 meters above sea level. This temple also shares the splendid sunset backdrops as that of Tanah Lot Temple, another important sea temple located in the island's western shores. Balinese architecture, traditionally-designed gateways, and ancient sculptures add to Uluwatu Temple's appeal. *Taman Ujung* water palace (in figure 12) is a former palace of Karangasem kingdom. The complex consists of various large pools and historic structures set against a backdrop of Mount Agung and the eastern shoreline. The Taman Ujung complex has a combination of Balinese and European architecture throughout three large ponds connected by long elegant bridges and pathways. The historical buildings are symbolic representations of Balinese culture. Therefore, the essence of the product culture is the learning experience, particularly about the history of the buildings, the details of the architecture, and former vs. current function of the buildings.

2. The Real Product of the Cultural Commodity

The second level of product identified by Kotler and Armstrong (2008) is the actual product. This encompasses those features that distinguish a product from others in the market; therefore, it represents the area where the marketing activity may be designed to influence consumer behavior. It is identified by visible, tangible and projected features of a product that can be perceived and evaluated by consumers: the package, quality, style and physical feature. As proposed by Eaglen (2009) the following product lines are considered as components of real product for the product culture.

- a. *Tangible symbolic representations*, consisting of those product item that can be physically experienced and seen, such as places, archeological sites, buildings and their architecture and pieces of artistic creations. Bali tourism promotion video shows some attractive historical buildings, including temples and Balinese royal legacies. The temples shown in the video such as: Besakih, Tanah Lot, Uluwatu and Taman Ayun temple. The video also shows former palaces of ancient Kingdoms of Bali, such as Taman Ujung and Kertha Gosa. These places considered as tangible symbolic representations since they can be seen

and touched, but cannot be bought by tourists.

- b. *Intangible symbolic representations*, which signify knowledge and values, although they may have a tangible aspect, for example books containing intangible knowledge expressed in literature, history and practices that the owners of that culture may share in everyday life. The example can be seen in Bali tourism video which shows some cultural practices, such as a scene shows a farmer put daily offerings in a small shrine on his rice field. Another scene shows some farmers cultivate their rice field traditionally. The video also shows a Balinese girl praying in front of a giant tree. Some men sitting and talking in front of their house while holding cocks which represent Balinese daily life.
- c. *Staged symbolic representations*, which are characterized by those expressions of beliefs and arts that are manifested with specific performances, such as music, dance, drama, events and pilgrimages, which could be contemporary or past. The video shows some art performances, such as kecak dance, barong dance, sekar jagat dance, mask dance and fire dance. Some cultural events are also showed in the video, such as Bali art festival, kite festival, Kuta carnival, Ubud writer's and reader's festival, Sanur village festival, and many more.
- d. *Replicated symbolic representations*, these are embodied into items having the function of reproducing a given symbolic representation, such as souvenirs, prepared by the culture's holders, whose function may be to remind tourists about the experience of interaction with a culture. Bali tourism promotion video shows some galleries, art shops and traditional markets where tourists can buy Balinese traditional souvenirs, such as paintings, wood carving, silver jewelries, etc.
- e. *Transferable symbolic representations*, being those popular aspects of culture that might be acquired by an individual by being involved within a culture or studying a language. It can be seen in the video which shows tourists get involved with local people doing their activity. For example, tourists go to rice field and learn how Balinese cultivate their rice field traditionally. The video also shows tourist involve in *melukat* 'purification rituals' and join *perang pandan* 'pandan battle'.

3. The Processed Real Product of the Cultural Commodity

The processed real product culture encompasses the brand, which, according to Middleton and Clarke (2001), is one of the most important product features in marketing activities as it indicates ownership of the product. It also symbolizes a degree of quality, distinguishes a product from the competitors, and, as specified by Andersen and Kotler (2003), helps the consumer to identify the product. The following picture (figure 13) is the branding of Bali tourism board.



Figure 13

The branding is strongly influenced by Balinese cultural background which carries Balinese life values and philosophy. The number three is very important and meaningful for Balinese. The letter B in the word "Bali" is actually shaped to resemble the number 3. It is similar to the Balinese sacred letter, *ang*. It represents the Brahma, the manifestation of God as creator. The shape of the logo is a triangle. The triangle actually means stability and harmony. The triangle shape also represents the three manifestations of God in Hindu, namely *Brahma* (the creator), *Wisnu* (the preserver) and *Siva* (the sin destroyer). The logo has three colors, red, black and white which respectively represent *Brahma*, *Wisnu* and *Siva*. The Balinese belief in the existence of three worlds, called *Bhur*, *Bwah*, and *Swah*. Life cycles also consist of three stages: life, birth, life and death. The word "*shanti*" (meaning peace) is repeated three times at the bottom of the logo. Three times repeating this word is believed to bring peace and harmony. The popular concept of *Tri Hita Karana* does underlie the idea of the logo. *Tri Hita Karana* is Balinese life philosophy which means the "three reasons for prosperity"; these are, harmony among people, harmony with nature, and harmony with

God. This philosophy has informed the vision of the Bali Tourism Board. All local tourism businesses and activities are regulated to obey this philosophy. Including these cultural contents in Bali tourism promotion video appears to be part of branding and promoting Bali cultural tourism, promising Bali as a destination always serene and enjoyable for everyone. Culture also appears to be subjected to branding to provide tourists with an image or meaning that could identify the population of a country representing what tourists might conceive as distinctive connotation of that population and their life style (Eaglen, 2009).

4. The Additional Product of the Cultural Commodity

Kotler, Bowen et al. (2006: 305) define the augmented tourism products as the “physical environment, customer interaction with service delivery system, customer interaction with other customers, customer co-production.” However, when examining culture and considering its nature composed of symbolic representations, the additional benefits to the essence of product could be seen in any additional knowledge derived from experience of culture (Eaglen, 2009). Observing Bali tourism promotion videos, the additional product of the commodity culture can be seen from the supplementary learning derived from experience Balinese culture. For example, when tourists go to galleries or art shops they can see the Balinese artists make woodcarving. They get additional knowledge of the art of traditional woodcarving. In addition, when tourist go hiking or cycling around Balinese rural area they will definitely see Balinese daily life. For instance, when they pass the rice field area they will see how Balinese organize their rice field with its traditional irrigation system called *subak*. It is the water management system for paddy fields in Bali which was developed in the 9th century. For the Balinese, irrigation is not simply providing water for the plant’s roots, but water is used to construct a complex, pulsed artificial ecosystem. The water management is under the authority of the priests in water temples, who practice *Tri Hita Karana* philosophy, a self-described relationship between humans, the earth and the gods. The overall *subak* system exemplifies this philosophical principle. Water temple rituals promote a harmonious relationship between people and their environment through the active engagement of people with ritual concepts that emphasize dependence on the life-sustaining forces of the natural world. Rice is seen as the gift of god, and the *subak* system is part of temple

culture. This additional knowledge is derived from experiencing Balinese culture.

IV. CONCLUSION

This article discussed about Balinese arts and culture as tourism commodity by examining Bali tourism promotion videos. Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that Bali tourism promotion videos have four dimensions of the product culture. First, it is the *core product* which could be seen in the satisfaction of the need for knowledge. The example can be seen in some pictures presented in the videos which considered as product culture, such as: sacred dances, offerings, ancient traditions, life cycle ceremonies, cultural festivals and historical buildings. The essence of the product culture gained by tourists is experiencing high culture of Balinese. The tourists can get new insight about the meaning and values of Balinese arts and culture. Second, it is the *actual product* which can be identified by visible, tangible and projected features of a product that can be perceived and evaluated by consumers: the package, quality, style and physical feature. Third, the *processed real product culture* which encompasses the brand and indicates ownership of the product. It can be seen in the branding of Bali tourism board “Bali Shanti, Shanti, Shanti”. It is strongly influenced by Balinese cultural background and carries Balinese life philosophy. Fourth, the *additional product* of the commodity culture can be seen from the supplementary learning derived from experiencing Balinese culture. Tourism industry in Bali is developed based on the principle of Balinese life philosophy, *Tri Hita Karana* which is also adopted as the vision of Bali tourism board. The type of tourism developed is ‘cultural tourism’ so that Balinese culture is directly exposed for tourist consumption. However, in this cultural commoditization, Balinese culture is conserved, developed and revitalized by the implementation of *Tri Hita Karana* in all aspects of life. Supplemented by other concepts taken from their traditions and local wisdom, the Balinese succeed in harmonizing tourism development and cultural preservation.

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