

## **Ramayana Ballet Performance's Allure at Purawisata Yogyakarta**

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Indonesia is known for its Wayang Orang performances, especially in the areas of Surakarta, Yogyakarta, Semarang, Jakarta, and Bali. Among the Wayang Orang performances, there was a group that switched to ballet performances, which later became known as the Ramaya Ballet Purawisata Yogyakarta. The purpose of this study is to dissect more deeply the Ramayana Ballet Performance and the extent of its influence on people's lives. Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet, shown in full every night from 20.00–21.30 WIB since 1976 until 2001, won the 'Guinness Book of Records' (MURI) for its consistency in performing cultural performances for 29 years continuously. Consistency in maintaining the noble values of culture continues until August 10, 2021, when Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet is 45 years old. The method used in this research is a qualitative, descriptive analysis method that explores and understands the meaning of a number of individuals or groups of arts being studied. The results of the study show that the innovation strategies offered to the audience are: (1) Special Package Ramayana Performances; (2) Ramayana Edukasi; and (3) Regular Ramayana, so the Ramayana Ballet show still exists today. Even at regular shows, tickets with seating for 600 people are always full.

*Keyword: Ramayana Ballet, Ballet, Purawisata.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Wayang Orang performances in Indonesia are a noble art form, displaying benevolent values that contain moral messages. This is implied in the plays in each of their presentations, which use the Javanese language and both of which developed in the cities of Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, and Jakarta. While in Bali, using the Balinese language, and in the Sunda area, using the Sundanese language, The story presented in the show is taken from the stories of the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Wayang Orang, also known as Wayang Wong, was developed by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I in the 1750s and reached its peak of development during the reign of Hamengku Buwana VIII (1921–1939), with the longest performance lasting four days and four nights and involving 800 people (Soedarsono, 2000: 2). In Surakarta, Wayang Wong was developed by Mangkunegara I around 1760 and experienced rapid development during the Mangkunegara V era, especially the renewal of dancers, fashion makeup, plays, and serving functions. In the renewal of dancers, Mangkunegara V grouped them into three groups: Wayang Wong Sentana (the royal family), Wayang Wong Abdi Dalem, and Wayang Orang Perempuan. In addition to the plays on the Mahabharata and Ramayana stories, Mangkunegara V also presents the play *Carangan* (outside the standard) (Interview with Irawati Kusumorasri, Mangkunegara Dancer, in Solo 6, November 2022).

However, at the end of the 19th century, there was a change. The palace can no longer fund Wayang Orang performances. It was from here that the Wayang Orang performance came out of the palace walls, and the Puppet Orang Panggung was born, which was pioneered by Gan Kam, a businessman of Chinese descent. With the permission of Mangkunegara V in 1895, Gan Kam transformed the Wayang Orang into a commercial performance. The stage setting is made to look like Chinese opera or Italian opera. The dancers were recruited from palace artists plus dancers from the general public (Respati, Pudji Utama, 2018: 134).

The commercial Wayang Orang show is very different from the Wayang Orang performance at the Kraton, which is presented at the Pendopo with audiences from 3 directions. Wayang Orang Commercial is performed on a proscenium stage with the audience facing one direction, and is shown in multiple locations using the "Open Stage" concept. In terms of the stage, it can be assembled

and dismantled in a very representative place for the convenience of players and dancers, as well as making it possible to bring in an audience. After Gan Kam's death in 1928, the Surakarta Wayang Wong groups were founded by Chinese artists, including Sedyo Wandowo, Sarotama, and Srikaton (Waskita, 2016: 35).

The Wayang Wong show, which has had a stage with a fixed location until now, is Sri Wedari in the city of Solo, which has lasted 110 years; Bharata in Jakarta, 50 years old; and Ngesti Pandowo in Semarang, 84 years old. Of the several Wayang Orang performances, there are performances with a different mode of presentation, namely the 'Ramayana Ballet at Purawisata' in the city of Yogyakarta, in the form of a Dance Sendra, by telling the story of the true love of Rama and Shinta from the Ramayana Epic. Since 1976, the show has been shown in full every night, starting at 20.00–21.30 WIB. In 2001, Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet won the 'Guinness Book of Records' (MURI) for its consistency in performing cultural performances for 29 years continuously, for the presentation of cultural tourism. Consistency in maintaining the noble values of this culture continues until August 10, 2021, celebrating its 45th birthday. This is a long enough age for traditional performances that still exist to maintain cultural values (Interview with Edi Johar, November 10, 2021).

Tourism in Indonesia is known for its tourist attractions, especially natural attractions as well as cultural attractions, which have selling points to be visited or enjoyed by tourists. Attraction as a system consists of the components of attraction, accessibility, and amenities. In this context, tourist locations and accommodation are the most important components that must be maintained and developed (Ruastiti, 2019: 188). Art that develops in tourist areas (art by destination), when it comes into contact with tourism, undergoes changes (art by metamorphosis) (Maguet, 1979: 123). From the perspective of cultural studies, this utilization is a cultural industry that demands commodification (Prima, 2018). In addition, when referring to the concept of Tomars, the performing arts of tourism consist of (1) imitation of the original; (2) short or compact or miniature form of the original; (3) full of variety; (4) abandoned sacred, magical, and symbolic values; and (5) cheap in price (Tomars in Soedarsono, 1999: 8).

In fact, Tomars's concept of tourism art, in fact, is not in sync with Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet performance, among others, "not short duration" (one and a half hours). Ticket prices are quite

expensive compared to the Wayang Wong Sriwedari Solo Show, which is only Rp. 10.000,- for the VIP class, while the ticket price for the Ramayana Ballet is Rp. 100.000,- for domestic tourists and for foreign tourists for Rp. 200.000. However, the show is always full.

The age of the performing arts group, who has stepped on 45 years, and is not in accordance with the concept of Tomars Tourism Arts, makes the researcher interested in knowing more, with the formulation of the problem as follows:

Why did the Wayang Orang Show become the Ramayana Ballet Show?

What is the marketing strategy for the Ramayana Ballet Show Performance as a tourist art presentation?

## METHOD

The Ramayana Ballet Performing Arts is a development of the Wayang Wong Performance, which empirically occurs in the field of value development, especially from the audience side. Therefore, the method used to obtain information according to the formulation of the problem will be a descriptive analysis method with a qualitative approach. Location The research was carried out at the Ramayana Purawisata Ballet Performing Arts Center, Yogyakarta, by digging for information from related sources, especially the performance manager, marketing manager, dancers, artistic team, cultural leaders, local communities, and stakeholders. To find answers in accordance with the formulation of the problem, the researcher uses a research step. The Ramayana Puppet Ballet Performing Art is a form of art as productive knowledge that has two sides, namely (1) the relationship between the artist and the audience community who will become connoisseurs of art and (2) relations between Purawisata managers who help realize the performance and marketing strategy. All of that, of course, there is a special strategy that is carried out and maintained.

## FINDINGS

### Tourist Performing Arts in Yogyakarta

Tourist travel is not only important in terms of increasing income receipts for hosts but will also be able to enrich the knowledge of tourists themselves, especially through new experiences and understanding of cultural and natural wealth through direct interaction with various communities (Hermantoro, 2013: 51). Yogyakarta is known as

one of the tourist destinations in Indonesia with a variety of uniqueness and cultural diversity that have succeeded in attracting the attention of tourists, including the performing arts. Traditional and contemporary performing arts in Indonesia are special events that can become a mainstay of tourist attractions (Yudarta, 2016: 38).

Yogyakarta has a special event by enlivening the atmosphere of regional arts as the identity of a cultural city. One of them is a traditional ballet performance known as the "Ramayana Ballet Purawisata", which is the "Tourism Industry" that brings out creations in every presentation. In this case, the development of performances is not limited to dance and composition, but also in terms of fashion, accompaniment, performance, and all aspects that complement it.

At the social level, the presence of the Ramayana Ballet creates new jobs for performing arts artists and contributes to the development of tourism programs. The point is, in addition to trying to keep Javanese dance alive in the midst of global cultural competition, it also maintains the values that already exist in the art. Ramayana Ballet is able to develop alternatives for tourist purposes by presenting, apart from being a Full Story Show on the Arena Stage, it also serves as a complement to dinner that is held at the Gazebo Restaurant.

This step is conceptually a "temporary monopoly," which is a condition that fulfills two things. The first condition is that the organization must be able to adapt itself to the conditions of the surrounding environment (survival for the fittest) and be supported by the ability to adapt to change. For the second condition, the organization must be able to adapt itself by natural selection, namely by giving birth to new ideas and products that are unique and of substantial value for consumers and users, producing beauty, institutions, and feelings (Fontana, 2011: 57).

In Dan J. Maquet's opinion, in the face of the presence of the tourist community, art will always develop along with the supporting community by formulating the division of art according to the function of art in the community that enjoys it. Specifically, there are two groups of art, namely (1) art, which is referred to as art by destination, and (2) art of acculturation. Art by destination is art produced by a group of people whose results are utilized by the community, while Art of Acculturation is art created by community groups but the results are intended for other people. This art

combines the artists' creativity and skill with the tastes of tourists (Grabun, 1976: 98).

### **From Puppet Show to Purawisata's Ramayan Ballet**

When the Wayang Orang is played with the express media in the form of dialogue or *antawecana*, which is voiced by each puppet player according to the character and character, and is interspersed with songs (*Tembang Macapat*) and dance moves. Unlike the Ramayana Ballet, the Wayang players express their emotions in the form of gestures according to their respective characters and roles, in some scenes accompanied by the chanting of the *Tembang Macapat*. Gestational motion, or meaningful motion, is a movement that visually has a certain meaning or purpose that can be understood and understood by the person who sees it (Elvandari, 2016: 165).

Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet is the third generation 'Ramayana Group', after Ramayana Prambanan and Sompilan. Ramayana in Prambanan is still actively holding performances to this day. Ramayana Sompilan has no longer held performances since the end of 1974. Ramayana Ballet Purawisata was established because Wayang Orang presentations are not much in demand by foreign tourists, mainly because of language barriers, so the audience is decreasing day by day. As a result, the incoming income is not sufficient for daily operational costs. The life of the Wayang Orang only depends on very limited subsidies from the government. In fact, the success of tourism products depends on whether there are parties involved in the process of distributing market products, namely (1) the government, (2) business people, (3) the media, and (4) local communities (Mudana, 2017: 70).

By changing the Wayang Orang show into a Sedratari called the Purawisata Ramayana Ballet, and showing it regularly, tourist visits are increasing, thus earning the title of 'The Best in Town', as well as various arts and culture awards. Among others, from the Department of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Yogyakarta City on October 12, 2001; and the Indonesian Record Museum (MURI), November 8, 2002; is the only performing arts group that has performed for 25 years without stopping (Interview with Sita Nurcahya, 10 November 2021).

At this time, the full Ramayana Ballet performance is supported by 70 people, consisting of 33 dancers who are able to dance with the Yogyakarta style dance philosophy of *kawruh joged Mataram*, namely: *greged*, *sungguh*, *ora micah*, and *mustard*; 25 people *pengrawit*, and 12 people working as relatives. The existence of this human resource

factor is a very strategic factor and must receive serious attention from relevant stakeholders (Darma Oka, 2021: 165). Until August 10, 2021, the Purawisata Ramayana Ballet has been running for 45 years, continuously without stopping (Interview with Sucipto, November 11, 2021).

### **Strategy for Offering Ramayana Ballet Show Tour Packages**

In the tourism industry, the so-called "offers" are all products produced by a group of companies related to the tourism industry that are offered to tourists, either to those who come directly or through intermediaries (Yoeti, 2003). Ramayana Ballet is staged in the 'Amphitheatre' stage performance building with a capacity of 600 seats. In addition to offering interesting performances, it also offers special dinner packages at the Gazebo Restaurant, with a garden atmosphere and beautiful and magnificent Javanese architectural designs, accompanied by gamelan music and Javanese dances.

Dinner packages and special performances are available for Indonesian tourists at a rate of IDR 200,000,-, while foreign guests are charged IDR 300,000,-. Guests at the Gazebo Restaurant are picked up from the hotel where they are staying. This is a characteristic of presenting guests, which seems to be able to make the restaurant full of enthusiastic tourists watching dance performances at Purawisata's Ramayana Ballet. In addition to the Gazebo Resort, still in the same area as the Performance Building, there is a 'Tasneem Convention Hotel' facility for foreign guests who will stay. This is as a system consisting of the components of attraction, accessibility, and amenities. In this context, the location and tourism accommodation are the most important parts that must be maintained and developed.

According to Hendrik Kusumawati, as Marketing Manager, the Ramayana Ballet Performance Package offered to the audience consists of three types, namely: (1) Special Package Ramayana Performance; (2) Educational Ramayana; (3) and Regular Ramayana (Interview, November 9, 2021).

### **Ramayana Special Package**

Ramayana Special Package, is a specially ordered show, whether shown at the Purawisata Yogya Stage, or on request, including at 5-star hotels, such as the Melia Hotel. Special orders at hotels are usually requested by state dignitaries or Wayang Wong lovers from neighboring countries who wish to enjoy a quiet and comfortable stay with a limited audience. Of course, you have to make a

performance stage, complete with sound system, lighting, and artistic stage, in addition to involving 70 personnel (dancers, musicians, singers, stage artistic team, and other supporters).

### **Ramayana Education**

Ramayana Education is a special package ordered by schools or universities, apart from being an appreciator as well as a workshop participant, who will later be involved in the performance. For technical implementation, the students or students are given a workshop on dance, karawitan, song, and makeup, with a maximum duration of 2 hours for each group. After attending the workshop, it was continued by wearing complete clothes with make-up according to the roles that had been determined by the trainers. Some of them go on to become female dancers, monkey dancers, male dancers, gamelan players, singers, fashion make-up artists, and even artistic team members. After finishing wearing clothes, continue to eat together, then perform together. Many values were obtained, especially the value of togetherness and involvement, as well as understanding the core values of the Ramayana Epos story, especially the characters of good character, which can be interpreted to be used as guidelines for daily behavior in people's lives (Nguh Seramasa, 2010). 2019: 83).

### **Ramayana Regular**

The regular Ramayana is a ticketed performance that can be seen every night. Ticket prices are Rp. 110,000,- for Indonesians and Rp. 300.000,- for non-Indonesian (foreigners) viewers. The audience seats, which have a capacity of 600 people, are always out of stock. This is as conveyed by the Maestro of Sundanese Dance, Irawati Durban. Every time they watch, they run out of tickets (Interview, 5 September 2021). The special strategy for the Ramayana Ballet Performance is that tourists understand when watching the show because the synopsis is provided in addition to Indonesian, but also in 6 foreign languages, namely English, Japanese, Chinese, German, Russian, and Dutch.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the presentation of the show changed, no longer holding the Regular Show package and the Ramayana Education Package. However, it only provides the 'Special Privacy Package', which then becomes the mainstay package. At a time when the artists were barely able to perform, the collaboration with the hospitality and travel agents was further enhanced. Another service is to serve the audience, even if it is only 1 or 2 people, and even pick up the audience from the airport to the hotel and from the hotel to the venue.

## **CONCLUSION**

The shift of the Wayang Orang Show to the Ramayana Ballet is because the manager realizes that the purpose of cultural tourism is so that the audience is interested in and understands the performances presented, especially in addition to the universal language of motion as well as the existence of six synopsis in foreign languages.

Organizing professional performing arts must have a strategy as an attraction to consumers. In addition to serving various types of Ramayana Ballet performance packages, it also provides dinner services and invites the audience. Even providing Tasneem Convention Hotel services, which are still in the same location as the venue and restaurant, is an accommodation of choice tailored to the needs of tourists. Among other things, its strategic location is close to various tourist attractions in Yogyakarta, such as the Yogyakarta Palace, as well as the Malioboro shopping center.

With the strategy of having hotels, restaurants, and performance venues in one location, as well as a service to pick up visitors if they are not staying at the Tasneem Convention Hotel, dinner is served with Yogyakarta-style dances and the involvement of the audience as players in the Ramayana Ballet Show with training. Through workshops and many other strategies, the Ramayana Ballet, as a development of the Wayang Wong Show, is still surviving (45 years).

Tomars' concept of tourism performing arts consists of (1) imitation of the original; (2) short or compact or miniature form of the original; (3) variety; (4) abandonment of sacred, magical, and symbolic values; and (5) low cost. Soedarsono, 1999: 8 (Tomars). The concept of tourism art, on the contrary, is the opposite to the Ramayana Ballet performance, including (1) the duration of time is not short (one and a half hours), and (2) the ticket price is quite expensive (compared to the Wayang Wong Sriwedari Solo Show, which is only Rp. 10,000,-, for VIP class, the ticket price for the Ramayana Ballet is Rp. 100.000,- for Nusantara Travelers). However, the show is always full, so the concept of a short and compact tour, as well as a cheap price, does not occur in the Ramayana Ballet show. The charm of the Ramayana Ballet Show lies, in fact, in tickets that are "not cheap" when compared to the Wayang Orang Show, which is still taking place in Sriwedari Solo and Baratha Jakarta.

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