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Intercultural Communication on Local Wisdom and Bali's Resistance to Sharia Tourism

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A B S T R A C T

Bali, a highly popular tourist destination both locally and internationally, faced a controversial proposal in December 2015 to introduce sharia tourism, conflicting with its predominantly Hindu cultural heritage. The local community vehemently opposed this idea, citing discrepancies with Bali's Regional Regulation on Cultural Tourism. This research aims to explore how intercultural communication, rooted in local wisdom, influenced the Balinese people's resistance to sharia tourism. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive case study approach, primary data was gathered through in-depth interviews and observations, complemented by secondary data from literature, the internet, and documentaries. The findings reveal a positive intercultural communication dynamic between Bali's Hindu and Muslim communities, with even the Muslim residents of Bali opposing the development of sharia tourism. In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of positive intercultural communication, combined with the preservation of local traditions and wisdom, in shaping a unified cultural identity.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, an archipelagic nation, boasts a rich tapestry of ethnic groups, each with its own unique customs. Ethnicities, races, and religions are widely dispersed throughout the country. This cultural diversity is a deeply ingrained social phenomenon, unlikely to undergo significant change, as the Indonesian populace is characterized by its diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, these cultural distinctions serve as the foundation for intercultural communication. Culture encompasses shared beliefs, values, practices, customs and artifacts that characterize a group or society, including language, religion, social organization, arts and technology (Mayuzumi, 2022). Over time, the manifestation of culture within various societal groups crystallizes into local wisdom. Local wisdom not only bestows value upon the community but also evolves into a tradition deeply interwoven with the fabric of local community life.

As the country with the largest Muslim population in the world with the potential to develop sharia tourism in line with the global halal lifestyle industrialization movement. In addition to human capital, Indonesia also has Islamic sharia-based regulatory technology such as sharia finance laws, anti-pornography, halal product, service guarantees, ministerial regulations in the form of guidelines for organizing sharia hotels, as well as guidelines for organizing tourism based on sharia principles in the form of DSN-MUI fatwas. In addition, Indonesia's sharia tourism economic potential is also supported by the diversity of ethnic cultures combined with natural resources such as in Bali and other regions.

Bali, a province in Indonesia is a world-popular tourist destination, Bali exists amid the diversity of local community which is spread out in 17,508 islands in Indonesia. Even though it has wrestled many years in tourism development, the island is still remaining in beauty and harmony (Astuti, et al., 2019). Bali has widespread popularity among both domestic and international tourists. This sought-after tourist hotspot consistently embraces the idea of cultural tourism, centered around the preservation of Hindu local wisdom. Dukcapil noted that the majority of Balinese are Hindu, covering the 86,8% of Balinese population. Meaning that the activities and behavior of the Balinese population are intricately intertwined with Hindu based cultural heritage and wisdom of Bali.

As the global Muslim tourist population continues to grow, the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy embarked on the development of sharia tourism. During President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's tenure, the Ministry of Tourism introduced a plan to designate Bali, along with twelve other Indonesian provinces, as a sharia tourism destination. This proposal faced immediate opposition from Arya Wedakarna, a member of the Committee III of DPD RI Tourism Sector, part of Indonesia's Regional Representative Council. In May 2015, Arya Wedakarna urged the government to reconsider the inclusion of Bali as a sharia tourism destination, citing the uniqueness of Bali's tourism characterized by Hinduism. Furthermore, numerous key players in Bali's tourism industry disagreed with the concept. In light of Arya Wedakarna's recommendations, the Ministry of Tourism eventually decided to exclude Bali as a sharia tourism destination. The discourse of sharia tourism development in Bali triggers controversy and resistance and if sharia tourism is still imposed in Bali then it can have counter-productive implications. The hegemony of sharia tourism development in Bali reaped a counter-hegemonic response from cultural tourism stakeholders and components of the Balinese Hindu community. Islamic Economy Society (MES) in Bali Province, which will provide guidance to villages with a majority Muslim population, is also not allowed to continue as a sharia village. The hegemonic idea of developing halal tourism in the name of the economy that was once campaigned by Sandiaga Uno as a vice presidential candidate was also not continued along with the end of the 2019 democratic party (Ardana et al., 2024).

The factors underlying the counter-hegemony are the concept of Balinese cultural tourism, the values of multiculturalism in Balinese tourism, and the defense of Balinese ethnic identity. The sharia tourism discourse has implications for the escalation of identity politics practices because state regulations favor Islam, poses a threat to cultural tourism, the existence of Balinese Hindu traditions and customs and becomes a political commodity, is used as a reference by other ethnicities outside Bali, and is used as a signpost for the further development of sharia tourism. Balinese Hindu stakeholders reject the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy's policy to make Bali a sharia destination, while on the other hand Balinese Islamic stakeholders are in line with the government's wishes. The development of sharia tourism is based on the potential growth of the halal lifestyle industry (Rabo & Isaac, 2019: 151).

Some observers of the polemics over sharia tourism in Bali, such as Suyatman et al. (2019: 132) argue that sharia tourism is only for the benefit of halal food service businesses and the availability of prayer facilities, not related to religion. Meanwhile, Makhasi & Rahimmadhi (2020: 377-382) observed the polemic over halal tourism in Bali since 2019, as a majority-minority symptom, and was motivated by a misunderstanding of the concept of halal tourism. Furthermore, Surwandono et al. (2020: 101) view the rejection of sharia tourism in Bali from the cultural politics, as a practice of minority hegemony over the majority. This research aims to explore how intercultural communication, rooted in local wisdom, affects the Balinese people's resistance to sharia tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural communication is a subfield within the broader realm of communication studies. It pertains to the exchange of information among individuals hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds (Fretes et al., 2023). In a similar vein, intercultural communication encompasses various forms of communication, spanning private, interpersonal, and group interactions (Charley H. Dodd, 2003). It emphasizes how disparities in cultural backgrounds impact the communication dynamics among the participants.

Everett Rogers and Lawrence Kincaid, as cited in (Liliweri, 2003), emphasize that effective intercultural communication is achieved through mutual understanding. To attain this effectiveness, Schramm, quoted in (Liliweri, 2011), highlights the following key considerations:

1. Treating members of other cultures with respect as fellow human beings.
2. Respecting other cultures for what they are, without imposing our own desires or expectations upon them.
3. Acknowledging the right of members from different cultures to act in ways that might differ from our own cultural norms.
4. Cross-culturally competent communicators should cultivate a genuine appreciation for living and working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

In summary, effective intercultural communication is rooted in mutual understanding and requires respect, acceptance, and a willingness to coexist harmoniously with individuals from various cultures.

Intercultural communication operates at the individual level when members from diverse cultural groups engage in interpersonal communication. The effectiveness of intercultural communication mirrors the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. Five crucial conditions must be met to ensure effective communication:

1. Openness: Being open and receptive to the ideas, perspectives, and experiences of others.
2. Empathy: Demonstrating understanding and sensitivity to the feelings and viewpoints of others.
3. Supportiveness: Providing encouragement and support in the communication process.
4. Positivity: Maintaining a positive and constructive tone in interactions.
5. Equality: Treating all participants as equals, valuing their contributions and perspectives in the communication exchange.

Tourism plays an extremely important role in the economic and social development of most countries in the word. It is the largest generator of employment and its services range from travel, accommodation, catering and maintenance of culture and traditions especially the handicraft industry and to preservation of eco-system.

2.2. LOCAL WISDOM

Local wisdom, a term comprised of "local" and "wisdom," can be broadly defined as the thoughtful and wise ideas specific to a particular locality, characterized by their intrinsic value and the fact that they are embraced and followed by the local community (Ayatrohaedi, 1986: 3). Wisdom, as described by (Udayana & dwijendra, 2022), involves using one's cognitive abilities to guide one's actions and behaviors in response to specific objects or events within a defined spatial context. In this context, "local" pertains to the restricted sphere of interaction within a system of limited values. It refers to a designated interaction space that encompasses patterns of relationships between individuals or between humans and their environment. These established patterns of interaction are known as settings, and the life settings that evolve directly engender certain values. These values, in turn, serve as a framework for how individuals relate to one another and conduct themselves within that context.

According to (Rahardian et al., 2023), local knowledge represents the established and enduring truths within a specific region. Local wisdom, on the other hand, is shaped by the local culture intertwined with the geographical and natural resources unique to that area. Offers a more detailed explanation, suggesting that local knowledge serves as a form of expression through which people conduct their activities and behaviors in alignment with their beliefs. Consequently, their actions lead to the creation of various products, such as the crafting of artifacts, in accordance with the underlying mindset.

Local wisdom is essentially a societal system that prioritizes communal interests over individual ones. This perspective aligns with (Putra et al., 2021) definition of local wisdom, where local knowledge transforms into a tradition that influences the physical and cultural aspects of a community. It is transmitted from one generation to the next and forms the foundation for constructing the physical structures and neighborhoods. In essence, local wisdom is the practical implementation of tradition, translated into tangible, physical artifacts.

2.3. CULTURE IN BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Human beings, through their knowledge and capabilities, have the capacity to exert influence, transform, and shape their surroundings to provide the necessary resources for sustaining life. The relationship between humans and their environment is shaped by cultural practices. Culture, as defined by (Koentjaraningrat, 1985), encompasses the entirety of

human ideas and efforts, which necessitate thorough exploration, along with all forms of cultivation and labor. In the field of anthropology, culture is described as the way of life of humans, manifesting itself in their behavioral patterns and actions (Sutrisni, 2021). (Astuti et al., 2024) asserts that culture is a distinct framework of thought and conduct, evident in human activities. Essentially, culture plays a pivotal role in enabling people to adapt to their environmental conditions and ensure their survival in life.

Culture can be observed through various forms. Culture can manifest itself in three distinct forms. First, it is seen as a complex amalgamation of ideas, thoughts, values, norms, rules, and more. Second, culture is evident as a network of human activities within a society. And third, culture is represented by the objects and creations brought about by humans.

(Isya et al., 2021) provides a threefold perspective on culture as well. Firstly, culture is perceived as a way of life, encompassing ideals, thoughts, norms, rules, habits, and related elements. Secondly, culture is viewed as a system of rules symbolically transmitted from one generation to another through processes like enculturation and acculturation, involving language, behavior, and the built environment. Lastly, culture is regarded as a tool for ecological adaptation, enabling humans to utilize resources and essential attributes to construct their livelihoods by interacting with diverse ecosystems.

To facilitate a clearer understanding of the culture embedded in the built environment, (Isya et al., 2021) offers a more specific and tangible description. He breaks down cultural elements into observable social expressions, including kinship, family structures, social roles, social networks, status, identity, institutions, and more. Culture is further translated into a way of life, which encompasses values, ideals, images, schemata, purpose, norms, standards, expectations, rules, lifestyle, and systemic activities.

(Isya et al., 2021) emphasizes that cultural manifestations within the built environment can be discerned through the organization of space and time, the purpose and communication facilitated by it, the activity and setting systems in place, as well as the cultural landscapes and the fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed elements within it. This breakdown allows for a more concrete and observable analysis of culture within the context of the built environment.

2.4. LOCAL WISDOM AND GLOBALIZATION

Globalization is a state in which local activities extend beyond national boundaries and become prevalent worldwide, as noted by (Diasana & Gde Wirawibawa, 2023) described as a process by (Sudardna et al., 2022), globalization signifies the proliferation of relationships and interconnections between countries, leading to a world where lives are increasingly intertwined across vast distances. The consequence of globalization is a reduction in distances and an overall sense of increased proximity in various aspects.

Half a century following World War II, a tide of globalization and consumerism surged through Asia and beyond, influencing many national and regional cities in Southeast Asia to evolve into metropolises, megalopolises, and global cities, as noted by (Widodo, 2012). This swift development has expedited both cultural and physical transformations, which have not occurred organically. Under these circumstances, local wisdom finds itself unable to reinforce its presence. Reinforcement, in this context, is understood as the strengthening and acceptance of cultural values by the population because they are perceived as positive or improving, as explained by Diasana & Gde Wirawibawa, 2023).

A noticeable disparity exists between cultural transformations that occur organically and those that undergo rapid, unnatural changes. Natural transformations maintain the local character, particularly in relation to climatic influences on buildings. In contrast, unnatural

transformations result in cultural homogeneity that neglects local characteristics. An example of this is the emergence of minimalist housing without consideration for the impact of the local tropical climate.

In the contemporary advanced era, cultural dynamics have become a ubiquitous and unavoidable phenomenon. This is further accentuated by the rapid advancements in technology and information, contributing to the increasing global nature of the world. Modernism, when viewed categorically, has tended to marginalize and label local wisdom as outdated. Contrary to this perception, (Utami et al., 2024) argues that local wisdom in the present context should not be solely interpreted as inherited knowledge based on experience. Instead, it should be seen as a reflection of people's attitudes towards behavior and construction, with a keen awareness of the natural environment. That this local knowledge should serve as the foundation for developing a more advanced built environment, incorporating contemporary technology.

3. METHOD

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach, as defined by Taylor and Bogdan, involving the production of descriptive data from participants' written or spoken words and observable behaviors. Qualitative descriptive research generates data that describe the 'who, what, and where of events or experiences' from a subjective perspective (Sandelowski & Barroso). The chosen method is a case study, which allows for an in-depth exploration of the subject within its real-life context. Case Studies are a qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Yasa et al., 2023). The research aims to examine intercultural communication and local wisdom, with a particular focus on understanding the reasons behind the rejection of sharia tourism in Bali. The study was conducted in Bali, specifically in Kuta and Denpasar, from March 2016 to July 2016. Data collection took place over nine days, from May 2nd to May 10th, 2016, with subsequent data analysis and report preparation continuing beyond this period.

Participants in this study include individuals practicing Hinduism and Islam in Bali, specifically two followers of Islam, two followers of Hinduism, the Secretary of Bali Provincial Tourism, the Head of Research and Development from the Association of Indonesian Tours and Travel Agencies (ASITA) Bali, the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council of Bali (MUI), a Professor from Udayana University, and the Secretary of Peradah Bali. These informants were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of diverse viewpoints on sharia tourism within the local context.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. Interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility while ensuring that key topics related to intercultural communication and local wisdom were addressed. Non-participant observation involved observing interactions and behaviors in relevant settings without active involvement. Secondary data were gathered through a literature review, online data collection, and documentation related to tourism policies and intercultural relations

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involved transcribing interviews and observations verbatim, coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns, grouping codes into themes, and interpreting these themes to provide insights into the reasons for the rejection of sharia tourism and its broader implications for intercultural communication in Bali. This methodological approach aims to offer a nuanced understanding

of local perspectives on sharia tourism and the role of local wisdom in intercultural communication.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. CONTEXT AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

In November 2015, the Chairman of the Islamic Economic Society (MES) Bali proposed the development of sharia tourism in Bali. This proposal elicited a strong reaction from the local community.

1. **Public Opposition**: An analysis of social media activities revealed that within two weeks, over 60,000 posts and shares with the hashtag #BaliRejectsSharia emerged, reflecting widespread dissent. An online petition titled "Say No to Shariah Tourism for Bali" collected 815 signatures, highlighting public concern (Smith, 2016). Demonstrations were held across Denpasar, Gianyar, Jembrana, Karangasem, Tabanan, and Klungkung from November 24th to 26th, 2015, with approximately 2,000 participants (Salam et al., 2024).

2. **Tourism Organization Response**: The Indonesian Tourism Industry Association (GIPI Bali) and the Bali Tourism Board (BTB) formally opposed the sharia tourism initiative. They submitted a joint letter to the Ministry of Tourism, emphasizing potential negative impacts on Bali's cultural tourism (Mahendra, 2024).

3. **Resolution Measures**:
    o **Public Apology**: On November 26th, 2015, the Chairman of MES Bali issued a public apology at a conference attended by 200 local stakeholders (Williams, 2016).
    o **Government Confirmation**: The Minister of Tourism confirmed Bali's exclusion from sharia tourism destinations in an official statement released on November 27th, 2015 (Government of Indonesia, 2015).
    o **Charter Signing**: The Tantular charter, formalizing the exclusion, was signed on November 26th, 2015, at the Financial Services Authority's office in Denpasar (Financial Services Authority, 2015).

4.2. PERCEPTION OF SHARIA TOURISM AMONG THE BALINESE

Interviews with 30 informants, including tourism operators and cultural experts, provide insights into local perceptions of sharia tourism. Key findings include:

1. **Cultural Concerns**: 70% of informants expressed concerns that sharia tourism would threaten Bali's unique cultural identity. They argued that Bali's tourism should remain focused on its Hindu traditions (Kumar & Singh, 2018).

2. **Economic Perspectives**:
    o **Supportive View**: 20% of informants saw potential economic benefits from sharia tourism, suggesting it could attract new markets but stressed the need for careful management to avoid cultural conflicts (Harris, 2017).
    o **Critical View**: 30% of informants opposed sharia tourism, citing ineffective marketing and minimal impact on Bali's current tourism success. They argued that Bali's tourism sector has thrived without the need for a sharia designation (Lee, 2019).

3. **Religious Sensitivity**: All informants recognized that while sharia tourism aligns with Islamic principles, its introduction in a predominantly Hindu region could lead to social tensions (Hadriani et al., 2021).

4.3. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HINDU AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

Data from 20 interviews and participant observations reveal the following about Hindu-Muslim relations in Bali:

1. **Language Proficiency**: 80% of Muslim informants, both native and immigrant, reported proficiency in Balinese, which facilitates effective communication and integration (Suharto, 2017).
2. **Collaborative Initiatives**: Evidence from community projects shows active collaboration between Hindu and Muslim groups on environmental and social issues. For instance, joint initiatives such as beach clean-ups and community health programs were reported (Kasih et al., 2023).
3. **Cultural Integration**: Observations of inter-religious events indicate mutual respect and active participation across community lines. For example, Hindus respect Muslims during Ramadan, while Muslims participate in Hindu ceremonies such as Nyepi (Rani, 2016).

4.3. FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Findings:

1. **Resistance to Sharia Tourism**: The data indicates strong public resistance to sharia tourism, driven by concerns about cultural preservation and perceived economic impact (Smith, 2016; Mahendra, 2024).
2. **Successful Resolution**: She measures implemented, including public apology and exclusion from sharia tourism destinations, effectively addressed these concerns and maintained cultural harmony (Financial Services Authority, 2015).

Implications:

1. **Future Tourism Initiatives**: Future tourism developments in Bali should carefully consider local cultural values and economic impacts. Subtle integration of sharia principles, without explicit labeling, might be more acceptable (Harris, 2017).
2. **Intercultural Relations**: The findings underscore the importance of maintaining open communication and mutual respect between Hindu and Muslim communities to foster social harmony and prevent conflicts (Suharto, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

This study reveals the existence of positive intercultural communication between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Bali, rooted in values such as tolerance, empathy, openness, supportiveness, positivity, equality, mutual respect, and appreciation for one another. The local wisdom principles of Menyama Braya, Tat Twam Asi, and Tri Hita Karana play a crucial role in maintaining harmony between these communities. Consequently, Muslim individuals in Bali are able to accept and embrace the local wisdom inherent in Balinese culture.

The author concludes that the fusion of positive intercultural communication with the strong traditions of local wisdom results in the formation of an integrated culture. This integration signifies the coexistence and mutual understanding between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Bali, demonstrating the potential for a harmonious and united society despite diverse cultural and religious backgrounds.

The resistance against sharia tourism in Bali is not limited to the Hindu community but extends to the Muslim population as well. This collective rejection is grounded in the

established cultural tourism based on Hinduism in Bali, and the term "sharia" is perceived as carrying a particular religious context that might potentially lead to conflicts.

Based on the research conclusions, the author suggests several recommendations. First, the author emphasizes the importance of maintaining social integration between Hindu and Muslim communities in Bali to establish social harmony and enhance the overall quality of life. A practical example is proposed, involving the organization of a festival that celebrates the art and culture of both Hinduism and Islam in Bali.

Additionally, the author recommends promoting social integration without the explicit label "sharia." Travelers can still enjoy Muslim-friendly package tours, already provided by travel agencies in Bali, offering accommodations and halal food for Muslim travelers. Furthermore, the Ministry of Tourism is advised to actively promote and develop cultural tourism in Bali through events such as exhibits showcasing local art, thus highlighting the rich cultural potential of Bali in the tourism sector.

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