

Creative Economy Empowerment Based on Local Commodity as Tourism Communication in Garut Regency

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Abstract - Garut is one of the area in West Java that has potential natural resources for the economy and tourism. *Akarwangi*/vetiver is a local commodity that can be processed into various forms of craft that have economic value. Through skillful hands, vetiver which was originally only fragrant aroma roots, became a Garut souvenir that much people loved. Franz Limiart, a creative economic Chinese practitioner who loves his hometown of Garut optimizes the use of vetiver into a local commodity that can support the tourism of Garut as well as support many people around him. This study aims to determine the utilization of vetiver as Garut's local natural resources into goods of economic value as well as the steps undertaken in empowering the creative economy to support tourism in Garut. The method used for this research is qualitative descriptive, with data collection technique through in-depth interview, observation and literature study. The results show, creative economic empowerment through the vetiver encourage tourism in Garut to be increased and improves the economic wealth of surrounding communities. Internet media was used to introduce the craft in cyberspace. The conclusion of this research, creative economy to support tourism of Garut and utilization of natural potency and local human resources strengthen the characteristic of tourism in Garut. The recommendation of this research is the need for assistance to other commodities besides the fragrant root, so that local potency of Garut can be exposed more widely.

Index Terms - Empowering, creative economy, vetiver, local commodity, Garut tourism

I. INTRODUCTION

Garut is one of the area in West Java that has potential natural resources for the economy and tourism. One of the natural resources that Garut has best is vetiver (*akar wangi*). Vetiver is a plant that has similarity to lemongrass and rice. The scientific name is *vetiveria zizanioides*. In Indonesia, this plant is only grow in Garut. Elsewhere are in Haiti and Jamaica. Since 1918, vetiver cultivated in Garut and processed into vetiver oil or essential oil known as Golden Java Vetiver Oil. Every year, Garut regency produces 50-60 tons of vetiver. Consider its great potential, Garut Regent decided to provide

about 2,400 hectares and all of them spread in District Leles, Cilawu, Bayongbong, and Samarang.¹

As the largest producer of vetiver products in Indonesia, Garut supplies these commodities throughout the archipelago. In fact, the oil is also imported to several neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. Now, Garut became the second largest producer of vetiver oil in the World. The whole parts of the plant is useful. From the root to stem, it can be utilized. Vetiver rods can be used as craft raw materials, while the leaves can be processed into oil as well as the root part.²

The opportunity to make vetiver as a craft is actualized by an artist named Franz Limiart. It becomes part of the tourism industry in Garut regency of West Java. Through the skillful hands of craftsmen he nurtured, Franz make the vetiver as a typical souvenir of Garut. The element of locality in the vetiver craft products is very subtle. Apart from the main ingredients that only exist in Garut, souvenirs from the vetiver is also made by craftsmen from Garut and it marketed only in Garut and not open branches in other areas.

The efforts that Franz made, open the opportunity for the development of creative economy based on local commodities in Garut. The handicraft products they produce are not limited to vetiver. Various products with other basic ingredients are developed, although the core is still at the vetiver. The development of various creative economy industries aims to improve the tourism industry in Garut. This study aim to determine the utilization of vetiver as Garut's local natural resources into goods of economic value as well as the steps undertaken in empowering the creative economy to support tourism in Garut.

II. METHOD

This research uses qualitative method with phenomenology approach. I attempt to express the efforts made by art worker and entrepreneur of vetiver craft, Franz Limiart, to make local commodity-based business into

¹www.akarwangigarut.com

²<http://jelajahgarut.com/akar-wangi>; retrieved 23/8/2017

speciality of Garut as well as a medium to communicate tourism in the city of Dodol.

The phenomenological approach focuses its attention on the individual's conscious experience. According to Polkinghorne in Creswell (1998: 51), phenomenological research explains or reveals the meaning of experience that some individuals perceive about concepts or phenomena. Researchers try to assemble the experience of the studied individual into a reality that is found according to their point of view. The key to the discovery of truth is in the informant being examined or the person who found the problem (Bajari, 2009: 74-75). Data collection is done through interviews, observation and literature study and related documentation research.

III. RESULTS

A. Vetiver crafts

Vetiver craft is one of the innovations pioneered and developed by Franz Limiart, an arts worker and a creative industry perpetrators, since 1998. Starting from his visit to one of the craft exhibition in Jakarta in 1989, Franz was interested in the vetiver craft available in the exhibition. After asking about the area of the vetiver producer, he get the answers, that the best vetiver producer is in Garut regency. From there, Franz took the initiative to develop handicrafts with basic ingredients of aromatic roots from Garut.

Developing the creative economy through the vetiver is one of Franz's efforts to empower local resources, both natural and human, to support tourism in Garut regency. Franz who has educational tourism background, wanting to have characteristic of Garut in tourism. For him, vetiver craft is a suitable souvenir to be used as a typical tourism attraction in Garut regency, because the raw materials and the human resources that process it comes from Garut and marketing is only done in Garut, so that the trademark was maintained. The product of handicrafts produced from the vetiver, consist of the form of Garut sheep, tablecloths, wall hangings, prayer rugs and others.

Franz said the handicraft business from the vetiver is a form of expression of gratitude to God who has predicted him born in Garut, a city known as Switzerland van Java.

To market the product, at the beginning of its pioneering Franz promote it through various craft fairs to overseas, such as Malaysia, Japan, South Africa and Singapore. As a result, since 2001, vetiver craft products are routinely exported to 5,000 items to Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia with selling price of Rp 20,000 to Rp 60,000 per item. Exports are also made to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in the form of prayer rugs at a price of Rp 150,000. However, when exported scraps of exports flooded Indonesia in 2005, craft sales were diverted from exports to local markets. The goal is to made people of Indonesia get quality goods.

"The omzet of goods may decrease by almost 50 percent, but the price per item is actually higher. Previously, the average price of Rp 90,000 per item, in the local market up to Rp 150,000 per item after added a touch of

charming Garutan batik. The biggest market are Jakarta and Bandung. It proves Indonesian citizens are also very fond of quality goods,"Franzsaid.



Figure 1 Prayer matres made from vetiver
Source: www.akarwangigarut.com

To guarantee the quality of the goods produced, Franz cultivates the vetiver in five sub-districts, namely Leles, Samarang, Pasirwangi, Bayongbong and Cilawu, which is done by the farmers there. Craftsmen as many as seven groups built scattered in the District of Karang Pawitan, Leles, Sela Awi, Garut City, and Bayongbong.

In order to properly manage the group, then in 1998, Franz founded the Joint Business Group (KUB) Zocha Graha Kriya, which is engaged in handicrafts and arts. Zocha, or *soca*, meaning 'eye' in Sundanese, has the meaning that everything in the Zocha Gallery is enjoyed by the eye. KUB Zocha was inaugurated as a company on 9 September 1999 at 9.00. Zocha is a combination of artisans, workers and activists of art and tourism activists.



Figure 2. The process of making prayer matres from vetiver
Source: www.pikiran-rakyat.com

There are eight business groups that are interconnected and categorized into different work functions. The eight groups are vetiver farmer groups, weaving groups, sewing groups, embroidery groups, batik craftsmen groups, bamboo craftsmen groups, ornamental butterfly craftsmen, and box craftsmen groups. The eight groups are intensively scouted directly by the founder / owner and General Manager Zocha in order to have the techniques and skills in accordance with

predetermined standards so as to produce quality handicrafts products and high aesthetic value.

The handicraft products produced by KUB Zocha Graha Kriya mostly utilize local potency of Garut Regency, that is vetiver as main material of its product making. In addition, with creativity and techniques, this SME collaborate the product of vetiver craft by producing other types of handicraft products made from coconut shells, bamboo cendani and duck feathers. According to Franz, at first, the idea of craft design comes from his own creations, but over time, many come from consumers who order.

Until now, Zocha produces more than 400 types of handicrafts, both made from vetiver and other traditional materials. The types of crafts include hoods, magazines places, tissue places, key chains, wall hangings, bags, lanterns, refrigerator lids, dolls and pillowcases.



Fig. 3. Domba Garut (Garut Sheep) made from vetiver
Source: www.jelajahgarut.com

To optimize the management of business and make the vetiver craft a speciality of Garut tourism, Franz opened the gallery only in Garut.

"One reason I do not open a branch because I want buyers come directly to Garut. I hope, with the arrival of buyers to Garut, Tourism, and culinary typical of Garut participate lifted its potential. Hopefully the vetiver can give way to better hope," Franz said.

B. Product marketing via internet

In addition to displays in the Zocha gallery on Jalan Pakuwon 10, Garut, vetiver craft is also offered widely through the internet. The selected media are website, Facebook and Twitter. All this three are named the same, *akar wangi Garut*. (www.akarwangigarut.com, *Akar Wangi Garut dan* (@AkarWangiGarut). Name made to facilitate the identification of social media in use.

Website www.akarwangigarut.com contains complete information about the products and how to order by online. The website also comes with a number of articles on vetiver and KUB Zocha profile so that website visitors have an overview of fragrant roots and handicraft products produced by Zocha.

In Facebook, the post is displayed not only complete information about the product of vetiver produced, also about the history, meaningful stories until the speech of certain days

(Ramadan, Idul Fitri, Independence Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day), and others.

In Twitter, because the limited space, @akarwangigarut account just write down the handicraft products offered as well as links to know the form and price of the product.

Marketing products through the internet is one form of tourism communication that can be done. Information submitted related to tourism in Garut.

C. Implications

Efforts made by Franz pioneered the craft of vetiver brings impact not only on himself as the initiator, also for the community around Garut and to Garut tourism. These efforts generate a creative economy and provide jobs for the people of Garut. As an individual who loves Garut, Franz wants a vetiver craft, as a genuine commodity of Garut, produced by craftsmen from Garut and marketed only in Garut. Thus, the handicrafts are characteristic of Garut and its benefits is for Garut.

Franz has 18 employees as well as 100 craftsmen working on handicraft made from vetiver. Craftsmen spread in several districts, including Cilawu, Bayongbong, Garut City, Samarang and Cikelet. Previously, they received training to produce works made from vetiver. They work in their respective villages and some of the craftsmen are displayed in the gallery as well as the Franz residence at Jalan Pakuwon 10, Garut Kota.

"Many of those who used to be unemployed now have additional skills. They also earn a very worth income every month," Franz said.

Franz says his greatest happiness is not when he gets big profits. It happens when the craft of the vetiver can also scent Garut. A lot of print and electronic mass media coverage of vetiver roots trigger tourists, national figures, traders, researchers, until school students accidentally come to Garut. His role as a natural photographer and cultural tourism activists helped smooth the move.

IV. CONCLUSION

Creative economy support tourism of Garut. Many people get the benefit from what Franz did with the vetiver especially on creative economic industry. Utilization of natural potency and local human resources strengthen the characteristic of tourism in Garut.

The recommendation of this research is the need for assistance to other commodities besides the vetiver, so that local potency of Garut can be exposed more widely.

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