




Ngibing Lengger: Archiving Bodily Performance for Creative Tourism in Banyumas

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Abstract. The pandemic has scattered all the aspects of tourism in Indonesia. Thus, the post-pandemic become the revival of new concept of tourism. In relation with Banyumas, *lengger* could possibly perceived as a new hope in tourism. Therefore, this research is aimed at investigating the evolving creative culture in relation with *lengger* as one of the tourism objects. At this point, *lengger* as one of the iconic traditional performances from Banyumas plays an essential role to promote the creative tourism in Post-Pandemic Era. This research used performance ethnography to analyse how *lengger* possibly creates a creative culture through *ngibing*. The theory of participatory culture and creative tourism are used to analyze the issue of *lengger* in relation with the revival of tourism in the post-pandemic era. The result shows that *lengger* as the iconic performance from Banyumas expand the horizon of creative culture concept. *Lengger* possibly becomes one of the interesting stage-tourism in which they expand their roles in the context of cultural tourism. Further, *ngibing* in *lengger* invites the active involvement of the viewer to participate in dancing that shape the creative culture. Thus, it highlighted how body become the artefact to archive the collective memory. The digitalization possibly evolved the archiving process, yet the active body becomes an alternative to archive not only the wonderful memory but also the experience of art performance.

Keywords: *ngibing* · *lengger* · cultural tourism · creative tourism · bodily performance

1 Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic that has been lasting since the end of 2019 in Indonesia had a tremendous impact on many sectors such as tourism. In fact, Indonesia imposed policy restrictions as so called Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB). This restriction is banned and limited all crowd activities. However, 2022 is the new normal as it marks a shifting pattern from being closed to give more space for gathering. The policies related to this post-pandemic also produce various creative steps from tourism actors to maintain their existence. Indeed, Banyumas as one of tourist destination spread the hype of the revival of tourism. Therefore, I argue that *lengger* as the identity of Banyumas could possibly managed as the magnetic vibes to boost the tourism in Banyumas.

Post-pandemic is the starting point for the revival of tourism which also requires a lot of effort to adapt. In relation to cultural politics, it also involves economic politics. Banyumas offers many activities of tourism such as natural tourism, cultural tourism, religious tourism, culinary tourism, etc. These activities are chosen by the tourists for the experience and fulfill their fantasies. [1] states that tourists celebrate different destinations, communities, and activities because they offer an illusion or fantasy, something different and contrary to everyday life. Being trapped in daily routines deliberately lets people need escapism. Thus, people need to seek some new experiences to fulfill the fantasy as well as to escape from the routines.

In the tourism landscape in Indonesia, Banyumas offers a variety of tourist destinations. In the perspective of cultural tourism, Banyumas offers a million fantasies through experiences. Cultural tourism covers not just the consumption of the cultural products of the past, but also of contemporary culture or the 'way of life' of a people or region. Cultural tourism can therefore be seen as covering both 'heritage tourism' (related to artefacts of the past) and 'arts tourism' (related to contemporary cultural production). On the contrary this concept departs from the concept of culture which is interpreted as culture as almost everything that we are and everything we do is problematic unless we differentiate between the activities that are contained within it. Therefore, cultural tourism possibly includes: Heritage sites (e.g. archaeological sites, whole towns, monuments, museums), Performing arts venues (e.g. theaters, concert halls, cultural centers), Visual arts (e.g. galleries, sculpture parks, photography museums, architecture), Festivals and special events (e.g. music festivals, sporting events, carnivals), Religious sites (e.g. cathedrals, temples, pilgrimage destinations, spiritual retreats), Rural environments (e.g. villages, farms, national parks, ecomuseums), Indigenous communities and traditions (e.g. tribal people, ethnic groups, minority cultures). Arts and crafts (e.g., textiles, pottery, painting, sculpture), Language (e.g., learning or practice), Gastronomy (e.g. wine tasting, food sampling, cookery courses), Industry and commerce (e.g. factory visits, mines, breweries and distilleries, canal trips), Modern popular culture (e.g. pop music, shopping, fashion, media, design, technology), Special interest activities (e.g. painting, photography, weaving). However, this research applied the cultural tourism concept not only to identify lengger as part of it. This concept is also used in magnifying the embodiment of experience through *ngibing lengger*.

Further, this research investigates lengger as one of tourist attractions in Banyumas that takes a role in cultural tourism. Lengger is a dance that is closely associated with Banyumas [2]. It represents the cultural identity of Banyumas in relation to nature through its various elements. Lengger is expected to be one of the magnetic attractions to boost the cultural tourism in Banyumas. In its development, lengger began to create a community to support their performing activities. In lengger terminology, *ngibing lengger* can be seen as a magical offer to attract tourists to visit Banyumas. *Ngibing* means engaging the tourist with the expectation of experiencing the dancing vibes.

Ngibing lengger as a part of cultural tourism is seen as a paradigm that is closely related to creative tourism. [3] stated that "creative tourism" to be an experiential subset of cultural tourism that demonstrates four characteristics: (1) it involves the transfer of culture-based, place-specific endogenous knowledge to the visitor; (2) it includes the experiential participation of the visitor in activities that embody such knowledge;

(3) it operates in a collaborative paradigm in some manner; and (4) it demonstrates a longer view beyond the actual tourist experience toward the host community's cultural sustainability. At this point, lengger is seen as a medium to transfer the experiential participation that develop the concept of creative tourism in the context of cultural tourism.

There is a shifting trend on cultural tourism research. [3] states that existing texts (especially in Europe) tend to concentrate on cultural tourism as a form of attractions or resources management with the focus on heritage tourism or the management of cultural events. Further, [3] develops the concept of cultural tourism through smaller communities, in which he investigates the place, cultural, and local representation. Localhood and representation are important findings in this study in the context of global changes caused by pandemics such as from massive to smaller tourism. The different research of [4] focused on the cultural tourism on cultural performance in Bali. This study critically reviews how cultural performances in Bali represent two different things when performed in places of worship and performed on stage performances. This research elaborates *lengger* in the perspective of cultural tourism, which focused on the embodiment of experience through *Ngibing* in the *lengger* performance. In addition, this study also probes at how lengger as a community produces several events to promote Banyumas.

2 Methods

This research was conducted using the performance ethnography. [5] states that

Performance ethnography represents and performs rituals from everyday life, using performing as a method of representation and a method of understanding. Critical and reflexive performance ethnography dialectically situates the researcher and those he or she studies within capitalist culture, in a dialogue or exchange that reframes and reposes the "question of understanding itself".

Data are collected through in-depth interviews with the lengger communities, *Rumah Lengger Banyumas* and *Otniel Dance Community*. Data are also collected by observing their events in Banyumas, *Jagad lengger festival* and *Peken Banyumas*. In addition, secondary data are obtained through their social media, journals, books, and websites related to lengger. The data are analyzed using cultural tourism and relates it to the embodiment of memory to see how these two things intertwine in shaping creative culture.

3 Result and Discussion

In the post-pandemic of Covid-19, the issue of tourism revival has called attention not only from the government, but also from the art performers. Thus, creative tourism may become the trend in relation to the cultural tourism to increase the tourist visit. The notion of cultural tourism relates to the active participation not only of the performer but also the tourist. Therefore, *lengger* as the art performers has become the agent to shape the creative culture by promoting Banyumas.

3.1 Lengger: Expanding Role in the Cultural Tourism

In the mid of 2022, *lengger communities* created some events to promote Banyumas and its culture. In the perspective of cultural tourism, they expand their role in the promotion through the incidental cultural tourist, such as *Jagad lengger festival* and *peken Banyumas*. [6] states that cultural tourism are divided into the purposeful cultural tourist, sightseeing cultural tourist, the casual cultural tourist, the incidental cultural tourist, and the serendipity cultural tourist. It highlighted the notion of the active participatory culture as they promote the event and held the event as well. Through the social media and networking, *lengger's* actively expand their role to promote Banyumas and its culture.

Peken Banyumas which was held by Rianto and *Rumah lengger Banyumas* in April 2022 invited many visitors to enjoy *lengger* performance with their new choreography entitled *Ksatria Singadipa*. This event was held in Taman sari Banyumas, located at the back side of pendopo Banyumas. This event provided some stalls of Banyumas traditional food such as gethuk sokaraja, mendoan, kamir and soto sokaraja. Further, the stall of Batik Banyumas also provided the latest collection of Banyumas art printing.

The next two weeks after the first event, there was *Jagad lengger festival* which was initiated by the Otniel and *Otniel Dance Community*. This event focused more on all about *lengger* and Banyumas. The first event is *ngunthili lengger*, which means that visitors are invited to join the cultural journey to the cemetery of Nyai Kunes, one of the ancestors of *lengger* Banyumas. The next event was some discussions with scholars such as Ahmad Tohari, Garin Nugroho, Rene T.A. Lysloff, Budiman Sudjatmiko, and Otniel. This event also held film screening about *lengger* with Bowo Leksono as the director of CLC Purbalingga. This event was equipped with *lengger's* corner that display historical document of the recording and texts about *lengger*. Further, visitors were invited to experience the journey of *lengger* through Virtual Reality (VR). Along the site, this event arranged a culinary stall and Banyumas art painting. At the end of the day, visitors are invited not only to watch *lengger* performance but also to join the dance in *ngibing* session.

In fact, those two events give the opportunity to the visitors to engage actively such as *ngibing* in *lengger* performance. While some visitors are required to be actively involved in experiencing the event, it can be seen as the practice of creative tourism. [7] state that Creative tourism “tourism that offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning courses and experiences. At this point, *lengger* is deliberately influential to positioned themselves as the magnetic source for the tourists.

Some of the agenda promoted in the account of *jagad lengger festival* and *Peken Banyumas* can be categorized into several types of tourism such as natural tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism, etc. The role of *lengger* in this case becomes important to open social networks in promoting the various advantages of Banyumas. On Instagram universe *lengger*, the tours offered include:

Natural Tourism: Slamet Mountain, Baturraden, Waterfall

On social media uploaded by the *Jagadlengger Fest* account, there is an interesting phenomenon to invite tourists to visit several tourist destinations in Banyumas. Banyumas

as an agricultural area also has tourist nature attraction such as Mount Slamet, Baturaden, Limpakuwus Pine Forest, Curug Ceheng, Curug Jenggala, and Pancuran Pitu. The Diverse tourism resorts in Banyumas offer exotic freshness of nature for tourists who may have been bored with the various routines of life in the city.

Food Tourism: Soto Sokaraja

In addition to natural tourism, this account also uploads interesting offers to enjoy culinary tourism in Banyumas, namely Mendoan and Soto Sokaraja. This account provides information that mendoan and soto sokaraja are sold in various parts of Banyumas. However, there are still many typical Banyumas snacks that can be enjoyed as souvenirs such as getuk sokaraja, mino, and cimplung.

Cultural Tourism: Lengger and Ebegan

Instead of lengger, another special Banyumas art with the magical experience is enjoying the Banyumas *ebeg performance*. This performance is different from Kuda Lumping in general because there is an interdimensional party that can be enjoyed by the audience. The term *wuru* indicates the exoticism of cultural ecstasy that can be seen or enjoyed by the audience.

Religious Tourism

The last tour that was uploaded as a form of gratitude was a religious tour which showed the tourist destination of the Saka Tunggal Mosque, which was built in Cikakak village, Wangon. This mosque is known as one of the oldest relics in Banyumas. In the current era, the Sakatunggal mosque indicates a harmonious life between followers of the Islamic religion and the abangan Islamic group or the aboge Islamic indigenous community.

Lengger that produces some contents of their event and distributed it through their social networking in social media managed not only the individual but also the collective interest. It highlighted the initiative idea of how lengger possibly play their role in tourism. Further, the visitors who joined the event will possibly reproduce the new spectacle in the social media while they are dancing or enjoying those events. Therefore, creative tourism becomes the key concept to expand the lengger's role as well as the tourist's role in cultural tourism.

3.2 Ngibing: Performing Creative Culture

Lengger as the identity of Banyumas has unique movements that differs it from the dances of Jogja or Surakarta styles. Dance movements that tend to be energetic and flexible represent the fundamental identity of Banyumas society which is called as *thok melong*. The performance of *Lengger* is usually ended with a session to honor the audience called *ngibing*. Ngibing is a moment when the dancer invites the audience to dance together on the stage. [8] stated that in the past, before the political turmoil of the 1960s, the lengger dancer is said to have routinely performed tayuban – that is, she invited certain men to dance with her (ngibing) as she performed by presenting each man with a dance scarf (a practice known as *Tiban Sampur*). *Tiban sampur* means that he is chosen to dance on stage with lengger. Indeed, *Ngibing* is interpreted as an experience to enjoy the

performance in which it was an expensive experience due to the restriction in pandemic era.

However, *Ngibing* can be highlighted as an unforgettable moment that provides space for tourists to be active in enjoying or reproducing the experience. Thus, *Ngibing* is identified as the practice of creative tourism. [3] states that creative tourism is commonly described as a reaction to the growing mass marketization of cultural tourism mixed with the growing desire of travelers to play more active roles in their journeys. It reveals that creative tourism is a terminology closely related to tourist agencies to play an active role in their activities as tourists. In line with [3], creative tourists can energize, regenerate, and strengthen the representation of place identity. It highlighted the notion of creative tourism on the active role of tourists in cultural tourism that shaped creative culture.

In more nuance impact, creative tourism in *lengger* possibly develop the concept of prosumption. While tourists/visitors upload the event of *ngibing* or while they are visiting the sites on their social media, they are defining themselves as subject. They do point to the significant phenomena of the growing amount of 'labouring' people are undertaking as they 'play' with these new technologies: creating profiles; making status updates; distributing information; sharing files; uploading images; blogging; tweeting; and the rest [9]. By actively reposting activities and travel experiences as tourists, the local identity of the uploaded object can be represented through the social media. Some of the uploads of tourists on social media is a medium to promote Banyumas. Thus, even though experience is often recorded massively in the digital media, body is possibly identified as the important sites of archiving.

3.3 Archiving the Collective Memory Through the Bodily Performance in Lengger

In relation to tourism, performances can be used as a media to store various collective experiences in the arts. While *ngibing* inferred the practice of creative tourism, body is essential in archiving memory. *Ngibing* is the terminology of the engaging activity in the *lengger* performance in which it involves the audience and dancers. Audience is positioned as subject that actively participate in the performance.

Madison stated that culture, so conceived, turns performance into a site where memory, emotion, fantasy, and desire interact with one another. Every performance is political, a site where the performance of possibilities occurs [10]. Performance is no longer a passive agent that can only be objectified. Performers and artists can be seen as active entities that in their relationship can establish their identity.

At this point, the experience of *Ngibing* is seen as the embodiment of collective memory. As stated by Assman in [11], collective memory can be described as a set of memories that together meld to create the identity and specificity of a group as 'a community which together remembers'. It underlines an attempt to create embodied collective memory through creative tourism. Dance is an important factor in establishing this collective memory. Chandralekha in [12] states that dance becomes, almost totally, a spectacle'. However, in the *Ngibing* concept, the body becomes an important entity to archive the collective memory.

At this point, body is essential in in the construction of the self. [13] stated that any construction of the body, however, it involves the construction of the self as embodied.

Further, it also reveals not only how the body is treated but also how life is lived. Therefore, the body then positioned as the one who has the agency to define itself. Instead of using Mary Douglas' concept of body as cultural text, in the context of *Ngibing* lengger, the Beauvoir's concept about embodied subject is influential in defining the self. Beauvoir in [14] stated that experience of embodiment as the embodied subject positioned social body by questioning how we inhabit the bodies and put them to use as well as the performance and human agency. Therefore, it highlighted the notion of the active subjects in defining themselves to archive the *ngibing* experience in their body. While dancing, tourist and performers possibly reproduced some actions that define themselves.

The embodiment of collective memory in the context of tourism can be a new alternative for cultural archiving models that lead to creative culture. Reproduction based on experience will create space for lengger dancers and tourists to engage in a wider global community. In the context of economy politics, it enhanced the success of tourism revival in Indonesia, but on the other hand this can also strengthen the representation of the local identity of a place.

4 Conclusion

After the pandemic of covid-19 became the starting point for the revival of tourism where *lengger* had established itself as one of the arts that played a role in overcoming it. *Lengger*, through various events that they made, has played a role in the success of tourism in Banyumas again. In addition, through the lengger performance, they define themselves as a community that is able to place active audiences in the context of creative tourism. Ngibing as one of the elements in lengger is a terminology that implies the active role of the audience. Through Ngibing, tourists are invited to be active not only watching the show but also enjoying the art experience. This experience is an effort to archive cultural experiences that can collectively form a memory and make it a creative culture trend.

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