



# Lantern as the Form of Hospitality for Improved Cultural Tourist Attraction of Sam Poo Kong Temple Semarang

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**Abstract.** Semarang is one of the cities boasting attractive tourist destinations commonly visited by local and foreign tourists. One of the tourist destinations (DTWs) in Semarang is Sam Poo Kong temple. As one of the DTWs in Semarang, Sam Poo Kong temple should understand the concept of hospitality related to all activities in the temple. This research aimed to give an understanding of the concept of hospitality as one requirement in tourism industry. There were some issues discussed in this research. First, this research discussed the concept of hospitality. Second, this research discussed the form of hospitality to be given by the temple. Third, this research discussed how lantern as the form of hospitality became the media of information of cultural tourism in the temple through tourism communication. This research used a qualitative descriptive method and literature study for data collection. The data needed were about lantern, hospitality, and cultural tourism to be discussed in this research. The author also reveals the beauty of lantern with communication in tourism study. The research results give an understanding of the concept of hospitality through lantern as cultural tourist attraction in Sam Poo Kong temple Semarang.

**Keywords:** Temple · Tri Dharma · Hospitality · Lantern · Cultural Tourism · Tourism communication

## 1 Introduction

One of the important sectors that are also the central and local governments' concern is tourism. Tourism is currently a relatively rapid developing industry that gives new opportunities as the source of occupation and livelihood for everyone. In addition, tourism also greatly contributes to the foreign exchange income and national development rate.

Local community development and supporting facilities development are factors inseparable from local tourism. This certainly requires the government's support and role as the actor and facilitator to assure sustainable performance of tourism development. Stakeholders' role in local tourism development sector is very important for creation of highly competitive tourism products.

Tourism sector is one of the factors that get more important to local development and economy. This sector can contribute to local income. In addition, tourism sector can also

grow economic rate through creation of an existing job opportunities that may alleviate poverty [1].

One of the cities with improving tourism sector is Semarang city, as can be observed through the quantity of visitors choosing Semarang as one of the DTWs, including Sam Po Kong temple. In regard to temple, the public are generally aware of and understand that *kelenteng* (temple) is a place of worship for Chinese people who follow *Tri Dharma* (三教 *sān jiao*) which means 3 teachings. The 3 teachings followed by the Chinese people are Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Confucianism was brought by a renowned Chinese philosopher, Kongzi. In Indonesia we identify Confucianism as *Konghucu*.

Temple can be understood of being a place of worship, but can also become a DTW like Sam Po Kong temple. Sam Po Kong temple presents cultural, religious and culinary tourisms. In this research, the author focused on the cultural tourism. The cultural tourism is presented by the temple through the lanterns hung at every corner of temple buildings. Besides adding beauty, these lanterns also give the visitors to donate. Lanterns used for donation purpose are usually ordered by one person or family with the same family name. Besides aiming to pay tribute the ancestors, this also aims to give donation and support to the temple management. These lanterns are attached at every corner of the temple buildings, adding to the temple's beauty.

Beauty is something that can give us joy. This statement bears the meaning that anything seems beautiful when it has beauty. This concept of beauty is God Almighty's creation instilled into human's mind for which we need to be grateful. How we see beauty depends on how we judge an object. In association with hospitality, beauty is related to each other. In this research, the author studied the existence of beauty value in the lanterns at Sam Po Kong Temple. The lanterns' beauty is also a form of hospitality installed by the administrator to attract both local and foreign visitors. The lanterns are installed in lines in Sam Poo Kong Temple area, and during Chinese New Year the lanterns are installed outside along the pathway towards the temple. In the past, people assumed that the temple was only a place for Chinese people to worship, but currently it is commonly visited tourist attraction. In Sam Po Kong temple we will have a difference nuance.

One of the success factors of a tourist destination development is communication. Through communication, besides difference nuance, there will be big influence on the DTW. Promotion or introduction of Sam Po Kong temple as one of the DTWs in Semarang will make it opener and known more by the public. This research aimed to give an understanding of hospitality through the beauty of the lanterns and using tourism communication in tourist destination development. This research also explained the community's and the stakeholders' participation in changing temple related image.

[2] states that communication helps tourism marketing in various elements of marketing. Communication greatly contributes both in communication media and communication content. Tourism communication is established due to unity of disciplines of science in a study of communication and tourism. Tourism communication study is biologically close to the studies of communication and tourism from which it is born [2]. Tourism communication contributes to the study of tourism marketing, accessibility to destination and tourism HR and institution.

## 2 Research Method

For in-depth and holistic understanding of a number of the phenomena studied and not to test the hypothesis proposed based on statistical formulas model, this research used a qualitative approach. The data collection methods used were observation, in-depth interview, and literature study. Observation was performed to describe a real field overview of Sam Po Kong temple's condition and situation along with any of its activities at the research location. Interview was performed with some informants, including the Chairman of Sam Po Kong Foundation, Mr. Chandra. For completion of data in addition to the observation and interview, one more data collection method was needed, literature study. This method generated supporting data of this research, including the history of Sam Poo Kong temple, development and activities in the temple. The results of observation, in-depth interview, and literature study were analyzed into models of category, comparison, and contrast and then interpreted [3]. The data were interpreted systemically, that was to comprehend a fact/some data in consideration of other related factors. To understand the interrelated factors of the data obtained, they were developed based on the mindset of the community on which the research was conducted, instead of on the researcher's standard [4].

## 3 Results and Discussion

Semarang is one of the tourist destination-cities in Central Java. *Pariwisata* (tourism) is derived from Sanskrit, composed of two syllables, *pari* and *pariwisata*. *Pari* means everywhere, all and full. Besides, *pariwisata* also means travel. Tourism development everywhere is performed systemically and in an integrated way. This means it requires the support of the community, actors and stakeholders in tourism sector. Community's involvement is also required not only as object, but also as the subject in tourism development. Community's involvement can be direct or indirect, individual or collective [5]. In other words, public awareness and participation in tourism development directly affects the tourism development. This is also the thing needed by Semarang City to keep being a choice of tourist destination.

Sam Poo Kong temple is one of the DTWs in Semarang as local and foreign visitors' choice. Sam Po Kong temple is located at Jalan Simongan No. 129, Bongsari, West Semarang District, Semarang City, Central Java. Sam Po Kong Temple as a DTW in Semarang is currently open for public. It is open every day with ticket ranging from Rp7000–Rp40.000,-. This is based on the temple's hope to introduce and give an overview that the temple is not only for its followers' visit and worship. Change in the meaning and function of a place, in this case Sam Poo Kong temple, requires cooperation and support of the temple, stakeholders, community and all relevant parties. Good communication is needed in tourism, commonly known as tourism communication. Tourism communication is a continuous process that needs flexible observation of new change trends [6]. Various strategies are needed to improve brand image and awareness for competitive advantage. The main strategy is to choose the right channel to develop long-term relationship with target group.

The tourism communication and strategy needed conform to the requirements for a DTW to be a tourist destination. To be a tourist destination, there are certainly requirements to satisfy under Law Number 10 Year 2009 on Tourism, that there are four elements to make a good tourist destination. The first element is intentionally made or natural tourist attraction. The second element is Accessibility, that a tourist destination must have good means of transportation or road access to it. The third element is facilities and infrastructures in support of tourism necessities. The fourth element is, no less importantly, surrounding community empowerment that prioritizes hospitality to the good entertainment or service of tourists.

According to the explanation above, this research focused on the fourth element as one requirement for a DTW to be a good tourist destination. The requirement is also adjusted to the concerned DTW's condition and situation. In this case, if the fourth element is associated with Sam Po Kong temple, the changes made do not remove any of the temple's characteristics. The characteristics include, for example, accessories commonly existing in the temple, such as lantern. According to the history, it is estimated that the lantern tradition had existed in Mainland China from the Han Dynasty era, about 3rd century. Lantern started to be identified as a symbol of celebration for New Year of Chinese Calendar in Ming Dynasty era. Lantern's red glow has its own philosophical meaning. Lantern's red light is a symbol of expectation that the year to come will be blessed with luck, fortune, and happiness. A classical legend also describes that lantern banishes evil force of anger as symbolized with a giant named Nian. Installing lantern in every house is also believed to have its occupants evading from crime threat. Lantern is one of the strategies used in tourism strategy to maintain the brand image, image and typicality of temple, and the same applies in Sam Po Kong temple. Lantern is an interesting cultural aspect of tourism in the temple.

Cultural tourism is a type of tourist travel driven by the existence of place, tradition, art, ceremony and obtaining new information from a nation or ethnicity with community that reflects the diversity and identity (character) of a certain place [7]. First, culture with historical building attractiveness, museum, site, monument, art gallery, ancient cultural site, and others. Second, contemporary art and sculpture, architecture, textile, design center, craftsmanship center, and others. Third, festival, street theater, performing arts, drama, and other special events. Fourth, religious heritage such as pura, church, candi, kelenteng, and sites. We may conclude that cultural tourism is a travel performed based on cultural motivation of a certain place with object attraction in the form of historical building, architecture, art, religious heritage and local people's habit. The same applies in Sam Po Kong temple.

According to the explanation above, tourism communication also needs to be continuously performed for people's awareness and guidance so that they will respect their ingenious culture and be able to ward off foreign culture through outreach on preservation of dance art, customs, traditional food and drink, including the use of customary suit and lontiok house as attraction of typical culture exhibition. This communication can be performed through various channels of communications. Sam Po Kong Temple uses lantern as the communication media. Besides its beauty, lantern also serves as the medium for paying tribute to the ancestors. Lantern is used to deliver the best prayers for the ancestors. Based on the interview with Mr. Chandra as the chairman of Sam Po



**Fig. 1.** Lantern at the front of the Main Temple Source: Private Document



**Fig. 2.** With the informant Mr. Chandra Source: Private Document



**Fig. 3.** Lantern at the right side of the Main Temple Source: Private Document

Kong Foundation, the demand for lanterns for delivering prayers for the ancestors kept increasing, as could be observed with abundant lanterns filling up every corner of the temple (Figs. 1, 2, and 3).

The existing lanterns at every corner of the temple have their own attractiveness in Sam Po Kong temple. The lanterns are also the form of DTW's hospitality in Sam Po Kong Temple. Service industry is all about hospitality. The task of hospitality is

to create benefit for the shareholders through services and satisfy guests [8]. In other words, hospitality can be defined as friendliness given by actor to others for improved attraction. [9] notes that in hospitality, service provider is “part of the product”. For guests’ satisfaction, guests do not only have to believe that they have received precious services for the money they have spent, but they should also be felt cherished and respected by employees providing the services.

## 4 Conclusion

Tourism communication and strategy are needed to maintain brand image, image and typicality of a DTW. Having the right channels or media is very important since tourism communication is a continuous process that needs flexible observation of new change trends. The media used in tourism communication are also the form of hospitality of a DTW, including Sam Po Kong Temple. Sam Po Kong Temple hopes to give a simple understanding of the concept of hospitality through the lanterns. Everyone understands that lantern is one of the temple’s typicality or brand image as Chinese people’s place of worship. Using tourism communication, the tourism actors and stakeholders want to make a slight change to temple’s brand image/image that is all this time only serving as the place of worship. With lantern as the form of hospitality, the temple is a very attractive cultural tourist destination. Besides understanding the function and meaning of lantern, visitors can also enjoy the beauty of lantern as a tourism object to bring pleasure.

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