



Revealing Local Wisdom at The Spice Museum to Strengthen National Identity Among Ternate's Young Generations

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Abstract. This paper examines the role of the Spice Museum in Ternate as a place to reveal and preserve local wisdom and its efforts to strengthen national identity among the younger generation. The local wisdom related to the history and culture of spices has significant value in shaping the cultural identity of Ternate's community. However, over time, understanding and appreciation of this cultural heritage have declined among the youth. The Spice Museum offers a solution by reviving local wisdom through educational programs, exhibitions, and relevant historical narratives. This local wisdom approach aims to instill cultural and national values in the younger generation and foster pride in their ancestral heritage. The paper highlights how the Spice Museum integrates local wisdom into its cultural education strategy, creating a younger generation that not only recognizes but also preserves their culture. Through the revelation of local wisdom at the Spice Museum, this paper shows that Ternate's youth can better understand and appreciate their cultural identity, which plays an important role in strengthening national pride and identity amidst globalization challenges.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Cultural Identity, Local Wisdom, National Identity, Ternate's Younger Generation.

1 Introduction

According to the 11th ICOM General Assembly in 1974, a museum is defined as a permanent non-profit institution in the service of society that researches, collects, preserves, interprets, and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with community participation, offering diverse experiences for education, entertainment, reflection, and sharing knowledge (Hudson, 1977).

The establishment of a museum requires specific prerequisites, which include the location, building, collection, equipment, organization, and staff of the museum

(Direktorat Permuseuman., 2000). Collections are essential to the existence of a museum. The presence of collections is the main reason people visit a museum, as it is the "soul" of the institution (Stebbins et al., 1991). Museum collections are sources of stories and memories for visitors. Through its collection, the museum must convey messages that contain various values and meanings of human civilization. If these messages are not fully received by the public, the museum's mission as a center of cultural information remains incomplete.

One museum representing past glories is the Spice Museum in Ternate, which is still under development. This museum is located in Ternate, North Maluku, and is visited by a significant number of people, especially during school holidays and weekends. The establishment of the Spice Museum in Ternate and the intrinsic value of its contents undoubtedly represent a significant development for the entire community. The involvement of the younger generation is crucial to ensure they do not lose their cultural heritage. This study will explore local wisdom for the younger generation, specifically Ternate's youth, through the Spice Museum.

The museum is filled with noble national values, as demonstrated by its collection, which depicts the local history and culture of Maluku, as well as European cultural influences (see Fig. 1 & Fig. 2). The concept of a museum that represents national identity continues to evolve in line with prevailing socio-political conditions and the dynamics of each era in every country. This is exemplified by these islands, where the museum reflects a narrative of national identity that can be formed through various media, not only collections but also publications, audio-visual media, paintings, and dioramas depicting the atmosphere of the European exploration period in search of spice resources in the eastern part of the archipelago.



Fig. 1. The Spice Museum, Ternate (BRIN, 2024).



Fig. 2. The collection of The Spice Museum (BRIN, 2024).

In the context of Indonesia, this study offers an interesting perspective on the formation and strengthening of national identity within the framework of significant ethnic diversity. Local wisdom is also very relevant in the context of national identity, especially in forming collective identity, preserving cultural heritage, unifying the nation, inspiring sustainable development, education, and cultural diplomacy. The role of the Spice Museum is crucial in terms of preservation, conservation, education, learning, research, exhibition, promotion of identity, cultural awareness, collaboration, relations, and the development of historical and cultural tourism.

The existence of museums is closely tied to local wisdom. Local wisdom is a unique and enduring phenomenon shaped by history, adaptation, and transmission from generation to generation. It offers a potential framework for organizing local communities. Local wisdom plays a strategic role, supported by the values of wisdom contained within it (Cocks et al., 2017). Local wisdom can be defined as a set of knowledge, values, and cultural practices passed down from one generation to the next within a specific community. Sibarani (2012) states that local wisdom encompasses knowledge acquired through human interaction with the environment, imbued with ethical, social, and spiritual values. In the context of Ternate, local wisdom is closely linked to the history of spices, such as cloves and nutmeg, which are an integral part of the community's cultural identity.

One place where local wisdom can be observed is the Spice Museum in Ternate. This museum not only serves as a repository of artifacts but also as a center for knowledge and cultural development. As Greenhill (2007) noted, modern museums have a great responsibility to educate the public and bridge the gap between the past and the present. In the context of the Spice Museum in Ternate, this function is fulfilled through exhibitions, educational programs, and historical narratives focusing on spices and their relationship to local wisdom. Additionally, the Spice Museum in Ternate provides a conducive educational environment for character development and cultural identity.

Culture-based education aims to strengthen national identity among the younger generation. Tilaar (2000) explains that education integrated with local culture can instill national values, pride in ancestral heritage, and awareness of the importance of cultural

preservation. The Spice Museum as an educational medium can serve as a tool to instill these values in Ternate's youth. Through the museum, there is close communication between visitors and collections, referred to as cultural communication. Cultural communication is the process by which values, symbols, and knowledge are transmitted from one generation to the next. According to Hall (1997), culture is a system of meaning produced and maintained through communication. In the context of the Spice Museum, the narrative and cultural interpretation of the displayed spices are important tools in conveying local wisdom to visitors, especially the younger generation.

The younger generation is the heir and preserver of culture. According to Sukardi (2004), the active involvement of youth in cultural activities can strengthen national pride and identity. Through the Spice Museum, young people can understand the historical roots and local wisdom related to the spice trade and be motivated to preserve them in the modern context. Thus, slowly but surely, Ternate's youth will grow with a strong local identity that strengthens its national identity. This study raises two research questions as follows:

- 1) What forms of local wisdom can be promoted through the Spice Museum to strengthen cultural and national identity, especially among the youth in Ternate?
- 2) How can a local wisdom-based approach at the Spice Museum be used as a strategy to strengthen national pride and intergenerational relationships?

2 Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach through observation, interviews, and secondary sources. Direct observation was conducted to observe the diversity of collections, the storyline in the presentation of the collections, and the maintenance level of the collections. Interviews were conducted with relevant parties, including museum managers, museum visitors, cultural communities, and government agencies directly involved in museum management. These interviews were conducted to obtain in-depth information and gather supporting data for this study. The qualitative secondary data which were taken from books, journals, research reports, government documents, and online media were used to explore information that could not be obtained through interviews and to verify the findings from observations and interviews. Finally, all the collected data were analyzed by using theories on spice routes, museums, and the role of youth in preserving cultural heritage values and understanding identity to strengthen national identity.

3 Findings and Discussion

Various literature on spice routes, museums, the role of youth in preserving cultural heritage values, and understanding identity to strengthen national identity have been discussed by several academics and researchers. Leur (1955) provides valuable insights into the characteristics of Asian trade and its technological equipment. Until the early

Industrial Revolution, he argued that Asia lagged behind Europe in trade and technology. Another study by Hopkins (2010) on identity in his first book mapped out the scale of themes and places that are part of the daily lives of young people in shaping their identities. The scale of themes and places explored here includes the body, environment, neighborhood, and community mobility, transitions, and the urban-rural environment, and how all these shapes are shaped by youth identity.

The use of spice motifs in batik and spices as a world heritage was discussed by Ulumuddin et al. (2021). A review article by Abbas (2022) explained that the eastern region of the Indonesian archipelago, which produces various spices crucial to international trade, has been connected to international shipping and trade networks (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. The spices trade route in 1511 (BRIN, 2024).

The reconstruction of the Spice Route narrative studied by Kumoratih (2022) is also interesting. Historical narratives such as the Spice Route are useful and can be freely reinterpreted by civil society into something new and meaningful, despite the contestation between the state, society, and market. Previous research shows that the process of reproducing nationalism through the reconstruction of national history and identity is no longer always initiated by elites. However, in terms of visual identity, no matter how much democratization and globalization provide space for civil society to reinterpret their ideal image as part of the archipelago, it still requires legitimacy from the state (Kumoratih, 2022).

The Spice Museum in Ternate is a cultural representation that can serve as a gateway to the cultural world. Every element of culture should be visible in the museum through the exploration of every discipline. In other words, the museum is an educational tool for various disciplines to stimulate visitors' curiosity, especially young people who are inspired to participate in future experiments and research in their fields.

The island of Ternate has been known in the history of the archipelago as one of the main producers of spices, such as cloves and nutmeg. This is an opportunity to preserve the rich spice culture from a local perspective. It can be said that almost every corner

of this region has an authentic spice cultural heritage that supports the livelihoods of its people.

The interview data reveal that the spice icon and all its supporting elements have become a cultural heritage felt and enjoyed in the rhythm of communal life for the people of Ternate. This rhythm indirectly shapes the behavior of the community, guided by local values, creating a local identity. The proposal for the establishment of the Ternate Museum was submitted in 2014 with the idea that Ternate is a spice-rich area visited by European countries such as Portugal, Spain, and the Netherlands in the 15th century.



Fig. 4. Museum collection communication media (BRIN, 2024).

As shown in Fig. 4, this museum does not only house collections of artifacts but also offers a process of knowledge and deep understanding that is expected to enrich visitors' experiences. This experience can then be shared with the public through various social media platforms, showing how delightful it is to visit the gateway to the world of cultural heritage and history. The fame of these spices made Ternate one of the main trading centres in Asia in the past. In addition to the private collections of culture lovers, the interview data show that many historical warrior collections have been published, including statues, kora-kora boats, and historical warrior stories depicted in sketch form. The museum is a spice research facility and an attractive tourist attraction for travellers, especially from countries that were once connected to Ternate.

The tower of locality in museum studies in Ternate meets a variety of interesting artifact collections to be researched, at least as an effort to describe the collection. The description is in the form of a brief narrative about the physical and metric descriptions as well as the background of the deposit of artifacts as well as other traces that can be traced on the object until it becomes a collection in the museum. The description process is an important one because it produces substance as the main focus of the material of the collection object, which is sometimes underestimated (Schiffer, 1987). Artefacts that become museum collections are the result of the presence of social power that shapes them today as well as the power of cultural communities in creating and maintaining symbiotic relationships between collection materials and visitor attendance. The

presence of this cultural community is an alternative in real action to not dissolve in the hegemonic narrative of the museum. Museum collections as a form of material culture in the context of local cultural history and archaeology when combined can be part of community work (Castaneda, 1996).

In the context of Indonesia, the Spice Museum and its collection offer an interesting perspective on the formation and strengthening of national identity within the framework of significant ethnic diversity. The presence of Europeans is not the only foreign influence in Maluku. Other ethnic groups, such as the Malays, Arabs, and Chinese, also made Ternate a diverse or pluralistic area and contributed to its social life. However, the local wisdom of the Maluku people, especially Ternate, has survived due to the strong influence of the Ternate-Tidore Kingdom, which was based on Islamic teachings.

4 Conclusion

The Spice Museum in Ternate plays a strategic role in revealing and preserving the local wisdom that is part of the cultural identity of the local community. Through exhibitions, historical narratives, and local wisdom-based educational programs, the museum can serve as an effective medium to strengthen national identity among the younger generation. Local wisdom, such as knowledge about spices, cultural values, and historical heritage, can be introduced and deeply understood by the younger generation through relevant and interactive approaches. By integrating local wisdom into educational and cultural activities at the Spice Museum, the younger generation not only learns about their nation's history and identity but also actively participates in efforts to preserve their culture. Additionally, the museum has the potential to become a center for fostering pride in ancestral heritage and raising awareness of the importance of cultural sustainability amidst globalizations. Overall, the effort to reveal local wisdom at the Spice Museum to strengthen national identity among Ternate's youth is an important step in strengthening intergenerational relationships, preserving cultural values, and building a strong national consciousness.

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