

The Pleasant and Unpleasant in Leisure Experience

Study of an Annual Tradition Called Mudik in Indonesia

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Abstract—Researchs done in the topic of leisure experience mostly attempted to reveal its dynamic and multi-phasic nature. However, those researchs's findings also showed how leisure experience was formed by a variety of experiences, including pleasant and unpleasant ones. This study attempts to gain a better understanding of this view by investigating people's appraisals of their experiences in annual ritual popularly known as mudik, or return home to celebrate the post-Ramadhan Festival in Indonesia. This study used a paper-pencil survey method by asking respondents (N=100) to complete questionnaire. Repondents were selected via proportionate stratified random sampling. Descriptive statistic were employed to analyze the collected data in this study. The result showed how variety experiences consisted in leisure experience were fulfilling and giving important meaning to each other and also increasing individuals's ability to view and reflect more on the kind of feelings they were having through a colored lens. It made them better manage feelings and able to frame them differently from they really are.

Keywords—*leisure experience; dynamic; multi-phasic*

I. INTRODUCTION

What leisure is and what it means can be varied. It can mean different things to different people. The common view of leisure is from the derivation of key words itself. Torkildsen⁶ explained in his book that english word leisure is derived from the latin *licere*, „to be permitted“ or to be „free“. Hence, the French word *loisir* meaning free time. So here, area of freedom, choice, and self-expression can be the common denominators, although freedom itself is wide open for varied interpretation. However, generally, leisure is defined in terms of freedom from constraint, freedom to choose, or as free time after work. Such definition of leisure still permits varying responses. Another perspective is mentioned by Godbey⁵ which considered idealistic and resemble the philosophy of Aristotle. Leisure as a way of life:

Leisure is living in relative freedom from the external compulsive forces on one's culture and physical environment so as to be able to act from internally compelling love in ways which are personally pleasing, intuitively worthwhile, and provide a basis of faith⁵.

In this definition leisure appears as a process, neither time nor state of being. A directed process of oneself in gaining freedom, so as to be able to act. If a student choosed to attend the class, he or she did not have to, to study additional material for fun and for his or her love to science, then leisure values have been added. Here, leisure seen as self-fulfilment, expressing oneself for worthwhile, fulfilling experiences. So it is away from physical products, activities, and time, but towards something to be experienced. Nowadays, many researchers use the term „leisure experience“ instead of „leisure time“ or „leisure activity.“ The concept itself has been applied to variety research of leisure. Researchers have noted that leisure as an experience is multi-dimensional and multi-phase. It includes pleasant experiences as well as unpleasant ones.

Clawson and Knetsch⁷ decribed five phases of leisure experience as 1) anticipation, 2) travel to, 3) the actual on-site, 4) the travel back phase, 5) recollection phase. Each stage of the phase consists different kinds of leisure experience. Steward and Hull⁹ compared people's appraisals of their on-site leisure perceptions from recollection phase perceptions in a day hike leisure activity. The study results showed that the appraisals of their leisure perceptions fluctuated across time. Borrie and Roggenbuck¹⁰ tried to investigate whether leisure experience is dynamic and evolving in the actual on-site phase of a wilderness experience. They reported that both the mode of experiencing wilderness and feelings of connection to fundamental ualities of wilderness were dynamic, complex, and evolving. More important is that the result showed wilderness experience as multi-phasic during the on-site experience. Lee, Dattilo and Howard¹¹ examined the transitory nature and the multi-phase nature of leisure experience using Mannell and Iso-Ahola⁸'s three perspectives on leisure experience (i.e., definitional perspective, immediate consciou experience, and post-hoc perspective). The findings showed that as an experience leisure is very complex and transitory. It composed of many characteristics where an experience that is not always pleasant may be identified by individuals as leisure.

Researchs done in this topic attempted to reveal the dynamic and multi-phasic nature of leisure experience. However, one viewed that those researchs's findings did not only reveal the characteristic of leisure experience, but also showed how leisure experience was formed by a variety of experiences, including pleasant and unpleasant ones. So here, this study attempts to gain a better understanding of this view by

investigating people's appraisals of their experiences in annual ritual popularly known as mudik, or return home to celebrate the post-Ramadhan Festival in Indonesia which is well known as a trip full of hardships.

II. METHODS

This study used a paper-pencil survey method by asking respondents (N=100) to complete questionnaire. Respondents were selected via proportionate stratified random sampling. This sampling technique allowed to have insight of respondents's demographic influences on their appraisals of their experiences. Respondents were selected to be proportional based on their gender, age, and marital status. Data were collected from the questionnaire. Questions were designed to identify demographic characteristics of respondents, their mudik trip pattern, their definitional perspective of mudik trip, and their appraisals of their own mudik experiences. 50 blogs from the internet narrating mudik experience was also read and examined to identify what experiences considered by the writers as leisure in mudik trip. Those identified leisure experiences were also asked to the respondents to find which one is considered to be the most enjoyable one. Descriptive statistic were employed to analyze the collected data in this study.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Mudik; Reality and Definitional Perspective

Mudik is an Indonesian term means return home. It is an activity where Indonesian, mostly migrants workers, return to their hometown ahead of the Idul Fitri celebration. The number of Indonesian took this traveling back home journey is quite tremendous. It reached over 20 million people in 2014 and 2015 (hubdat.dephub.go.id). It caused massive traffic jams, a sudden rise of demand and volume of intercity transportations. However, the celebration will be incomplete without struggling along the congested road, usually occurs along Java's Northern Coast Road, or jostling with each other for getting transportation's tickets. German sociologist Andre Moller¹, in his book *Ramadhan di Jawa*, said that the tradition of mudik is a distinctive and unique phenomenon that occurs in all parts of Indonesia ahead of the Idul Fitri celebration. Indeed, it is a unique tradition belong to all groups, rich and poor, young and old, that once considered as ritual to the ancestors, but now it is a way to strengthen family ties and also sharing the happiness.

This traveling back home is usually expensive. The ticket's price of every public transportation mode is highly increased. Price for rent car also is not an exception. People try to get cheap ticket by booking it several weeks or even months before it sold out. They dare to stay overnight to line up for tickets. People who try to reduce their budget for transportation expense probably choose to drive their own vehicles, cars or even motorcycles, but still traffic jams do not make any efficiency in terms of reducing fuel costs. Another smart way to choose is to join a free mudik program offered by government bodies and private companies, but since many are willing to get these free seats, luck became the only hope to win it.

Mudik is not only expensive, but it is also extensive and exhaustive. A distance of 156 km from Bandung to Cirebon which usually take for 4 to 5 hours by car can be doubled or even tripled during mudik time due to the traffic jams. To avoid being trapped in the traffic jams, many depart early and drive a long journey with very little rest to get home as quick as possible. People using public transportation will have to be very patient to wait in a long queues. Yet after that, they have to struggle with other inpatient passengers to get in and get a seat.

This traveling home journey described by 83% of respondents as a trip that physically exhaustive, other 13% described it as a trip that cost much of energy, time and money, and the rest of 4% described it as a common trip. Those described by 96 % respondents are congruent with reality that mudik is expensive, extensive, and exhaustive trip. However, those are considered as a little price to pay to get home and gathering with all family members in the day of Idul Fitri celebration. Why?

B. Gaining Leisure in Mudik Trip

The Idul Fitri celebration will be incomplete without taking this mudik journey. As The English man says no pain no gain, here it means no mudik no celebration. Mudik is the pain to be taken to feel the sweetness of the celebration. 77 % of the respondents are agree with this statement, while other 13 % are neutral and 10% are disagree.

In many religious traditions, pain as unpleasant physical sensation holds significance as a means of purifying undesirable aspects of the self. In his research, Bastian et. al² found that physical pain may restore feelings of moral righteousness following wrongdoing.

Idul Fitri literally means becoming holy again after getting through hardships during a month of fasting. During this time, muslims must refrain from eating, drinking, marital relations in the daylight hours, and refrain themselves from bad habits. In the journey of mudik, one's patient is being tested through unavoidable hardships. By getting through all these, feelings of cleansing the soul from wrongdoing during fasting are promoted. It makes them feel Idul Fitri much more worth for them to celebrate. Yes, indeed cold water always tastes better after a hard day's work. Pain in its various ways can make people feel more justified in rewarding pleasant experiences. As Bastian³ explained that pain facilitates pleasure by providing an important contrast for pleasurable experiences, increasing sensitivity to sensory input, and facilitating self-rewarding behavior.

Furthermore, 77% respondents agree with the statement are also considered their mudik journey as leisure experiences. While other 23 % considered it as usual experiences. It showed that mudik as a trip is displeasure, described by 96 % respondents as expensive, extensive and exhaustive, but as an experience it is considered pleasure. Why displeasure thing is considered as pleasure one?

Naturally, everything in this world needs its contrast to be existed or to be felt, as we need pain to provide contrast for pleasure. If it is all pleasure then life becomes dull and boring.

As Bastian⁴ explained that unpleasant experience may actually enhance the pleasure and happiness we derive from life. It builds our pleasure in ways that pleasure alone simply cannot achieve. More important is that understanding pain can have range of poitive consequences will help individuals manage pain by framing as a positive, rather than negative³.

Discuss it further to respondent's mudik frequency, 80% of respondents considered mudik as pleasure experience, take mudik trip every year. So they face the unpleasant trip again and again. It makes them have better understanding about the unpleasant trip, and at the same time they are able to manage the unpleasant feelings, framing them as a positive which increases neurochemical responses to better manage the unpleasant feelings. As the result, mudik trip is no longer become as it is, expensive, extensive, and exhaustive, but rather become leisure experience.

Coming to more detail about what respondents considered as leisure they enjoy the most when taking this mudik trip, 5 different answers are picked from 50 blogs in the internet telling stories about mudik experience, to be chosen by the respondents. Those five answers are: 1) Traveling with the whole family, 2) Traveling through many cities and villages, 3) Interaction with new people traveling same journey, 4) Enjoying culinary from specific region, 5) Being part of millions of people traveling the same journey. Choice to answer other than those fives is also allowed.

80% respondents choose that traveling with the whole family is what they enjoy the most in the mudik trip. 15% choose interaction with new people traveling the same journey, and other 5% choose traveling through many cities and villages as their answers. What becomes more interesting here is that 80% respondents choose the first answer are all using their own four wheels vehicles when taking this mudik trip. While the rest 20% respondents choose the second and the third answer are using public transportation or motorcycles. This additional finding indicates that car ownership helps people to get attached to their family and gaining leisure from the attachment, especially in a long trip like mudik.

Separate from the 77% respondents considered mudik as leisure experience, there are 23% respondents considered it as usual experience. Torkildsen⁶ explained in his book there are many factors influence leisure participation. He grouped them into three:

- Individual factors: the stage of an individual's life, his or her interests, attitudes, abilities, upbringing and personality
- The circumstances and situations in which individuals find themselves: the social setting of which they are a part, the time at their disposal, their job and their income
- Opportunities and support services available to the individual: resources, facilities, programs and activities; their quality and attractiveness; and their management

Those three groups of influence factors was assumed will also influence how respondents view their experience of mudik trip. However, there are only two things that significantly different from respondents considered mudik as leisure experience and respondents considered it as usual experience. They are mudik trip companions and distance to mudik destination. 23% respondents considered mudik as usual experience have their friends as mudik trip companions or have no companion at all. Their distance to mudik destination are only hundreds kilometers in the same province. On the other side, 77% respondents considered mudik trip as leisure experience have their family members as companions, and their distance to mudik destination are cross province.

These findings showed that it is not only getting through hardships or pain that able to turn unpleasant experiences to be pleasure, but also family existence and distance that represent how long or how many experiences happening in the process.

IV. CONCLUSION

Although leisure is commonly defined as "enjoyment" or "fun", but actually it is characterized by variety of experiences, including pleasant as well as unpleasant ones. Those experiences are fulfilling and giving important meaning to each other. What appraised pleasant is not because it is simply pleasant, but it rather because it consists of its opposite, the unpleasant. As in this study described that mudik as unpleasant trip builds meaning to the pleasure of Idul Fitri celebration in ways that pleasure alone can not achieve. Those variety of experiences are also increasing our ability as human to reflect more on the kind of feelings we are having through a colored lens. It made us better manage feelings and able to frame them differently from they really are. Since leisure has its ideal meaning as a way of life as described in Godbey⁵'s definition, so it must be formed by not only one characteritic, but many.

Unfortunately this study has its limited and lackness, especially in the data collected. Data on-site real time phase was not able to obtain when this study was conducted. Further research is needed to clarify and gain better insight in how leisure experience is formed in its dynamic and multi-phasic nature.

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