

REVITALIZATION OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AS THE MAIN ATTRACTION OF RURAL TOURISM IN SOUTH KALIMANTAN

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Abstract

The global shift towards special interest tourism demands that rural destinations leverage their unique intangible cultural heritage. However, amidst intense competition, many rural tourism villages in South Kalimantan face stagnation due to ineffective revitalization strategies that risk cultural commodification. This study aims to analyze revitalization strategies by examining the influence of Cultural Authenticity and Asset Scarcity variables on Destination Competitiveness. The research employs a mixed-method approach with a sequential explanatory design. Quantitative data were collected from 200 tourists using a 1-7 Likert scale questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and tourism managers. The analysis results reveal a critical paradox: tourist perceptions of cultural authenticity and asset scarcity currently do not have a significant positive effect on destination competitiveness, with perceived scarcity even acting as an accessibility barrier. These findings imply that current revitalization efforts in South Kalimantan are often trapped in "staged authenticity" and unmanaged exclusivity. Therefore, synergy between the government and local communities is urgently required to "tangibilize" cultural assets into well-curated, easily interpreted tourism experiences without losing their original essence.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Cultural Authenticity, Asset Scarcity, Destination Competitiveness, Rural Tourism

INTRODUCTION

Global tourism today has undergone a significant transformation, shifting from a mass tourism paradigm toward special interest tourism that emphasizes unique, personal experiences and profound cultural interactions (Richards, 2018; UNWTO, 2023; Sigala, 2021). This paradigm shift fundamentally requires every tourist destination not only to sell natural beauty but also to explore the wealth of intangible cultural heritage as a primary attraction that distinguishes one destination from another (UNESCO, 2020; Timothy, 2021; Du Cros & McKercher, 2020). In Indonesia, the trend of rural tourism development has become the spearhead of regional economic development strategies, where the existence of local culture is positioned as an irreplaceable vital asset (Kemenparekraf, 2023; Antara & Pomes, 2021). Nevertheless, the level of competition among rural tourism destinations is increasingly fierce, demanding a strong and sustainable differentiation strategy to survive in a competitive market (Porter, 2019; Ritchie & Crouch, 2020). Various recent empirical studies indicate that modern tourists tend to seek destinations that offer local wisdom values with preserved authenticity (Wang, 2020; Kim et al., 2018; Chhabra, 2022). Therefore, the proper identification and inventory of cultural assets are crucial initial steps for the sustainability of a tourist destination (Dina et al., 2021; Setiawan, 2022).

South Kalimantan, as a province with strong Banjar cultural historical roots, essentially possesses immense potential for culture-based tourism development (Pemprov Kalsel, 2023; BPS, 2024). The intangible cultural wealth of this region is highly diverse, ranging from the Madihin oral tradition and Panting musical rhythms to various unique river rituals, all of which are distinctive assets not found in other regions (Dispar Kalsel, 2022; Arifin, 2021). Despite having abundant potential, tourism development in South Kalimantan often faces structural challenges, particularly regarding effective product packaging and promotional strategies (Susanto, 2020; Hidayat, 2021). Many tourism villages that inherently possess extraordinary cultural potential fail to develop and experience stagnation due to the managers' inability to transform these assets into competitive and marketable tourism products (Nugroho, 2021; Sari, 2022). This situation is exacerbated by a lack of deep understanding of tourist preferences regarding what is truly considered authentic and highly valuable in a tourism experience (Pratama, 2021; Lestari, 2022; Fauzi, 2023).

Although the identified cultural potential is substantial, field data indicate a rather alarming gap between the number of cultural assets possessed and the actual realization of tourist visits in several priority tourism villages. It is evident that an increase in registered assets and the frequency of cultural events do not necessarily boost visitor numbers significantly. This raises the main research problem: Are the revitalization strategies implemented thus far on target, or are they merely ceremonial? Specifically, this study poses the following research questions: (1) How does the perception of Cultural Authenticity influence destination competitiveness?; (2) How

does Asset Scarcity influence destination competitiveness?; and (3) Can the combination of these two variables act as the main driver of competitive advantage for rural tourism in South Kalimantan? These questions urgently need answers, considering that many tourism destinations ultimately fail because they are trapped in cultural commodification that strips away original values (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 1973).

The significance of the Cultural Authenticity variable (X1) in the context of this study is based on the theory of Constructive Authenticity, which states that tourists constantly seek symbolic meaning behind the objects they observe (Wang, 1999; Zatori et al., 2019). Authenticity in tourism is not solely about physical objects but rather the quality of emotional experience and interaction (Yi et al., 2020; Park et al., 2019). In the context of South Kalimantan, the authenticity of river culture and oral traditions is often eroded by massive modern infrastructure developments (Rahman, 2021; Utami, 2022). If this aspect of authenticity is not carefully managed, the destination will lose its "soul" and will inevitably fail to compete with others (Zhou et al., 2022; Ram et al., 2016). Therefore, measuring tourist perceptions of authenticity becomes a vital indicator for the success of revitalization programs (Trisnawati, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Asset Scarcity variable (X2) is adopted from the Resource-Based View (RBV) theoretical framework, emphasizing that sustainable competitive advantage can only be achieved by controlling valuable, rare, and inimitable resources (Barney, 1991; Grant, 2020). In the tourism industry, scarcity creates a sense of urgency and exclusivity for tourists to visit (Li & Liu, 2021). Intangible cultural assets in South Kalimantan have a high degree of scarcity because they are deeply tied to specific geographical locations and communities (Specific Locality) (Hasan, 2021). However, few studies have empirically measured the extent to which this perception of scarcity tangibly contributes to visiting decisions or destination competitiveness (Mulyana, 2021). A less comprehensive understanding of the scarcity aspect often leads tourism managers to sell these assets cheaply within mass tourism schemes (Gretzel, 2020; Sigala, 2021).

The novelty of this research lies in addressing a critical theoretical contradiction within cultural tourism literature. While the Resource-Based View (RBV) asserts that asset scarcity inherently creates competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Grant, 2020), other empirical studies suggest that highly exclusive or under-narrated cultural assets can actually create accessibility barriers that deter modern tourists. Previous studies often report inconsistent findings regarding whether authenticity automatically boosts competitiveness, or if poorly packaged "staged authenticity" actually diminishes tourist interest in developing rural contexts. This study fills this theoretical and empirical gap by simultaneously testing the psychological dimensions of tourists toward Authenticity and Scarcity, placing them within the specific ecological context of wetland rural tourism in South Kalimantan. Furthermore, the use of a Mixed Method approach provides an analytical depth that goes beyond statistical interpretations, delving into the cultural meaning behind the numbers, thereby contributing theoretically to the resolution of the authenticity-competitiveness paradox and offering practical implications for regional creative economic revitalization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Rural Tourism is generally defined as any tourism activity based on rural life, art, culture, agriculture, and natural heritage (Lane & Kastenholtz, 2015; UNWTO, 2020). Successful rural tourism development heavily relies on the harmonious integration between local community participation and the management of their cultural assets (Garrod et al., 2006; Dewi, 2020). In this context, Intangible Cultural Assets play a central role as the core attraction (UNESCO, 2003; Timothy, 2021). Previous research confirms that intangible assets such as folklore, traditional dances, and customary rituals can create strong emotional bonding with tourists (Richards, 2018; Timothy, 2021). However, the primary challenge in managing these assets is maintaining sustainability without destroying their sacred value through commercialization (Lenzerini, 2021; Blake, 2022). Therefore, the revitalization of cultural assets is necessary to prevent the extinction of traditions while providing added economic value to the community (Pietrobruno, 2019; Alivizatou, 2021).

The Cultural Authenticity variable (X1) refers to tourists' subjective perceptions regarding the originality, truth, and sincerity of the tourism experience they undergo (MacCannell, 1973; Wang, 1999). Literature divides authenticity into Object-based authenticity, focusing on the originality of physical artifacts, and Existential authenticity, focusing on the feeling of "being true to oneself" while traveling (Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Cohen, 1988; Yi et al., 2020). Empirical studies consistently show that perceived authenticity has a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Ram et al., 2016; Park et al., 2019). The more authentic a destination is perceived by visitors, the higher the perceived value of the experience (Fu et al., 2020; Sthapit et al., 2021). In a rural context, authenticity is closely associated with genuine interaction with locals and a natural, unfeigned environment (Mura, 2019; Zatori et al., 2019).

The Asset Scarcity variable (X2) is deeply rooted in economic and marketing theories stating that products available in limited quantities or that are rare possess higher perceived value (Verhallen, 1982; Cialdini, 2009). In tourism, scarcity is translated as a level of uniqueness that cannot be found elsewhere (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999;

Pike, 2018). The scarcity of cultural assets becomes a major determinant of product differentiation in a highly competitive tourism market (Barney, 1991; Grant, 2020). Tourists, particularly millennials, tend to seek "once in a lifetime" experiences offered by rare assets (Skinner, 2021). Studies indicate a strong correlation between perceived scarcity and willingness to pay, as well as overall destination attractiveness (Assaf et al., 2019; Castro et al., 2020).

Finally, Destination Competitiveness (Y) is defined as the ability of a destination to provide high-quality experiences for tourists while simultaneously improving the welfare of local residents and preserving its resources (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Porter's (1990) competitiveness model has been widely adapted in tourism studies to explain the success determinants of a destination (Armenski et al., 2017; Kubickova, 2019). Competitiveness indicators cover various aspects such as destination image, supporting infrastructure, and cultural attractions (Enright & Newton, 2004; Goffi et al., 2019; Zehrer et al., 2017). Recent research emphasizes that competitiveness in the modern era is driven more by intangible assets than tangible ones (Hanafiah et al., 2021). Based on this review, the proposed hypothesis is that authenticity and scarcity simultaneously enhance destination competitiveness (Kim, 2018; Lee, 2019; Chen, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a mixed-method approach with a Sequential Explanatory strategy, where quantitative data are collected and analyzed first, followed by further deepening and explanation using qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Sugiyono, 2019). The population in this study comprises all domestic and international tourists who have visited tourism villages in South Kalimantan. The quantitative sample was determined to be 200 respondents using purposive sampling. Setting the sample size at 200 is based on the statistical guidelines of Hair et al. (2014), which suggest a minimum ratio of 5 to 10 times the number of indicator items for valid multivariate analysis, and to minimize sampling error (Ghozali, 2018). The primary data collection instrument was a closed questionnaire consisting of 30 structured items: 10 items for Cultural Authenticity (X1), 10 items for Asset Scarcity (X2), and 10 items for Destination Competitiveness (Y). The measurement system used a 1-7 Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree). The selection of a 7-point scale is based on Preston & Colman's (2000) study, which proved that this scale has higher validity, reliability, and discriminatory power than a 5-point scale, providing more detailed data variance for parametric statistical analysis.

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression after passing a series of prerequisite tests, including validity, reliability, and classical assumption tests (normality, heteroscedasticity, and multicollinearity) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). After obtaining statistical results, the qualitative phase was conducted to validate and deepen these numerical findings through in-depth interviews with key informants. Informants were selected using snowball sampling, consisting of Banjar traditional leaders, tourism village managers, and representatives from the local Tourism Office (Moleong, 2018). Qualitative data were then analyzed using source and method triangulation techniques to ensure data validity, alongside the Miles & Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). The combination of these two methods aims to obtain a holistic and comprehensive understanding of how the revitalization of cultural assets tangibly affects destination competitiveness in the field (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a detailed presentation of the empirical findings derived from quantitative data analysis involving 200 respondents, complemented by qualitative insights obtained through in-depth interviews. The findings reveal complex and multifaceted dynamics concerning the current condition of rural tourism in South Kalimantan

Descriptive Statistical Overview

Based on the processed questionnaire data, the respondent's answer profile shows a moderate mean tendency on the 1-7 scale. The Cultural Authenticity variable (X1) has an average score of 40.01 (out of a maximum total score of 70 per variable), Asset Scarcity (X2) is 39.57, and Competitiveness (Y) is 39.90. These figures indicate that tourist perceptions regarding the authenticity and scarcity of cultural assets in South Kalimantan fall within the "Neutral" to "Slightly Agree" level. The residual histogram graph shows a bell-shaped normal distribution pattern, meaning the data meet the basic assumptions for regression analysis. However, a challenge lies in the wide variance of answers, reflecting that the tourism experiences felt by visitors are not yet uniform, likely due to unstandardized service levels across tourism villages.

The Influence of Cultural Authenticity on Competitiveness

The first hypothesis test aimed to measure the partial impact of cultural authenticity on destination competitiveness. A summary of the regression calculation results can be seen in detail in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Partial Regression Test Results (t-Test)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	40.626	9.964	.000
Cultural Authenticity (Total XA)	0.068	1.037	.301
Asset Scarcity (Total XB)	-0.086	-1.244	.215

(Source: SPSS Data Processing, 2026)

Based on Table 2, the Cultural Authenticity variable (X1) exhibits a positive regression coefficient of 0.068, but with a significance value of 0.301 (Sig. > 0.05). These statistical results confirm that cultural authenticity currently does not have a significant effect on the competitiveness of rural tourism destinations in South Kalimantan, thereby rejecting the proposed hypothesis (H1). This empirical finding reveals a critical issue on the ground: the phenomenon of *Staged Authenticity* (MacCannell, 1973). Tourists likely perceive the presented cultural attractions as less natural, overly rigid, or heavily commodified for commercial interests, which ultimately fails to foster strong emotional bonds. This directly aligns with the Constructive Authenticity theory (Wang, 1999), which emphasizes that without genuine emotional involvement and meaningful interaction, cultural assets remain mere inanimate objects that cannot independently drive destination competitiveness.

The Influence of Asset Scarcity on Competitiveness

The second hypothesis test examined the impact of asset scarcity on competitiveness. Data in Table 2 shows a beta coefficient value of -0.086 with a significance of 0.215 (Sig > 0.05). Surprisingly, asset scarcity actually has a negative directional relationship (although insignificant). This means that the more "rare" or difficult it is to access a cultural asset, the less likely it is to increase competitiveness, potentially even decreasing tourist interest if accessibility is too difficult or information is restricted. In the context of the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), rare assets will only become a competitive advantage if they are well organized. This finding indicates that the "scarcity" of cultural assets in South Kalimantan (such as traditional rituals with uncertain schedules) may actually be perceived as a barrier by tourists (scarcity as unavailability), rather than as an attractive, exclusive value.

Simultaneous Effect and Determinants

Simultaneously, the F-test results showed a calculated F value of 1.549 with a significance of 0.215. The obtained R-squared value is very low, at 0.016 or only 1.6%. This statistically proves that under current conditions, Intangible Cultural Authenticity and Scarcity variables contribute very little to the formation of destination competitiveness in South Kalimantan. As much as 98.4% of competitiveness variation is determined by other factors outside this research model, most likely physical infrastructure, digital accessibility ease, and basic facilities (tangible attributes). This is a crucial finding, realizing that relying solely on cultural narratives without modern revitalization packaging and adequate facilities will not be enough to compete in the global market.

Integrative Discussion

Quantitative results indicating the insignificance of these cultural variables are clarified and confirmed by qualitative data. Based on in-depth interviews with traditional leaders and tourism village managers, it was found that the concept of "Revitalization" is often misinterpreted simply as ceremonial performances without strong narratives. One key informant stated: "Our culture is indeed authentic and rare, but tourists are often confused because there is no clear and engaging storytelling." It is this interpretation gap that explains why statistical data shows a weak influence. Without revitalization strategies focused on meaning interpretation (Wang, 1999) and ease of information access, even authentic and rare cultural assets will fail to be converted into destination competitiveness (Porter, 1990). Therefore, revitalization strategies must immediately shift from mere "static preservation" to "dynamic experience management."

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that intangible cultural assets in South Kalimantan hold massive potential but have not been optimized as primary drivers of rural tourism competitiveness. Based on data analysis, Cultural Authenticity and Asset Scarcity variables are currently empirically proven to have no significant effect on Destination Competitiveness. These findings highlight fundamental structural issues in regional tourism packaging; authenticity that is not narrated well and scarcity that is not managed professionally actually become accessibility barriers for tourists. Cultural assets left "dead" or "too exclusive" evidently fail to create competitive advantage in a modern tourism market that demands convenience and experience.

Academically, future research is suggested to explore relevant mediating variables, such as Tourist Experience or Digital Marketing, to bridge the relationship between cultural assets and competitiveness. Given the low R-Square value in this study, other researchers are strongly advised to include physical infrastructure, service

quality, and accessibility variables into the rural tourism model to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Furthermore, refinement and adaptation of measurement instruments are also needed to increase data reliability, especially in highly specific local cultural contexts.

For the Provincial Government of South Kalimantan and tourism village managers, the main recommendation of this research is to execute Interpretation and Management-Based Revitalization. First, transform the perception of scarcity into high-economic-value exclusivity by creating scheduled premium tourism packages, rather than leaving it as scheduling uncertainty that confuses tourists. Second, enhance the perception of authenticity not by prohibiting the modernization of supporting facilities, but by strengthening storytelling and facilitating direct interaction (co-creation) between tourists and cultural practitioners. Intangible assets must be immediately "tangibilized" through engaging digital narratives and well-curated attractions to genuinely compete at national and international levels.

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