

CULTURAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS AT THE CAP GO MEH FESTIVAL IN SINGKAWANG CITY

Rhea Mandasar, Budi Setiawan

Pradita University

Email: rhea.mandasari@student.pradita.ac.id, budi.setiawan@pradita.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Cultural tourism is one of the supporting or driving factors for the Indonesian tourism sector which plays quite an important role. Culture can be an attraction that can attract domestic and foreign tourists to learn about a culture in a particular area, one of which is the Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City. The Cap Go Meh Festival has now become an annual event that has been seen by the eyes of the world since 2008 and was recognized as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage 2020 and then named as one of the best events in Indonesia's Top 10 in 2023. Through the Cap Go Meh Festival as a cultural attraction, apart from being an entertainment event, it is also a cultural communication tool that represents traditions, history, culture, and introduces the regional culture of a place. The research was conducted to determine the attractiveness of the Cap Go Meh Festival cultural tourism which will be held in 2023 using the qualitative descriptive method. The research subjects used key informants, namely the Deputy Chief Executive, Dayak Traditional Institution, and Participants of the 2023 Cap Go Meh Festival. The research results showed that the Cap Go Meh Festival met the criteria as an attraction that had aspects of uniqueness, beauty and value contained in it.

Keywords: Tourism Attractions, Culture, Cap Go Meh Festival

INTRODUCTION

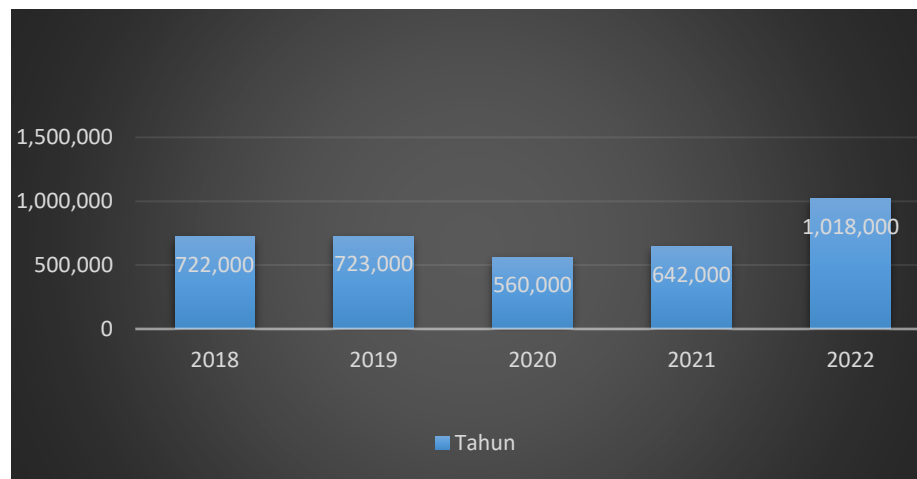
Indonesia is a multicultural country that has a diversity of races, ethnicities and cultures, spread across thousands of islands in Indonesia (Putra & Ibrahim, 2023). With great diversity, accompanied by unique and interesting natural riches, Indonesia has the potential to excel in the tourism sector. In 2022, Indonesia's tourism competitiveness ranking will continue to rise, from 44th place to 32nd (The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI), 2021).

One type of tourism that has quite an influence on the Indonesian tourism sector and has become an attraction for tourists is cultural tourism destinations (Goni et al., 2023). A destination is expected to not only be able to present natural beauty, but also be able to provide educational value that highlights the uniqueness of an area, for example by introducing more deeply about the culture in that area as an attraction for local and foreign tourists to visit. He said that the most important factor in cultural destinations is the cultural conditions of the community to support tourism development (Nur Setya Rahman Nuzulul, 2023). According to (Syamyanti, 2022), cultural tourism is able to provide economic benefits for local communities, generate

funds and education for the restoration and preservation of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, but can also be a serious threat if errors occur in managing cultural tourism.

One of the cultural tourism destinations in Indonesia, namely Singkawang City, is a city with a million charms and amazing natural panoramas that is even widely known nationally and internationally. The presence of the natural beauty of Singkawang City is also equipped with unique cultural heritage to attract local and foreign tourists (Ramadania et al., 2023). One cultural heritage that is quite unique and has the potential to become a tourist attraction is the Cap Go Meh Festival (diskominfo.kalbarprov.go.id). By definition, the Cap Go Meh Festival is an annual festival held by ethnic Chinese in Singkawang on the 15th day of the first month of the Chinese New Year. The Cap Go Meh Festival provides cultural values that are different from other regions so that it becomes an event for promotion and friendship between ethnic groups (Yuliawati et al., 2023). In 2023, the Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City succeeded in occupying one of the Top 10 best events/events in the 2023 Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN) determined by the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy and was recognized as the National Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2020 .

According to Sumastro, M. Si, Acting Mayor of Singkawang City (2023), said that in 2023, the number of tourists visiting Singkawang City is targeted to increase, namely by 1.5 million tourists. This visit is expected to increase considering the absence of this festival during the Covid-19 pandemic. The following is data on tourist visits for Singkawang City starting from 2018-2022.



Source: BPS (2023)

Based on the image above, it can be seen that the number of tourist visits to Singkawang City has increased significantly after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic (Susanto & Dwijayanto, 2022). The increase can be seen with growth of 40.83% in 2022 with total tourist visits of 1,018 million people compared to 2019 of 723 thousand people before the Covid-19 pandemic occurred. Then this figure continues to increase in 2023 until June, total tourist visits reached 1,237,848 (Head of the Singkawang City Youth and Sports Tourism Office, 2023). Of the total figure, 606,663 visitors specifically came to watch the 2023 Cap Go Meh festival (Kemenparekraf, 2023). The number of visitors dominates around 49% of the total number of tourists in 2023 visiting Singkawang City. The dominant number of visitors during the Cap Go Meh celebration

shows that the Cap Go Meh Festival is a cultural tourism attraction that is able to attract tourist visits from both domestic and foreign countries (Ololo & Dieke, 2022). Apart from that, this festival can help promote regional cultural traditions, explore, develop, preserve cultural values as assets, and improve the economy of the Singkawang community.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach, where the researcher tries to understand and describe the condition/subject of the research by collecting data and information and then explaining it in the form of a description without making previous predictions (Prayoga, 2021). According to (Sugiyono, 2018), qualitative research methods are methods used to examine the condition of natural objects, where the researcher is the key instrument.

The data collection method or technique in this research is qualitative with primary and secondary data sources. According to Hasan in (Fithriana, 2019), primary data is data that has been obtained or collected directly from the first source by the person conducting the research or the person concerned in the research. In order to collect primary data, researchers conducted interviews with key informants, namely the Deputy Chief Executive, Dayak Traditional Institution, and Participants of the 2023 Cap Go Meh Festival. Meanwhile, secondary data is data obtained from sources that do not directly provide data to data collectors (Tingginehe et al., 2019). To collect secondary data, researchers conducted studies from previous research, literature studies and documentation related to the attraction of the Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attraction of the Cap Go Meh Festival

Festival is a term that refers to a form of celebration to commemorate an event that has cultural value and is consistently used as a routine for a certain social group. Through festivals, a celebration is of course packaged better so that it can introduce and attract tourists, both domestic and foreign, as well as preserving the cultural heritage of the area.

The Cap Go Meh Festival is the closing of the Chinese New Year celebrations for the people of Singkawang City and at the same time serves as a showcase for the multi-ethnic traditions and local wisdom of Singkawang City, especially Tinghoa culture, starting from traditional arts, culinary delights and various cultural attractions. The Cap Go Meh Festival itself has been carried out for generations by the Chinese community in Singkawang City and is an annual event held once a year by the Singkawang City Government. However, the Cap Go Meh cultural event only became known to the world in 2008 (Merry, 2019).

Based on its history, Cap Go Meh itself has various versions based on the beliefs, culture and traditions of each region. The people of West Kalimantan, especially Singkawang City, have their own history. Initially in 1772, in a special village for ethnic Chinese in Monderato, West Kalimantan, who were immigrants from South China, was hit by an outbreak of infectious disease and there were no medical personnel at that time. This shortage makes Chinese people seek treatment from healers/shamans who use traditional and magical methods. They carry out a healing ritual called the repulsion ritual with local residents on the 15th day (Hokkien dialect: Cap Go) of the first month of the Chinese New Year calendar. Since this ritual, Chinese people have finally recovered and felt the benefits of the ritual of repelling evil. In the end, the ritual of

rejecting reinforcements became a tradition passed down from generation to generation that has survived to this day and was combined with the Chinese New Year celebration, which was named Cap Go Meh. From this history, the Cap Go Meh festival, especially in Singkawang City, has the main objective, namely an expression of gratitude to God for the blessings/good fortune given this year and at the same time as a hope that next year will be better.

1. Uniqueness

A tourist attraction can be said to be an attraction if it has and fulfills certain aspects, one of which is uniqueness (Ismayanti, 2010). Uniqueness comes from the word unique, which means that an object is stated to be different from others and has elements, such as unique performances or culinary delights. The uniqueness of a performance that is said to be unique must be varied, not monotonous and have its own characteristics.

As a result of interviews with key informants, the uniqueness of the Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City apart from being recognized as the 2020 National Intangible Cultural Heritage and one of the best events after the interview was conducted was the Tatung tradition. The Tatung tradition describes spiritual actions carried out by Tatung people by demonstrating the ability to withstand sharp and pointed objects such as broken glass, swords and spears. People believe that this was done by the Tatung who had been possessed by the spirits of ancestors, gods, and even knights from China. This action was carried out for two days, namely on the 14th as a ritual to wash the streets to cleanse evil spirits and continued with the peak of the celebration on the 15th day of the Chinese New Year calendar with a parade around the city of Singkawang. At Cap Go Meh 2023, the Tatung parade was attended by 859 Tatung from all sub-districts in Singkawang City.



(A)



(B)



(C)

Figure 1. (AC). Tatung Traditions and Parades

Apart from that, another unique thing about the Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City which is most different from other cities in Indonesia is the unification between ethnic groups. The Cap Go Meh parade is not only awaited by the ethnic Chinese community but also the Dayak and Malay ethnic groups who join in the fun. The enthusiasm and involvement of different ethnic groups shows that good relations between ethnic groups in Singkawang City are able to go hand in hand with each other. The harmonious inter-ethnic community life in Singkawang City is a feature of the Cap Go Meh Festival in Singkawang City (Burhan et al., 2020). In addition, Singkawang City has also been recognized as the most tolerant city in Indonesia in 2021. With the uniqueness of the Cap Go Meh festival in Singkawang City, this cultural tourism has increased the popularity of "Cap Go Meh" so that it is able to attract national and foreign tourists to join in celebrating the Festival. Cap Go Meh in Singkawang City.



(A)

Figure 2. (A). The appearance of the three tribes

2. Beauty

The second aspect of fulfilling the attraction of a tourist attraction is the aspect of beauty (Ismayanti, 2010). Beauty is a term that describes an object that is able to give someone a feeling of pleasure, meaning, and satisfaction when they see it. Beauty can also refer to something that has elements of environmental beauty or cultural elements.

Cultural heritage, apart from the arts, also has its own beauty or aesthetic value, as is the case with the Singkawang City Cap Go Meh Festival. Based on the results of interviews conducted, the aesthetic value of this festival can be seen from two aspects, namely traditional and non-traditional beauty. The beauty of tradition, namely in Tatung, starts from the clothing, attributes, equipment used according to the identity of each Tatung, some are like gods, knights, even their ancestors. The Tatung also have a flag that shows which temple they come from. Apart from the appearance, the beauty of art is also obtained from the musical accompaniment in the form of Chinese musical instruments, namely loku, and palanquins which have been packaged and

decorated in an attractive way. The performances of the Tatungs were also arranged well and in an orderly manner according to the sequence.



(A)



(B)



(C)

Figure 3. (AC). Appearance of the Tatungs

Meanwhile, the non-traditional beauty value of the Cap Go Meh festival is the artistic and cultural performances that last for 15 days, namely January 20 - February 6 2023 at the Kridasana Stadium. The arts and cultural performances took place lively, featuring art from 17 associations. Apart from the arts performances, there are also musical performances which enliven the arts performances.



(A)

(B)

Figure 3. (AB). Performing Arts

3. Value

The third aspect that fulfills the criteria for a festival to become an attraction is value (Ismayanti, 2010). Value describes a concept that refers to something that is considered valuable in life. An object can be said to have no beauty or uniqueness, but if the object has a certain meaning, then the object can be said to have value and can be attractive to tourists.

Based on the results of interviews with key informants, there are definitely values other than culture that the Cap Go Meh festival wants to convey to the community and the general public. Apart from cultural values, the values contained in the Cap Go Meh Festival include educational value, historical value and of course commercial value. Through Cap Go Meh, the government wants to simultaneously instill educational value so that the general public knows the unique cultural traditions of Singkawang City and is interested in learning more about this cultural tourism. The commercial value is to introduce it to national and foreign tourists with the aim of attracting tourists to visit and carry out tourism activities in Singkawang City. It is hoped that cultural tourism, apart from increasing the number of tourist visits, will also become an opportunity for the development of the local economic sector and tourism service businesses (Patriani & Burhan, 2019).

These four values are of course taken into account by the Cap Go Meh festival organizing committee every year. The importance of knowing the value that you want to channel through an activity is so that you can maintain the quality as an attraction to attract national and international tourists to Singkawang City.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research regarding the Cultural Tourism Attraction of the Cap Go Meh Singkawang Festival in 2023, it was concluded that the Cap Go Meh Festival is an annual festival held once a year by the Singkawang City government which later became the identity of the existence of Singkawang City. Since 2008, the Cap Go Meh Festival has been seen by the world and recognized as a 2020 National Intangible Cultural Heritage. In 2023, the Cap Go Meh Festival has become one of the Top 10 best events on Karisma Event Nusantara (KEN). The Singkawang City Cap Go Meh Festival also meets the criteria as an Attraction assessed from three aspects, namely the Uniqueness, Beauty and Value contained in the Festival. In terms of uniqueness, this festival displays spiritual actions such as dusting which shows the Tatung's body's resistance to sharp objects. Additional uniqueness is the unification between ethnicities which enlivens Chinese cultural customs. Meanwhile, the aspect of beauty is both traditional and non-traditional. The beauty of tradition can be seen from the performance of Tatung and non-traditions from the art and music performances of 17 associations. Lastly, the values contained in the Cap Go Meh festival are educational value, cultural value, historical value and commercial value.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burhan, R., Patriani, I., & Baharudin, L. (2020). Konstruksi alat tangkap jaring rajungan (*Portunus pelagicus*, spp) di Kecamatan Sungai Raya Kabupaten Bengkayang. *Jurnal Enggano*.
- Fithriana, N. (2019). PERSPEKTIF PEMBANGUNAN WISATA PANTAI PADA PENERAPAN POTENSI WILAYAH. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik (JISIP)*, 8(4), 187–194.
- Fitriani, R., & Sugiyono, S. (2018). Perilaku Peduli Lingkungan Pada Siswa Kelas X Sma Muhammadiyah 1 Yogyakarta. *Journal of Culinary Education and Technology*, 7(2).
- Goni, S., Kandowangko, N., & Kawung, E. J. R. (2023). THE Minahasan Art and Culture. *International Journal of Social Science Research and Review*, 6(6), 59–68.
- Ismayanti, I. (2010). Pengantar pariwisata. *PT Gramedia Widisarana*.
- Merry, M. S. (2019). *Educational justice: Liberal ideals, persistent inequality, and the constructive uses of critique*. Springer Nature.
- Nur Setya Rahman Nuzulul, R. (2023). *Pembuatan Gamelan Moulding Jenis Bonang Barung Di PT. YPTI Kalasan Yogyakarta*. Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta.
- Ololo, N. G., & Dieke, P. U. C. (2022). Change and continuity in event tourism development in Nigeria: Examples from Ekpe Cultural Festival in Abia State. *Tourism Review International*, 26(1), 57–71.
- Prayoga, R. (2021). *Penggunaan Media Gambar Dalam Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Matematika Siswa Kelas III SDN 1 Tulus Rejo*. IAIN Metro.
- Putra, B. M., & Ibrahim, B. (2023). Development of Multiculturalism on Ethnic and Religion in Indonesia. *Santhet: Jurnal Sejarah, Pendidikan, Dan Humaniora*, 7(1), 21–35.
- Ramadania, R., Yolanda, A., Kalis, M. C. I., Heriyadi, H., & Rahmawati, R. (2023). Does the Advertising Strategy and Tourism Attraction of the 'Cap Go Meh' Festival Can Affect the Decision and Intention of Tourists Revisiting? *International Journal of Sustainable Development & Planning*, 18(4).
- Susanto, S., & Dwijayanto, A. (2022). Student's Attachment to Social Media and the Challenges of Moderate Islamic Education (Implementation During the Covid-19 Pandemic). *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 10(2), 331–352.
- Syamyanti, R. (2022). Pariwisata Budaya untuk pelestarian cagar budaya. *Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Provinsi Sumatera Barat*.
- Tingginehe, A. M., Waani, J. O., & Wuisang, C. E. V. (2019). Perencanaan Pariwisata Hijau Di Distrik Roon Kabupaten Teluk Wondama, Papua Barat. *Spasial*, 6(2), 511–520.
- Yuliawati, S., Dienaputra, R. D., & Yunaidi, A. (2023). Coexistence of the ethnic Chinese and Sundanese in the city of Bandung, West Java: a case study on Kampung Toleransi. *Asian Ethnicity*, 24(3), 390–405.

Copyright holder:

Rhea Mandasar, Budi Setiawan (2023)

First publication right:

[Jurnal Syntax Transformation](#)

This article is licensed under:

