

COFFEE EDUCATION TOURISM IN GUNUNGKIDUL, YOGYAKARTA: INTEGRATING CREATIVE ECONOMY, CULTURAL HERITAGE, AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. *Coffee is more than an agricultural commodity, it represents cultural identity and serves as a driver of the creative economy. This article examines Katamata Coffee Roastery as a pioneer in developing the concept of coffee education tourism based on local wisdom in Gunungkidul Regency, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review, document analysis, and field observation, the study reveals that coffee education tourism not only enhances the economic value of Gunungkidul's Robusta coffee, but also functions as a medium for community empowerment, cultural preservation, and diversification of sustainable tourism. The findings highlight the importance of synergy between coffee, culture, and tourism in strengthening local identity and promoting a community-based creative economy.*

Keywords: *Community Empowerment ;Education Tourism; Gunungkidul Robusta Coffee; Sustainable Tourism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Coffee is one of Indonesia's strategic commodities, possessing high economic, social, and cultural value. As the world's fourth-largest coffee producer, Indonesia is recognized not only for its diverse varieties but also for its social and cultural traditions surrounding coffee production and consumption (Rahardjo, 2020). In regional development, coffee has transcended its role as a mere agricultural product and become part of the creative economy ecosystem, fostering innovation rooted in local knowledge and culture (Sukma, 2021).

Gunungkidul Regency, widely known for its karst landscapes and natural tourism potential, has begun to develop high-value non-food agricultural sectors such as Robusta coffee. The hilly areas of Ngawen, Semin, and Patuk sub-districts possess favorable agro-climatic conditions for robusta cultivation, including altitude, soil structure, and microclimate (Amri & Jayusman, 2023). However, the economic value of Gunungkidul coffee has remained stagnant for decades because production has focused primarily on raw beans rather than on value-added processes such as processing, branding, and educational tourism.

The emergence of Katamata Coffee Roastery marks a significant transformation. Katamata functions not only as a roasting and processing facility but also as a learning center and community empowerment hub for local coffee farmers. Moreover, it serves as an educational tourism destination that integrates cultural, environmental, and creative-economic dimensions. This initiative signifies a paradigm shift from viewing coffee merely as a commodity to embracing

it as a *cultural and educational experience*.

From a theoretical perspective, this concept aligns with the framework of community-based development and sustainable creative economy. These approaches position local communities as principal actors in the economic value chain, where traditional knowledge, cultural identity, and innovation become forms of social capital mobilized for collective welfare (Todaro & Smith, 2015).

Additionally, the development of coffee education tourism supports the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—notably Goal 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), Goal 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and Goal 12 (*Responsible Consumption and Production*). Thus, coffee education tourism represents not only an economic innovation but also a social development strategy that enhances community resilience amid global change.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Coffee as cultural commodity and local identity

Coffee has been widely conceptualized not merely as an agricultural commodity but as a cultural product embedded in social practices, meanings, and identities. Sociological and anthropological studies show that coffee consumption, production and rituals around coffee become markers of collective identity and local heritage (Rahardjo, 2020). In Indonesia specifically, place-based varieties and locally specific processing methods contribute to distinct “coffee cultures” that can be mobilized for place-branding and community pride. The literature thus frames coffee as both an economic good and a symbolic resource whose value is co-produced by producers, processing actors, and consumers (Ghosh, 2020; Wilson, 2018). The Gunungkidul case—where Robusta cultivation and roasting activities have been re-signified through learning and storytelling—is an example of this cultural inscription of coffee.

2.2 Creative economy, value-added processing, and rural transformation

The creative economy literature emphasizes how knowledge, creativity and cultural assets generate new value chains beyond raw commodity export (Howkins, 2013; World Bank, 2020). Applied to rural agricultural contexts, scholars show that product diversification, local branding, small-batch processing, and experiential services (e.g., tastings, workshops) can capture downstream value for communities and micro- enterprises (Sukma, 2021; Yuliana, 2021). In coffee-producing regions worldwide, the third-wave coffee movement and specialty coffee markets have opened opportunities for artisanal roasting, single-origin marketing, and tourism-linked sales that raise farmgate incomes when effectively organized (Cruz & Schneider, 2020). The literature highlights crucial enabling factors: technical capacity in post-harvest processing, entrepreneurial skills, access to market information, and institutional support for quality assurance.

2.3 Educational tourism and community-based tourism (CBT)

Educational tourism (learning-focused travel) and community-based tourism (local control and benefit-sharing) intersect in literatures that foreground learning experiences as mechanisms for empowerment and social capital building (Widodo, 2019; Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Empirical research shows that tourism activities designed around hands-on learning (farm visits, processing demonstrations, craft workshops) can generate diversified livelihoods, enhance local skills, and foster heritage awareness—provided communities retain agency over interpretation and revenues (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018). Critically, the success of educational tourism is conditioned by quality of interpretation, participatory governance, and equitable distribution of

benefits; otherwise, leakage and commodification may displace local priorities.

2.4 Sustainable tourism, ecological literacy, and karst conservation

Sustainable tourism scholarship stresses balancing economic benefits with environmental stewardship and social equity (Fennell, 2020; UNWTO, 2021). In ecologically sensitive landscapes—such as karst regions—tourism must be specially tailored to avoid degradation of hydrological systems, biodiversity, and unique geomorphology (UNESCO, 2015). Studies of eco-education initiatives show that integrating environmental knowledge into tourist activities (interpretive walks, waste management demonstrations, reforestation programs) increases visitor awareness and can catalyze pro-conservation behaviors among host communities (Fennell, 2020). Moreover, circular waste practices (e.g., composting coffee waste) and water-conserving processing techniques align with broader calls for responsible production-consumption cycles (Goal 12 of the SDGs). The case findings that Katamata practices composting, rainwater use, and community tree planting are therefore consistent with recommended approaches for tourism in fragile karst landscapes.

2.5 Social capital, empowerment, and resilience

A cross-disciplinary literature links community-based economic innovations to increases in social capital (trust, networks, reciprocity), empowerment (agency, skills, voice), and socio-ecological resilience (Adger, 2003; Putnam, 2000 in applied contexts). Empowerment through skill development (barista training, small enterprise management) and participatory tourism governance can reduce vulnerability to market shocks by diversifying income sources and strengthening cooperative action (Soetomo, 2017; Yuliana, 2021). Importantly, the literature cautions that empowerment is not automatic: it requires inclusive participation (gender, youth, smallholders), transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms, and continuous capacity building to prevent elite capture.

2.6 Synergy models: integrating creative economy, culture, and sustainability

Recent theoretical work advocates integrative models that intentionally link cultural assets, creative enterprise, and sustainability principles to form durable local economic ecosystems (World Bank, 2020; Howkins, 2013). Such models emphasize feedback loops: culture informs product narratives (branding), creative practices build marketable experiences (tourism), and sustainable practices protect the resource base enabling long-term production. Empirical studies from coffee regions (Latin America, Southeast Asia) demonstrate that when these elements are coordinated—through cooperatives, public-private partnerships, or local institutions—communities are more likely to capture value locally while preserving cultural and environmental assets (Wilson, 2018; Cruz & Schneider, 2020). The coffee-culture-tourism synergy articulated in this study maps directly onto these integrative frameworks.

2.7 Gaps, risks, and governance considerations

The literature also identifies several caveats and research gaps relevant for practice and further study. Key risks include: market volatility for specialty products, dependency on tourist flows (seasonality and external shocks), potential commodification of culture, environmental carrying-capacity thresholds in sensitive landscapes, and inequitable benefit distribution. Governance literature emphasizes the need for multi-stakeholder arrangements, capacity building for local management, monitoring systems (environmental and socio-economic), and supportive policy instruments (training funds, market access programs) to mitigate these risks (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; UNWTO, 2021). Future research should examine long-term socio-

economic impacts, gendered effects of tourism-linked livelihoods, and quantitative measures of ecological outcomes.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research applied a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the implementation of coffee education tourism in Gunungkidul. Data collection techniques included:

- a. Literature review, to identify theoretical concepts related to creative economy, sustainable tourism, and community empowerment;
- b. Field observations, conducted at Katamata Coffee Roastery and surrounding coffee farms in Patuk and Ngawen;
- c. Informal interviews with coffee entrepreneurs, farmers, and visitors.

Data were analyzed using data reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing techniques (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The validity of findings was strengthened through source triangulation and repeated observations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. *The Dynamics of Coffee Production and Identity in Gunungkidul*

Gunungkidul has a long history of plantation cultivation, including coffee. During the Dutch colonial period, coffee was part of the *cultivation system (cultuurstelsel)* in southern Yogyakarta. After independence, however, coffee production declined due to shifting economic orientations and land degradation (Soetomo, 2017).

In the last decade, renewed enthusiasm for local coffee production has emerged alongside the growing popularity of Indonesian specialty coffees and the *third wave coffee* movement. Within this context, Katamata Coffee has played a pivotal role—not only by purchasing farmers' harvests but also by mentoring them in environmentally friendly farming, post-harvest processing, and sensory evaluation (*cupping* and *roasting*).

This transformation has sparked a new sense of pride among local residents. Coffee is no longer viewed merely as a source of income, but as a symbol of local identity and a medium for building social networks among farmers, creative practitioners, and tourists.

b. *Creative Economy and Coffee Culture Synergy*

The creative economy is rooted in creativity, knowledge, and cultural heritage as sources of economic value (Howkins, 2013). At Katamata, creativity extends beyond coffee processing to the ways coffee is narrated and experienced as cultural expression.

Visitors are not only invited to taste coffee but also to learn every stage—from planting and picking to drying and brewing. Each stage becomes an educational encounter and a form of social interaction that generates added value. These practices produce a “local narrative” essential for destination branding based on cultural authenticity.

The cultural dimension is further reinforced through community participation in preserving traditions such as *nyeduh bareng* (collective brewing), *selamatan panen kopi* (harvest rituals), and performances of local music during coffee festivals. Such activities demonstrate how coffee acts as a medium linking economic, cultural, and social dimensions in a harmonious relationship.

c. *Educational Tourism and Community Empowerment*

Katamata's coffee education tourism model positions local people as subjects rather than objects of development. Residents are trained to become tour guides, baristas, artisans, and

storytellers of coffee heritage. This approach reflects the principles of community-based tourism (CBT), in which communities exercise control over the direction and benefits of tourism activities (Timothy & Boyd, 2003; Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Educational tourism has opened new employment opportunities beyond conventional agriculture—spanning culinary enterprises, handicrafts, and barista training. Its impact is evident in the rising participation of youth in productive activities and in the growth of environmental awareness within the community.

Moreover, coffee education tourism cultivates social capital such as trust, networks, and collective cooperation (*gotong royong*). These strengthen socio-ecological resilience, enabling communities to adapt to market fluctuations and the effects of climate change.

d. Sustainable Tourism and Karst Conservation

Gunungkidul is characterized by fragile karst landscapes vulnerable to ecological degradation. Accordingly, coffee-based tourism is developed under principles of environmental sustainability. Katamata Coffee implements practices such as composting organic coffee waste, harvesting rainwater for processing, and maintaining vegetation buffers around coffee plots.

Tourism activities are integrated with environmental education, including tree-planting initiatives, use of eco-friendly energy, and awareness programs on the hydrological significance of karst systems. This approach aligns with the concept of educational ecotourism, emphasizing balance among economic benefit, environmental preservation, and community well-being (Fennell, 2020).

Through these efforts, coffee education tourism contributes to ecological literacy among tourists and locals alike—encouraging behavioral changes toward more responsible consumption and production practices.

e. The Coffee–Culture–Tourism Synergy Model

Analysis reveals that Gunungkidul's coffee education tourism integrates three interdependent components:

- Creative Economy – innovation in coffee processing, packaging, and presentation generates new economic opportunities;
- Local Culture – community wisdom and traditions provide symbolic value and strengthen destination identity;
- Sustainable Tourism – tourism activities empower communities while maintaining environmental integrity.

Together, these elements form a mutually reinforcing ecosystem that creates a *local loop economy*, circulating value within the community and enhancing the region's competitiveness. The synergy between these dimensions demonstrates how rural development can move beyond extractive economic models toward culturally and ecologically embedded innovation.

CONCLUSION

The development of coffee education tourism in Gunungkidul, exemplified by Katamata Coffee Roastery, represents a tangible practice of integrating creative economy, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism. This model enhances the value of local Robusta coffee, strengthens cultural identity, and fosters social resilience. Community-based approaches adopted through educational tourism illustrate that social innovation can coexist with environmental conservation. The Gunungkidul case demonstrates a replicable framework for other regions seeking to advance a creative-economy-based development model grounded in

local wisdom. For policymakers, this initiative underscores the importance of collaborative governance, inter-sectoral partnerships, and capacity building to sustain local creative enterprises and preserve ecological balance in karst landscapes.

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