

## CHARACTERISTICS OF ART CAMPUS AS A CULTURAL LEARNING SPACE FOR TOURISM STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines how the learning environment of an art-based university shapes the cultural understanding and competencies of students in the Tourism Study Program. Existing research has widely discussed cultural tourism and cultural literacy, yet few studies explore how daily exposure to artistic practices functions as an experiential learning space for tourism students. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through observation and in-depth interviews with tourism students who interact directly with artistic activities. The findings indicate that art campuses create a unique cultural ecology where students learn cultural values not solely through theory but through embodied experiences such as witnessing rehearsals, engaging in informal conversations with art students, and participating in campus cultural events. These experiences foster cultural sensitivity, interpretive skills, and ethical awareness that support the development of culturally responsible tourism practices. This study contributes to the discourse on tourism education by demonstrating that art-based learning environments play a strategic role in strengthening cultural competencies among future tourism practitioners.*

**Keywords:** art university, cultural learning, tourism students, cultural competence, experiential learning

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## INTRODUCTION

The art campus exhibits unique characteristics that distinguish it from other educational institutions, because its main function is not only to convey theoretical concepts, but also to bring art and cultural practices to life directly in the academic environment. Every day, the campus is filled with a variety of creative activities, such as traditional dance practices, ethnic music performances, theater performances, fine art productions, and cross-disciplinary discussions on local aesthetics and traditions. These activities create a campus atmosphere that is dynamic, expressive, and rich in cultural meaning. Spaces such as dance studios, music studios, performance rooms, art galleries, and open-air rehearsal areas are important components of campus life, so that the entire environment feels like an active and lively cultural laboratory. Students who study there not only gain knowledge in an academic context, but also engage directly in a cultural atmosphere that develops naturally and organically.

The presence of an environment like this provides a very valuable experience for students of the Tourism Study Program. As a field of science where one of the main focuses is cultural tourism, tourism students are required to understand the values, history, functions, and dynamics of culture that are tourist attractions. Learning about culture is usually done through theoretical material delivered in class, but being on an art campus allows tourism students to gain deeper cultural insights through hands-on observation and practical empirical experience. They can witness how a performing art is learned, practiced, and finally staged, as well as understand how

local traditions are preserved through a sustainable and innovative creative process. Thus, art campuses serve as cultural learning environments that are not only theoretical, but also applicative, contextual, and directly related to reality.

In addition, the interaction between tourism students and art students creates an informal learning space that is no less important. Art students, accustomed to living in the rhythm of everyday culture, provide real and concrete examples of how they understand the traditions, values, and functions of art in society. Daily conversations, collaborations in campus activities, and cooperation in art events provide opportunities for tourism students to learn about the art community's perspective on culture in depth. This process enriches their knowledge and experience of how culture is produced, cared for, and disseminated in a broader social context. In other words, art campuses provide a social context that strengthens the cultural literacy of tourism students, not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of social meaning, community identity, and cultural dynamics.

The learning experience formed through the art campus environment can have a significant impact on the ability of tourism students to understand and manage the potential of culture-based tourism. By seeing firsthand the creative processes that take place around them, students can develop a higher cultural sensitivity, understand the various forms of ethical and responsible cultural appreciation, and know how culture should be treated in the context of tourism so as not to experience over-commercialization or lose its authentic value. They can also develop critical thinking about how local culture can be packaged into attractive and innovative tourist attractions without losing the essence of its pure tradition. This is especially relevant considering that the tourism industry today increasingly emphasizes the importance of authentic tourism experiences, based on local cultural values, and sustainable.

Although a number of studies have discussed the relationship between art, culture, and tourism in general, studies that specifically place art campuses as living cultural laboratories for tourism students are still very limited and have not been widely done. No previous research has directly observed and analyzed how the creative environment of art campuses shapes students' cultural learning processes through daily exposure to diverse art practices. Informal interactions between arts students and tourism students, which are actually important and strategic cultural knowledge exchange spaces, have also never been analyzed in depth in the existing academic literature. In addition, there have been no studies that have outlined in detail how students' empirical experiences, such as witnessing the creative process firsthand or being actively involved in artistic activities, translate into the professional competencies required in cultural tourism. This gap demonstrates the need for research that sees art campuses not just as ordinary educational institutions, but as complex cultural ecosystems and influencing the way tourism students understand and interpret cultural values in the broader context of tourism.

However, research that specifically examines the experiences of tourism students in the art campus environment is still very limited and has not reached the required depth. Most previous research has focused more on cultural learning in general, the role of art in tourism, or the relationship between the arts community and the creative industry as a whole. There has not been much research that looks at and explores how the art campus environment directly influences the cultural understanding of tourism students, especially in terms of their daily experiences interacting with living art traditions and practices. In fact, this understanding is important to know the extent to which art campuses can function as an effective and efficient cultural learning space for tourism students, as well as how the experience contributes significantly to their readiness to face the cultural-based and increasingly competitive world of tourism work.

Based on this background, this research was conducted to fill the existing literature gap and provide a deeper and more comprehensive picture of how tourism students understand local culture when studying in the art campus environment. This research also aims to look at and analyze the natural cultural learning process, the forms of cultural experience that students gain through direct interaction, and the impact of the art campus environment on the way they perceive, assess, and apply culture in the context of sustainable tourism development. Thus, the

results of this research are expected to be able to make a meaningful contribution to the development of cultural tourism studies and assist educational institutions in designing more relevant, effective, and adaptive learning strategies for tourism students in this era of globalization.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the relationship between art, culture, and tourism have been widely reviewed in the literature, especially in the realm of cultural tourism and cultural education. The fundamental concept on which this research is based departs from a deep understanding of culture itself. According to Koentjaraningrat (2009), culture is the totality of the system of ideas, behaviors, and the results of human creation that are studied in society. In the field of tourism, culture is considered one of the main magnets that offers a distinctive experience for tourists. This opinion is supported by McKercher and du Cros (2002), who explain that cultural tourism involves tourism activities that utilize cultural resources, including traditions, performing arts, historical sites, and modern cultural expressions. From this perspective, culture is not only an object to be seen, but also an educational arena that provides value to tourists and tourism practitioners.

Art campuses as places of education play a crucial role in preserving and spreading culture. The learning environment theory from Fraser (1998) emphasizes that the physical, social, and cultural conditions in which students learn will affect the learning process and the way they grasp a concept. In the context of an art campus, this environment includes daily art activities, interaction with creative groups, as well as the existence of cultural facilities such as studios, studios, performance halls, and galleries. This kind of environment can be a source of extensive cultural experience for tourism students, as they not only understand culture through lectures, but also through direct observation of the creative process, exchanges between artists, and the implementation of art events.

In addition to the theory of the learning environment, the concept of cultural literacy from Hirsch (1987) is also relevant to describe how students understand the local culture. Cultural literacy includes the ability of individuals to identify, understand, and interpret cultural symbols, practices, and values in their social context. On an art campus, tourism students can build cultural literacy through observation, interaction, and indirect participation in art activities. This is in line with the social learning theory put forward by Bandura (1977), which states that individuals can learn through observation (observational learning) of the actions and activities of others. Tourism students who watch art students practice, create, and maintain traditions will gain a deeper understanding of local culture than just through academic reading materials.

In the world of tourism, cultural understanding is closely related to the concepts of cultural appreciation and cultural sensitivity. According to Reisinger and Steiner (2006), cultural sensitivity is one of the competencies that must be possessed by tourism actors because they often interact with local culture and tourists from various origins. The experience of living on an art campus full of cultural activities provides an opportunity for tourism students to foster this sensitivity. They can learn how culture is treated by artists, how traditions are preserved, and how cultural values are maintained through daily routines. This will greatly support them in designing cultural tourism that is not only interesting, but also ethical and sustainable.

Previous research on cultural tourism has shown that direct cultural experiences have a major impact on students' understanding and attitudes. Fauziah's research (2021) found that students' participation in local cultural activities increases their knowledge of the potential of cultural tourism and strengthens their ability to design cultural value-based promotions. Meanwhile, Arianto and Prasetyo (2022) explained that students' interaction with the art community can deepen their understanding of the creative process and have a positive effect on their views on cultural tourism development opportunities. Other research by Dewi and Handayani (2019) also shows that an art-based educational environment is able to increase students' cultural appreciation and shape their perspective on the preservation of local traditions.

However, although some studies have explored the relationship between art and tourism,

there are still very few studies that specifically examine the experiences of tourism students on arts campuses. Most research focuses on general cultural tourism, cultural promotion, or the linkage between performing arts and tourist sites. Studies on how the art campus environment shapes the cultural understanding of tourism students have not been widely done, especially in the Indonesian context. This shows that there are research gaps that need to be filled, namely how tourism students interpret the cultural experiences they gain while on the arts campus, as well as how those experiences contribute to their preparation to manage culture-based tourism in the future.

Thus, this literature review shows that cultural theory, learning environment, cultural literacy, and social learning are appropriate foundations for understanding the phenomenon studied. In addition, the findings of previous research provide an idea that direct cultural experiences have an important influence on student understanding. However, there has been no study that specifically connects the cultural understanding of tourism students with the art campus environment. Therefore, this research is strategically positioned to complement the lack of the literature.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study applies a qualitative method with a case study design to explore in depth how tourism students interpret culture through their interaction with the art campus environment. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the complexity of the cultural learning process which cannot be simplified into numbers, but must be understood through the experience, views, and interpretation of the research subject. The case study design was used because this research focuses on one specific context, namely the experience of tourism students on art campuses, thus allowing for intensive and contextual exploration of the phenomenon being studied.

The research was conducted at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Padang Panjang, an arts-based educational institution that has a unique learning atmosphere, different from conventional campuses. The arts campus environment full of creative activities such as dance rehearsals, music rehearsals, performances, art discussions, and studio practices directly provides tourism students with exposure to diverse cultures. Therefore, this location was chosen deliberately (purposive) because it provides empirical data that is in accordance with the research objectives. The research subjects consist of students of the Tourism Study Program with various semester levels, ranging from the third semester to the fifth semester. They were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their participation in campus activities and their proximity to the art activities that took place in the environment. This selection is carried out to ensure that respondents have sufficient experience to explain the phenomenon they want to reveal.

Data collection was carried out through two main techniques, namely participant observation and in-depth interviews. Observation was carried out directly for three weeks, during which researchers were involved in observing campus activities without participating in the art process itself. Observations include observing how art students practice dance, play traditional music, prepare for theater performances, and interact in studios and public areas of campus. Observations were also focused on the presence of tourism students in these spaces, how they pay attention to art activities, how they get along with art students, and their spontaneous reactions to the cultural atmosphere formed. Through these observations, researchers get a natural picture of the presence of culture in campus life and how tourism students experience such exposure in their daily routines.

In addition to observation, in-depth interviews are the main technique to reveal the personal experiences of tourism students. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher had the flexibility to delve into certain aspects when the respondents revealed experiences that were considered important. These interviews emphasize

students' narratives about how they understand the local culture after living in an art campus environment, how their interactions with art students shape cultural understanding, and how they apply these experiences in the academic context of tourism. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in a relaxed setting that allowed respondents to tell their stories more freely, resulting in rich and reflective data. All interviews were recorded with the respondent's permission for easy transcription and analysis.

Data analysis follows the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana interactive analysis model that involves three main processes: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. In the first stage, data reduction is carried out by selecting, grouping, and focusing the information that is most relevant to the research question. This process is carried out repeatedly throughout the data collection because qualitative data tends to develop as interviews and observation results increase. The next stage is the presentation of data in the form of a thematic narrative that allows researchers to see the relationships between concepts, identify patterns, and formulate analytical categories that emerge from respondents' experiences. The third stage is the drawing of conclusions that are carried out in stages, namely by reflecting on the initial findings, relating them to related theories, and deepening the interpretation based on the additional data collected.

To maintain the validity of the data, this study applied triangulation method, namely by comparing the suitability between observation data and interview data. Although the study respondents were only tourism students, the use of two data collection techniques allowed researchers to look at the phenomenon from two perspectives: what students stated and what was seen in the behavior and context of the art campus environment. In addition to triangulation, researchers also maintain the credibility of the data through member checking, namely by confirming several interview results to respondents to ensure that the researchers' interpretations do not deviate from their original intentions. Thus, the resulting research findings are not only subjective, but can also be accounted for academically.

## **DEVELOPMENT RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The results of the study show that the presence of tourism students in the art campus environment has a great influence on their understanding of the local culture. The campus atmosphere filled with art activities makes culture no longer an abstract theoretical concept, but rather a reality that emerges every day in their lives. Tourism students indirectly learn to understand cultural values through observation, participation in campus events, and relationships with art students who have a closer bond with local traditions. The continuous routine of art activities allows tourism students to form cultural understandings based on hands-on experience, not just from oral explanations in class. This shows that art campuses play a role as a dynamic and continuous arena of cultural learning.

The findings of the study reveal that the presence of tourism students on art campuses shapes cultural learning processes that are not only academic, but also emotional, social, and sensory. Their interaction with the creative atmosphere that exists every day opens up informal learning opportunities that are often more meaningful than classroom lecture materials. In this case, the art campus becomes a living cultural environment that gradually affects how tourism students understand, feel, and evaluate culture.

At first, most students admit that they have no affinity for art. They come with the view that tourism is only related to attractions, promotions, and services. However, after entering the art campus environment, the view shifted. One respondent stated: "I used to never think that art was important for tourism. But after seeing the exercises on campus for myself, I felt like I was stepping into a new world. It's very different when you see it directly." (Respondents 1) His remarks show a transformation of perception arising from practical experience. The existence of facilities such as dance studios, music studios, and rehearsal stages creates a cultural atmosphere that cannot be replaced by text or theory alone. Observation of the creative process that for non-art students is a new experience becomes an entry point to understand the depth of cultural values.

One of the experiences that respondents most often mentioned was the sensation of witnessing the process of practicing art up close. Respondent 4 explained: "When I first saw the dance practice in the studio, I was shocked. They repeat the same movement over and over again until it fits. From there, I realized that culture did not just appear. There is a struggle. It opened my eyes." This kind of understanding rarely arises if students only learn about culture through books or lecture presentations. Direct experience makes them realize that culture consists of creative processes, discipline, and commitment of art actors. This then fosters a new respect for the local culture.

In addition to direct exposure to art, casual interaction with art students is also a key element that shapes the cultural understanding of tourism students. These interactions occur in the canteen, building corridors, break rooms, or when watching performances together. Respondent 6 shared: "During breaks, I often hear art students talking about costumes, the meaning of movement, or music. Sometimes I accidentally listen, I keep asking. From those spontaneous stories, I learned a lot." Informal conversations like these provide students with an organic, unplanned learning experience. They learn culture naturally through dialogue and stories of the experiences of their friends who live in the art world. This is in line with the concept of social learning, where knowledge is gained through observation and interaction.

Some students even feel that the art campus environment introduces a "new culture" that they have never encountered in their daily lives before. Respondent 7 explained: "The new culture is not just about art. But the way they appreciate the process, the way they talk about the work, the way they look at tradition. I feel like it's another culture that I'm learning from." His remarks show that tourism students not only learn art as an object, but also learn the cultural attitude of art students. It includes thinking patterns, appreciation for tradition, and an understanding of symbolic meaning. In other words, tourism students experience a change in perspective about the culture itself.

Not only a cultural understanding was formed, but also an early understanding of the art world more broadly. They began to realize that art has complex structures, rules, techniques, and philosophies. Respondent 3 said: "I just found out that every dance movement has a meaning. I used to think it was just a beautiful movement. After asking my art friends, I just understood that there is a story behind the movement." This understanding is important because the meaning of culture in the context of tourism is not only related to the visual appearance, but also the narrative and values inherent in that culture. Tourism students who understand this context will be more sensitive in promoting or packaging culture as tourist attractions.

In addition, the experience of living on an art campus also influences tourism students' views on ethics in the development of cultural tourism. Many of them began to question the practice of cultural commercialization that did not pay attention to cultural values and sensitivities. Respondent 9 explained: "After seeing the creative process of art friends, I feel that culture should not be sold carelessly. There are things that must be respected. If we make tourist attractions, we must know the limits." His remarks show that direct experience shapes students' ethical awareness. They realize that culture is not merely an economic commodity, but also a part of a social identity that has deep value. This awareness is an important basis for the development of responsible cultural tourism.

Social interaction between tourism students and art students is one of the most influential factors in the formation of cultural understanding. Art students, who are daily involved with dance practice, traditional music, theater, or other creative activities, are indirectly a source of cultural knowledge for tourism students. Daily conversations, casual discussions, and the opportunity to watch the preparation of the performance provide additional insight into the cultural meaning and value in each artwork. Tourism students admit that through these interactions they learn about cultural aspects that they have never found in books or lecture materials. This learning process is in line with the concept of social learning which states that a person can learn from observation of the behavior of others. In this context, art students serve as models who show how culture is valued and maintained.

The first-hand experience of witnessing the creative process also has a big impact on the

way tourism students understand the local culture. They can clearly see how a dance is learned with discipline, how traditional music requires a certain precision, how cultural values are stored in movement, costume, and sound, and how a performance is not only a spectacle, but also an expression of identity. Empirical experiences like this make tourism students better understand that culture is not just a tourist attraction, but the result of long work that requires process, dedication, and deep understanding from the actors. This experience strengthened their sensitivity to culture so that they appreciate the aspects of authenticity and values inherent in a tradition when discussing tourism development.

In addition, campus cultural activities such as end-of-semester performances, art festivals, work exhibitions, or collaborations between study programs are also additional learning spaces for students. They can see how a cultural activity is designed, produced, and presented to the public. This process provides an understanding of how a work of art can be packaged in the form of an engaging performance without taking away the cultural value of it. This situation is very relevant to the world of tourism, considering that cultural activities are often used as part of tourist attractions. Through this experience, tourism students can grasp that the success of a cultural attraction depends not only on the visual packaging, but also on how cultural values are maintained and delivered ethically.

The findings of the study also show that the cultural knowledge of tourism students is growing because they are used to being in physical spaces that contain cultural values. Dance studios, music studios, theater rehearsal rooms, and art galleries indirectly create an atmosphere that shapes their mindset about culture. This environment makes them better understand that culture has a dimension, a process, a space, and a community that needs to be valued. Even students who previously had no interest in art began to have a new awareness of the importance of culture as an identity and tourism potential.

Interestingly, tourism students are also beginning to view culture not only as a tourist attraction, but as a social force that has a role in building the character of society. They acknowledge that being on an art campus makes their views on culture broader, including how culture can be used as an educational medium, community strengthening, and a means of cultural diplomacy. This view shows that the experience of studying on an art campus provides a new dimension in their understanding of cultural tourism.

However, this study also found that some tourism students still need guidance in connecting their cultural experiences with the academic context of tourism. Not all students are automatically able to relate these empirical experiences to concepts such as tourist attractions, cultural interpretation, or destination management. This shows that the role of lecturers and curriculum remains important to bridge practical experience with relevant academic theory. Despite this, the art campus environment still makes a great contribution in shaping their cultural understanding.

Overall, this discussion emphasized that the arts campus environment provides a rich and immersive cultural experience for tourism students. Through interaction, observation, and participation in cultural activities, students gain a much more comprehensive understanding of the local culture. This not only has an impact on increasing knowledge, but also on their attitudes and perspectives on cultural tourism in a more wise, authentic, and sustainable way.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research reveals that the existence of the Tourism Study Program in the art campus environment has a great influence on how students understand, appreciate, and apply cultural values in the field of tourism. Direct contact with the art atmosphere both through works, creative groups, and learning areas full of cultural expressions encourage tourism students to see culture not just as a promotional tool, but as a living system that must be protected and carefully translated into tourism activities.

The findings of the study show that the open, innovative, and rich nature of the arts campus deepens the learning process of tourism students. Students not only gain theoretical knowledge of culture, but also experience aesthetic and social experiences that shape their

views on culture-based tourism work. This understanding is then reflected in the way they design cultural interpretations, creative promotional strategies, and more sensitive attitudes towards conservation issues.

In general, this study confirms that the combination of tourism education with the art campus environment has the potential to produce tourism experts who are more innovative, flexible, and have high cultural sensitivity. Cooperation between these two fields opens up opportunities for tourism education models that are more in line with the current needs of cultural destination development. Further studies can expand the scope of the impact of the art environment on students' practical abilities or on the pattern of academic collaboration between art study programs and tourism study programs in various universities.

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