

Manten Kopi Tradition as a Cultural Asset in Coffee Marketing: A Phenomenological Study for Sales Optimization and Customer Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of utilizing local cultural assets in coffee marketing strategies to increase product attractiveness and consumer engagement. The research objective is to analyze the meaning of Manten Kopi ritual as a cultural asset and examine how the tradition is integrated into the marketing strategy of agritourism and coffee products. The method used was qualitative phenomenology with data collection through in-depth interviews with farmers, traditional leaders, coffee farm managers, and participatory observation of the Manten Kopi procession in Modangan Village and Bangelan Farm. The results showed that the Manten Kopi ritual built an authentic brand narrative, increased agritourism visits by 30-40%, optimized storytelling in product presentations to distributors, and fostered organic word-of-mouth among tourists and local consumers. The discussion highlighted the importance of community involvement in maintaining the authenticity of traditions, utilizing digital media for the dissemination of cultural content, and developing tour packages that highlight cultural experiences as a competitive advantage.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known for its rich local wisdom in food and beverage processing, including its diverse coffee cultural heritage. Each region in Indonesia has a unique tradition related to coffee, such as “Wiwit Kopi” in Jombang or “Kopi Godog” in Aceh, which not only function as religious rituals or farmer’s thanksgiving, but also as a unique cultural identity. Such local culture or wisdom often becomes the basis for marketing tourism and local products. In this context, the tradition of “Manten Kopi” – the ritual of “coffee bride” that brings together coffee fruit *lanang* (male stalk) and *wadon* (female stalk) as a symbol of the bride and groom – has been carried out in several East Java plantations such as Karanganyar (Blitar) and Kebun Bangelan (Malang) as a marker of the start of the harvest season. The tradition that has existed since the colonial era (established in 1874 by the Dutch) is still preserved by the plantation managers of PT Harta Mulia and PTPN XII. In addition to acting as a prayer for a safe harvest, Manten Kopi is also believed to be a form of preserving local wisdom in the agricultural sector.

Marketing that highlights local culture has become an important strategy in strengthening brand identity and increasing consumer engagement. Liang et al. (2024) revealed that products that carry local cultural characteristics can shape brand identity and influence consumer perceptions, which ultimately strengthens brand image. Similarly, Hammou et al. (2020) in their study on Marrakesh handicrafts in Morocco found that the preservation and promotion of intangible cultural heritage through social media can strengthen a city's image and serve as an authentic marketing attraction. On the other hand, Qiu et al. (2024) highlights the importance of agrotourism souvenir design that integrates local cultural heritage, as this can effectively convey the historical value and uniqueness of a region while attracting tourists.

Specifically in the context of coffee, research by Campos et al. (2024) in Brazil shows that specialty coffee products that integrate local stories, traditional harvesting techniques, and the cultural values of the local community successfully enhance product competitiveness and create an emotional connection with consumers. This aligns with the findings of Satria et al. (2021), who studied coffee tourism development strategies in Aceh. The study states that coffee tourism management that highlights local wisdom, such as the Gayo coffee drinking ritual and its historical narrative, can be a key attraction in culture-based tourism marketing.

Furthermore, Wang et al. (2021) discuss how Chinese-descent coffee brands in Indonesia and Malaysia utilize digital media to showcase their cultural identity. By using local cultural symbols, stories, and visuals on online platforms, these brands are able to create differentiation and strengthen consumer loyalty.

Liang et al.'s (2024) study also emphasizes that cultural memories of a particular product or destination can enhance brand loyalty, especially when local cultural elements are an integral part of the consumer experience.

Not limited to physical products, research by Juliandri and Rahayu (2024) in the context of hospitality also shows that incorporating local cultural elements into hotel services and decor can enhance customer satisfaction. This indicates that business strategies incorporating local wisdom—whether in products or services—can create significant added value in marketing.

Thus, various previous studies show that the utilization of local culture in marketing, both in agricultural products such as coffee and in the tourism and service sectors, has proven to be able to build a positive image, increase customer loyalty, and create unique competitiveness. This strategy not only elevates local economic potential but also plays a role in preserving cultural heritage amid the dynamics of the global market.

Marketing literature shows that introducing local cultural elements into marketing strategies can strengthen brand image and influence consumer purchasing decisions. As emphasized by Hidayat et al. (2023), local community culture greatly influences consumer behavior so that global marketing strategies must be adjusted to the local cultural context. In addition, local traditions need to be preserved so that they are not lost (slipped) due to social change. *Manten Kopi* is part of the local wisdom of coffee plantations; if not consciously maintained, this kind of tradition can be lost along with modernization, even though the tradition “created and practiced for the good of the community” and closely related to the culture of the community. Therefore, *Manten Kopi* is not only a ritual inherited from ancestors, but also a valuable cultural asset that has the potential to be used as an added value for marketing local coffee.

In the environment of PT Harta Mulia (manager of Kebun Karanganyar/De Karanganyar) and Kebun Bangelan (PTPN XII), the *Manten Kopi* tradition has begun to be integrated into marketing activities such as educational tours of coffee plantations and product promotion events. However, so far there have not been many empirical studies that have examined in depth the meaning of this ritual for customers (both local and tourists) and the impact of its integration on sales effectiveness and customer engagement. The formulation of the research problem is: How is the experience and meaning of the *Manten Kopi* tradition for local and tourist customers, and how can the integration of this tradition into marketing strategies and sales administration optimize sales and customer engagement? The purpose of the study is to explain the meaning of the *Manten Kopi* ritual for the surrounding community and visitors, and to evaluate this cultural strategy in managing coffee marketing and sales in order to increase customer engagement. Thus, this study is expected to

provide new insights into the utilization of *cultural branding* local in the coffee industry in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Cultural Assets and Cultural Branding

Local culture is seen as a source of competitive value in product marketing, especially in sectors closely related to heritage such as coffee. According to Hidayat et al. (2023), the integration of cultural elements into marketing strategies—often called “cultural branding”—can strengthen brand image and create differentiation that is difficult for competitors to replicate. By featuring the *Manten Kopi* ritual as part of the brand narrative, the company not only highlights the uniqueness of the product, but also instills historical and emotional meaning that increases consumer attachment to the brand.

Experience-Based Marketing Theory

Schmitt (1999) explains that experiential marketing utilizes sensory, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral stimuli to create memorable ‘brand experiences’. The *Manten Kopi* ritual, with its strong visual and symbolic process—the “marriage” of the *lanang* and *wadon* coffee cherries—presents a unique experiential element that triggers emotional engagement and deep memories for visitors. This is in line with the finding that cultural experiences can increase positive word-of-mouth and customer loyalty.

Social Identity and Community Theory

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), social identity influences how individuals value themselves within a group. In the context of the *Manten Kopi* tradition, the ritual fosters a sense of community and local pride among farmers and villagers. By involving the community in the procession, the ritual not only strengthens the *sense of belonging*, but also creates cultural advocates who voluntarily promote local coffee traditions and products to their social networks.

Model of Cultural Asset Utilization in Marketing Strategy

Based on the integration of the above theories, the conceptual framework of *Manten Kopi* tradition utilization in marketing can be summarized as follows:

1. Cultural Asset Identification: Inventorying rituals, symbols, and historical values (*Manten Kopi*) as cultural capital.
2. Brand Narrative Development: Formulate storytelling that connects ritual elements with brand image and product quality (e.g. special edition “bridal coffee”).

3. Experience Design: Develop agritourism packages and promotional media that highlight the ritual procession to maximize the sensory and emotional experience aspects of visitors.
4. Community Engagement: Involve local cultural actors (farmers, traditional leaders) in the implementation and promotion to maintain the authenticity and sustainability of the tradition.
5. Impact Evaluation: Measure indicators of sales, tourist visits, and social media “engagement” as a result of cultural integration in marketing.

Relevance to Phenomenological Methodology

The phenomenological approach strengthens this theoretical study by focusing on individuals' subjective meanings of the Manten Kopi ritual. Through in-depth interviews and observations, the essence of the experience can be revealed and used as the basis for formulating marketing strategies that are truly resonant with the emotional and cultural needs of consumers and local communities.

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the assumption that local culture, as manifested in rituals such as Manten Kopi, not only has aesthetic and spiritual value but also economic value when incorporated into marketing strategies. Therefore, the conceptual approach in this study will explore the relationship between the cultural meaning of Manten Kopi, customer experience, and the effectiveness of integrating local culture into marketing activities and sales administration. This study does not aim to test causal relationships statistically but seeks to explore the depth of meaning and customer perceptions, as well as their implications for local wisdom-based local coffee branding strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a phenomenological approach within a qualitative research framework. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it focuses on understanding the subjective experience of individuals towards a phenomenon (in this case, the Manten Kopi tradition) in depth. In general, this methodology emphasizes the collection of descriptive data about the “what” and “how” of the participants’ experiences related to the ritual, with the aim of formulating the essence of collective experience. In accordance with Creswell’s (2014) guidelines, the researcher identified the Manten Kopi phenomenon as an object of experience, then collected data from individuals who experienced the ritual (for example, ritual performers, visitors, and managers) to produce a combined description of the core meaning of this ritual.

Data collection techniques are done by *purposive sampling* by involving: (1) coffee plantation managers and staff at PT Harta Mulia/Kebun Karanganyar and PTPN XII Kebun Bangelan; (2) local residents (community leaders, coffee farmers) who are directly involved in the ritual; and (3) coffee customers/consumers, both local and foreign tourists who have witnessed or heard of this tradition. Data was collected through:

- a. In-depth (semi-structured) interviews with open-ended topic guides on perceptions, emotional experiences, and cultural values of Manten Kopi.
- b. Field observations of the implementation of the Manten Kopi ritual (including visual details of the ceremony, audience participation, and storytelling), as well as photo/video documentation of the activity.
- c. Documentation studies in the form of written materials or publications (tourism brochures, print/digital media) containing information about Manten Kopi at the research location.

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures: each interview transcript and observation result was reviewed repeatedly to identify patterns of meaning and key themes. The researcher coded (*coding*) to the informant's statement and then formulate the main themes such as "symbolic meaning of ritual", "customer experience", and "marketing impact". The analysis process is carried out iteratively until saturation is achieved (no new themes). To increase validity, the researcher also triangulates data sources (confirming interview findings with field observations and documentary sources) and consults with several key informants for clarification.

RESULTS

Perception and Meaning of Manten Kopi Ritual

In-depth interviews with farmers and traditional leaders in Modangan Village (Karanganyar) and Kebun Bangelan (Malang) revealed that Manten Kopi is understood as an expression of gratitude for the harvest and a symbol of togetherness of the farming community. The value of gotong-royong and local identity is stronger because every farming family is involved in the "coffee bride" procession. Emotionally, this ritual fosters local pride: one informant stated that witnessing the "kopi lanang-wadon" procession made him feel directly connected to the history of the coffee farmers' ancestors.

On the other hand, tourists-especially foreigners-appreciate Manten Kopi as a unique educational tourism experience. They noted that they had never seen the "marriage" of plants in ritual form, so involvement in the elders' explanations and the picking of the first fruits added a dimension of cultural storytelling that enriched the enjoyment of local coffee.

Integration of Ritual into Marketing Strategy

The management of PT Harta Mulia ("De Karanganjar Koffie") and PTPN XII Bangelan plantation systematically incorporate Manten Kopi into the annual calendar of activities-with promotion via social media, tourism websites, and local mass media. Processional photo-video content was used to build a brand narrative that emphasized the authenticity and historical value of coffee products. In addition, the coffee farm tour package was designed to make the Manten Kopi procession one of the highlights of the tour, emulating the agritourism model in Flores that has proven successful in increasing tourist engagement.

A portion of the coffee beans picked in the procession ("lanang-wadon") is packaged as a limited edition "Bride Coffee" with a cultural label, as well as an exclusive souvenir for visitors.

Impact on Visits and Sales

Internal company data shows an increase in the number of visits to agritourism sites in the harvest season by 30-40% compared to the period before the integration of this ritual. Similar observations in Waerebo (NTT) recorded an increase in tourists from 5,000 to 7,000 people per year with tourism revenue reaching IDR 2 billion after including coffee traditions in tour packages.

Sales administration efficiency also improved. Manten Kopi's cultural storytelling is used in brand presentations to distributors and retailers, so that trade negotiations are more focused on the uniqueness and quality of cultural products, rather than price alone, strengthening the positioning of "De Karanganjar Koffie" as an authentic, historic Indonesian coffee.

Customer Engagement and Organic Word-of-Mouth

Travelers and local consumers who experience the ritual first-hand are more likely to share photos and stories on social media without additional incentives-spreading the cultural narrative to their extended networks organically. This extends promotional reach and strengthens customer loyalty to local coffee brands.

DISCUSSION

The Meaning of the Manten Kopi Tradition for Local Customers and Tourists

The interview results show that Manten Kopi is seen as a symbol of gratitude and cultural sustainability in the coffee farming community. For farmers and residents of Modangan Village (Karanganyar) and residents around Kebun Bangelan, this ritual is seen as an expression of gratitude to God for the

blessings of the harvest and the hope that the harvest and milling process will run smoothly. A local traditional figure stated that through Manten Kopi, the values of togetherness and mutual cooperation between residents are maintained because many farming families are involved in the procession. Emotionally, this ritual fosters local pride. One local respondent said, *"Seeing the coffee 'marrying' makes me feel like I am part of the ancestral tradition of this coffee plantation. It feels like I am getting closer to the history of our ancestors."*

For tourists (especially foreigners) who come, Manten Kopi is a unique educational tourism experience. Several tourists mentioned that they had never witnessed the tradition of "marriage" in plants before; this ritual offers a different and impressive cultural experience. The experience of hearing the story behind Manten Kopi – from the explanation of the elders about the symbols of male and female coffee to the process of picking the first fruit – makes visitors feel emotionally involved. This is in line with the findings of literature that experience-based activities (*experience-based*) can foster positive emotional relationships with tourism products. For example, the coffee agrotourism package in Flores "Perjalanan Secangkir Kopi" has proven to be successful in increasing tourist engagement with local coffee culture. Thus, Manten Kopi is not just a visual attraction, but a medium *storytelling* a culture that increases customer interest and satisfaction with local coffee.

Integration into Marketing Strategy and Sales Administration

Field observations and interviews with PT Harta Mulia management showed that Manten Kopi was intentionally integrated into various marketing activities. This tradition is held as an annual event (before the big harvest), and is routinely published on the company's social media and local mass media. For example, the committee facilitates photo and video documentation of the Manten Kopi procession for promotional content for the brands "De Karanganyar Koffie" and "Kebun Kopi Karanganyar". In addition, the marketing team designed a plantation tour package that included this ritual event as one of the tour highlights. Similar to what happened in Waerebo (NTT), the existence of the coffee tradition ritual is a selling point in the coffee tourism product of Karanganyar Village/De Karanganyar.

From the product side, some of the first harvest coffee beans (selected as lanang-wadon) are specially packaged as a "wedding coffee" edition with a cultural label, as an exclusive souvenir. Administratively, the harvest calendar is arranged in such a way that Manten Kopi can combine the first picking process and the opening of the coffee mill into one ceremonial moment. This creates efficiency in organizing events and harvest logistics. As conveyed by the Bangelan Plantation Manager, "In addition to preserving local cultural wisdom, Manten Kopi symbolizes the company's great hope that all the coffee beans in

the plantation can be picked and entered the factory to be processed into good quality". In other words, this ritual also functions as a kind of *company ritual* which instills a high quality mindset from the start of the production process.

From a marketing perspective, the integration of Manten Kopi culture has been proven to increase customer engagement. Tourists who enjoy the experience tend to share photos or stories on social media, so that the promotion reach becomes wider organically. Likewise, local consumers who know this tradition feel more emotionally attached to PT Harta Mulia's products, because they feel they are helping to preserve the regional heritage. Overall, the company's internal data shows an increase in the number of visits to coffee plantation tourist locations during the harvest season (up to 30-40% higher than the previous period) after Manten Kopi was actively promoted. This is in line with observations in Waerebo, where the involvement of coffee traditions in tour packages has driven an increase in tourists from 5,000 to 7,000 people per year and tourism transactions have reached IDR 2 billion.

Sales efficiency also increases because the Manten Kopi tradition adds value to local coffee, making it easier to position the product. With a strong cultural narrative, PT Harta Mulia's coffee products are able to differentiate themselves from competitors. For example, in sales administration, marketing staff use the Manten Kopi story to create branding presentations to distributors and retailers, so that trade negotiations focus more on the quality and uniqueness of cultural products, not just price. This approach helps enrich the brand image of "De Karanganjar Koffie" as an authentic and historically valuable Indonesian coffee.



Figure 1. The Manten Kopi tradition ceremony at Bangelan Coffee Plantation, Malang.

Two of the best coffees (lanang and wadon coffee) are brought as the "bride" in the opening procession of the main harvest. This tradition not only symbolizes gratitude for the harvest, but also becomes a cultural marketing tool to attract tourists and customers.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This phenomenological study reveals that the Manten Kopi tradition has a deep cultural meaning for the local community and a valuable experience for tourist customers. For local residents, Manten Kopi represents gratitude and maintains the values of togetherness and the identity of the plantation. For tourists, the ritual adds an educational dimension and uniqueness to the coffee tourism experience. The integration of this tradition into the marketing strategy at PT Harta Mulia and De Karanganjar (PTPN XII) has been proven to increase **customer engagement** and sales efficiency. By packaging Manten Kopi as promotional content, special products, and a series of tours, the company has successfully positioned their coffee as an authentic cultural product. As expressed by Hadi (manager of Karanganyar) that Manten Kopi has been running since 1874 and continues to be preserved, this tradition is now a strategic cultural asset.

Based on the findings, the applicable recommendations include: (1) Consistently holding Manten Kopi as a routine event and expanding multi-channel promotions (social media, tourism websites, mass media) to reach a wider audience. (2) Developing special edition coffee products with the Manten Kopi theme (for example, "Pengantin Kopi" packaging) and related cultural souvenirs. (3) Involving local communities and government in this event so that the sustainability of the tradition is guaranteed and public support is gained. (4) Strengthening cultural storytelling in employee and tour guide training, so that every consumer understands the historical value behind the coffee brand. With these steps, the Manten Kopi tradition as a local cultural heritage can continue to support the growth of coffee sales and strengthen customer loyalty in the long term.

FURTHER STUDY

As a follow-up study, it is recommended to develop a quantitative approach through a Likert scale questionnaire to measure the impact of Manten Kopi ritual integration on purchase intention, perceived quality, and brand loyalty; expand the study comparatively with coffee traditions in other regions (e.g. Flores or Toraja) to examine cultural variables that influence marketing effectiveness; conduct an ROI analysis of ritual-based promotional activities including organizational and content costs, and their relation to increasing coffee and agritourism revenues; explore the role of digital media (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok) in disseminating cultural narratives to various demographic segments and the most effective types of content; integrate sustainability aspects (agroforestry, organic certification) to look at consumer perceptions of eco-cultural assurance; and conduct a longitudinal study over 3-5 years to monitor

the evolution of local community and tourist perceptions and the dynamics of coffee ritual marketing strategies.

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