



Understanding ‘Batik Belanda’ in Dutch Society via Co-Creation Experience of Creative Tourism Practice

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Abstract. Batik Belanda is a long-established acculturated cultural heritage from the Dutch East Indies era. Some examples of Batik Belanda can be seen in Batik Buketan (bouquet) and Batik Snow White (folklore). However, the representation and understanding of Batik Belanda remain deceptive. Additionally, this specific batik is still underrepresented in modern society, losing its dialogical purpose as a heritage and its connection to Indonesian and Dutch individuals’ cultural identities. Developing creative tourism is one of the solutions to promote heritage – deemed to provide a better understanding via in-depth learning and personal contact. This qualitative research was conducted in the Netherlands to analyze the potential of Batik Belanda and creative tourism practice. The creative tourism practice was done by creating an immersive batik workshop with the goal of generating interest in both Indonesian and Dutch communities in the Netherlands to connect with their cultural heritage from Indonesia. Participants’ observations and interviews with 10 workshop participants served as the main methodology. This research indicated how participants’ experiences increased their understanding of cultural heritage and fulfilled their emotional needs through the workshop, giving them motivation and shaping their interest in the pre-visit stage of cultural tourism in Indonesia. On the other hand, their interest in culture and tourism in Indonesia was divided, determined by how they perceive post-colonial subjects and their cultural identities as a community in the Netherlands.

Keywords: *batik belanda; creative tourism; cultural identities; dialogical heritage.*

1 Introduction

Indonesia’s diverse culture, shaped by various tribes and multicultural influences, is showcased in traditional crafts, especially textiles. Batik, a significant cultural heritage, embodies both tangible and intangible craft elements, acknowledged by UNESCO in 2009. Batik motifs represent regional identities [1], yet the colonial influence on batik remains largely unknown. While current historic studies have been told from and generally represent one perspective (mainly Western epistemology), this batik stance is an unspoken heritage with the potential to unravel another side of history.

The European influence on batik, often referred to as 'Batik Belanda' (Dutch batik), emerged through the acculturation of mixed ethnicities in the former Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia [2]. During the Dutch colonial period in Indonesia, middle-class Dutch society discovered the potential of batik to be commercialized for Western markets and attempted to create their own version [2].

However, this history is predominantly favored by Western epistemology and sources (mainly Veldhuisen [2]). The name 'Batik Belanda' is thought to emphasize that the batik was discovered and owned by the Dutch. In reality, Batik Belanda was an imitation made due to the increasing interest in batik in Europe. After a brief discussion with Sabine Bolk, we agreed that a more appropriate name for Batik Belanda is 'European-influenced batik' (Bolk, S., personal interview, 14 March, 2022). This includes the perception of the timeline and the people who were involved in the process; they were not only Dutch enterprises and Indonesian batik makers but a real result of the acculturation of other ethnicities, descendants, and diasporas of the former Dutch East Indies (Bolk, S., personal interview, 14 March, 2022).

Since the 1970s, interest in Indo-European origins has grown, but European-influenced batik has mainly been static in exhibitions and is gradually losing its cultural heritage role. This study aimed to explore the cultural heritage of acculturated cultures through the history and influences of cultural objects.

The tourism industry increasingly links cultural heritage with tourism [3], especially catering to the demand of Generations Y and Z for authentic experiences [4]. Considered as an evolution of cultural tourism, creative tourism emphasizes participatory actions to meet the participants' needs [5]. This approach aligns with the growing recognition of shared post-colonial histories in the Netherlands, presenting an opportunity to promote cultural experiences and revive the story of European influences in batik from the former Dutch East Indies.

This study explored the post-colonial heritage connection between Indonesia and the Netherlands, focusing on inter-acculturation heritage, aiming to foster interest beyond the cruelty of colonialism. The main research question is: 'In what ways can the craft of Batik Belanda (European-influences batik) generate interest among the Indonesian and Dutch communities in the Netherlands to connect with their cultural heritage from Indonesia?'

Furthermore, by understanding and exploring the analysis of both Indonesian and Dutch people's interests and perspectives, this study examined how Batik Belanda influenced the emotional changes and cultural connections of the

Indonesian and Dutch participants, exploring how an immersive workshop may impact their cultural identity and future travel motivations.

2 Research Method: Designing Immersive Batik Workshop

This research investigated how co-creating creative spaces and practicing creative tourism can enhance interest in post-colonial cultural heritage among Indonesian and Dutch communities, focusing on the sociological perspectives of participants.

With the growing interest in heritage, the tourism industry has started to explore the potential of colonial history as a new form of tourism. The idea of heritage is increasingly deemed a social and cultural process [4] to be negotiated in constructing new identities and memories. Park [5] has suggested that the colonial past can be integrated into cultural heritage tourism, which is able to create a safe area where this type of tourism is recognized as a peace-making activity – by memory and a sense of belonging leading to emotional and moral changes. The importance of creative tourism is to redesign the whole concept to emphasize interactive co-creation between visitors and hosts, distinguishing it from cultural tourism by its higher level of tourist involvement.

This research employed the participatory action approach, in which the theory underlines the subject's participation and action in relation to the designed research [6]. According to Chevalier and Buckles [6], participatory action research incorporates three fundamental aspects: participation (people and society), action (engagement with experience and history), and research (knowledge creation), which transforms action into a collective process of investigation. In this research – to promote European-influenced batik as the main tool to represent heritage aspects – the practice of creative tourism (e.g., local workshops) is deemed more suitable and relatable in the meaning-making of craft heritage values through the makerspace model. Makerspace emphasizes the involvement of cultural roles and creative engagement through the making process [5]. In this research, the makerspace concept shows the possibility of how both modern cultural practices and the hybridization of heritage and creativity are able to build cultural regeneration processes [8].

Applying the makerspace model had an advantage for this research. However, it cannot fully showcase cultural heritage and fostering cultural identity solely through a basic workshop. To enhance the participants' understanding of the cultural object's story, the workshop design incorporated Richards' basic design principles [9] of creative space, incorporating intangible creative resources like immersive workshops, prototyping, and co-creation. By applying Richards'

principles, the goal was to facilitate the participants' transformative experiences and self-development through staged authenticity [10].

2.1 Studying Batik Workshop in the Netherlands

The study used the existing batik workshop of Sabine Bolk in the Netherlands as a comparison in the design of an immersive workshop, 'Unraveling Batik Belanda'. It assessed the differences between Dutch and Indonesian batik workshops, focusing on the impact of cultural engagement while incorporating dimensions of the tourist experience: education, escapism, aesthetics, and entertainment [11].

The first observation was done by joining Sabine Bolk's batik workshop in Middelburg, 24th of March 2022. The author joined day two of the workshop as one of the participants along with 5 other workshop participants – all female, 5 Dutch nationalities, and 1 Indo-European, 30 to 65 years old. The workshop took 6 to 7 hours in total, however, this tended to be flexible, which gave the participants a sense of enjoyment. The workshop was divided into four parts: an introduction (brief description and tutorial); batik technique with canting and stamps; colet/painting process (including break and covering the paint with wax), and the final dyeing. At first glance, the setup was a bit different than the usual batik workshop in Indonesia. Other than the materials used, such as color dyes and wax, the practice was also done differently. Based on the author's experience joining a batik workshop in Indonesia, batik workshops in Indonesia tend to replicate the local batik makers' routine: holding the cloth with bare hands while sitting on a small stool. Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, people were provided with surfaces (table and board) and sat on a normal chair, almost like drawing. Furthermore, in the motif-making process, this stage differed from the usual procedure, in which participants should have designed the motif on the textile first with a pen or pencil and then traced the motif with the *canting* (a tool used to apply liquid hot wax in the batik process). Nevertheless, this was understandable, given that this workshop was open to anyone, and therefore it was important for the participants to become accustomed to the canting process within a limited time span.

During the workshop, the participants showed curiosity about Indonesian batik techniques but mostly worked quietly, immersed in their projects. The provided books and references inspired participants to recreate traditional batik motifs, and their motivation varied from learning the technique to tracing their Indo-European roots, resulting in overall feelings of enthusiasm, self-exploration, and enjoyment.

2.2 Design Process: Immersive Batik Workshop – ‘Unravelling Dutch Batik’

Data from the initial observation and an in-depth interview with Sabine Bolk provided valuable insight for designing a more immersive workshop. Following Shove et al.'s framework [12], it is crucial to consider the interplay of resources, meaning, and creativity in constructing a creative space [13]. Highlighting cultural heritage in a tangible setting, such as an exhibition that recounts the history of European influence in batik and fostering creativity through workshop practices, are essential for connecting the participants with their cultural identities and generating a sense of belonging to a particular subject.



Figure 1 Surroundings of the workshop – built into two spaces: an exhibition room (books, history, etc.) and a practice room. (A) Workshop introduction and discovering tools. Participants adapting and negotiating in the creative space. (B) Participants seeking inspiration and learning the history from the exhibition room.

The workshop was a collaborative project with Sabine Bolk and two organizations: the Indonesian Student Committee of Rotterdam (PPI Rotterdam)

and Indonesia Nederland Youth Society (INYS), designed as an innovative qualitative research method comprising a workshop and a mini-exhibition. The author acted as participant-observer during the workshop, mainly as an assistant for the speakers and as a mediator of the workshop. The workshop fostered familiarity with batik through informative displays, books, tools, and documentation from Indonesia. The *colet* dye and beeswax are common workshop tools, but Sabine Bolk displayed a variety of *cantings* from different regions, sizes, and functions for the participants to explore (as seen in Figure 1).

The workshop design, influenced by Richards' definition [4], focused on skill enhancement and sensory communication in the practice, while the exhibition highlighted authenticity and the craft's origins and stories. It also explored the contemporary impact of European influences in batik in the Netherlands and Indonesia to engage the participants as a dialogical heritage. A key challenge was incorporating creative tourism practices and maintaining authenticity while appealing to a wider audience and making a bridge with Dutch culture. The workshop theme, 'Unraveling Dutch Batik,' was chosen together with a Dutch batik researcher to present the subject's history from Indonesian and Dutch perspectives, aiming for an immersive experience with local elements like *keroncong* music and Indonesian snacks to make it interactive and engaging [14].

3 Result and Discussion

This section elaborates on the findings from the observation during the workshop and the interviews with ten of the workshop participants. The workshop was held at the Indonesian Embassy in Den Haag with 20 participants: 6 Indonesians, 1 Hungarian, 1 Canadian, and 12 Dutch. Based on the observation, the participants were unexpectedly more diverse than in the first observation, with 5 males and 15 females ranging in age from 20 to 60 years. The majority of participants were Millennials and Generation Z (13 participants), proving the CBI's [15] claim about the high rates of these generations as potential cultural tourists. After the workshop, around ten respondents – Dutch and Indo-Europeans living in the Netherlands – were recruited with purposive sampling [16], based on their interest in joining the workshop and their experience, for further interviewing via Zoom. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form [16], to learn more about the interests, motivations, and potential of cultural tourism from the Netherlands to Indonesia.

3.1 Authenticity or a Glimpse of Immersive Experience

The majority of the workshop participants were primarily motivated by their interest in art and culture, curiosity about batik practice, or connections to Indonesian culture, including through travel experience, family ties, Indonesian

diaspora, or Indo-European heritage. The Dutch participants had varying degrees of connection to Indonesia, while most Indonesian participants were students and expats living in the Netherlands for at least a year. The duration of their residency influenced whether the workshop served as an introduction to Indonesian culture or a means to reconnect with their cultural identity. The workshop theme was an integral part of the participants' experience as a symbol or representation of the culture of a location [5].

Despite the slight adjustments in batik practice methods, the participants found the workshop to be mostly authentic, resembling Indonesian batik workshops. Participant 1 was surprised and recalled a previous experience doing a batik workshop in Yogyakarta that was similar to Sabine Bolk's. This alignment with Richards' [17] objective of creative tourism to foster deeper connections and memories through active participation is evident. The Dutch and European participants enthusiastically shared their workshop experiences with those who had visited Indonesia, feeling transported back to the country. Despite the concept of 'staged authenticity' [10], the workshop successfully recreated elements of Indonesian batik workshops and evoked emotional experiences, particularly for participants 2 and 3, who connected with their past travels in Java and Sumatra within the workshop's limited space.

3.2 Workshop in Increasing Cognitive and Personal Integral Needs

The workshop combined the makerspace model with Chevalier and Buckles' [6] fundamentals of people, action, and research to teach batik and its culture. The participants, including both Indonesians and Dutch, were generally aware of batik as an Indonesian textile but lacked knowledge about its practice, history, and other details. This highlights the underrepresentation of even well-known cultural heritage.

The workshop space was divided into working and exhibition/break rooms to enhance the participants' focus. The workshop aimed to fulfill the participants' cognitive needs related to practice and cultural values, and according to the interviewees, it successfully achieved this. Their experience of the workshop's practice, according to the interviewees, was first highlighted by the participants. The participants worked at their own pace, remaining immersed in their creative process, which is considered a transformative self-development and interest-building experience [9] (seen in Figure 2). The participants reflected on and learned from their hands-on experiences, which included overcoming challenges and adapting to the batik process, as exemplified by Participant 4's enthusiastic description of using canting and wax:

At first I was adjusting and made lots of mistakes. And then eventually it was all about incorporating those mistakes, as I said, like when my wax randomly dropped, I was like ‘Oh no!’ and then ‘Okay, what can I do?’ So, I made like drops all over the place so it is just going to look like a pattern. So I think it’s very much about the learning.

Despite encountering difficulties, the participants remained focused and relaxed during the workshop. They appeared to be having enjoyable moments while creating batik. The hands-on experience as part of the workshop mechanism fostered a strong connection between the participants and the heritage object, promoting focus and joy.



Figure 2 Surroundings of the workshop (C) Participants immersed in the creative practice through the batik and colet process.

The workshop incorporated cultural value by creating a mini-exhibition and an intimate working space, allowing participants to interact and draw inspiration from books and the exhibition. The participants engaged with Sabine Bolk to learn about batik's history and various types of batik, with creative tourism adding deeper value to culture by transforming traditional practice into a performative role [18]. The interviewees expressed intrigue at discovering that batik goes beyond textiles, sparking Participant 3's interest in sharing his knowledge and learning more about Indonesian culture.



Figure 3 Batik workshop and the participants – final reaction and their satisfaction at the end of the workshop.

Affective and personal integrative needs play a significant role in enhancing participants' self-esteem, emotional well-being, and cultural identities [12]. The batik workshop became a medium where the participants could express their creativity and experience emotional release. Regardless of the main theme, it allowed them to create motifs freely, whether replicating Indonesian patterns, experimenting with abstract designs, or following their own interests. This process helped the participants navigate their emotions while adapting to new tools like *canting*.

The Indonesian participants expressed pride and familiarity with batik. Participant 5 enthusiastically described how she used provided stamp tools to create *kawung*, her favorite batik motif. Meanwhile, two siblings retraced their inspirations from books, while an older Indo-European participant practiced batik-making by recreating a *buketan* motif. For participants from countries other than the host country, the workshop prompted continuous cultural comparisons, making them self-conscious about their identities by highlighting cultural differences and gaps [15].

Based on the interviewee's experience, the workshop itself was considered sufficient in meeting the cognitive, affective, and personal integrative needs of the participants. Their fascination with both batik practice and acculturated history through crafts resulted in great responses (as seen in Figure 3). By incorporating culture and creativity, the subject (craft) does provide a dialogical approach [13].

The workshop was built using a combination of visual, auditory, and tactile senses to replicate a batik workshop in Indonesia, 'transporting' the audience to another side of the world. All of the interviewees expressed a strong desire to learn more about batik and other Indonesian cultural heritage, including joining another workshop if the opportunity arises. In this sense, the workshop served as a preview for audiences interested in visiting Indonesia – whether to learn more about their historical roots or Indonesian culture itself.

3.3 Cultural Identity and Cultural 'Self-Reflection'

Individual identity, as described by Tao and Yan [4], hinges on a sense of belonging and understanding one's culture, particularly traditional aspects. In the modern era of globalization, individuals continuously negotiate their cultural identities [14]. As a result, most participants sought reconnection with their own identities while living outside of Indonesia, fulfilling their affective and personal integrative needs.

In the workshop, the Dutch participants showed little interest in the topic of post-colonial influences, highlighting a disconnect from the history they share with Indonesia. For them, the workshop was a medium for introducing a new culture to them rather than a familiar culture. For Indonesians and Indo-Europeans, the workshop sparked transformative experiences, inspiring self-exploration [17]. The Indonesians took pride in their country's recognition from a new perspective, while the Indo-Europeans saw it as a chance to reconnect with their familiar heritage in a foreign land. Both groups balanced their origins with their new lifestyle in the Netherlands (see Figure 4).

All participants considered authenticity important for creating an immersive space, but they were willing to adapt as long as it maintained a connection to their 'home'. Overall, the workshop resulted in what Tao and Yan [4] refer to as 'cultural self-consciousness'. The workshop served as a medium for the participants to become self-aware of the importance of understanding a culture. Following the workshop, the participants noticed significant differences in learning via sightseeing from a museum and text versus in-depth learning – which was more effective and engaging.

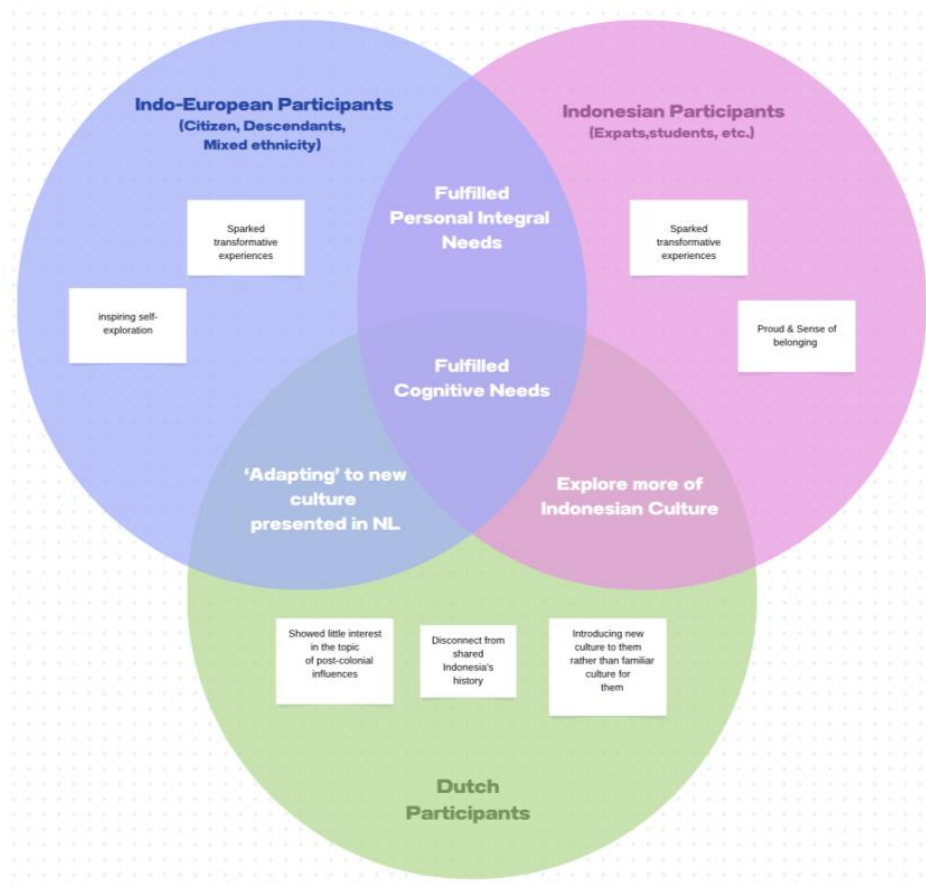


Figure 4 Diagram – summary of research findings.

4 Conclusion

The immersive workshop enhanced participants' understanding of Indonesian culture through both practical engagement and a constructed immersive cultural space. This approach aligns with the concept of creative tourism, which offers enduring cultural experiences, as stated by Chang [11]. The immersion in sensory elements effectively conveyed the story of batik and European influences during the Dutch East Indies period, contributing to a sense of authenticity, while other aspects of the workshop supported participants in negotiating the level of authenticity. In this sense, the workshop focused on developing the value of European influences on batik by highlighting people and space, authenticity, and skills [9]. Overall, the workshop emphasized the value of European influences on batik, focusing on people, space, authenticity, and skills, addressing the participants' cognitive and integrative needs.

Themes in the participants' responses became evident as they recounted their past experiences, offering clarity in organizing their answers and further elaborating on various themes. The workshop effectively fostered emotional, social, and creative connections among participants, the researcher, and the space [7], successfully meeting the emotional needs inherent in creative tourism and sparking interest in exploring other aspects of Indonesian cultural heritage. Nevertheless, it was surprising to find that the workshop's theme, 'Unraveling Dutch Batik,' resonated with specific target audiences, particularly those interested in learning batik, while others remained distant from the topic of post-colonial influences in acculturated heritage. Consequently, prioritizing the practice of pure Indonesian culture over extensive information display appeared to be a safer and more inclusive approach.

Most workshop participants suggested presenting this event as a symposium, combining a workshop, talkshow, and exhibitions, while emphasizing the current relationship with the heritage, including showcasing Indo-European artists inspired by it. The workshop was deemed a sufficient introduction and an ideal activity of 'imaginary traveling,' sparking enthusiasm for further exploration of Indonesian culture. However, in order to interpret the theme's history accurately, extensive research must be conducted. To accommodate both communities effectively, focusing on the heritage object and referencing European 'traces' rather than 'influences' is preferable, and the next step involves designing an improved representation and space for them to reconnect with their cultural identities.

Lastly, the representation of Indonesian-related themes in the Netherlands, particularly post-colonial subjects, is evolving with advancements in education, museum descriptions, and community engagement. However, the focus remains primarily on historical aspects, overlooking the impact on current Indo-European generations. To bridge this gap and engage the current generation, creative tourism practices can serve as mediators, providing a dialogical approach to heritage. Further research is required to comprehend the presentation of acculturated heritage in the Netherlands, its impact on Dutch communities, and its role in sparking interest in travel to Indonesia, potentially leading to changing perceptions and further studies uncovering the shared history. Similarly to how this research attempted to unravel the true story of Batik Belanda, future research may reveal more knowledge about the historical connection between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

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