



## Leather Craft Industry and Tourism: A Symbiotic Relationship? (A Case Study of Magetan East Java Indonesia)

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### Abstract

This article examines how leather craft industry contributes to tourism development in Magetan East Java Indonesia and vice versa. This study applied a qualitative approach and is descriptive in nature. Techniques of collecting data include site observation, interview, document review, and focus group discussion. Data were analyzed using the interactive model and thematic analysis. Research results indicate four themes. First, leather craft industry in Magetan that is mostly home industry has been empowered in many ways. Several aspects, including a high number of tourist visits, local government policy, abundant human resources, and industrious businessmen have strengthened the industry. Some local government policies have been implemented in several programs to develop the industry. Second, quality products and new design innovation for leather crafts are limited. Most products that are dominated by shoes and sandals are created for lower-middle-income consumers. Third, leather craft industries in Magetan have contributed to the establishment of local entrepreneurship, small-medium enterprises, and tourism. They create job opportunities for the locals and boost the local economy. Fourth, the relationship between leather craft centers and tourism activities is dominated by tourists' purchase of leather craft products for souvenirs. However, tourism activity in the area is not yet aimed at watching and involving tourists in the process of craft making for educational tourism purposes.

**Keywords:** Attractions; Crafts; Leather Industry; Tourism

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### INTRODUCTION

Craft is one of the representations of culture and functions not only as products that can generate economic return but also as cultural commodities which

can perform tourism values. Horjan (2011) mentioned that crafts have a mutual relationship with tourism. On the one hand, craft products function as tourist souvenirs which remind them of the places they visit. Moreover, the existence of craft cen-

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ters diversifies tourist attractions. The process of making craft products can become a tourist attraction. This is in line with a research conducted by Greru & Kalkreuter (2017) which mentioned that within the last three decades there has been a shift in tourism and travel pattern from visiting sites, monuments, and other tangible objects or cultural heritages to looking at and participating in the process of making cultural products such as crafts. This has stimulated the emergence of a new type of special interest tourism called craft tourism. Hieu & Rasovska (2017) describe craft tourism as having some essential characteristics. It combines several interrelated elements including aesthetical, cultural, sociological, and economical aspects.

Furthermore, it is mentioned that crafts which include textile and arts provide contribution to creating tourism destination image and travel experience. Crafts also play an important role in contributing to a country's economy. The selling of craft products in tourist destinations indirectly create export market for crafts producers. Domestic as well as international tourists often set a budget for buying craft products to take home as souvenirs which can tell a lot about the destination visited (Basakaran & Manikandan, 2016). Besides contributing to economic development, crafts support culture revitalization. Many craft centers employ artisans to preserve and sustain crafts as cultural heritage.

Tourism has become one of the key factors to develop a country's economy (Kum, et al., 2015; Nkemngu, 2012; Proenca & Soukiazis, 2008). Economic activities can grow from the tourism sector and become the biggest factor in many countries. A study undertaken by Proenca & Soukiazis (2008) noted that at the regional level, tourism becomes one of the strategies to solve unemployment problems because there is the strong linkage between tourism and other economic sectors, including agriculture, retailing, wholesaling, transportation, manufacturing, as well as arts and crafts. The close relationship between crafts and tourism can be seen in many aspects. This

is because human nature always returns from traveling with souvenirs and most souvenirs are handicrafts. According to Hieu & Rasovska (2017) tourism development without promotion of traditional craft products will result in a loss of the national economy. Concerning craft products as souvenirs Swanson (2004) mentioned that souvenirs are universal reminders of special moments or events and that returning home with souvenirs validates and prolongs the travel experience.

Several places have become centers of craft products which provide tourists with diverse souvenirs. The places then become craft villages which are defined as the center of craft production involving artisans and households to sustain traditional heritage as well as produce and sell products in small and medium scope (Hieu & Rasovska, 2017).

Huhtamaa (2006) stated that to make crafts essential in tourism market, it is important to develop innovation of new designs, use new colours, choose good materials, and feature the original craft products. The importance of new features was introduced in order to maintain the traditional crafts to be adaptable with the utilities of modern-life. In accordance with the statement Ona & Solis (2016) described that the Ibaloy crafts which have uniqueness can be publicly shared and developed as tourism products. Ibaloy crafts are made of rattan and bamboo that can be found in their immediate surroundings. The selling of Ibaloy craft products creates the livelihood of the local people. The selling of the functions of the craft to be a means of Ibaloy culture promotion and provides some commercial benefits.

Ballengee-Morris (2008) mentioned that it has become necessary for craftsmen to adapt to modern features of crafts in order to make them up to date and ready for sale. Craftsmen modify arts and crafts by doing an experiment with their products to make them suitable for the market. According to Cohen (1993), commercialized arts belong to 'changeover' dynamics which are capable of continuous evolution and

transformation. The sense of 'commercialization' has been considered largely from the perspectives of change and modification to the crafts because the modification is basically the 'communication' between the craftsmen and the tourists (Chutia & Sarma, 2016).

George (2010) discussed the ownership of intellectual property, traditional knowledge, copyrights, and forms of protection relating to a community's intangible cultural heritage which are unresolved issues in the commoditization process. However, et al. (2016) mentioned that the commercialization of crafts does not necessarily entail the degradation of traditional crafts; further, that promotion of traditional crafts in support of tourism may rekindle people's awareness of their role and importance, as well as vulnerability in the face of modernization.

.When a craft is commercially introduced in the tourism system, it changes the shape of the object and gives new meaning to the craftsman and the consumer community. Craftsmen start distinguishing their products as commercial, traditional, rustic, or fine work. Designs, motifs, colour combinations, as well as use of raw materials also differ accordingly (Cant, 2012).

This paper examines how the leather crafts industry in Magetan supports tourism development and whether tourism activities contribute to industry enhancement. Many leather craft centers were examined to see whether they can serve as tourism resources which provide craft products for souvenirs and become alternative tourist attractions to diversify tourism products.

## METHOD

The research was undertaken in Magetan East Java Indonesia. The area was rich in raw materials for leather craft products. Leather craft work is done in many home industries located in some villages including Selosari, Candirejo, Magetan, Mojopurno, and Cepoko. All these villages are situated in Magetan regency of East

Java Indonesia. Selosari is close to the center of the town, while the other four villages are situated in the suburban area.

This research utilized descriptive method and applied qualitative approach. The location under study is the center of leather craft industries in Magetan Regency East Java. The region has produced a lot of leather crafts for a wide range of customers. This study explores how leather craft industry in the area supports regional tourism development and how these two agents build mutual relationship through craft tourism.

Several techniques were employed to collect data including site observation, interview, focus group discussion, and document study. Data were analyzed using interactive analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and thematic analysis (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The interactive analysis comprises several steps including data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. In this context data reduction is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and abstracting raw data concerning leather craft industry and tourism in Magetan which were obtained from the field notes. Data obtained from an interview with stakeholders of leather craft industries and tourism as well as existing documents which had been transcribed were reduced and selected to find out key issues. Reducing data provide accurate results because checking for reducing can be done to avoid overlapping. Data display relates to the information organization concerning leather craft products. The products were classified and categorized to support a conclusion. In this context, display includes providing graphs, charts, maps, and tables related to leather craft products and tourism. Based on the processes conclusion is drawn by organizing all data concerning leather craft industries and tourism which have been collected and analyzed to be the foundation to draw the conclusion of the study. In the analysis process the regularity, rhythm, pattern, statement, configuration, cause-effects, and proposi-

tion concerning leather craft products and tourism were scrutinized. The conclusion is drawn when all the previous processes are done.

In thematic analysis the focus was on exploring the themes and patterns that emerge from the data concerning leather craft industries and tourism in Magetan. This method facilitates the management of rigorous and transparent data and allows one to move back and forth to look at the raw data concerning leather crafts and tourism in Magetan to establish themes. Four themes were identified in this research including empowerment of leather craft industry, design innovation, and quality products of leather crafts to support tourism, leather crafts, and local entrepreneurship, and craft centers, tourism, and souvenirs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Empowerment of Leather Craft Industry

Magetan is one of well-known regions of leather craft manufacturers in Indonesia. The business of producing leather crafts has grown in the area for several years where many of the craftsmen started their businesses from home industry. Several aspects have empowered the industry, including government policy, abundant human resources, and industrious businessmen. First, the local government of Magetan has empowered the industry development by providing education and training programs as well as assisting business capital, technology, and production equipment. Second, leather craft industry in Magetan is supported by the abundant human resource that is a substantial element supporting the industry. There are 553 artisans involved in the industry, consisting of 23 female and 530 male workers. Third, the existence of industrious businessmen producing leather crafts in the area plays significant role in strengthening the craft industry. There are 201 leather craft industries in Magetan producing a variety of craft products. These are great resources, considering that the large num-

ber of production houses provides a large production capacity. This is not only an advantage for the artisans to improve their economy but also good opportunities for new tourism businesses. It is in accordance with research findings by Hieu & Rasovska (2017) which reveal that craft industries create employment, contribute to poverty alleviation, and support tourism.

The existence of leather craft home industries in Magetan supports tourism development in the region in two ways. Firstly, leather products of home industries function to be tourist souvenirs that create a memory of destination. Secondly, craft souvenirs become one of tourism promotional tools for Magetan tourism. One missed-opportunity is the fact that the process of making leather crafts has not been developed to become alternative tourist attractions for educational purposes. Tourists visiting Magetan can see how artisans create various leather crafts and try some of the processes. Tourists can involve in the activity, and this will be a new travel experience. However, the activity has not been seen and understood by tourism stakeholders in the area as an opportunity in tourism businesses. Tourists only come and buy leather products and leave.

With regards to buying leather craft products, some tourists visiting Magetan comment that there is a lack of product diversity. Magetan leather craft centers have not yet produced varied designs of crafts due to the lack of machinery and tools. It is in accordance with a study conducted by Srivastava & Sharma (2014) on Indian handicrafts industry in Mojari which mentioned that the diversity of leather products is limited because of the absence of sufficient types of equipment and tools. Modern mechanical tools used in the manufacturing process of leather products consist of elementary machines like die-cutting and finishing machines. The usage of machinery to create a product can improve aesthetics as well as finish and reduce drudgery. Besides, it increases the variety of leather products.



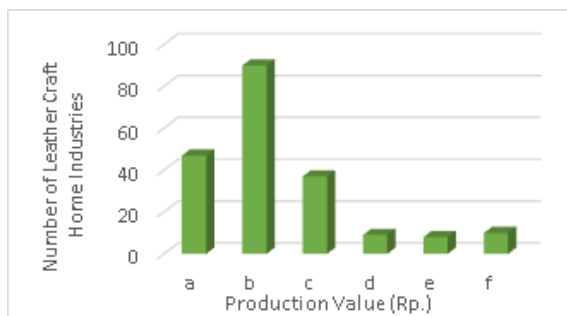
A study by Tsaknaki, et al. (2014) also supports the argument and mentions that there is a significant difference between handcrafting process and process using laser cutter to develop the form and design of the product. The use of a modern tool such as laser cutter is more practical and saves time.

Besides the lack of various design, the efforts to empower leather craft industry in Magetan has not yet been connected to initiating tourists activities in craft centers. According to a study by Chutia & Sarma (2016), the expansion of leather craft products through tourism is one of the processes of commercial production modes for the betterment of the poor craft-making communities. The products that combine culture, tradition, and design are made to attract both domestic and international tourists (Zhang & Liu, 2011). Moreover, Gustami, et al. (2014) noted that in Indonesia, tourism has been one of the main stimuli for crafts. Indonesian artisans even become one of the inspirations for International design magazines, such as ELLE Décor, Vogue Living, and Belle (Chotiratanapinun, 2009). In other words, the artisans have entrepreneurial characteristics since there are creativity, innovation, risk-taking, and opportunity.

In regard to creativity and opportunity many craft home industries in Magetan which produce shoes, sandals, belts, and jackets can, in fact, develop new leather craft products for tourist souvenirs. This is because their production process leaves a lot of patches that become waste and that the artisans can make use of these patches to create a new design of crafts for tourist souvenirs. This opportunity has not yet been taken as a new business. At present, however, only a few people have utilized the patches.

Similarly, new business opportunity to develop educational tourism based on leathercraft industries in Magetan has not been developed. In fact, when tourists visit craft centers they can try and experience how to create leather souvenirs for themselves. The artisans can make use of

the patches as learning media or trial and practice media to accommodate tourists who are interested in experiencing leather crafts making. A project concerning how to change leather waste or patches to functional leather by Palacios, Limiñana & Ais (2016) supported this argument. The project basically highlights transformation of hides and animal skins into leather and makes use of solid organic waste.



(a) < 200.000.000; (b) 201.000.000 - 400.000.000; (c) 401.000.000 - 600.000.000; (d) 601.000.000 - 800.000.000; (e) 801.000.000 - 1.000.000; (f) >1.000.000.000

**Figure 1.** The number of leather craft home industries and the production value (Source: Magetan Government Industry and Trade Office, 2017)

Figure 1 shows that leather craft home industries in Magetan have become great revenue resources for the region. There are 10 biggest production houses of which revenues already reached Rp. 1,000,000,000 in 2017. The number of production houses described seems to be small if they are compared to the total 201 production houses of leather craft in Magetan.

### Design Innovation and Quality Products of Leather Crafts to Support Tourism

Magetan leather craft centres produce several products that are mostly shoes and sandals. However, there are also other products such as leather belts, jackets, and bags. Despite a large number of products, there is only a small variety of products. Similarly, quality products and new design innovation for leather crafts are limited.

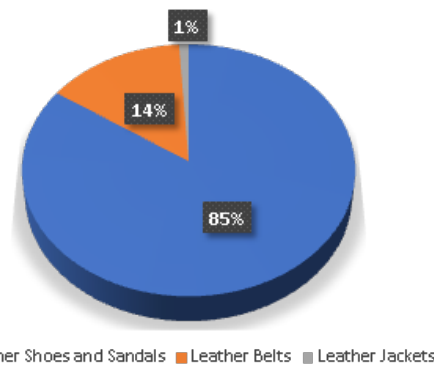
Traditional leather craft products of

Magetan have to some extent fulfilled the expectation of some buyers. However, there are some products that do not represent characteristics that meet the needs of either domestic or international tourists for souvenirs. Both diversifications of a model and new leather craft design are limited. Besides, to some domestic tourists, the price of Magetan's leather craft products is high. Most of them want cheap souvenirs. To some others, price does not matter. However, it is difficult to find quality leathercraft products in Magetan. It is in line with a study conducted by Zhang & Liu (2011) on tourist souvenirs in China which reveals that some domestic tourists want cheap souvenirs, while international tourists want quality products. He also mentioned that different backgrounds of tourists tend to have different shopping behaviour, spending level, and cultural knowledge. Consequently, craft producers have to create different products based on consumers' demand. Besides price and quality, this market segmentation requires innovation and diversification of leather crafts which represent the uniqueness of the region.

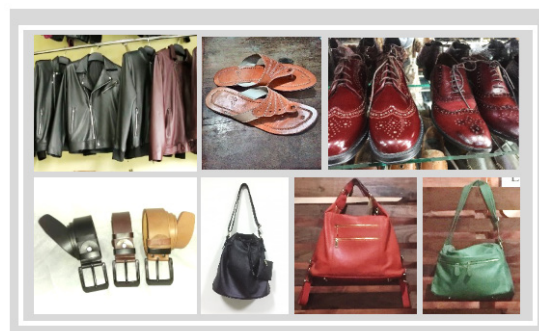
According to Richards (2011) innovation of new designs of leather craft products for souvenir has significantly contributed to the development of both leather crafts and tourism. With regard to Magetan leather industry, limited diversification of leather craft products is due to the lack of machines, tools, as well as competence of the artisans for creation and innovation. A study by Srivastava & Sharma (2014) about leather crafts in Mojari India supports the findings. It is stated that the availability of sufficient machinery and tools, new designs and patterns have contributed to the success of leather craft industries in the region. Similarly, the success of leather craft products of Garut West Java is also determined among others by innovation of contemporary designs to meet customers' demand (Mulyati, 2016). Moreover, Balengee-Morris (2008) mentioned that new handicrafts which adapt modern patterns are very useful because they benefit two

parties, i.e. the consumers and the artisans, and will increase production values in accordance with market desires. According to Kesarwani, Jahan & Kesarwani (2015) customer demand should be fulfilled by the availability of quality and variety of products.

Figure 2 shows various products of leather crafts in Magetan. The products of leather shoes and sandals are still the most produced in the area comprising 85%, followed by leather belt products (14%), and leather jackets (1%). The figure also shows that leather product diversity is limited. Restricted design and model constrain buyers to explore and purchase craft products.



**Figure 2.** Crafts industry in Magetan in 2016. (Source: Magetan Government Industry and Trade Office, 2017)



**Figure 3.** Leather Craft Products of Magetan.

Creating the new design of leather crafts does not only provide customers to have more choices but also support the revitalization of traditional art and crafts as the tourism sector. This is in line with Pratamawati (2016) who stated that revitalization is needed because it can revive

and boost the artisan to remain concerned with art. Her research about mask puppet as traditional art performance and cultural tourism commodity mentions that traditional art performance does not only provide economic benefits for all the parties involved, including the artist and the local government but also give opportunities to the artists to improve their creativity to design art performance as a tourist attraction. Further, the creation of a new design also increases the cultural wealth of an area. Therefore, new design creation has a symbiotic relationship with the revitalization of art and craft and tourism development.

### Local Entrepreneurship, Leather Crafts, and Tourism

Within the last few years, home industry producing leather crafts have flourished in Magetan. As many as 201 leather craft home industries have emerged and sustained their businesses. In 2016 some of the production values even reached Rp. 1,000,000,000.00 (See Figure 1). They create job opportunities for the locals and boost the regional economy.

Similarly, this industry has employed as many as 553 artisans. Many tourists buy their craft products for souvenir created by these artisans. Leather craft industries in the area have contributed to the establishment of local entrepreneurship, small-medium enterprises, and tourism. It supports the growth of local economy.

It is in accordance with a study undertaken by Baskaran & Manikandan (2016) on craft tourism service in Tamilnadu India. The study revealed that leather crafts generally contribute to economic growth of an area. By working in the craft industry craftsmen are able to support their family income and send their children to school. Besides contributing to the household economy, crafts industry supports the preservation of local culture and enhancement of travel experience (Whitford & Ruhanen, 2010). Hieu & Rasovska (2017) underlined that indigenous culture such as crafts functions as a means for livelihood and create indigenous entrepreneurship which

establishes small businesses to provide living for themselves and their families. Similarly, tourism creates employment and provides entrepreneurship opportunities for the locals by optimizing the use of local resources.

In the context of Magetan leather craft industry, entrepreneurship activities include producing and selling craft products to both local and foreign tourists. There are 921.031 tourists visiting Magetan in 2017. This is a big market for crafts and souvenir production houses. However, the participation of local craft entrepreneurs' to take this market opportunity is currently limited. Local entrepreneurs need to encourage not only the involvement of local artisans but also the involvement of other residents to become entrepreneurial individuals or communities and develop leather craft businesses in Magetan to move towards prosperity. Local entrepreneurship enhancement on leather craft business can reduce unemployment and contribute to poverty alleviation (Hieu & Ravonska).

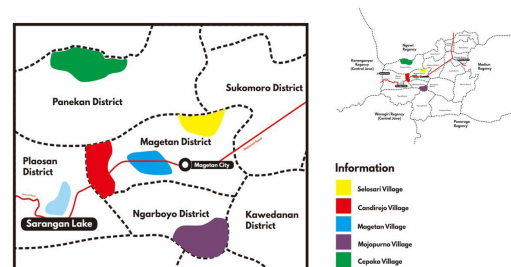


Figure 4. Areas of leather craft production in Magetan.

Figure 4 shows that there are some villages in Magetan which become the centers of leather craft industry including Selosari, Candirejo, Magetan, Mojopurno, and Cepoko. Most of the places are locations for leather craft production. Selosari is located in the main road to Sarangan Lake, the most famous tourist destination in Magetan. This place which is known as Jl. Sawo has become important product outlet for local leather crafts. A number of leather shops sell different kinds of leather products, including shoes, sandals, belts, jacket, wallet, and purse produced by local

home industry. Many tourists come to this place after visiting Sarangan Lake to buy souvenirs. Candirejo is a village that produces mostly leather sandals made of natural colouring leather. In Mojopurno there are some artisans producing souvenirs made of leather patches. The products are affordable for all tourists both low-budget and the upper-end. The other villages including Candirejo, Magetan, Mojopurno, and Cepoko function more as production places. The marketing places include Selosari (Jl. Sawo) and some tourist attractions in Magetan.

Therefore, some popular tourist attractions in Magetan including Sarangan Lake, Wahyu Lake, Cemoro Sewu, and Tirtosari Waterfall as well those five villages, have a significant role to support craft industries in the region. Some of them function as "showroom" or facade for craft products; some others are suppliers of leather crafts purchased by tourists as souvenirs. According to Zhang & Liu (2011), souvenirs are reminders of the places tourists visit. They pursue things to buy for souvenirs when they visit a destination. For most tourists shopping is their habit. Vacation is not complete without shopping. However, different tourists have different shopping habits and patterns. Some tourists purchase cheap souvenirs which are usually of low quality. Some others seek quality craft products which is often expensive.

Another research by Suryawardani, et.al (2014) mentioned that the availability of souvenirs which are based on local craft products strengthens local souvenirs and reduces imported crafts. One of the reasons why tourists buy local crafts is because they want something authentic which symbolizes local culture.

Tourists shop souvenirs for themselves, their families, friends, and relatives. Therefore, the existence of the craft industry provides support to regional tourism since it accommodates the tourist's need for shopping activities. Similarly, tourism contributes to the development of souvenirs and gifts industry. It also serves as promotional tool of a tourist destination. When a destination is promoted, more tourists come and the locals benefit more from tourism. Tourism indeed plays an important role in developing regional economy. Furthermore, the success of tourism industry can be seen from the growth of small business of local entrepreneurship and craft markets.

### Leather Craft Centers, Tourism, and Souvenirs

Leather craft centre of Magetan provides a lot of products to be purchased by tourists for souvenirs. There is significant increase of 10% in the number of tourists visiting the region from 828.913 in 2016 to 921.031 in 2017. At the same time tourists

**Table 1.** Tourism Facts of Magetan East Java Indonesia.

Indicators	Year		
	2013	2014	2015
Number of tourist visits (thousand)	577.3	627.1	752.83
Tourist length of stay	2.42	2.35	3.27
Tourism revenue (Million Rp.)	4902.6	5357.5	6425.8

Indicators	Year	
	2016	2017
Number of tourist visits (thousand)	828.913	921.031
Tourist length of stay	2.42	2.27
Tourism revenue (Million Rp.)	7.051.8	7.806.5

Source: Magetan Government Tourism Office (2018).



shopping habits give opportunities of the craft industry to flourish. These have performed a symbiotic relationship between crafts and tourism and can support the emergence of new type of special interest tourism which is called craft tourism.

As can be seen from Table 1 the number of tourist visits to Magetan gradually increases from 577.373 in 2013 to 921.031 in 2017. Similarly, tourism revenues increase from 4.902.613.000 in 2013 to 7.806.471.000 in 2017. This shows that tourism has developed in the area and has become an opportunity for other businesses including leather souvenir industries to grow. However, length of stay of the tourist decreases from 3.27 in 2015 to 2.42 in 2016 and 2.27 in 2017. The tourism authority needs to make an effort for making tourists stay longer in Magetan. It can be extended by providing alternative cultural activities such as visiting and participating in the process making of leather craft making for souvenirs. The pattern of tourist visits, where they always stop by in leather craft centers to purchase souvenirs, supports leather craft industries to flourish. It also increases the additional income of the community and boosts the local economy.

This is in line with a study conducted by Hieu & Rasovska (2017) on Vietnam's handicraft villages. The results mention that seen from an economic perspective, craft tourism creates more employment, improve local economy income, alleviate poverty, and play a substantial role in improving product sales because tourists will purchase craft products when they visit craft villages. Moreover, handicraft product development has become the cultural pride of the local community and created their income-earning tools. Their products have even been exported to more than 100 international markets.

Some leather craft home industry of Magetan produces different craft products that are suitable for souvenirs. The products are small, handy, and cheap. They include various models of key chains and mini wallets. These types of souvenirs are used either for memorial, collection, or gift

for friends and relatives. Some of the souvenir products are made of patches or waste of the making of shoes and sandals.

Zhang & Liu (2011) mentioned that souvenirs have strong local features. Buying meaningful souvenirs can promote tourist destinations and help people understand the tourism region. Souvenirs including arts and crafts also support the development of the local economy. A study conducted by Nyawo & Mubangizi (2015) concerning art and craft contribution to local economic and tourism development in Mtubatuba South Africa mentioned that natural resources and cultural products such as arts and crafts have successfully drawn tourists to the area. Furthermore, it was stated that tourism growth success has impacted the emergence and development of small businesses including restaurants and crafts industries. It shows that tourism plays a significant role in accelerating a country's economic growth.

Concerning the development of craft tourism and souvenirs of Magetan, there are some tourism places such as Sarangan Lake, Tirtosari Waterfall, and Cemor Sewu which provide chances for artisans to sell their craft products. Currently, it is a good opportunity to create unique souvenir products because tourists always want to bring back souvenirs for several reasons. Firstly, souvenir is an important element of travel experience. It is usually perceived as a memory carrier on a vacation that connects someone with experience. Secondly, souvenir relates to prestige because it shows people that someone has visited a famous tourism place. Thirdly, souvenir reflects history and heritage value which becomes an important learning tool. Fourthly, souvenir sales help indigenous people earn money for the betterment of the family economy (Hieu & Rasovska, 2017; Ona & Solis, 2017).

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the explanation above, four main points can be drawn. First, tourists who purchase souvenirs, assistance from

local government, artisans and businessmen who produce craft products have supported the region's leather crafts industry. Second, leathercraft products created do not perform recent design innovation. Many products cannot catch up with the new market trend and cannot fulfill the demand for high quality. Third, the locals have opportunities to be entrepreneurs and enhance the local economy by developing a leather home industry that produces souvenirs for tourists. Fourth, the leather craft industry has initiated a symbiotic relationship with tourism by providing craft products for tourists' souvenirs. However, stakeholders have not taken the opportunity to develop craft tourism by involving tourists in the making of leather craft as educational tourism activities.

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