

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CREATIVE ECONOMY IN SAUDI ARABIA: SUSTAINING COFFEE AS A CULINARY DESTINATION IN BURAIDAH

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Abstract

Ideas and community synergy are required in maintaining a creative economy in strengthening not only the local economy but likewise being a role in its development of coffee productivity, profitability and quality growth in the Middle East's coffee value chain to the global level. Visiting the development of specialty coffee in Saudi Arabia in recent years has made it one of the options for the creative economy built on community development in local tourism growth. Critically in Buraidah as one of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of gastronomy, specialty coffee is entirely resonant with its synergies around the coffee value chain in Saudi Arabia, making it one of the proponents of the local creative economy. This paper is a qualitative descriptive through the literature, observations, site visits and interviews, which were analysed, concluded that the creative economy through coffee in Buraidah has developed more profoundly in strengthening the sustainable economy as a culinary destination in the region. All actors from the coffee value chain in the region are anticipated to be able to sustain its development for a better future generation.

Keywords: Specialty Coffee, Creative Economy, Gastronomy, Tourism Development

1. Introduction

Buraidah is the capital and largest city in the Al-Qassim Region, located in north-central Saudi Arabia in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula. It is known as one of the oldest cities in Saudi Arabia. Being the strategic centre of the Arabian Gulf, Buraidah is situated at the same distance from the Red Sea to the west and the Persian Gulf to the east. Buraidah is also known for its date festival, the largest in the world, with various dates offered once a year. Moreover, the city is described as the city of dates. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) stated that on November 8, 2021, had included the city of Buraidah in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of gastronomy (Arabnews, 2021).

Buraidah, the regional capital of the Al-Qassim Region, is located on the edge of Wadi Al-Rummah. As a place characterised by a typical desert climate, Buraidah has hot summers and cool winters with low humidity. In addition, agriculture is still the mainstay of the economy. The traditional oasis products of dates, lemons, oranges and other fruits are still essential. The modern introduction of wheat production has become so successful that Buraidah is one of the kingdom's largest producers, making Saudi Arabia a net exporter of cereals (Hartmann *et al.*, 2012).

By exploring the advancement of the coffee industry in the world, it is undeniable that Saudi Arabia has played a role in enlivening the Middle East coffee market. The number of young entrepreneurs who have revived the local economy through a trend that has been heating up in the last ten years has made this trend even more animated by local people

who encourage this coffee market. The government has also made Saudi Arabia more advanced in the coffee industry with massive funding of SAR 1.2 billion to revitalise the local coffee market. In particular, something that is being encouraged by global young people with the trend of specialty coffee itself, from farms in Jazan to cups in specialty coffee's consumers everywhere. With the hope that in the future, it can strengthen the world coffee market and mitigate sustainability in the coffee value chain (Maspul, 2022).

Meanwhile, coffee shops in Buraidah have many variations in providing services for consumers who visit dates and the coffee culture in the Al Qassim region. Coffee roasteries also enliven local coffee production, consumed not only by local coffee shops but also in several other areas of the Middle East. Even with the emergence of a new harvest from Jazan Al Khawlani coffee production, the single-origin choice in the specialty coffee market. This aid measure from the government is constructive in revitalising the renewable creative economy of Saudi youth who brought the name Saudi coffee to the global creative economic market. Especially in Buraidah, al Qassim, where coffee has become a beauty in the past, as described by Muhammad ibn Abdullah Al Qadhi's poet of coffee. He was born in Unayzah, Al-Qassim, in 1810 (1224) - 1869 (1285H). He was the great Nabataean poet, Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Qadi, of the Arab tribe of Bani Tamim, and one of the most prolific, most prolific and most potent of the Nabataean poets, meaning that everyone witnessed and praised by critics of plant-based poetry because it is one of the unique phenomena of plant-based poetry with little repetition (Al Sabah, 2013).

2. Methodology

The author conducted this research in Buraidah, Al Qassim, Saudi Arabia. This study uses a descriptive analysis. This research method is descriptive with a qualitative approach, examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought or a class of events in the present. While the purpose of descriptive research is to make a systematic, factual and accurate description, painting of the facts, characteristics and relationships between the phenomena studied. The primary data of this study were obtained from interviews with the coffee community from the coffee value chain in Saudi Arabia and direct observation of the researcher at the research site. In contrast, secondary data for this study were obtained from literary sources.

3. Gastronomy Growths in Saudi Arabia

Gastronomy is everything related to the art, practice, and study of the selection, preparation, production, presentation and enjoyment of various foods and beverages. Gastronomy includes the origin and history of the food consumed and the provision in a sustainable manner. As an Arab country that has a long history, Saudi Arabia has a wide variety of culinary and gastronomy large enough in the Middle East. If managed properly, both can have a broad impact and even prosper the Saudi Arabian society, specifically with the coffee value chain that has positively impacted the global coffee community that has been growing through generations with a unique presence till today (Santich, 2004).

Gastronomy is a very strategic soft power for Saudi Arabia in supporting the economy and food security. It can help solve various kinds of national problems through culinary diplomacy and help preserve the environment and reduce the impact of climate change. Eating habits, including culinary legends, are also included in gastronomy and how to handle and process until it becomes food. Likewise, coffee continues its legacy from Arabia as the primary source of coffee drinks in the historical *Kaldi* legend. Its acculturation with various commercial and specialty coffee cultures in Saudi Arabia is a new challenge in advancing the creative economy and a sustainable economy with the Saudi Coffee 2022 program, as mentioned earlier (Maspul, 2022; Scarpato, 2003).

4. Specialty Coffee in Saudi Arabia

The development of specialty coffee in Saudi Arabia has mushroomed since 2015, becoming a renewable reference from the previous commercial coffee. When the trend of coffee itself is busy becoming one of the artisan culinary choices that are developing in several western countries. Specialty coffee is a term to describe the highest quality coffee, usually from specialty coffee plantations. The term was first used by Erna Knutsen in the *Tea & Coffee Trade Journal* in 1974, in which she uses the word to describe the best-tasting beans produced in a unique microclimate (Sinnott, 1994). According to the SCAA - Specialty Coffee Association of America, coffee worth 80 or more on a

100-point scale is considered special. Specialty coffee is a typical gourmet or premium coffee used in the global coffee community (Traore *et al.*, 2018).

Specialty coffee is grown in a unique and ideal climate, is distinguished by its complete taste and has few or no defects. The unique flavour is the characteristics and composition results of the soil in which the coffees are grown. Specialty coffee is the fastest-growing segment of the coffee industry. In the United States, specialty coffee has increased its market share from 1% to 20% in the last 25 years. To promote and self-regulate the industry, growers, exporters, roasters, retailers and equipment providers have established some trade associations. This association exists in both coffee-consuming and producing countries.

Saudi Arabia has become one of the pioneers in the Middle East, becoming a hub for specialty coffee hubs; this is reinforced when many Saudi students have completed their studies abroad during the reign of King Abdullah ibn AbdulAziz Alu Saud. Saudi graduates who have returned brought a new culture of enjoying coffee and added acculturation to the culture of drinking Arabic coffee, which has been local wisdom for a long time. The third wave, a new generation of specialty coffee, is one of the references in helping strengthen the local and regional economy. With the advancement of super-advanced production equipment, Saudi Arabia has become a hub in developing local economies in the Middle East (Maspul, 2022).

5. Discovering the Creative Economy Idea

The creative economy is an economic activity driven by the creative industry by prioritising the role of intellectual property. In addition, the creative economy can be demonstrated through activities based on individual creativity, skills, and talents to create innovative and creative power that has economic value and affects welfare (Foord, 2009). Creative economy development has been revitalised in Indonesia since the era of the sixth president of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, which was then continued by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo. The creative economy development process is realised by establishing the Indonesian Design Power by the Ministry of Trade to assist the development of the creative economy in Indonesia. The role of the creative economy has entered the agency of the Indonesian national ministry with the last merger with the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy (Mardiasmo *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, the 2007 Indonesian Creative Industry Contribution Mapping Study was launched at the Trade Expo Indonesia. The Blueprint for the Development of the Indonesian Creative Economy 2025 and Development of 14 Sub-Sectors of the Indonesian Creative Industry was re-launched in 2008. As for the sector of the creative economy itself, it can be adapted through several sectors such as; game development, architecture, interior design, music and film, fine arts, product design, fashion, culinary, video and animation, photography, visual communication design, television and radio, craft, advertising applications, performing arts and publishing. The benefits of the creative economy have increased GDP in Indonesia. The evidence in the records of the Indonesian Ministry of Industry in 2012 stated that the creative economy's contribution to GDP rose to \$39,2 billion, or approximately 7%. The creative economy can help increase entrepreneurial potential because anyone can promote or distribute online. The existence of the creative economy cannot be separated from the industrial revolution 4.0, which makes it easier for someone to use the internet (Subagja, 2017; Simatupang *et al.*, 2012).

The existence of a creative economy cannot be separated from several factors, such as intellectual creation in the creative economy, which can produce creativity, expertise, and talent. The design of innovative new products usually contributes to the development of the industry so that products as much as possible can be used indefinitely. Thus, creativity and expertise also need to be improved. In addition, the creation of the final product is easier and faster to replace, so many companies continue to develop the products they sell that cannot be replaced (Bilton & Leary, 2002). In other cases, the products produced by a company must aim to be marketed to consumers so that these products can also be marketed directly and indirectly. Moreover, cooperation in the creative economy because in the future, we will continue to meet with various parties, such as entrepreneurs and the government that regulates policies, is needed to assist the creative industry development process. Especially in initiating ideas that include the characteristics that must be possessed in the creative economy in creating the product itself (Weaver & Oppermann, 2000).

The creative economy has a significant influence on the economy. In addition, it can positively impact the social field; improve the quality of life of a person or community, reduce social tolerance in society, and reduce social inequality. The various benefits of the creative economy include the economic field; increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP), opening up employment opportunities, increasing production, creating healthier competition for business activities, reducing unemployment rate growth, and increasing innovation by creative economic actors in various sectors. Of course, in developing society in general, being creative in designing products that can help meet the needs of many people (Bonnardel, 2012).

6. Buraidah's Café and Coffee as Culinary Destination

As one of the world's largest commodities, coffee has become one of the old trends that have been renewed through the latest consumer behaviour approach from a generation that wants the best taste from the taste of coffee itself. In the Middle East, coffee is one of the drinks that gives a unique old feel to the development of its cultural acculturation since the third wave in a country with the largest oil commodity in the world (Tucker, 2017).

In explaining specialty coffee, the main attraction for visitors to Buraidah is to serve specialty coffee where the single origins offered are varied from several coffee-producing countries in the world, which are generally grown in the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. In addition, the hectic Saudi Coffee 2022 from Khawlani's coffee, a single-origin local variant from Jazan itself, is why visitors visit Buraidah. In addition, Buraidah's position as the centre of the Arabian peninsula is a magnet for visitors to make Buraidah a stopover for foreign tourists, especially during the annual Buraidah Date Festival. Four thousand young people participate in the festival, which will last 35 days and includes various programs targeting all community segments (Arabnews, 2021a).

Likewise, the cafe's creative economy is the core of sales and is trended by local Saudi youths who are diligent in studying creativity in coffee skills and network with world coffee actors from farm to cup. One of the recent activities is Bash Coffee Buraidah's participation in the Producer Roaster Forum (PRF) in Medellin Colombia 2022. where the strengthening of the network in the global coffee community as well as the local market in conceiving new sustainable ideas from farm to cup (PRF, 2022). All of this is expected to boost the local coffee market in Buraidah and enhance the presence of Saudi Coffee 2022. By capturing the best quality coffee and packaging it in quality production, it is undeniable that Saudi Arabia in the future will mitigate sustainability in the global coffee market from farm to cup for the next generation.

Tourism	Creative Economy in Cafe
Something to See	Visitors/tourists of coffee cafes in Buraidah can witness the acculturation of the third-wave Saudi and Specialty coffees and the process of serving coffee to consumers. Even the coffee production itself is from coffee roasters in Buraidah.
Something to Do	Visitors/tourists of coffee cafes in Buraidah can directly choose which coffee to enjoy with single-origin variations. The composition of the coffee follows consumer demand in finding the taste sensation they want through the specialty coffee process. In addition, some cafes also allow visitors to take an active role in the processing of coffee presentations, for example, in the selection of decorations/writings inc the coffee to be served or additions/subtractions in the coffee. Visitors can take coffee courses held by several local coffee academies, such as Bash coffee Buraidah which currently provides a coffee education incorporated curriculum through the Coffee Skills and the Sustainability Program from the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA).
Something to Buy	Visitors/tourists of coffee cafes in Buraidah can buy the final coffee products from the cafe restaurants and coffee shops that have been packaged attractively, from roasted coffee to local merchandise from the local coffee community.

Fig. 1, Table of data processed from Sharpley and Telfer (2015)

Data from Google Maps explains that there are 150 café restaurants and coffee shops in Buraidah, each of which has uniqueness in promoting its impressive marketing. Even more extraordinary is that many coffee shops are built side

by side, with designs varying from acculturated and traditional to modern designs. Café restaurants and coffee shops include al Nahdha, al Rehab and al Rayyan areas located in Abu Bakr As Siddiq Rd, Umar ibn Al Khattab Rd, Uthman ibn Affan Rd, Al Bukhari Rd.

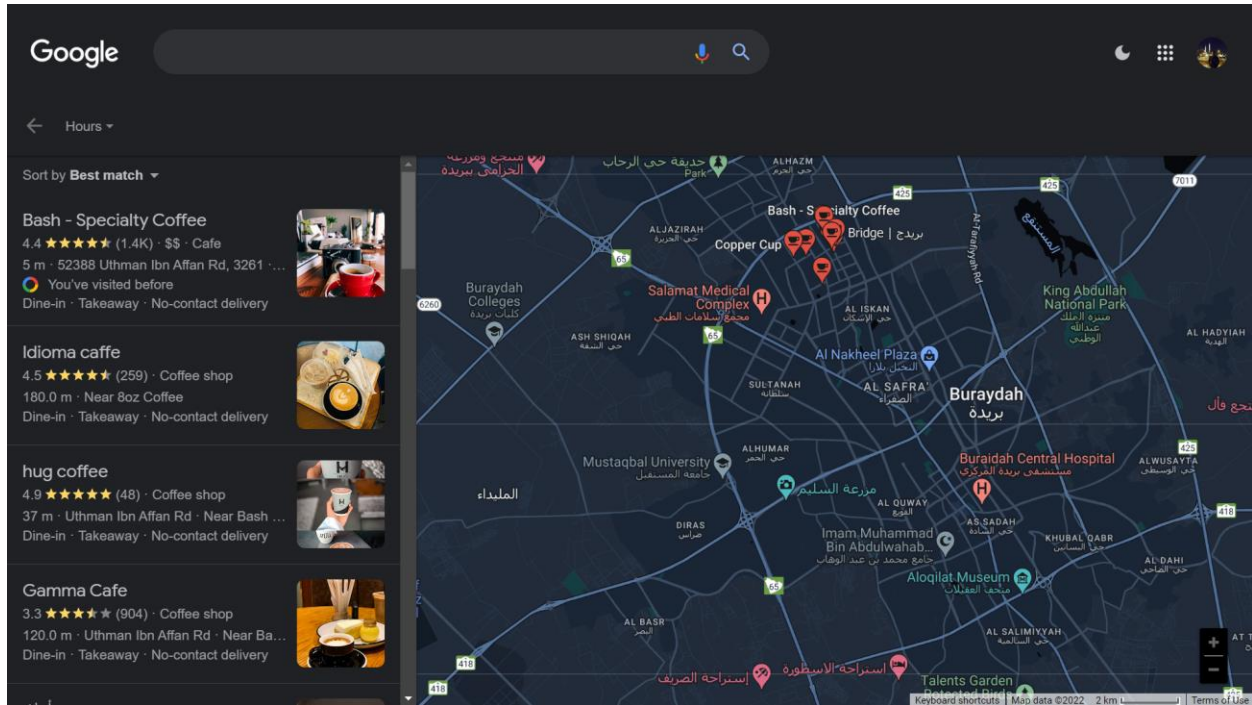


Fig. 2, Café Restaurants and Coffeeshops in Buraidah, Saudi Arabia (source: Google Maps)

The Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), which has established a standard in global coffee for better coffee knowledge, is the primary reference for specialty coffee in Buraidah and other regions in Saudi Arabia. Where this development appears with several actors who are authorised to deliver and provide global certification in several Coffee Skills modules, it is essential in specialty coffee operations in this creative coffee business. In addition, the Coffee Sustainability program makes specialty coffee from farm to cup sustainable to be enjoyed by the next generation. Sustainability must be the goal of all world organisations, including coffee (Maspul *et al.*, 2022a; Posner *et al.*, 2020).

Likewise, the role of social media is quite vital in presenting modern business today, where young people are unique in describing the characteristics of consumer behaviour that is currently trending in coffee. Even e-commerce sales are one of the pillars of point of sales, making business reach not only physically building but can be reached long distances. Moreover, with the presence of social media, branding in cafe restaurants and coffee shops becomes stronger, helping in networking for the coffee community in carrying out the specialty coffee trend (Maspul, 2021).



Fig. 3, Bash Coffee on Uthman ibn Affan Rd; One of the pioneer cafes in Buraidah, attracted 40 cafe restaurants and coffee shops to be neighbours in the vicinity in the last five years (source: author).

7. Maintaining the Creative Economy in Buraidah's Coffee Value Chain

Developing a creative economy from coffee to make it a sustainability strategy in the cafe restaurants or coffee shops. Moreover, in maintaining a creative economy for sustainable local tourism, several synergies are needed to innovate the coffee value chain both externally and internally, as follows:

- **Strengthening in Enabling**
Likewise, building a system to strengthen the cycle and sustain all coffee actors so that they are always ready to make Buraidah a coffee tourist destination in Saudi Arabia. In this case, where coffee can be processed in the coffee value chain in Saudi Arabia already has a satisfactory cycle from the government in sustaining farmers in Jazan and supporting distribution through the Saudi Coffee 2022 goals. Moreover, enabling can be maintained by creating coffee-related actors who actively promote the creative economy through governance programs or community development through local and global organisations.
- **Strengthening in Empowering**
It is strengthening the authority and responsibility of each coffee actor connected through the coffee value chain with consistent measures in the production of specialty coffee. Coffee value chain actors must always structure coffee in terms of the knowledge of the coffee actors and the final product produced. The standards promoted by local and global organisations will always help enhance the outcomes aspired by coffee consumers.
- **Strengthening in Encouraging**
Strengthening the coffee value chain by encouraging the community in helping to promote, stimulate and motivate the local creative economy in the coffee sector is significantly critical. Achievements acquired through the program's success are also recognised vertically and horizontally, each of which has an affinity that needs to be

relished. Contributions like this form in the coffee value chain and its actors will positively impact the rotation of benefits for agricultural productivity, profitability and quality growth in the coffee value chain cycle.

8. Conclusion

Seeing the development of specialty coffee in Buraidah in the last seven years has helped strengthen the local creative economy in Saudi Arabia, with the emergence of acculturation of renewable coffee drinking culture from consumer behaviour. In addition, it has become a new coffee reference in the coffee value chain in the world in the existence of coffee development since the beginning of the *Kaldi* legend from the Arabian peninsula until today. In sustaining coffee as a final product that can help excel tourism development in Saudi Arabia, sustainable synergy is required from all coffee value chains, especially in maintaining the sustainability strategy through enabling, empowering and encouraging. It is anticipated to be able to make the creative economy through coffee sustainable so that the local coffee community can maintain it for future generations.

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