



Perception of the Batik Dress Code at SMTOWN Live 2023 Jakarta Concert

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Abstract. This article examines how concertgoers interpreted batik during SMTOWN Live 2023 SMCU PALACE @ Jakarta. Held to commemorate 50 years of Indonesia–South Korea diplomatic relations, the concert encourages attendees to wear batik as the dress code. Data gathered using Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling on 50 news online media and supported by in-depth interviews. Drawing on Stuart Hall’s reception analysis, this study found that audiences were divided into two dominant positions—the dominant and the negotiated—with no oppositional interpretations. Findings show that many concertgoers fully embraced batik as a symbol of Indonesian cultural pride and as a means of initiating cultural diplomacy. Meanwhile, others negotiated its meaning by bridging tradition with contemporary culture. Batik is a traditional adaptation of attire to modern settings. No instance found on oppositional position indicating successful campaign resonance. This study concludes that media-driven cultural initiatives can shape public opinion and foster cultural pride in the context of cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: Batik, K-Pop Concert, Online News, Reception Analysis, Text Mining

1 Introduction

Batik is recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2009 (Evita, 2022). As a symbol of Indonesia’s culture, batik has become an innovation in building national identity (Husna, 2024). In this identity-formation process, batik serves as a medium for the government, batik artists, cultural figures, and entrepreneurs to promote it on the international stage (Hakim, 2018)(Yulianingrum, 2022)(Febriani, 2023). To preserve batik amidst strong foreign cultural influences, a movement to popularize batik among teenagers has emerged as an effort to globalize what is local (Unairnews, 2023). The real form of action to preserve batik tulis in society is to wear batik in everyday life as a sign of love for Indonesia (Yudhi, 2019).

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One such effort to globalize batik is reflected in the SMTOWN concert held on September 23, 2023. SMTOWN is a concert showcasing artists under SM Entertainment, a South Korean entertainment company. In 2012, SMTOWN held a similar concert in Indonesia, and after 11 years, SMTOWN fans, or SM STAN, were greeted again at SMTOWN Live 2023 SMCU Palace @Jakarta (hereinafter referred to as the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert). What made this SMTOWN concert special is that 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Indonesia. The SMTOWN concert was part of Korean Week, organized by the South Korean Embassy in Indonesia, held from September 18 to 24, 2023, to commemorate this special milestone (Bisnis.Com, 2023). For SMTOWN 2023, the concert promoter, Dyandra Global Edutainment, encouraged concertgoers to wear a special dress code: batik. In an Instagram post on September 8, 2023 (See Fig. 1), Dyandra urged concertgoers to wear Batik with the caption, "I wear Batik with pride to #SMTOWN JAKARTA 2023." Dyandra called on concertgoers to proudly wear their cultural identity (Liputan6, 2023).

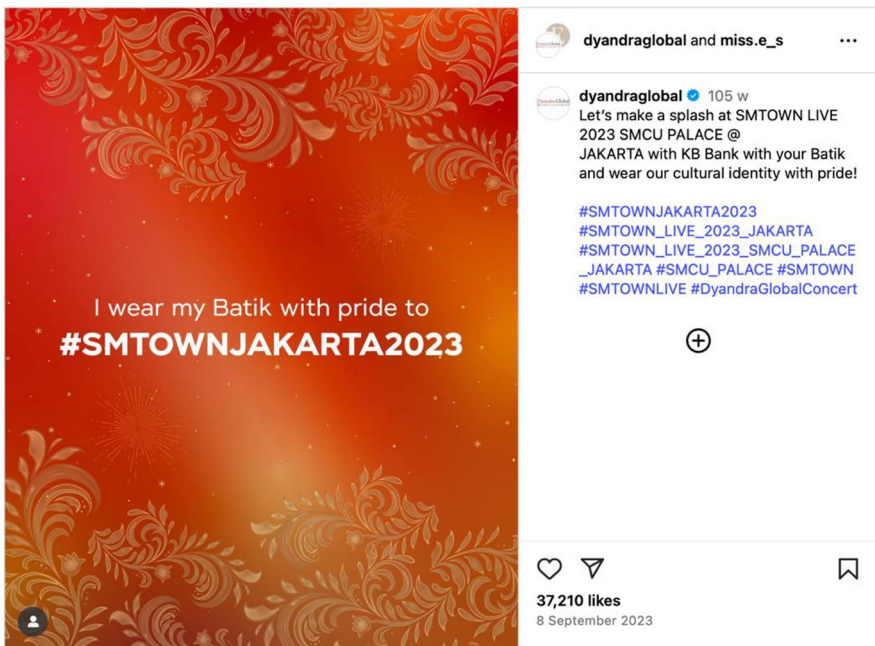


Fig. 1. Invitation to Wear Batik Dress Code at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 Concert (<https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw7amsLSrQL>)

2 Methodology

This study discusses the text analysis in the context of exploring the symbolic meaning of batik at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert. Using text modeling with Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) and Stuart Hall's representation theory, this research is based

on news coverage of the batik dress code used at the concert. The LDA modeling method will generate a set of the most dominant topics based on concertgoers' experiences. Stuart Hall's representation theory will be used to interpret the concertgoers' experiences regarding the batik dress code. The research flowchart is shown in Fig. 2.

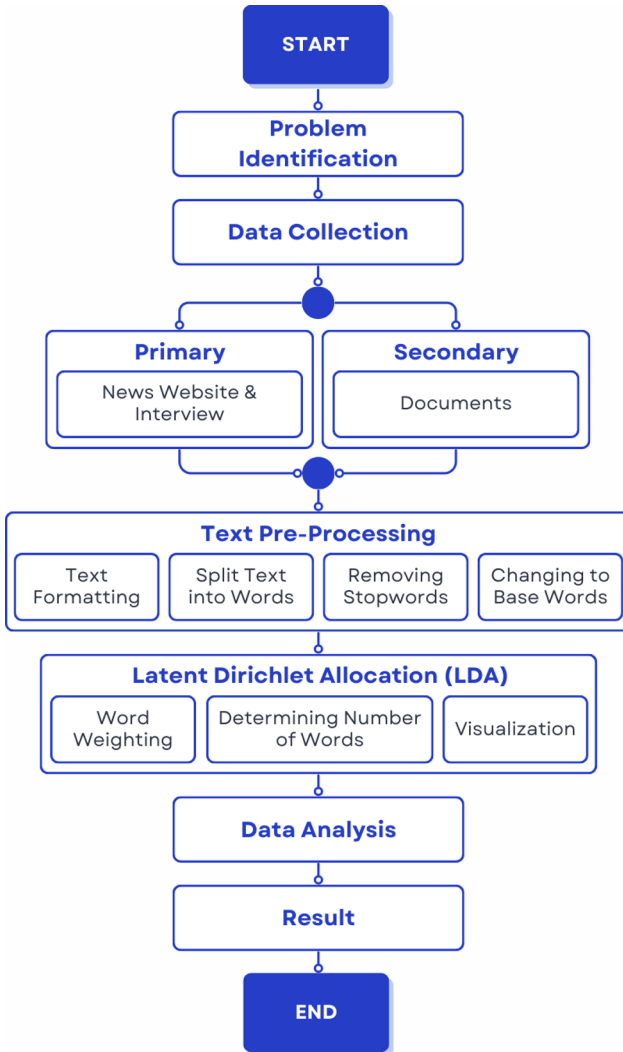


Fig. 2. Research Design

2.1 Identification and Data Collection

The research began with the identification of the main problem, followed by the formulation of a structured research plan based on preliminary exploration. Data collection

included both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data were obtained from relevant literature and academic works, while primary data were collected through an online news search on the use of batik as a dress code during the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert, using the keyword “allintext: smtown batik” for articles published between September and November 2023 and accessed on July 1, 2024—audience comments from the retrieved news served as the primary textual data. To enrich the analysis, in-depth interviews with four concert attendees were conducted, purposively selected for their participation in the event and willingness to share experiences related to the batik dress code. The small number of participants was justified by the study’s qualitative orientation, which prioritizes depth of insight over sample size. Data reliability and validity were ensured through triangulation between textual and interview data, as well as consistent interpretation during the analytical process.

2.2 LDA Modelling

The third step is pre-processing the text from the transcripts, which includes text formatting (case folding), word splitting (tokenizing), removal of stop words (Stopword Removal), and stemming (Jo, T, 2019)(Chai, 2022). The indicator for the third step is the processed text dataset, including case folding, tokenizing, Stopword Removal, and Stemming. The fourth step involves using the dataset from the previous step, which includes three stages: term weighting, determining the number of topics with Perplexity Value and Coherence Score, and visualizing results with a word cloud (Chai, 2022)(Khadijah, 2024). LDA is a method that evaluates each document as a probabilistic distribution over latent topics, with each topic characterized by a distribution over words (Blei et al, 2002)(Gurcan, 2021). Determining the number of topics (n topics) is done using two measurements, namely the Perplexity value (Xu et al., 2019)(Gan, 2021)(Saha, 2024) and the Coherence score (Habibabadi & Haghghi, 2019)(Thielmann, 2023). Coherence score indicates the level of semantic similarity between words on a topic used for the main evaluation (Tresnasari et al, 2020). The indicator for the fourth step is the most dominant topics based on the audience’s experience with the batik dress code at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert.

2.3 Data Analysis

The fifth step is to analyze the topics generated by the LDA model based on the dominant words in the comments. These topics are interpreted using Stuart Hall’s representation theory. Insights from the in-depth interviews were triangulated with LDA modeling results to strengthen interpretations. The indicator for the fifth step is the symbolic meaning of batik at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert.

The reception analysis will examine the meaning of the batik dress code at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert in Jakarta using Stuart Hall’s representation theory. According to Hall (2013), meaning is formed and communicated through language, symbols, and cultural practices. Representation results from the process of exchange among members of a cultural group. In this process, cultural identity is constructed in a text and perceived by interacting members of society (Hall, S, 2013). From Hall’s

perspective, batik can be analyzed through the lens of representation theory to understand how it conveys meanings across various social and cultural contexts.

3 Result and Discussion

This study conducted web scraping on 50 news links uploaded between September 9, 2023, and November 10, 2023. It resulted in 149 data points containing the news URL, the commentator's name, and statements about the use of the batik dress code at the SMTOWN Jakarta 2023 concert. A dataset was formed after undergoing text preprocessing stages, namely text formatting (case folding), word splitting (tokenization), stop-word removal, and stemming. After all text preprocessing stages, 127 rows of statement data were obtained as a processed text dataset for word weighting. This weighting is used to determine the top 5-20 words used in the LDA process. The experiments conducted for LDA modeling involved selecting 5-20 topics, each containing 5-20 words. Evaluation results showed that the combination of 15 topics and five words provides a good balance (See Fig. 3), with the highest Coherence value, although Perplexity is not the lowest.

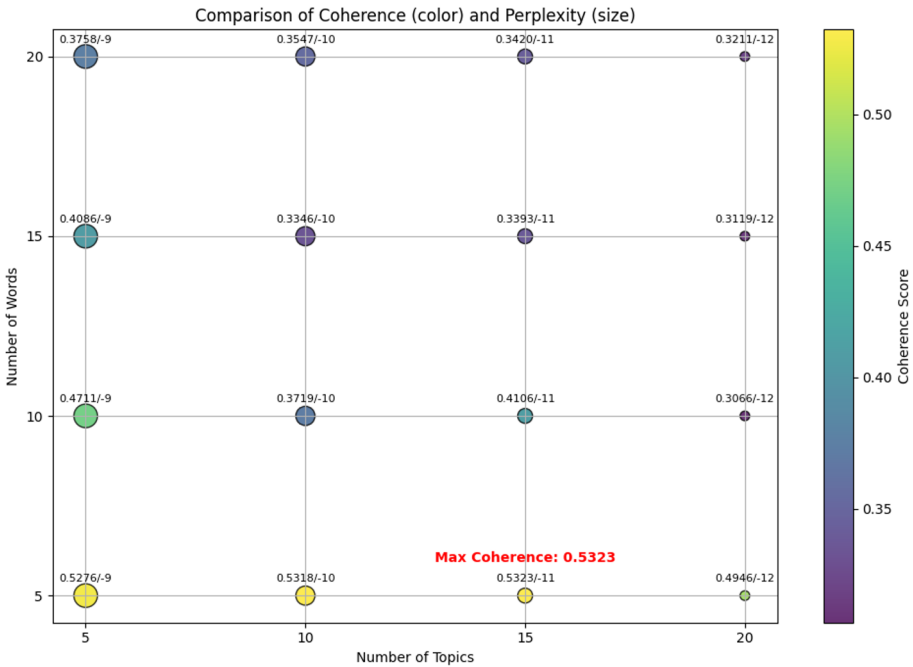


Fig. 3. Graph of Coherence Score vs Perplexity Value

LDA analysis and interviews reveal a deeper narrative about audience reception. This mixed method illustrates the balance between collective sentiments and personal experiences. LDA identified four major themes in Tabel 2.

Table 2. Major Topics Classification

Themes	Example Words	Narrative
Concert and Occasions	'konser', 'acara', 'datang', 'promotor', 'smtown'	Related to events where batik is worn. This topic demonstrates batik's popularity in everyday life and at larger public events. Emphasize the fashion and aesthetic aspects of wearing batik. This shows that batik is not merely a fabric or clothing to Indonesians; it has become a national identity. Wearing batik in concert was a gesture of cultural participation.
Fashion and Aesthetics	'warna', 'pakai', 'guna', 'lihat'	Underscores how the batik dress code intersected with the audience's perception of visual identity and cultural representation at the SMTOWN concert.
Visual element	'batik', 'warna'	Indicate that batik is associated with a cultural symbol. Batik is viewed as an Indonesian representation in international promotion.
Cultural Symbol	'Indonesia', 'budaya', 'duta', 'negeri'	

3.2 Stuart Hall's Reception Analysis

The communication model proposed by Stuart Hall essentially states that the sender encodes meaning, and the receiver decodes it, with the encoded meaning potentially interpreted differently by the audience (Hall, 2007). According to Gunter (1984), this theory concerns how audiences interpret media content to understand the intended meaning. Reception analysis assumes the audience is active, with the freedom to access media and shape meaning. Audiences have the freedom to interpret the meanings encoded and conveyed through media texts (Anshar et al., 2024). Based on Hall's study, he divides audience responses into three different positions: dominant, negotiated, and oppositional.

Dominant Position. This occurs when the audience aligns with the codes of the program, which include attitudes, values, and assumptions, fully accepting the meaning intended and desired by the message creator.

Negotiated Position. This occurs when the audience, within certain limits, aligns with the codes or messages and fundamentally accepts the meaning intended by the program creator but modifies it to reflect their own position and interests.

Oppositional Position. This occurs when the audience does not align with the program's codes or rejects the intended meaning of the message, determining their own alternative framework to interpret the message or program.

The enthusiastic response from concertgoers to the promoter's call to wear batik was high, as evidenced by thousands of fans in Jakarta's SMTOWN 2023 concert venue dressed in traditional attire. Various responses from concertgoers were also reported by national media outlets regarding the decision to make batik the dress code for the concert. Many concertgoers felt proud and enthusiastic about wearing batik as a form of cultural identity. At the same time, some were surprised by the preparation required, while others joked about wanting to marry one of their idols because they were wearing batik.

Hall assisted in interpreting the message "I wear Batik with pride" at the 2023 SMTOWN concert in Jakarta. The following are the results for the audience position categories:

Dominant Position. This study found that concertgoers expressed pride in wearing batik as part of the concert's dress code. The prevalence of prideful and supportive expressions in wearing batik illustrates alignment with the campaign's goals. To them, it was an opportunity to celebrate their heritage on a global stage. Fandoms of NCT, Aespa, and Red Velvet stated that batik is a characteristic of Indonesia. Batik is the suit outfit for a diverse look and is easy to mix and match. They recognized its significance in representing Indonesia's cultural identity.

They viewed the initiative as timely and appropriate, especially in the context of cultural diplomacy marking 50 years of Indonesia-South Korea bilateral relations. The dress code was widely supported, with several participants emphasizing that the campaign could bring batik to an international audience—particularly if SMTOWN artists also wore batik during the event. The word 'warna' (color) serves as a testament to the fact that people in dominant positions not only decoded the campaign but also actively celebrated it. Color is used to bridge tradition and modernity while reinforcing cultural diplomacy. Some highlighted that including batik in such a global platform was a strategic move, framing it as both an innovation and a diplomatic effort to promote Indonesian heritage.

Negotiated Position. Concertgoers who absorb the message but interpret it according to their own perspective fall into this position. They integrate the dominant meaning with personal adjustments or additions to how they wear batik. At first, it was challenging for various reasons, including having to wear pre-prepared concert attire in SM Entertainment's colors. However, they appreciated the campaign's uniqueness and expressed pride in showcasing batik as a traditional symbol adaptable to the modern global environment.

They expressed pride in wearing batik to demonstrate their Indonesian identity, despite their love of foreign culture, especially K-pop. Some combined it with local cul-

ture in various creative ways. Fandom wore a bright green kebaya, identifying themselves as NCT fans. Others chose shades of pink, representing SMTOWN's colors. Another creative approach was seen in batik vests and hoodies, which were more appropriate and casual for concerts. One audience member expressed their amazement at their creativity in combining batik for concerts. Overall, their statements demonstrate that traditional attire can remain flexible and relevant in various situations. Thus, Indonesian identity can be maintained and coexist with foreign cultures.

Oppositional Position. Audiences will be put into this position when they do not align with and recognize the primary message. This research found no direct opposition to the batik dress code for the 2023 SMTOWN Jakarta concert.

3.3 Media in Diplomacy

Through Hall's lens, the act of wearing batik emerges as an active process of decoding, in which the audience bridges tradition with contemporary self-expression, affirming batik's enduring cultural significance. Bohn (2004) highlights clothing as a medium of communication. He elaborates on the sociological construction of clothing as communication, not only from the perspectives of consumption and culture. Even the clothing worn tells a story without us needing to speak a word (Goedhart, A., 2020).

The media's role in diplomacy can be seen in shaping the audience's experience of the batik dress code. Media framing batik not merely as traditional attire but as a meaningful symbol of Indonesia's rich cultural history. Cultural diplomacy demonstrates success when it employs participatory and emotionally engaging media forms. (Cull, N., 2019).

In terms of the dominant position, concertgoers embody a sense of nationalism and pride in their cultural identity. They fully accepted the message. Batik here can act as soft power and cultural diplomacy (Nye, J. S., 2008)(Ang et al, 2008). Batik symbolized an opportunity to showcase Indonesian culture with pride on a global stage. Indonesia can broaden its cultural diplomacy by leveraging global entertainment to project its national identity.

National media online has portrayed batik's transformation from traditional attire to modern fashion that suits global entertainment. Every complete or contextual statement related to the campaign consistently mentions the word "batik," underscoring its prominence as the campaign's core message. Audiences exhibited a range of responses, primarily categorized into dominant and negotiated positions, with no indications of oppositional decoding. This reflects the strong alignment between batik and the campaign's goals, as well as the audience's overall acceptance of its significance.

4 Conclusion

This study concludes that the audience's interpretation of the batik dress code at the SMTOWN concert was diverse, with findings categorized into two audience positions: dominant and negotiated. Notably, no interpretations fell into the oppositional position.

Applying Stuart Hall's reception theory, the study reveals that some attendees fully embraced the promoter's message of showcasing batik as a symbol of Indonesian cultural identity (dominant position). These participants expressed pride in wearing batik, viewing it as an opportunity to elevate this cultural heritage on a global stage. Conversely, those in the negotiated position acknowledged and supported the cultural intent behind the batik dress code but adapted its meaning to align with their personal preferences and the concert's casual context. Despite initial feelings of confusion or inconvenience, and in some cases choosing not to wear batik, they still expressed support for the promoter's initiative to highlight Indonesian culture.

These findings underscore how online media coverage of the SMTOWN concert, held in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Indonesia-South Korea diplomatic relations, fostered a positive reception. This demonstrates the vital role of media in cultural diplomacy. Beyond merely disseminating information, the media can shape public perceptions and promote understanding by presenting diverse viewpoints. The positive reception of batik as a cultural symbol at this international event highlights the media's ability to harmonize global and local identities, ultimately strengthening cultural and diplomatic ties between nations.

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