

Tradition For Sale: *Batik*, Local Heritage, and Capital Investment

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Abstract - In the age of information and communication technology today, the *batik* production and distribution have also changed accordingly. From an artisanal products to home industry, *batik* is now manufactured and distributed in boutique, show rooms, groceries, and by online. Our findings derived from two months ethnographic observation in Trusmi, Cirebon, West Java showed that the nature of *batik* production and distribution has significantly changed compared to our previous observation (Purwanto 2002). As a center of traditional hand made *batik*, Trusmi was famous for its local motives and patterns composed by local *batik* artisans. However, when the observation took place in 2016, we found that manufactured-*batik* has been the main commodity in dozens of *batik* boutiques and showrooms. They were sold as shirts, dresses, and other ready-to-wear apparels. *Batik* in form of textile and fabric is only found in small amount. Using ‘*Batik Trusmi*’ wholesale as a case study, we would like to describe and analyze how cultural commodity, such as *batik*, is marketed in this modern and globalized time. We emphasize the role cultural expressions and use of all local sentiments regarding *batik* and other rural and traditional life by the shop owner to increase sales.

Index Terms - *Batik, Trusmi, Indonesia, cultural expression, economic commodity, marketing, retail store*

I. Introduction

This paper discuss strategy to market *batik* in the most recent Indonesia that involving capital investment and cultural commodification. People mostly recognizes *batik* as part of artistic work of Indonesia, as well as a traditional motives of clothes [13]. More than a cultural identity and expression, *batik* also become part of the community's economy [15] and national income. Its role in propping up the industry has been recognized since the colonial period [17]. *Batik* has become the main commodity for the capitalist during the colonial period back in the XIX to early XX century. The Chinese and Arab descent in Indonesia, formerly known as Netherland India, has been the pioneer for the business. The

trend continued until the country's independent in 1945 to early 1970s. The introduction of modern manufactured textiles during the modernization era in the seventies has made *batik* industry decline. The rise and fall of *batik* industry is actually very related to technology and trends in the market, as well as state policy [4].

As a commodity with a very strong cultural basis, conversation about *batik* is not just a mere business affair. Places *batik* as a cultural object that is very much attached to the community [13]. In the same direction, we see also connect *batik* with other variables such as with the craftsmen as *batik* producers, labors who work in *batik* industry, knowledge about *batik* motives, the meaning of *batik* for community which in some places still regard it as a sacred value. On the other hand, there are often other aspects that must be put forward when discussing *batik* business.

Selecting a *batik* showroom in Trusmi, West Java as a case study, we will describe how the changes took place on the marketing aspects of *batik* as a distinctive cultural commodity of Trusmi. Further analysis is done on a wholesale in Trusmi which actively uses cultural strategies and utilizes all the local sentiments regarding *batik* and other rural and traditional life to increase sales.

II. Methods

The data was gathered from a two-months field research using ethnographic methods in 2016. We interviewed owners and showrooms management in Trusmi village, shopkeepers, and *batik* craftsmen, and senior *batik* artists. In addition to focus on *batik* marketing aspects in BT, we also explore the process of production and marketing of *batik* in the village. Observation on the arrangement of merchandise in the showroom becomes our priority, followed by series of depth interview to explore the marketing strategy of the shop owners. Furthermore, the analysis is carried out qualitatively by addressing the themes that appear in our interview transcript. Then

we examine the content of them to interpreted the findings.

III. Literature Review

Prospective buyers' views on products are determined by the store's atmosphere [14]. While the atmosphere is influenced by four things: store location and customer services, store ambience and design, product quality and features and instore customer convenience. Buyers will visit locations where they can easily reach which are places characterized by high accessibility and ease of achievement. When all these necessary conditions are met, a shop owner may expect buyers to come again. At the end, a store loyalty that refers to customer's willingness to continue shopping from time to time will be achieved. In this case, interrelationships between store attributes, shopping enjoyment, place attachments, and store loyalty to a product becomes important. In short, he mentioned about significant store attributes that make visitors comfortable are the atmosphere, price, leisure, design, and service.

There are several way to create ambience that positively attract consumers. Store display is one of them. Researchers said that store display can emotionally effect on consumer [11]. Merchandise should be placed in particular orders and places to be able to draw attention of potential customers. How it appears in display is really important; merchandise displayed in a place with proper lighting, for example, can invite consumer's eye to starring at and think about having one of them [16]. In addition to lighting, visualizing merchandise to create a positive store environment has also consider the display itself, layout, coordination, merchandise assortment, and signage [12].

Price is always becomes customers' main consideration. In the fashion business which lately becomes competitive, store owners have to carefully has to be very carefully examine what constitute the price. A research on the price of *batik* Trusmi consideration made by *batik* seller [2]. Aside from the motives of the textile, the way its produced whether it handmade or manufactured, she explains that the material used to color *batik* is also important to include in pricing. An environmentally friendliness apparently has became a new sentiment for the consumer to buy traditional textiles.

The local consumers in Indonesia are really sensitive to price [10]. It means that store owners have to think over the price constitution, even the loyal customers are sometimes change their choice to find a more reasonable price. Some common way for pricing is by giving an odd number for the price. Overall, providing product information on a sign without price elicited higher

likelihood to buy than providing a sign with price. The authors found a positive relationship between visual attention to price on the display sign and likelihood to buy, but an inverse relationship between visual attention to information and likelihood to buy [7]

IV. Data and Discussion

- *The Village of Trusmi*

Trusmi is the center of *batik* industry located in Plered, Cirebon, about four kilometers west of Cirebon City, in West Java province. It is actually comprise of two different village namely Trusmi Wetan and Trusmi Kulon, however the outsiders *batik* buyers mostly do not really aware of this administrative division. *Batik* craftsmen in the village of Trusmi and its surroundings in subdistricts of Plered and Kedawung, amounted to 4,462 workers in 2016. In Cirebon regency, there are 521 unit of workshops are registered to produce *batik* with total production more than 460,000 pieces each year. The table 1 below show us some data on the *batik* production in Cirebon regency.

TABLE 1.
Some Facts on *Batik* Business in Cirebon

No.	Data	Remarks
1	Location	Subdistricts of Plered and Kedawung
2	Number of enterprise	521
3	Number of workforce	4,462
4	Number of production	460,460 pieces/year
5	Production value	IDR 65,560,443,000/year
6	Foreign distribution	Japan, Brunei, Thailand, Philippines

Source: Disperindag Cirebon 2017

The 2016 production value of *batik* in Cirebon reached IDR 65,560,443,000 or equal to USD 5,043,111/year, if the currency rate is IDR 13,000 for one dollar. That means, the average of production value was USD 9,680/year for each workshop; not too much interesting for the business. In other words, the competition for selling in the local market is very high. in Trusmi, especially Trusmi Kulon where our observation took place, the competitiveness of *batik* business was not represent by the number of artisan and their labor, but by the number of showrooms. Table 2 indicates the number of showrooms in the Trusmi and its surroundings.

TABLE 2
Number of Showrooms in Trusmi and Arouds

No.	Name of village	No. of showroom
1	Panembahan	14
2	Trusmi Kulon	45
3	Trusmi Wetan	7
4	Kalitengah	7
5	Weru Lor	4
6	Kalibaru	2
7	Dawuan	1
		80

The table above shows how Trusmi Kulon is become the center of *batik* business. There are 45 showrooms operated there compared with other villages which in total comprise less than a half of showrooms in Trusmi Kulon.

Cirebon *batik* handicraft is attached to Ki Buyut Trusmi, a figure in the era of the kingdom of Cirebon 15-16 century whose name became the name of his residence. The triumph of Trusmi as the center of the *batik* industry was in the decade of 1930 marked by the emergence of a group of Chinese businessmen. At the time of the independence revolution, the workers took over the *batik* industry from the hands of Chinese businessmen. Initially *batik* was produced by writing technique, then repaired with stamp technology in the 1850s. For a hundred years, this stamp technology makes *batik* grows as a big industry. The golden age of *batik* handicrafts in this area occurred during the period 1950-1968. No wonder if a cooperative at the local level, *Batik Cooperative Budi Tresna* shade *batik* crafters, able to build a very grand building in early 1950. In 1968, the first *batik* showroom was opened by a senior *batik* crafter. Slowly afterwards *batik* showrooms became the main store to sell *batik* in Trusmi to replace *batik* cooperative.

- *Batik Wholesale Center BT*

The showroom owner, Ibnu Riyanto, is the son of a well-known *batik* entrepreneur in Trusmi Village, Rusima. This man born in 1988 previously had the first *batik* showroom with the name of IBR stands from *Ibnu Bersama Istri* (Ibnu and wife) or *Ibnu Bin Rusima*. Riyanto who has started entrepreneurship since graduating high school in 2006 has a high motivation for business. In 2011, he built his second showroom by renting a former rattan mill area of 1.5 hectares. The showroom is named after Batik Wholesale Center 'Batik Trusmi'. The building is one of the largest and magnificent among all *batik* showroom located in Trusmi. Inaugurated in conjunction with the *batik* claim as Malaysian cultural heritage that many reap protests in Indonesia,

Batik Wholesale Center 'Batik Trusmi' get a good momentum. The shop was crowded since the first day it opened.

During the first year, Riyanto only sold shirts and *batik* cloth. However, in the following year, market demand is changing. Consumers are looking for typical foods and beverages of Cirebon to be made souvenirs. Riyanto's showroom becomes more varied, not only sell *batik* in the form of cloth and shirt but also dress of woman, dress and *gamis* (moslem long dress for man), and souvenir typical of Cirebon like crackers, fishes, *terasi* (shrimp paste), and fruit syrups. Also available are various accessories such as sculptures and knick-knacks, sandals, and shoes obtained by distributors from other regions in Yogyakarta, Bandung, Indramayu, Kuningan and Madiun. In 2015, Riyanto accepts offers in collaboration with e-commerce such as Blibli.com and Zalora.

This impressive progress seems to have other consequences. The name of Wholesale Batik 'Batik Trusmi' showroom was sued by other Trusmi *batik* traders. They consider that the Trusmi Batik is a generic name that should not be a trademark. Through a long discussion with other crafters, traders and shipowners, Riyanto changed the name of the showroom into Batik Wholesale Center BT.

- *Merchandise settings at Batik BT Wholesale Center*

Below we will describe the various ways of setting up merchandise by adapting the models from previous retail management experts that combine physical and emotional elements, and tangible and intangible attributes from the store's atmosphere.

Batik Wholesale Center BT is located at Jalan Raya Trusmi Kulon no. 148, Cirebon. The building is located at a crossroads between the market of Kalalaran and the Sheikh Datul Kahfi street with a large yard for the parking of four-wheeled vehicles. The location of Batik Wholesale Center BT is strategic because it is only about 100 meters from the gate to dozens of other showrooms along Trusmi village road.

The visitors enter through the entrance through the main building of the Grand Store which provides the main merchandise which is a collection of *batik* products, and typical souvenirs from Cirebon and other areas. When entered, on the right side there is information center and visitors can leave luggage in the place. Sales Promotion Girl and security guards will greet visitors by offering assistance while repeatedly saying "excuse me, good day! Can anybody help? "to those who come. Toilets and cashiers are available at the very back.

The exit door was close. Above the exit gate, there are photos and travel stories of Ibnu Riyanto, some awards, and news coverage in some printed media neatly framed. When out of area 1 and 2, visitors can enter Batik Kitchen restaurant that provides traditional food and beverage menu. In addition to restaurants, Batik Kitchen provides meeting rooms for rent. Being near the restaurant is a reflexology room provided for visitors after exhaustion around the showroom. From the restaurant, visitors can walk backwards to the *Pelataran Seni* (Art Courtyard), an area that is also the most visited by visitors and is usually the last area.

When starting his business Riyanto only sells *batik* in the form of clothes and shirts. In the following year, his business has progressed relatively rapidly. So that he provides a variety of fashion goods like shoes, shawls, *batik* mats, blouses, blazer, pillowcases and bed sheets to bags. The mannequins at the front of the store became one of the consumer's center of attention. This is important to attract the attention of consumers, visitors and tourists to enter the store. The storefront contains a cloth with well-known motifs such as *megamendung* and *pagalima*.

Store decoration is usually associated with special events or celebration days such as fasting and Idul Fitri, Independence Day, Valentine's Day, New Year Eve, etc. Decoration is done by arranging some clothes that are promo at the front near the visitors enter. In addition, the colors in the store are dominated by certain colors like red and green to attract attention.

V. Ambience and Positioning

Riyanto seeks to leave a strong impression that visitors feel the rural atmosphere. Apparently he tried to associate *batik* with traditions, traditions with rural, and rural atmosphere with distinctive cultural traits. In addition to the stage decoration filled with *megamendung batik* paintings, the roofs made of woven bamboo with brown color make visitors more feel the rural atmosphere attached to all things traditional. To complete the traditional atmosphere, Riyanto built an arts court in the BT Wholesale Batik Center complex.

The art courtyard has various activities. While the wholesale is open from 08:00 to 20:00 for weekdays and another extra hour at the weekend, the '*batik corner*' open from 09:00 to 17:00 daily. A female employee is appointed as coordinator to that corner to organize *batik* making demonstrations and provide short training for visitors to learn how to make *batik*. In the afternoon at 14:00 until 18:00

visitors are entertained by traditional Cirebon dances such as *bugis ronggeng* dance and mask dance on the art stage performed by local high school students. The visitors can see the art performances without having to pay for tickets, but they can give donations provided in the cardboard box in front of the stage.

In addition to featuring performance art, Riyanto also provides a corner to learn to create traditional arts for visitors. They can learn to do glass painting, t-shirt painting, and mask coloring by paying Rp. 20,000 - 35,000 equal to US 2-3. Certainly, they can also learn to make *batik*. The arts courtyard has 20 units of *batik* making which can be used for 5 people. Visitors are taught by craftsmen and in the end the produced *batik* clothes can be brought home.

On holiday, the visitors of Batik Wholesale Center BT mostly tourists from outside Cirebon. A set of traditional West Java musical instruments, namely *angklung* displayed in the shop to impress the visitors with local identity. The sound of *angklung* softly heard from the speakers throughout the day. Inside the store, consumers are given compliment *wedang jahe* (hot ginger tea) and *krupuk mlarat* (typical crackers of Cirebon).

VI. Conclusion

The marketing of *batik* as a traditional textile of Indonesia has been very dynamics. Starting from a subsistence production by making the textile for personal use to home industry, it is nowadays sold in a modern stores, groceries and wholesales. The case we studied in Trusmi showed three interesting findings. First, the *batik* craftsmen in Trusmi as the center of traditional batik in Cirebon, West Java, began to realize the importance of the suitable marketing strategy. Secondly, the marketing of *batik* in Trusmi develops from time to time: (1) local retailers in the village; (2) collection and distribution through cooperatives, (3) opening individual stores or showrooms, and wholesalers. Third, the marketing strategy in the store or wholesale does not limited to providing merchandise. The case of Batik Wholesale CenterBT shows how cultural expressions in the forms of performing the making of various handicrafts, arts performances, and the provision of typical food and drink can be used as an approach to attract visitors. In addition, the creation of traditional and rural life atmosphere is also a powerful marketing tool for the shop owner to increase sales.

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