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The Marginalization of Traditional Arts from the Demands of Tourism Industries: Cultural Commodification Strategy in the Global Era

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The marginalization of the traditional art in the form of cultural commodification due to the demand of the tourism industry in Indonesia has become a necessity in this era of economic globalization. The tourism industry—as a “child” of globalization—with special standards has indirectly encouraged the disappearance of integrative needs between society as the supporting community and traditional arts. Traditional arts—as one of the cultural identities of the local community—must commodified into tourist attraction which is sold to gain financial benefit. The problem is how we develop strategy needed to synergize local cultural identity of the supporting community and the demands of the tourism industry. Field research method is applied in order to get the data which is analyzed by using qualitative method with case study in the coastal areas in Central Java. First, the marginalization of the traditional art in the form of cultural commodification becomes a necessity in an era of a global economy marked by the growing development of tourism industry. Second, traditional art has not been able to keep pace with the demands of tourism industry since traditional art is considered having inadequate quality standards demanded by tourism industry. Third, the commodification of culture conducted by tourism industry should synergize the perception and community responses to the demands of tourism industry. Fourth, one of the concepts that is most relevant to accommodate the demands of cultural commodification is to create imitative traditional arts.

Keywords: Globalization, Tourism Industry, Traditional Art, Cultural Commodification, Marginalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic globalization basically gives a global and open picture of economic life, without territorial or regional limitation among countries. Here, the so called open picture refers to investment activities in free-world trade. The consequences of free trade, therefore, create more extensive trade area and eliminate barriers hampering the international trade. Shortly, economic globalization means the necessity of eliminating all restrictions and obstacles towards the flow of goods, services and capital.¹ Here, countries around the world become one increasingly integrated market force with unimpeded territorial boundaries.

Further, the development of recent information technology has also changed the culture of the majority of the world community living in both urban and rural areas. Societies throughout the world today have conducted economic transactions and have obtained information swiftly as a result of the advancement of satellite technology and computers. Thus, culture in the era of globalization should not be treated as a whole pattern of behavior, knowledge, and mindset of society as a well-established social

group. Culture is not seen as solely material reality that always remains, but culture in the era of economic globalization has formed a reality that has always produced and reproduced continuously, which eventually gave birth to new identities.

According to Smith, the current social development has been basically transcended beyond modern thought (characterized by the emergence of goods and services industries) towards the idea of postmodernity which tends to be organized by the consumption of culture and mass media.²

Today's economic globalization in the context of Indonesian society has grown in line with the development of cultural consumption. As a result, its growth evidently shaped the transformation of consumer capitalism characterized by the proliferation of shopping centres; such as shopping malls, part-time industries, fashion industries, beauty industries, culinary industries, advice industries, gossip industries, luxurious residence, apartment, luxurious goods advertisement, instant food (fast food), as well as the reproduction and transfer of lifestyles through advertisement and the media.³

The phenomena can be seen on the presence of television broadcasting industries in Indonesia. TV programs have encased

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every citizen from sunrise to sunset. The programs have established the knowledge of a fast reality and at the same time accommodated communication strategy to maintain or change the attitudes or opinions of the target for the benefit of the strategy makers. Thus, it can be said that television is likely to invite its audience to adhere to the party that controls the capital of communication, both in the political and economic context.

Traditional art which long has been the expression of the people to create harmony between man and the environment should compete with the products of other culture openly. Traditional art is considered as a cultural object which is mass produced in order to gain capital benefit. Traditional arts which were initially acknowledged as the subject of knowledge, wisdom, and indigenous culture of the supporting community, then turned into an object that could be bought and sold through a process of cultural production. Thus, commodification of culture is developed in the form of buying and selling of cultural property in the form of traditional art. Through the process of industry demanding financial profits, the existence of traditional art should be repacked into a cultural property following the rules of the market.

At this point, the commodification of traditional art in Indonesia is inevitable. Further, globalization has delivered its direct product, the tourism industry. Tourism industries shape the cultural commodification of traditional arts marked by the demands of tourism and traditional arts that should be traded.⁴ Here, the development of tourism, according to Kayam, has set traditional art to be part of the cultural commercialization.⁵ Globalization in economy demands several supporting activities, for example, tourist attraction.

The objectives of this study are firstly giving new insights on the strategy and development of traditional arts which are in line with the demands of tourism world. Second, finding alternative models to protect traditional arts as a cultural identity of the supporting community which remains in synergy with the demands of economic globalization expressed in the world of tourism. In order to support the objectives of the study, field research is conducted to assess comprehensively about the perceptions and responses of the supporting community towards the presence of traditional arts and the demands of artistic attractions in the world of tourism. The field research also involves finding out models of traditional arts development which are in line with the demands of tourism and the world of tourism without marginalizing the traditional arts of the supporting community.

2. METHOD

The qualitative research approach seeks to understand in depth and holistic towards a number of phenomena being studied and not to examine the proposed hypothesis based on the model statistical formulas. To obtain such data, the steps of the research involve observation, interview, and focus group discussion (FGD). Observation is performed to describe the real picture of the condition of traditional arts and tourism objects. Meanwhile, interviews and focus group discussions are carried out on a number of informants to get a comprehensive picture about the perceptions and responses, perspectives, attitudes and their expectations for the existence of traditional arts and tourism industry. The informants involve practitioners in tourism industry, community leaders, religious leaders and other strategic figures.

The results of the observation, interview and FGD are analyzed into models of category, benchmarking, and contrast which

are then interpreted.⁶ Interpretation of the data is carried out systematically to understand the facts/data by considering other factors related thereto. Yet, to understand the intertwined factors of the acquired data, it is important to develop a framework of the learned society which is not based on the perspectives of the researcher.⁷

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the above description, the existence of traditional arts in the era of the tourism industry faces both opportunities and challenges. The opportunity of traditional art in the era of the tourism industry includes the increasing number of orders to perform on stages in accordance with the demands of the market. Obviously, the increasing number of orders to perform on stages also encourages traditional art performers to constantly develop dynamic and creative works of art. Hence, it is expected to improve the financial condition of the traditional art performers. However, innovation on developing traditional arts such as the mass production of traditional arts in the forms of VCD and DVD, has encountered a dilemma. It may reduce the value and sanctity of the art, yet it may also be an effective opportunity to promote the existence of traditional art to the public at large. It is due to the facts that the weakness of traditional art performances is its form disappears once the show is over. It is in contrast to art craft in which once the creation process is completed people still admire it and even collect it.⁸

Traditional art which has been the expression of public must adapt to current market needs in order to meet the demands of tourism industry.⁹ The rise of tourism industry requires commodities, which are expected to be traded with consequences of the emergence of cultural commodification. Commodity, according to Jary and Jary, refers to the goods of economic value produced, bought, and sold in the market.¹⁰ Meanwhile, commodification is a description of the process in which goods and services are produced quickly to accommodate market needs. The demands of the tourism industry as a logical consequence of the impact of economic globalization have set the existence of traditional art as a commodity which must then be commodified.

The tourism industry, particularly along the coastal areas of Central Java, is expected to not undermine the existence of the traditional arts. Despite the needs of recomposition, reconstruction, recoreography, and revitalization in accordance with the standards demanded by the tourism industry, the development strategy is expected to continue protecting the essence of traditional arts as cultural identity and indigenous culture of the supporting community. Such a development strategy commonly referred to as pseudo traditional art, a concept in the development of traditional arts by creating the derivative of the original form.¹¹

The strategy is also developed in Bali since tourism industry in Bali is a prominent activity in the dynamics of the local community. Tourists coming to Bali can witness an imitative ritual performance art. The actual objective of the imitative art performance is protecting the authenticity of traditional art. In Bali, there are three classifications of arts performance, the *wali*, *bebali* and *balih-balihan*. The arts performance of *wali* is designated to the guardian deities and the ancestors, *bebali* is an art performance for humans, and *balih-balihan* is an art performance for public entertainment.¹² The demands of the tourism industry in Bali have eventually developed the concept of pseudo-traditional

repackaged in the form of *balih-balihan*. This type of art performance still retain the original form, but the values of sanctity have been removed, the duration of the show is shorter and the price of the ticket is cheaper.

With the concept of pseudo-traditional art, a strategy to synergize the demands of economic globalization—particularly in tourism industry—with the development of traditional art can be applied. In addition, the concept of pseudo-traditional art can protect the existence of traditional arts as a cultural identity of the supporting community. On the other hand, this type of art is also able to accommodate the demands of economic globalization as entertainment in the form of tourist attraction. The concept can work well if it is supported by organizing traditional arts festival. Traditional arts festival will be a concrete step to accommodate the demands of tourism industry for the existence of traditional arts.⁹

4. CONCLUSION

The commodification of culture is one of the contemporary issues that developed along with the idea of globalization in the post-modern era. Commodification is a description of the production process of goods and services as a commodity to comply market needs. In this global economy era, all cultural elements can be used as a commodity which eventually leads to a specific term of cultural commodification. In other words, cultural commodification is the production process of cultural property as a

commodity to be traded through cultural industries by following the rules of the market.

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