

Merchandise and Memorabilia: Between Art Products, Self-Image, and Musicians Existence

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Abstract. This study aims to examine three merchandise of Semarang bands/musicians, namely Soegi Bornean, Pyong-pyong, and Vice Versa. The method used is a Sociology of Art approach with a focus on the production and distribution of works of art. The data of this research is the result of observations on the unique side of the merchandise production of Soegi Bornean, Pyong-pyong, and Vice Versa. The data collection method used is in-depth observation. The observation method is used to cover data related to the production and distribution of merchandise. The analytical method used in this study is to examine the extent to which merchandise has an effect on the musicians, both artistically and in terms of market advantages. The results of this study indicate that the unique merchandise of musicians has a great influence from the artistic side, sales profits, self-image, and the existence of the musician.

1 Introduction

Art and culture and technology are two human creations that need each other. A work of art is made using various technologies, ranging from art tools and equipment, stage technology, printing machines, computers, to technology that supports recording media art. Even in literary works, a narrative style appears in the form of science fiction (sci-fi) or science fiction, in which there is an exploration of the imaginative world associated with technological sophistication.

Technology as a tool for everyday human life has succeeded in changing the face of works of art. With the existence of computer technology, information technology, internet, and social media, the face of art and works of art is also very different when compared to before the existence of these various technologies. This difference even starts when an artwork is produced, distributed and consumed by viewers, readers, listeners, and art connoisseurs.

Changes in production, distribution, and consumption patterns are part of technological disruption. This pattern became more massive when internet penetration began to strengthen towards the end of the twentieth century and strengthened at the beginning of the XXI century. The advent of the internet forced the social, political, and cultural world. The Internet is reconfiguring communication patterns that previously ran analogously to become digital. This includes the world of journalism and the arts [1].

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The world of Indonesian music has also been affected by this technological disruption. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, in 2021 around 97% of music sales will be distributed via music streaming services or digital music platforms. Physical albums such as LPs, CDs, and cassettes only account for about 3% of sales. Physical albums which in analog times became the spearhead of music sales have now turned into mere merchandise and memorabilia. Popular music and mainstream Indonesia as part of the cultural industry cannot be separated from this technological disruption. The pattern of production, distribution, and consumption in the analog era changed drastically when information technology and the internet became epidemic. The old order of the pattern has been successfully tampered with through technological disruption.

In addition, musicians also take advantage of alternatives outside of their music products to generate income. One such alternative is to sell merchandise or memorabilia. This merchandising phenomenon is not "new stuff". Musicians have always produced band t-shirts, whether with album covers, touring or concert editions, or special designs for a specific purpose. The more unique and rare a music merchandise is, the more expensive it is and the greater the income for musicians.

This research will discuss about three unique editions of musicians merchandise from Semarang. It is even more interesting because the merchandise was issued during the Covid-19 pandemic, where income from concerts was minimal so that income from merchandise was very reliable. The three musicians are Soegi Bornean, Pyong-pyong, and Vice Versa.

2 Literature Review

This research is part of art research and its relation to technology, especially related to technology disruption. Indonesian popular and mainstream music as part of the cultural industry cannot be separated from technological disruption. The pattern of production, distribution, and consumption in the analog era changed drastically when information technology and the internet became epidemic. The old order of the pattern has been successfully tampered with through technological disruption.

Disruption itself occurs in all walks of life. Starting from business, education, journalism, transportation, and art and culture is no exception. Disruption itself comes from the root word "disrupt" which means "not organized", "disturbing", "turning back", "separating", "causing to split". With the basic word being viewed as negative, it is not surprising that people who are not prepared at this time perceive disruption as a negative situation. Situations that are seen as negative, for example the loss of employment due to technological advances [2].

Gerry Wahyu Dewatara and Sari Monik Agustin conducted a research related to technological disruption in the art of music with the title "Digitalization of the Music Industry in Industry 4.0 in Indonesia". This study focuses on the extent to which music digitization has an effect on music marketing. The context of digitizing music here is focused on digital platforms and streaming [3].

Riomanadona M Putra and Irwansyah conducted a different research point of view regarding the penetration of technological disruption in music, where they highlighted the steps and music marketing strategies of independent musicians, some of whom still maintain physical releases in the digital era [4].

3 Research Method

The basis of this research is sociological which moves according to qualitative research. The approach used is the Sociology of Art, especially discussing or studying people with specific involvement in artistic activities, and other communities outside of art activities in cultural

phenomena that then affect art activities. The main study is about society as connoisseurs, observers, reviewers, researchers, educators (consumers), and art managers which are the components of the art creation process [5][6][7].

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method. The research data was obtained by studying literature and documents. The literature study was conducted by searching for library sources that were relevant to the object of technological disruption in art and music merchandise. The documents that we examine are various forms of merchandise releases issued by Soegi Bornean, Pyong-pyong, and Vice Versa. The analytical method used in this study is to examine the extent to which the uniqueness of the merchandise in the era of technological disruption is based on Media Archeology theory [8] [9] [10].

4 Merchandise and Memorabilia

4.1 Soegi Bornean Wooden Watch

Soegi Bornean released watch merchandise in February 2022. They announced it through their special Instagram account for merchandise, namely @buahtresnasoege. Previously in January 2022 they created promotional content for their fans, namely fans were invited to create Instagram Reels content using the audio song "Samsara" and the hashtag #sudahisamsara. From the content, 3 winners were selected who were entitled to get the watch.

Creating an Instagram Reels competition using their own song is a great marketing trick. With more and more fans using their songs, of course, Soegi Bornean's engagement on social media, especially Instagram, will increase.

Soegi Bornean's decision to take advantage of fan involvement in the distribution of this merchandise was a smart decision. From the hashtag #sudahisamsara there are approximately 18 Instagram Reels posts. The reels with the most impressions were the @berlianoise account with 3132 impressions. The reel with the least number of views is @haluanlensa with 271 views. Total impressions from Reels with the hashtag #sudahisamsara was 27,157 impressions as of July 10, 2022.

The combination of using song promotions and merchandise by involving fans makes Soegi Bornean as a musician seem close to fans. Here the image of Soegi Bornean as a musician who shows a positive aura has been successfully addressed to their fans and music market.

4.2 Pyong-pyong-style Tamiya Custom Car

In September 2021, Pyong-pyong, a punk rock band from Semarang, released a unique merchandise, namely a limited edition customized Tamiya toy car. Fans who want to get it will have to buy the Pyong-pyong and Horny Cupcakes collaboration merchandise. For every purchase of 1 merchandise, you will get 1 coupon which will be drawn to get Tamiya from Pyong-pyong. Tamiya toys are also produced in very limited quantities, which are 8 pieces, each with a serial number.

Pyong-pyong's merchandising tricks take advantage of nostalgia and memorabilia. What is being sold is the uniqueness, rarity, and childhood memory of each fan. As a band that was founded in 2002, Pyong-pyong has a fan base with a different age demographic than Soegi Bornean. Pyong-pyong fans are generally in their 20s to 40s. By making limited edition Tamiya cars, all age ranges of their fans are expected to be accommodated.

Pyong-pyong and Horny Cupcakes' practice is not the first time. The practice of collaboration between musicians and fashion companies has often been done, especially by

rap musicians. Fashion companies take advantage of the fame of rap musicians as a boost to their product sales. Rap merchandise reached its peak in 2016, when rap musicians also produced their own fashion lines independently [11].

4.3 Vice Versa Pillowcase

“A bundle of beautiful scene left behind”. The sentence was printed on a pillowcase as a merchandise from the band Vice Versa. This pillowcase is unique as a merchandise band. In addition to the pillowcases, there are t-shirts, cassettes, and shirt buttons.

The uniqueness of a merchandise becomes an added value. Fans can not only collect “normal” merchandise such as vinyl, cassettes, CDs, or t-shirts. By having a unique merchandise, fans feel special and different from fans who don't have the unique merchandise [12].

This is the fan niche that Vice Versa is targeting. The concept is uniqueness to be a commodity. Commodities that musicians hope to buy massively by their fans. For fans, unique merchandise becomes an important memorabilia. Sometimes it has no functional value, even though the merchandise is a product that can be used by ordinary people. But for fans, unique merchandise is sometimes just stored or displayed and has no use at all.

5 Conclusion

Unique merchandise from musicians has a great influence in terms of artistic, sales profits, self-image, and the existence of the musician. Uniqueness requires artistic exploration. The musicians and their collaborators are required to create an out of the box merchandise product. Uniqueness also stimulates increased sales figures. Although we did not get a definite value commercially, the attention to unique merchandise at least helped increase the quality of merchandise and musician promotions. From there, the image of musicians also increased. Musicians who issue unique merchandise are considered musicians who have a different persona. Everything finally culminates in the existence of musicians who are constantly awake or rising. As an art commodity, musicians and all their stakeholders are required to be creative and continue to produce products. Even if the product has nothing to do with music.

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