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Batik and Marketing Aspects of Traditional Commodities

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Abstract: In today's age of information and communication technology, *batik* production and distribution have changed accordingly. From artisanal products to home industry, *batik* is now manufactured and distributed in boutiques, show rooms, groceries, and online. The findings of this study are derived from two months' of ethnographic observation in Trusmi, Cirebon, West Java, which revealed that the nature of *batik* production and distribution has significantly changed in comparison to previous researches. As a center of traditional handmade *batik*, Trusmi is famous for its local motifs and patterns composed by local *batik* artisans. However, when the observation took place in 2016, we found that manufactured *batik* has become the main commodity in dozens of *batik* boutiques and showrooms, with *batik* being sold as shirts, dresses, and other ready-to-wear apparels. *Batik* in the form of textiles and fabrics is only found in limited amounts. Using 'Batik Trusmi' Wholesale as a case study, the ways in which a cultural commodity such as *batik* is marketed in the modern and globalized world is described and analyzed in this research. In particular, the role of cultural expressions, and the use of local sentiments regarding *batik* and other aspects of rural and traditional life by the shop owner to increase sales, is emphasized.

Keywords: *Batik*, Trusmi, Indonesia, cultural commodity, marketing, retail stores

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper discusses recent strategy for marketing *batik* in Indonesia in terms of capital investment and cultural commodification. Many people recognize *batik* as part of the artistic produce of Indonesia, as well as being familiar with the traditional motifs of *batik* clothes (Sekimoto 2003; Kerlogue & Fulvio 2004). As well as being an aspect of cultural identity and expression, *batik* has become part of the economy of local communities (Steelyana, 2012) and of national income. Its role in propping up the Indonesian industry has been recognized since the colonial period (Van der Eng, 2007). *Batik* became the main commodity for capitalist investment during the colonial period of the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. People of

Chinese and Arab descent in Indonesia, formerly known as Netherlands India, were pioneers of the business. The trend continued until the country's independence in 1945 and on into the early 1970s. However, the introduction of modern manufactured textiles during modernization in the seventies led to a decline in the *batik* industry. The rise and fall of the *batik* industry is therefore strongly related to technology and trends in the market, as well as to state policy (Gatut & Aryanto, 2012).

As a commodity with a very strong cultural basis, discussion about *batik* is not just related to business issues. Sekimoto (2003) identifies *batik* as a cultural object that is very much attached to communities. In the same way, *batik* can also be connected with other local issues, such as craftsmen as *batik* producers, laborers who work in the *batik* industry, knowledge about *batik* motifs, and the meaning of *batik* for communities, some of which still regard it as having sacred value. On the other hand, there are often other general aspects that must be put forward when discussing the *batik* business.

Selecting a *batik* showroom in Trusmi, West Java, as a case study, this study will describe how changes have taken place in marketing *batik* as a distinctive cultural commodity of Trusmi. Further analysis is carried out of a wholesaler in Trusmi which actively uses cultural strategies and utilizes local sentiments regarding *batik* and other aspects of rural and traditional life to increase sales.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A review by Sharma (2016) of merchandize display shows that prospective buyers' views on products are determined by a store's atmosphere. The author states that atmosphere is influenced by four things: store location and customer services, store ambience and design, product quality and features, and in-store customer convenience. Buyers will visit locations they can easily reach, characterized by high accessibility and ease of use. When all these necessary conditions are met, a shop owner may expect buyers to return and store loyalty will be achieved. In this case, interrelationships between store attributes – shopping enjoyment, place attachment, and store loyalty to a product – become important (Johnson *et al.*, 2014). In short, Johnson *et al.* (2014) put forward the view that the significant store attributes that make visitors comfortable are atmosphere, price, leisure, design, and service.

There are several ways to create an ambience that positively attracts consumers. Store display is one of them, and researchers have suggested that store display can emotionally affect consumers (Mubaraq *et al.*, 2015). Merchandize should be placed in particular orders and places to draw the attention of potential customers. How merchandize appears in display is important: if it is displayed in a place with proper lighting, for example, it can attract the consumer's eye and encourage them think about owning the item (Sutanto, 2016). In addition to lighting, visualizing of merchandize to create a positive store environment also requires attention to the display itself: layout, coordination, merchandize assortment, and signage (Rahma & Purwanegara, 2013).

Price is always a main consideration for customers. In the fashion business, which has become competitive in recent years, store owners have to carefully examine what constitutes the price they charge. Research on the price of Trusmi *batik* by Borshalina (2015) reveals some of the price considerations of the *batik* seller. Aside from the motifs of the textiles and the way they are produced (whether handmade or machine manufactured) Borshalina explains that the materials used to color *batik* are also important as an aspect of pricing. Being environmentally friendly has apparently become a new sentiment for the consumer buying traditional textiles.

Local consumers in Indonesia are extremely sensitive to price (Kurabayashi *et al.*, 2013). This means that store owners have to think carefully about their determination of price, as even loyal customers sometimes change their choices to find a more reasonable price. A common way of pricing is by setting an odd number for the price. Additionally, providing product information on a sign but without price elicited a higher likelihood of purchase than providing a sign with a price. Some experts 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 (Huddleston, 2015).

3. METHODOLOGY

Although this study is not intended as ethnographic marketing research, the approach taken is very much influenced by marketing research (Cayla & Arnould, 2013; Goffin *et al.*, 2012) and business anthropology (Tian, 2010; Jordan, 2010, 2012). The methods used to collect and analyze data are therefore qualitative, as suggested by Tian (2010), using participant observation, interviews, and network analysis, as these are of appropriate to business and management studies. Such an approach can be used “to improve performance from product design to marketing strategies, from organizational change to consumer behavior studies, from domestic to international business development” (Tian, 2010: p. 72). For the analysis the categorizations and classifications used by ethnographers to develop themes and inferences (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) are followed.

Data was gathered during a two-month field research trip which took place in 2016, in which owners and showroom management, shopkeepers, *batik* craftsmen, and senior *batik* artists in Trusmi village were interviewed. In addition to focusing on aspects of the marketing of *batik* in a showroom, the process of production and marketing of *batik* in the village was also explored. In-depth interviews were conducted with three store owners who had a great deal of knowledge of the development of *batik* marketing in the village. In addition, dozens of crafters and shopkeepers were also interviewed. Observation of the arrangement of merchandize in the showroom was also a priority, followed by a series of interviews to explore the marketing strategies of the shop owners.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. The village of Trusmi

Trusmi is the center of the *batik* industry, located in Plered, Cirebon, about four kilometers west of the city of Cirebon in West Java province. It consists of two different villages, namely Trusmi Wetan and Trusmi Kulon, however non-local *batik* buyers are not generally aware of this administrative division. *Batik* craftsmen in Trusmi and its surroundings in the sub districts of Plered and Kedawung numbered 4,462 workers in 2016. In Cirebon regency there were 521 workshop units registered to produce *batik*, with total production of more than 460,000 items each year. Table 1 presents data relating to *batik* production in Cirebon regency.

The 2016 production value of *batik* in Cirebon reached IDR 65,560,443,000, equal to \$5,043,111 at a currency rate of IDR 13,000 to \$1. This represents an average production value for each workshop of \$9,680 for the year, an amount not considered sufficient by the owners. In other words, the competition for selling in the local market is very high. In Trusmi, and especially in Trusmi Kulon where the observation for this study took place, the competitiveness of the *batik* market was not represented by the number of

Table 1
Facts relating to the *batik* business in Cirebon

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

Source: Disperindag Cirebon 2017

artisans and their labor, but by the number of showrooms. Table 2 indicates the number of showrooms in Trusmi and its surroundings.

Table 2
Number of showrooms in and around Trusmi

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

Source: Modified from Disperindag Cirebon 2017

Table 2 shows that Trusmi Kulon has become the center of the *batik* business, in that there are 45 showrooms operating there compared with the other villages which in total comprise less than half of the total number of showrooms in Trusmi area.

Cirebon *batik* handicraft is connected with the name of Ki Buyut Trusmi, a figure from the era of the kingdom of Cirebon in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries whose name became the name of his place of residence. The success of Trusmi as the center of the *batik* industry occurred in the 1930s, marked by the emergence of a group of Chinese businessmen. At the time of the independence revolution workers took the *batik* industry from the hands of these businessmen.

Initially *batik* was produced by a writing technique, then developing into stamp technology in the 1850s. For a hundred years, this stamp technology allowed *batik* to grow into a large industry. The golden age of *batik* handicrafts in this area occurred during the period 1950–1968. A cooperative at the local level, the *Batik Cooperative Budi Tresna* of shade *batik* crafters, was successful and enabled the construction of a grand building in the early 1950s. In 1968, the first *batik* showroom was opened by a senior *batik* crafter. Slowly *batik* showrooms became the main stores selling *batik* in Trusmi, replacing the *batik* cooperative.

4.2. Batik Wholesale Center BT

The owner of this showroom, Ibnu Riyanto, is the son of a well-known *batik* entrepreneur in Trusmi village named Rusima. Ibnu Riyanto, born in 1988, previously owned the first *batik* showroom with the name of IBR, standing for both *Ibnu Bersama Istri* (Ibnu and wife) and *Ibnu Bin Rusima*. Along with his wife, Sally Giovani, who also has excellent business sense, Riyanto started his business after graduating high school in 2006. The business's second and third showrooms were opened in Trusmi in 2007 and 2008. In 2011, the owners built their *batik* showroom department store, by renting a former rattan mill with an area of 1.5 hectares. The showroom is named after the *Batik* Wholesale Center '*Batik* Trusmi'. The building is one of the largest and most magnificent among all of the *batik* showrooms located in Trusmi. Inaugurated in conjunction with the claim of *batik* as a Malaysian cultural heritage against which many Indonesians protested, *Batik* Wholesale Center '*Batik* Trusmi' acquired momentum, and the shop has been busy since the first day it opened.

During the first year, Riyanto only sold shirts and *batik* cloth. However, in the following year, market demand was changing and consumers were also looking for typical Cirebon foods and beverages to buy as souvenirs. Riyanto's showroom merchandize has since become more varied, not only selling *batik* in the form of cloth and shirts, but also as women's dresses and *gamis* (long Muslim garments for men), and souvenirs typical of Cirebon, such as crackers, fish, *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 such as Yogyakarta, Bandung, Indramayu, Kuningan, and Madiun. In 2015, Riyanto accepted offers of collaboration with e-commerce outlets such as Blibli.com and Zamora.

This impressive growth has had other consequences. The use of the name of Wholesale *Batik* '*Batik* Trusmi' showroom was contested by other Trusmi *batik* traders. They considered that Trusmi *batik* is a generic name that should not be trademarked. Through a long discussion with other crafters, traders, and shop owners, Riyanto changed the name of the showroom to *Batik* Wholesale Center BT, and it will shortly be shortened to BT.

4.3. Location and room division of BT

In terms of merchandizing in BT, models combining physical and emotional elements, and tangible and intangible attributes from the store's atmosphere, have been adapted from retail management experts McGoldrick (2004) and Varley & Raffiw (2004).

BT is located in the main street into Trusmi, namely Jalan Raya Trusmi Kulon, Cirebon. The building is located at a crossroads between the market of Kalalaran and Sheikh Datul Kahfi Street, and has a large yard for the parking of four-wheeled vehicles. The location of BT is strategic because it is only 100 meters from the gate to dozens of other showrooms along the Trusmi village road.

Visitors enter into the main building of the Grand Store which displays the main merchandize, comprising a collection of *batik* products and typical souvenirs from Cirebon and other areas. On the right there is an information center and a left-luggage area. A sales promotion person and security guards will greet visitors by offering assistance and repeatedly saying, "Excuse me, good morning. How can I help you?" to those who enter.

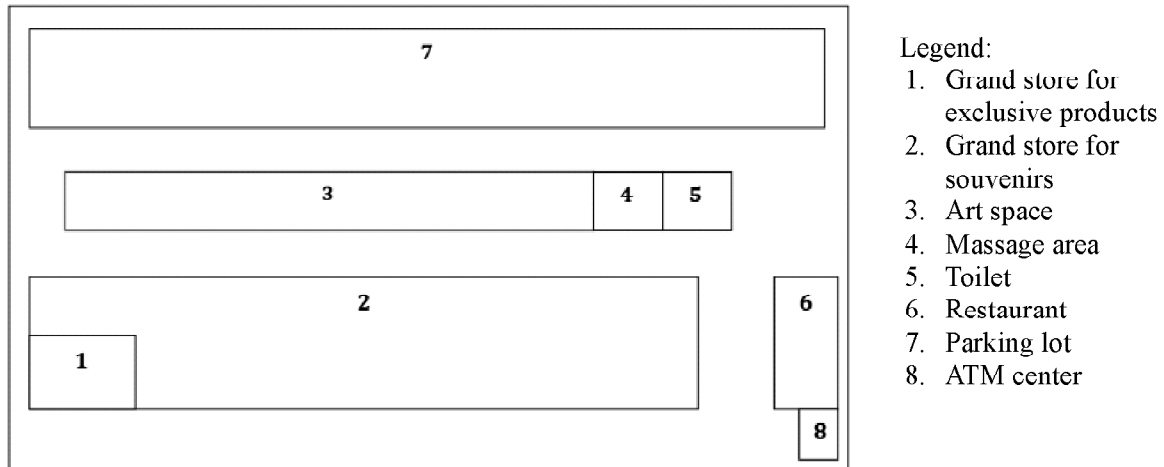


Figure 1: The store landscape of BT

Toilets and cashiers are available at the very back of the store, and the exit door is close to the toilets. Above the exit gate, there are travel stories and photos of Ibnu Riyanto, some awards, and framed news coverage from the print media. Leaving areas 1 and 2, visitors can enter the *Batik* Kitchen restaurant that provides a traditional food and beverage menu. In addition to the restaurant, this area provides meeting rooms for rent. Near the restaurant is a reflexology room provided for visitors to enjoy after the exhaustion of walking around the showroom. From the restaurant, visitors can walk back towards the *Pelataran Seni* (Art Courtyard), an area that is also the most visited by visitors and is usually the last area passed through.

When starting his business, Riyanto only sold *batik* in the form of clothes and shirts. In the following year, his business progressed relatively rapidly, and he now provides a variety of fashion goods from shoes, shawls, *batik* mats, blouses, and blazers, to pillowcases, bed sheets and bags. The mannequins at the front of the store are one of the consumers' centers of attention. This area is important in attracting the attention of consumers, visitors and tourists and encouraging them to enter the store. The storefront displays 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, and New Year's Eve. Decoration is created by arranging clothes that are on promotion at the front, near the visitors' entrance. In addition, the decoration of the store is dominated by colors such as red and green, to attract attention.

4.4. Ambience and positioning

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

The art courtyard hosts various activities. While the wholesale store is open from 08:00 to 20:00 at weekdays and an extra hour on weekends, the '*batik* corner' is open from 09:00 to 17:00 daily. A female employee is appointed as coordinator for that corner to organize *batik*-making demonstrations and to

provide short training sessions for visitors to learn how to make *batik*. On the art stage in the afternoons, visitors are entertained by traditional Cirebon dances, such as *bugis ronggeng* and mask dancing, performed by local high school students. Visitors can see the art performances without having to pay for tickets, but they put donations in a box in front of the stage.

In addition to featuring performance art, Riyanto also provides a corner in which visitors can learn to create traditional arts. They can learn glass painting, t-shirt painting, and mask coloring by paying IDR 20,000–35,000 (equal to \$2–3). They can also learn to make *batik*, and the art courtyard has 20 *batik*-making units which can be used by up to five people. Visitors are taught by craftsmen and can produce *batik* clothes which they can take home.

During holidays, visitors to BT are mainly tourists from outside Cirebon. A set of traditional West Javan musical instruments known as *angklung* are displayed in the store to impress visitors with its local identity. The sound of *angklung* is played softly from speakers throughout the day. Inside the store, consumers are given complementary *wedang jabe* (hot ginger tea) and *krupuk mlarat* (typical Cirebon crackers).

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Having described the history, merchandize settings, and BT store atmosphere, the marketing aspects of *batik* in BT are now analyzed, by referring to some of the aspects that affect store atmosphere in shopping. These are specified by Sharma and Sharma (2016) as in-store location, store ambience, product quality, and consumer convenience. Such aspects are linked to the development of store loyalty which, according to Johnson *et al.* (2014), is influenced by interrelationships between store attributes, shopping enjoyment, store loyalty to a product, and place attachments. The notion of location appears in slightly different forms in the analysis of both the above studies, and so in this study these will be jointly classified as ‘store location’. In particular, BT’s strategy to attract consumers will be analyzed, by reference to studies by Mubaraq *et al.* (2015), Sutanto (2016), Rahma and Purwanegara (2013), Borshalina (2015), Kurabayashi *et al.* (2013), and Huddleston (2015). These authors discuss the importance of aspects such as store display, proper lighting, coordination, merchandize assortment, signage, store display layout, and price. As qualitative research, retail components were identified according to suggestions drawn from the literature, and BT’s performance was considered in relation to them (Table 3).

Table 3
Results of observations of BT’s performance

<i>Retail components observed</i>	<i>Suggestions from the literature</i>	<i>BT performance</i>
Store atmosphere and store loyalty (Sharma and Sharma, 2016; Johnson <i>et al.</i> , 2014)	Store location	BT has a perfect strategic location at the heart of the traditional <i>batik</i> center of Trusmi, close to the main road, and with public transportation nearby.
	Store ambience and design	BT is designed by considering flow of consumers through the store. The rooms inside are wide enough to be visited by hundreds of people at the same time. Ethnic accessories are installed on the walls of the shop and traditional music is played.

contd. table 3

<i>Retail components observed</i>	<i>Suggestions from the literature</i>	<i>BT performance</i>
	Product quality and features	BT ensures the quality of their products by purchasing only from manufacturers and crafters already known. <i>Batik</i> models and patterns follow trends and market demands.
	In-store customer convenience	Inside the store, the atmosphere is comfortable because the rooms are large enough to allow air to flow freely. Some rooms are equipped with air conditioning. Benches are available to enable visitors to take a break during their visit. The decorations, colors used to paint the walls, and music played inside the store are selected to represent a rural environment.
	Interrelationships between store attributes	Customers can easily check the products they want because they can take them directly and check and compare them with similar products within the store.
	Shopping enjoyment	A one-stop-shopping concept is used to allow consumers to shop for <i>batik</i> easily. There is also a place to eat and drink, benches for rest, a prayer room, a massage area, and entertainment. The store is also equipped with air conditioned rooms and traditional music.
	Store loyalty to a product	BT only sells <i>batik</i> of the best quality from craftsmen in Cirebon and Pekalongan. While providing many products, <i>batik</i> remains the main commodity and is the core business of the store.
Strategy to attract consumers (Mubaraq <i>et al.</i> , 2015, Sutanto 2016; Rahma & Purwanegara, 2013; Borshalina, 2015; Kurabayashi <i>et al.</i> , 2013; Huddleston, 2015)	Store display	Visualizing of merchandize is carried out with regard to product categorization. Various <i>batik</i> items are classified by whether they are factory products or come from traditional workshops, whether they are made by printing, stamping, or handmade techniques. Ready-to-wear products are set out according to gender, age, and purpose.
	Proper lighting	Lighting is used to give emphasize to <i>batik</i> motifs. BT does not use many spotlights because the ceiling is high, the room is spacious, and the natural lighting is quite good.
	Coordination	Merchandize is placed in a specific order so consumers can choose the products they want with ease. There is a member of staff in charge of categorizing products and arranging displays.
	Merchandize assortment	The main way the attention of consumers is attracted is through the provision of a large selection of <i>batik</i>

contd. table 3

<i>Retail components observed</i>	<i>Suggestions from the literature</i>	<i>BT performance</i>
		products, both manufactured and handcrafted, with varieties of motifs, models, and colors. In addition, BT sells various complementary products such as food and beverages, as well as local products from Cirebon and West Java as souvenirs.
	Signage	Although the rooms in BT are very spacious and are divided into several special rooms, visitors can easily find the location they want as directions are clearly displayed.
	Store display layout	The in-store rooms are well designed for smooth flow of visitors. Visitors can go directly to the store sections they want, or walk around the store to see all the collections. Visitors who have set needs can go directly to a specific section, to make shopping more efficient.
	Price	The price of products sold in BT is not always cheap. The store owner prefers consumers to complain about price rather than product quality. But at any time there are special discounts, such as during holidays and certain anniversary events. In addition there is almost always a discount for buyers who purchase in large quantities.

Table 3 illustrates the ways in which BT's management uses strategies to attract consumers to visit the store and purchase products. Firstly, BT benefits from its location, which is right in the gateway to Trusmi village, a landmark for Cirebon's style of *batik*. BT can be easily reached by both private and public transportation. If customers take public transport they will alight near BT before they explore the village by tricycle. As the store is built over a wide area, the store buildings can be arranged to provide supporting facilities such as parking, a prayer room, toilets, restaurants, and an art courtyard. Visitors can explore the store in comfort compared to other stores which, since they are much smaller, are often quite crowded.

The various merchandize lines sold in BT provide another way to please customers. It is primarily a large *batik* boutique, but other things related to customers' need are also available. Some fashion-related goods are sold, foods and beverages are available, and a lot of souvenirs are also sold in the store. These diverse products have made BT not only a *batik* showroom, but also a kind of department store where customers may get almost anything they need. In order to facilitate customers to find the products they want to buy, the store is divided into specific sections. According to this study's respondents, these arrangements enable them to effectively use their time and to find the items they are looking for.

While price is an incentive for customers to buy, BT's owners stated that they did not actually sell 'cheaper *batik*' but rather 'better *batik*'. Sally explained that she did not want consumers to feel dissatisfied after buying *batik* by finding that it did not last well. However, BT also uses discount to engage customers. This strategy is believed by the owners to make customers choose BT as their first preference when they are looking for *batik*.

In addition to these strategies, BT's owners also attract customers creatively by playing on their ethnic sentiments. Indonesians have been proud of *Batik* for a long time. Customers not only like *batik* because of its motifs, colors, and designs, but also because it supports a sense of pride in their 'Indonesianness'. Although always associated with Javanese tradition, *batik* can, in fact, be found in many places in Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and almost all the islands throughout Indonesia. While some may see *batik* primarily as part of an ancient Javanese tradition, the nuances it brings are also related to a rural atmosphere. BT's owner maximizes these ethnic and rural sentiments to attract consumers.

This last strategy, which is described by Cayla and Arnould (2008) as a cultural effort to branding needs to be highlighted. These authors argue that "common ways to think and write about brands are intimately tied to what we call the Western 'imaginary' of marketing" (Cayla & Arnould, 2008, p. 87); this study would like to propose that this issue of brand and image is also there in the case of BT. The owners manage the store in a modern and westernized way, but at the same time they intensively use traditional and rural sentiments as a way to impress customers. This suggests a cultural view of the business's success, rather than one built solely on market research and learning (Cayla & Arnould, 2013, p. 2). This research should be seen as being focused on what van Rijn (1996, p. 21) characterizes as hidden depth of local culture. In the case of selling *batik*, the ways in which BT's owners have come to the knowledge of what that hidden depth is for local *batik* consumers has been described. It is based in tradition, nation pride, and nostalgia for rural life as presented to consumers by *batik*. Therefore to market *batik* more effectively the owners provide room for consumers to enjoy cultural entertainment along with their shopping experience.

6. CONCLUSION

The marketing of *batik* as a traditional Indonesian textile has been very dynamic in recent years. Moving from subsistence production of the textile for personal use to home industry, *batik* is nowadays sold in modern stores, groceries and wholesales. The case studied in Trusmi reveals three interesting findings. First, the *batik* craftsmen in Trusmi, as the center of traditional *batik* in Cirebon, West Java, have begun to realize the importance of suitable marketing strategies. Second, the marketing of *batik* in Trusmi has developed over time, from local retailers in the village to collection and distribution through cooperatives, to the opening of individual stores or showrooms and wholesalers. Third, the marketing strategy in stores or wholesale outlets is not limited to providing merchandize. The case of BT shows how cultural expressions in the forms of showcasing the making of various handicrafts, arts performances, and the provision of typical food and drink can be used as a cultural approach to attract consumers. In addition, the creation of a traditional and rural atmosphere is also a powerful marketing tool for retailers to use to increase sales.

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