

The Rise of Sole-Proprietor Makers in Indonesia Urban Cities

Aulia Ardista Wiradarmo*
Bandung Institute of Technology

Abstract: The notion of Do-It-Yourself (DIY) in modern culture is not just about hobby and leisure time anymore. For the past few years it has shifted into a profitable microbusiness with the sole-proprietor maker as the main initiator. Therefore contemporary craft or craft-design started emerging in Indonesia. This essay is based on the writer's personal experience as a maker and entrepreneur. The writer also observed other makers in order to explore about what distinguish them from traditional craft or design alongside with other supporting elements such as business model and consumer type. Combined with desk research from literature reviews, this paper explains about the growth potential of contemporary craft and gives recommendations so that sole-proprietor makers in Indonesia could thrive.

Keywords: *Contemporary Craft, Craft-design, Creative Economy, Entrepreneur, Handmade, Maker*

*auliaardista@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Indonesia is prominent for its traditional craft, especially batik. Most of these crafts were made by rural people with ancient traditional techniques and cultures passed down from their ancestors. On the other hand, in response to consumerism and mass-produced goods, the Do-It-Yourself movement started to surge. Urban people began creating things themselves. It is not influenced by cultural tradition but is more about self-expression and as a leisure activity. There is also an ideology to create rather than to buy. However, within the years some makers decided to take their hobby more seriously and established contemporary craft microbusiness which is known as soleproprietor makers.

This paper observes 12 sole-proprietor makers, their characteristics, business model, and their relation to consumer alongside with literature review about contemporary craft or craft-design. The purpose is to raise awareness about growth potential of contemporary craft makers and provide recommendations for makers and stakeholders in order to make this burgeoning sector thrive.

Craft-Design

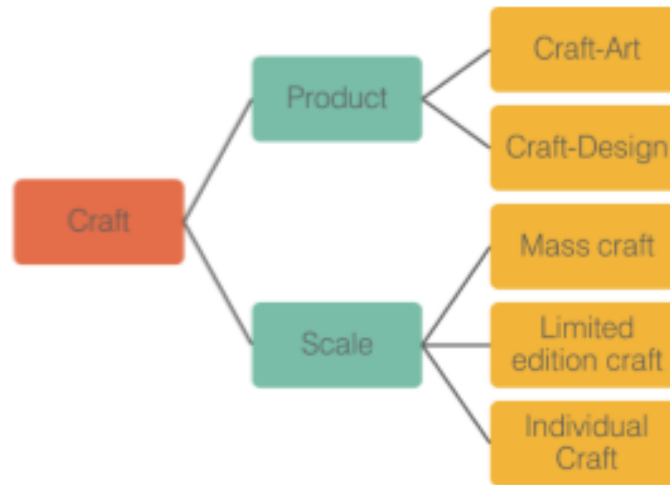


Figure 1. Scope of Indonesian craft

Indonesia divides creative economy into 18 sub-sectors and one of them is craft. Craft is defined as an artefact that is made by hand. The scope of craft can be classified by its final product and production scale as above. Craft-design perfectly describes the circumstances of contemporary craft makers in Indonesia.

Craft-design combines characteristics of both craft and design in a single product. For example a craft-design product may be produced by hand in limited edition (craft characteristics) but use composite material and functional (design characteristics). To some extent the highest distinction is that craft or craft-art represents hereditary cultural tradition while craft-design adapts the newest trend.



Figure 2. Characteristics of Craft and Design

Cokorda Istri Dewi (2014) from Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy stated that the main problem of Indonesia’s craft industry is the lack of creative resources (creative people involved in this industry). It has the smallest figure (scale 1 to 10) among other seven indicators. Empowering craft-design makers is one way to reinforce this indicator.



Figure 3. Mapping of competitiveness for Indonesian craft

Maker Characteristics

Research by Meg Mateo Ijasco (2011) proved that self-employed makers tend to be happier and more satisfied with their jobs. The income might not be munificent, but they can actualize their self. This self-fulfillment makes some of the makers decide not to be a part time crafter anymore and be a full time crafter, like what Dewi Kucu from Cutteristic did. She left her job as an interior designer an owner and crafter of Ideku Handmade not only posts photos related to products to her Instagram, but also posts about her daily life. She has #puwisweekendstories or #becausepuwilovesmural hashtags in order to engage with her followers. d prioritized Cutteristic.

Most of them work at a studio, whether it is home-based or a separate office location. As sole-proprietor makers, there is no boundary between the business and the owner. It can be seen from their social media branding which often use soft-selling method. Martha Puri Natasande, the owner and crafter of Ideku Handmade not only posts photos related to products to her Instagram, but also posts about her daily life. She has #puwisweekendstories or #becausepuwilovesmural hashtags in order to engage with her followers.

Table 1. List of brands by makers, cities, products, and materials or techniques

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---|----|--------------------------|---|
| 1 | ARKANA |  | 7 | Crochet in Pot |  |
| | Bandung | | | Jakarta | |
| | Notebook / journal | | | Home decor | |
| | Book binding | | | Crocheting | |
| 2 | Ayu Larasati |  | 8 | Cutteristic |  |
| | Jakarta | | | Jakarta | |
| | Tableware | | | Wall decor, gift | |
| | Ceramic throwing, glazing | | | Paper cutting | |
| 3 | Born Goods |  | 9 | Ideku Handmade |  |
| | Jakarta | | | Jakarta | |
| | Bag, wallet, strap | | | Bag, pouch, cushion | |
| | Leather sewing, stamping | | | Drawing, sewing | |
| 4 | Cemprut |  | 10 | Kelly's |  |
| | Tangerang | | | Jakarta | |
| | Doll | | | Card, calendar, wrapping | |
| | Sewing | | | Drawing, printing | |
| 5 | Conture |  | 11 | Lima Watch |  |
| | Bandung | | | Jakarta | |
| | Houseware, furniture | | | Watch, table clock | |
| | Concrete modelling | | | Wood carpenting | |
| 6 | Crayon's Craft & Co |  | 12 | Omoi |  |
| | Bandung | | | Bandung | |
| | Food miniature | | | Scrapbook in jar & box | |
| | Clay modelling | | | Drawing, scrapbooking | |

Because of its authenticity, craft-design products are easy to differentiate from mass-produced products. They are produced in small-batches or limited editions, which enhance exclusivity. Most of the makers uses pre order or made by order system. It is also advantageous to the customer because they can order custom made products based on their taste and need. As an example, if you want to order a memory jar at Omoi as a gift, Andintya Anissa, the owner of Omoi, will request photos and details such as your beloved ones favourites and profile to create a personalized memory jar. Indeed the result is a very personal present.



Figure 4. Hand building pottery workshop by Ayu Larasati at Indoestri Makerspace

Skill-sharing is another engagement for the Makers' brands. Some makers obtain additional income from workshop teaching or open studio. The cost may vary and depends on the organizer, some may be free, but it is mostly a simple, event-based, or a lecture only (without practice) workshop. To illustrate Ayu Larasati hosts a hand building pottery workshop which costs Rp. 1 million at Indoestri Makerspace but she also has a short lecture class with Lingkar.co which is free. After all it is a way for them to connect with other makers and craft enthusiasts. Other prominent workshop organizers are Living Loving Class, Mau Belajar Apa, and Tobucil.

Craft-design Business

Sole-proprietorship is the simplest business structure for makers. Its definition is that the business and the person starting the business are one entity (Jason Malinak, 2012), thus it starts with selfemployment. It can be solo or with several employees (only a few), but the owner must be in charge with every production process. Usually the employees are trained by the owner in order to learn specific skills or as a specialist in a part of the workflow.

Most of the people prefer industrialised products so craft-design products targets niche market. It does not mean that the market is narrow, only more specific. In fact perfect niche can leads to loyal customer and peer-to-peer endorsement. Business model for niche is often called Longtail. Longtail focuses on large number of products with low volume. In craft-design case it is shown by personalized products or commissioned works.

Craft-design marketplace can be divided into online and offline. Etsy is the biggest online craft marketplace around the world with 36 million active buyers and sellers (Benedict Dellot, 2014). Many of Etsy sellers earn their living cost only by selling in Etsy.



Figure 5. Craftline website

Unfortunately Indonesians are still unfamiliar with this type of platform, judging from the number of Indonesian sellers on Etsy. It is assumed because most Indonesian people do not understand export policies or international payment. That is why local online marketplace such as Craftline and Kreasik exists. However the number of users and sales in these platforms do not develop rapidly. In general, direct business to consumer relationship is still the most profitable in Indonesia’s industry. Most of offline marketplaces for craft-design products are craft fairs such as Inacraft, Pasar Seni ITB, Crafty Days Tobucil, SMART Dia.lo.gue, and Indoestri Day. On the other hand there are only few offline stores that focused on craft-design products.

Consumer Type

Even though makers target niche market, the development of consumer is getting more promising for craft-design business. Yuswohady (2012) explained about the “Consumer 3000” phenomenon that emphasized on the surge of middle class.

Currently the amount of middle class people in Indonesia is higher than upper and lower class. From a psychographic perspective, middle class consumers are value-minded consumers and the values are divided into 3 categories: (1) reasonable value; (2) critical value; and (3) functional value. Reasonable consumers derive from brand-minded consumers that are more rational and knowledgeable while functional consumers are derived from price-minded consumers that possess a higher buying capability.



Figure 6. Consumer 3000 Segmentation

The connection with craft-design development can be considered as such: At first consumer wants to create (DIY movement), then shifts into buying local brand (local value awareness), and later on became more specific on choosing valuable local handmade products (craftsmanship value awareness).

Handmade products are considered as highly valuable since consumers feel involved with the creation process and enjoy them. They also experience the ease and comfort of custom-made service and does not mind paying a slightly higher price or waiting for the production process. With handmade products they will also get one-of-a-kind product that has far more personal value than what is found in mass product. Furthermore makers always prioritize quality, not quantity of their products, for they are driven by the motive to create, not to solely make profit.

2. Conclusion & Recommendation

It is clear that contemporary craft have different characteristics from traditional craft. Therefore action and approach that is to be undertaken must also be different. Apparently both the government and society are not aware of this fact yet.

With this paper the writer hopes to promote contemporary craft or craft-design as a rapidly growing sector. The demand is getting higher, even more so if we can penetrate the global market. The writer hopes that more Indonesian will decide to work as makers and create their

own job opportunity. It is unconventional in Indonesia to be self-employed but it proved to be successful in advanced economics countries. Moreover Indonesia is encouraging its creative economy development.

If we trace back our roots, our country's culture is one that is indeed very creative and productive. The writer believes that creativity runs in our blood. Indonesians are makers, whether traditional or contemporary, and they can change our economy to a better way.

Recommendations is sorted as internal (makers) and external (stakeholder, government, industry) recommendations.

Internal Recommendations

1. Combine contemporary products with traditional material or pattern to embrace Indonesian culture. Adhi Nugraha (2010) invented the TSCUM method to help simplify the process.
2. Increase the quality of brand image and presentation with an array of well-executed photoshoot, catalogue, and lookbook.
3. Initiate national craft community to engage and collaborate with other makers.

External Recommendations

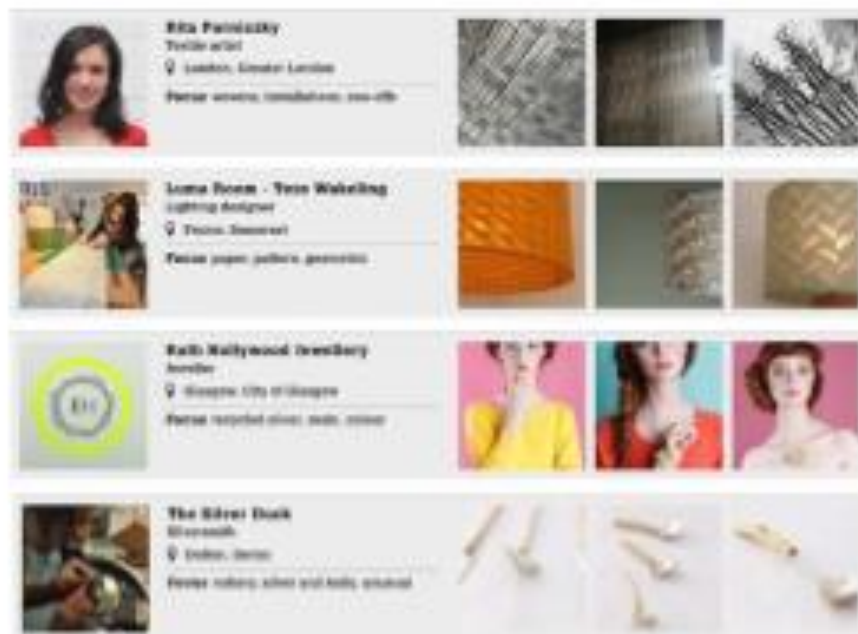


Figure 7. UK Craft Council's Makers Directory

1. Create certifications for online shops so that consumer can choose a reliable online shop. It can also be integrated with an online makers directory as publication support.
2. Make offline marketplace or shops for local craft products. It must be curated professionally to maintain quality.
3. Socialize export policies, international payment, and how to ship products overseas. Makers should be able to expand their market conveniently. To do so would also popularize Indonesia as a country of makers, not merely consumptive users.
4. Raise the entrepreneurial spirit of young people. Online craft-design business is easy to start and considerably cheap. It only requires skill and passion.
5. Give awards and commendations for the best craft and other creative industry practitioners in appreciation of their contribution to creative economy.

REFERENCES

- [1] Dewi, Cokorda Istri. (2014). *Ekonomi Kreatif: Kekuatan Baru Menuju 2025*. Jakarta: Kementerian Pariwisata dan Ekonomi Kreatif.
- [2] Dellot, Benedict. (2014). *Breaking The Mould: How Etsy and Online Craft Marketplaces are Changing the Nature of Business*. London: RSA.
- [3] Ilasco, Meg Mateo. (2011). *Craft, Inc. Revised Edition*. San Fransisco: Chronicle Books.
- [4] Jacob, Sam. (2015). What Makes a Maker? Taken on 26 March 2015 from <http://metropolismag.com>
- [5] Malinak, Jason. (2012). *Etsy-preneurship*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- [6] McGuirk, Justin. (2011). *The Art of Craft; The Rise of The Designer-Maker*. Taken on 26 March 2015 from <http://www.theguardian.com>
- [7] McIntyre, Morris Hargreaves. (2006). *Making It to Market: Developing The Market for Contemporary Craft*. London: Crafts Council.
- [8] McIntyre, Morris Hargreaves. (2010). *Consuming Craft: The Contemporary Craft Market in A Changing Economy*. London: Crafts Council.
- [9] Nugraha, Adhi. (2010). Transforming Tradition for Sustainability Through 'TSUCM' Tool. *SYNNT/ORIGINS*, 3, 20-36.
- [10] Osterwalder, Alexander & Yves Pigneur. (2010). *Business Model Generation*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- [11] Risatti, Howard. (2007). *A Theory of Craft: Function and Aesthetic Expression*. North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press.
- [12] Yuswohady. (2012). *Consumer 3000: Revolusi Konsumen Kelas Menengah Indonesia*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.