



Original Article

Enhancing the Identity of Creative Industries Through the Development of Batik Motifs Inspired by Local Wisdom

Asri Yanti Sekar Melati ^{a,*}, Desy Nurcahyanti ^b and Rahmanu Widayat ^c

^a Master of Visual Art, Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jebres, 57126 Kota Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia.

^b Department of Visual Art, Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jebres, 57126 Kota Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. desynurcahyanti@staff.uns.ac.id (D.N.)

^c Department of Interior Design, Faculty of Art and Design, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Jebres, 57126 Kota Surakarta, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. rahmanuwidayat@staff.uns.ac.id (R.W.)

* Correspondence: asriyantisekamelati@student.uns.ac.id (A.Y.S.)

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Abstract: Each region possesses diverse forms of local wisdom that reflect the unique values and identity of its community. Bekonang Village, located in Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, is recognized for its vibrant and enduring creative industries. These industries span various sectors and have continued to thrive over time, yet they require strategic efforts to reinforce and showcase their cultural significance. One effective strategy to strengthen the identity of Bekonang's creative industries is by visualizing them through traditional textiles that carry both aesthetic and symbolic meaning. Batik, as a prominent cultural artifact, serves as an ideal medium to portray the local character and heritage of Bekonang Village. This study employs a qualitative research approach with descriptive data analysis. Primary data were collected through interviews and direct field observations, while secondary data were obtained from literature reviews. Both sources of data were analyzed to inspire the creation of batik motifs that represent the creative industries of Bekonang. The study identifies various local industries—such as traditional fashion houses, gamelan instrument craftsmanship, and narimo mask making—as rich sources of visual storytelling. By translating these creative activities into distinctive batik motifs, this research aims to preserve and promote the cultural identity of Bekonang Village. The resulting designs serve not only as artistic expressions but also as cultural narratives that highlight the region's heritage. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader effort of sustaining local wisdom through innovative cultural representation in traditional textile art.

Keywords: Local wisdom; Creative industries; Batik motifs; Cultural identity; Traditional textiles



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1. Introduction

Bekonang Village, located in Sukoharjo Regency, is renowned for its tradition of producing ciu, a traditional alcoholic drink made from fermented sugarcane juice (Nagari, 2013). The village is strategically positioned near sugarcane plantations, making it easier for industry players to access raw materials. This practice has deep historical

roots, with some production points dating back to the Dutch colonial era when the Dutch colonizers consumed *ciu* as a substitute for wine (Geraldine & Soedarsono, 2020). Despite the persistence of this tradition, the production of *ciu* has sparked differing views among the local community. Some support its continuation, while others oppose it due to concerns about health and social implications (Nur et al., 2020). Although *ciu* production plays a vital role in the local economy, the image of Bekonang has become associated with the negative connotations of alcohol consumption, particularly from the perspective of the Muslim community, for whom such beverages are considered haram (Hanifah, 2023). However, some groups argue that as long as production is regulated and controlled, it can coexist with other aspects of the region's culture and industry (Geraldine & Soedarsono, 2020).

Bekonang's identity as the center of *ciu* production has led to a negative perception that overshadows its rich cultural and industrial potential (Aini & Antrakusuma, 2024). This perception, though deeply ingrained, can be reshaped by highlighting the region's other strengths. Bekonang has a long history and offers ample opportunities to promote alternative regional images (Sastrodinomo, 2006). In this context, improving the identity of Bekonang is crucial for its future development (Nurfalah et al., 2020). Rapid technological advancements present both a challenge and an opportunity. The spread of information through digital media has made it easier for external communities to form opinions about Bekonang, often based on incomplete or biased views (Muharromah & Yunita, 2023). To counter this, the region needs a strategic effort to strengthen its regional branding, incorporating various facets such as culture, agriculture, industry, and community (Pramadyanto & Irwansyah, 2023).

Geographically, Bekonang is located within the Solo Raya region, which is close to batik-producing areas like Surakarta City and Girilayu in Karanganyar. This proximity provides an opportunity to develop a new strategy for positioning Bekonang's industry, not just as a center for alcohol production, but also as a hub for cultural heritage and craftsmanship (Nurchayanti, 2019). Batik production, with its intricate visual aesthetics and deep cultural significance, is one such area of opportunity (Meliono, 2016). Local batik craftsmen have continued to innovate, creating designs that reflect local wisdom and traditions (Wahid, 2023). This rich tradition of batik, influenced by the Soloan style, can be an important part of Bekonang's renewed identity (Muhadiyatiningsih & Hikmawati, 2018).

Incorporating local wisdom into batik motifs offers a potential pathway to transform Bekonang's image. The area's diverse cultural heritage, combined with its industrial potential, can serve as a foundation for a vibrant creative industry (Kholis et al., 2023). Aligning these efforts with current design trends can further enhance the region's appeal (Saufika et al., 2022). Collaboration among various stakeholders—such as the government, local communities, and educational institutions—will be key to realizing a positive shift in Bekonang's regional branding (Damayanti, 2019). The government's role in facilitating the promotion of local industries, educational institutions' contributions to problem-solving, and community engagement are all essential to this transformation (Prihatin et al., 2019; Martono et al., 2017; Rusydi & Munawar, 2022). The goal of this research is to explore the potential of the creative industry in Bekonang Village and develop a motif creation strategy that strengthens the region's identity. Through this strategy, Bekonang aims to redefine its image by showcasing not only its traditional alcoholic beverage industry but also its cultural and industrial potentials that deserve wider recognition.

2. Materials and Methods

The study on strengthening the identity of Bekonang Village through the creation of local wisdom-based motifs employed a qualitative research approach. This method was chosen to reveal the factual phenomena occurring in the field, presented in a descriptive format. The goal was to present data in a detailed narrative form, organized through words and sentences. Data collection involved several techniques, which were categorized into primary and secondary sources (Hardani et al., 2020). Primary data was gathered through direct observations and interviews. Observations were conducted in various creative industry locations within Bekonang Village, Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java. These observation sites were selected based on their relevance to the concept of designing motifs inspired by local wisdom. Data was recorded in textual form and documented through photos and videos using devices, ensuring proper storage of the data (Henry et al., 2020). The next phase involved conducting interviews with selected sources. To enhance data accuracy, interview techniques were employed to gather in-depth information about the creative industries in Bekonang Village. Key informants included industry practitioners, local government representatives associated with the creative sector, and other stakeholders who could provide valuable insights (Salmaniah, 2002). The interview process was carried out face-to-face, with documentation supported by recording devices or note-taking (Nasution, 2019).

In addition to primary data collection, a literature review was conducted as part of the secondary data collection process. Secondary data sources, such as books, journals, previous research, and other relevant literature, were used to complement data not found in the field (Sari, 2020). The literature sources were carefully selected to align with the research topic, particularly in relation to batik, creative industries, and Bekonang Village. These sources were accessed both digitally and in physical form (Hikmawati, 2017). The literature review strengthened the validity of the data obtained from observations and interviews. These three data collection techniques formed the strategy to support the design process of local wisdom-based batik motifs. The creation of these motifs, grounded in research, aimed to strengthen the identity of the creative industry in Bekonang Village. Bekonang Village boasts a variety of creative industries that

continue to thrive. A notable example is its tradition of wooden mask-making, a key element of its cultural heritage. The preservation and promotion of this creative industry are achieved through the aesthetic visualization of wooden masks, particularly those depicting Arjuna figures. This effort seeks to shape the identity and image of Bekonang Village, highlighting its cultural richness beyond its well-known *ciu* (alcoholic beverage) industry. The long-standing tradition of wooden mask-making, still upheld by local artisans, deserves recognition both within and outside of Bekonang Village. By incorporating the creative industry into batik motifs, the project aims to make these cultural expressions accessible to a broader audience. The widespread use of batik in various forms of clothing or fashion can further contribute to shaping a positive image of Bekonang Village.

3. Results

3.1. Aesthetics Of Arjuna Mask Batik Motifs

Bekonang Village has a creative industry centre that utilises wooden materials. The material is carved and shaped into masks that can be utilised as interior decoration objects. The main function of the masks produced by artisans in Bekonang Village is as an aesthetic enhancer in dance or drama performances. Several art venues in the form of wayang topeng in Surakarta and surrounding areas also use masks produced by craftsmen in Bekonang. The masks produced are classified as classic masks because they are still made manually and traditionally. The manufacturing process has become a habit to maintain traditional values.



Figure 1. Classical Mask Making Process in Bekonang Village

Some of the masks made refer to characters from Javanese puppet stories and wayangan characters, such as Arjuna, Rama, Sinta, Kelono, Panji, Pentul, Buto, and so on. Each character depicting a character is made with a different visual form. There are adjustments that are emphasised to show the character's nature and the meaning of the aesthetic form. Masks with classical styles are part of fulfilling the need for expression in art. The typology of characterisation is realised to be channelled to visual art audiences in both dance and drama. The classical wooden mask industry in Bekonang Village has begun to experience a decline in the number of artisans. This condition requires a strategy to strengthen and introduce the positive side of Bekonang Village about the many creative industry centres in this place. The strategy is realised by transforming the classical mask craft into motifs for traditional textiles in the form of batik. The selection of this creative industry is based on the proximity of the community to the visual elements that can be enjoyed, both in terms of wooden mask crafts and batik. The highlighted part of the mask production industry is the mask object depicting the character Arjuna. The classic Arjuna mask is one of the flagship products in Bekonang Village, so it needs to be developed and introduced to the community through stories in batik motifs.



Figure 2. Batik Motif of Arjuna Mask

Figure 2 describes the distinctive characteristics of the Topeng Arjuna batik, which prominently features brown, or *sogan*, as its primary color. The design utilizes three shades of brown: dark brown, light brown, and beige, creating a harmonious blend that draws inspiration from traditional Soloan batik. This style is known for its rich spectrum of browns in varying intensities, carefully chosen to maintain balance between the main and supporting motifs. The thoughtful color selection prevents any visual disruption, ensuring a cohesive and balanced composition. The central motif of this batik is inspired by Bekonang Village's traditional wooden masks, specifically the Javanese puppet character Arjuna. This character, symbolizing strength, gallantry, and bravery is reinterpreted in a stylized form to represent the wearer's inner strength and charisma. The motif captures a range of emotions, from anger to sadness and happiness, reflecting the human experience and the diversity within the Bekonang community. This variety of expressions emphasizes harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect, despite differences in the community. The Arjuna motif embodies the hope that the wearer lives by these values—living harmoniously and with respect for others. It symbolizes the importance of honesty, adaptability, and good character, with Arjuna's noble qualities serving as an ideal model.

The motif features various sizes—small, medium, and large—arranged in a balanced yet seemingly random way. Intricate details are highlighted with *isen-isen* (decorative elements) and precise cut lines, while the simple brown background is adorned with *cecekan isen-isen* (dots). These dots vary in number, sometimes two, other times three, creating a random but visually balanced pattern that complements the main motif. Supporting motifs, such as the *kawung*, are placed on either side of the design, bordered by the *rambatan* motif. The *kawung* motif is simplified to reflect a classic style and features *cecek pitu*—seven dots arranged in a symmetrical, flower-like pattern—repeated both horizontally and vertically, symbolizing connectedness. The *kawung* motif carries profound philosophical meaning, often associated with the Javanese court, representing the concept of *papat kiblat limo pancer* (the directions of life). The left (east) symbolizes unluckiness or sunset, the right (west) represents life and sunrise, the north signifies death, and the south symbolizes the opposite of life. The central position represents the essence of human life and the divine.

The *cecek pitu isen-isen* reflects the cyclical nature of human existence, linking life, death, and divinity. Other supporting motifs include flowers and leaves, interconnected by creeping stems. These flower patterns symbolize *kembang setaman*, or a garden of diverse flowers, representing unity within the community. The natural elements—flowers in various stages of growth—reflect the cycle of life, from birth to growth to eventual death, mirroring the human experience and reinforcing the philosophical themes embedded in the batik design.

3.2. Introductory Strategy of Bekonang Village Creative Industry

Strengthening the identity of Bekonang Village as a creative industry area can be realized through the creation of batik motifs sourced from these objects. Batik Topeng Arjuna is one of the products that can be introduced to the community. The introduction process can be done through creating derivative products that involve the use of this batik as the main material. The chosen product should be based on the interest of the community and adjusted to the trend. Batik cloth can be sewn and shaped into various products such as pillowcases. This product is one of the needs of people who like home decor items. Pillowcases can be an aesthetic enhancer in a corner such as a sofa and mattress, and so on. Its flexible placement and an object that humans need to get comfort, so this product is very capable of being made from Batik Topeng Arjuna fabric.



Figure 3. Pillow Mockup of Arjuna Mask Batik

Figures 3 and 4 highlight the entry of the fashion industry as a means to introduce a new image of Bekonang Village, which is home to various creative industries. Clothing, a basic human need, often incorporates batik, a fabric that suits a wide range of activities. The community's strong connection to batik clothing reflects its flexibility as a fashion product that also embodies cultural identity. Batik is used in a variety of clothing styles for both men and women, making it a versatile material. The Batik Topeng Arjuna cloth is designed in a modern style, suitable for various occasions, while maintaining a subtle incorporation of classic patterns. These motifs combine Soloan style with popular trends, offering designs that are not overly intricate but still preserve the essential features of written batik, including distinctive isen-isen elements. One example of Bekonang Village's image is using batik in everyday garments like t-shirts, which can be worn in any activity. This allows batik users to introduce the cultural significance of Batik Topeng Arjuna, representing the creative industry of mask artisans. The promotion of this product is part of a broader effort to showcase and introduce other creative industries in Bekonang Village.



Figure 4. T-shirt Mockup of Arjuna Mask Batik



Figure 5. Tote Bag of Arjuna Mask Batik

Figure 5 illustrates another fashion product that serves as a medium to introduce the identity of the creative industry in Bekonang's classic puppet production: the tote bag. This versatile item is widely used in daily life, offering flexibility across a range of activities. Its simple design and spacious interior make it ideal for both academic and professional settings, such as school or work, where it can easily carry various items. Additionally, it is perfect for recreational use. The tote bag can be designed using Topeng Arjuna batik cloth, blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary fashion. This design stands out with its unique aesthetic, which does not rely on classic elements but still preserves the cultural value and beauty of batik. This product is a strategic response to current trends, effectively integrating the traditional artistry of batik into modern lifestyles.

4. Conclusions

Bekonang Village, located in Sukoharjo Regency, Central Java, is home to a diverse range of creative industries that deserve recognition both within the region and beyond. While the village is widely known for its *ciu* drinks, it is important to highlight the creative industries that contribute to its unique identity. One way to achieve this is by showcasing the production of classic masks, which continue to thrive, through products that resonate with a broader audience, such as batik. Batik featuring the Topeng Arjuna motif, inspired by the traditional masks, beautifully reflects the cultural heritage and craftsmanship of local artisans. This batik design can be expanded into various products like pillowcases, t-shirts, and tote bags, aligning with current trends and community preferences. By adapting to these trends, Bekonang Village's creative industries can successfully build a stronger identity and raise awareness. The research on creating batik based on the transformation of creative industries into diverse motifs serves as a valuable resource for both academic and non-academic communities. The findings are particularly useful for students, lecturers, researchers, designers, batik artisans, and anyone interested in supporting regional identity through batik as a medium of cultural introduction.

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