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FORMING A FASHION DISTRICT IN BANDUNG

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ABSTRACT

As a form of a creative industry, the fashion industry is believed to be one of the main aspects of a city's development, both in the economic and cultural sectors. But this industry needs a place, a physical one as much as a cultural one, for it to be able to exist and grow. Such a place is defined by the city's local culture, which will eventually characterize the fashion industry growing there amongst those of other places.

The city of Bandung is known for its fashion industry. Its street fashion has become an inspiration for many clothing companies and their distribution outlets. There are now more than 200 distribution outlets spread through out Bandung, a number which defines the city's passion for fashion. Along with the growth of the fashion industry, some supporting industries such as tailoring, shoemaking, and photography have also found success. Today, Bandung's fashion industry is one of the main sources of the city's income. This fact has helped the industry attract the government's attention, and along with the city's assets of human capital and the supporting industries, build Bandung's potential to form a fashion district within itself.

A fashion district will heighten Bandung's position as the center for fashion in Indonesia. Moreover, it will also relate to the government's plan in the establishment of Bandung as a Creative City. The district will also add to the city's main attraction, which will result in an increase in domestic and international tourists and in the city's income.

This paper aims to propose the formation of a fashion district in Bandung, taking the city's socio-culture condition into account in the process of defining the district's character. It will explore the city's potential, and compare it to those of more established fashion cities such as Milan and Paris. The planning will aim to make it the hippest spot for fashion-addicts to roam while in Bandung.

Keywords: *fashion industry, cultural goods, district, positive externalities*

INTRODUCTION

Although Bandung is known as the center for fashion in Indonesia, until today Bandung's young fashion designers still feel the need of a place where they can optimise their potential and be more efficient in their work process. To give solution to that problem, this paper proposes to form a fashion district within the city.

A fashion district will accommodate not only a large part of the production process in fashion industry, but also some of its marketing process. Assigning a fashion district designation to a neighborhood or urban area will also create positive externalities that can be enjoyed by the people and industries of Bandung.

BANDUNG AND FASHION INDUSTRY

Along with the rise of agriculture industry by the end of 19th century, as well as the completion of the railroad which connected Bandung and Batavia, the city became a popular holiday destination. During that time, the fashion industry and retail activities mostly took place at the district in downtown area called 'Braga', a shopping promenade where people see and be seen.

By the end of the 20th century, Bandung has grown into one of Indonesia's major industrial city. Its economy was mainly built upon textile/apparel, tourism, education institutions, technology, and services among other. Bandung's fashion industry was equipped with many textile factories. Bandung also had a research center for textile and many design schools supporting its fashion industry.

The 1997 Asia's financial crisis led many garment and textile factory to bankruptcy. Production ceased, yet cheap foreign textile products (mainly from China) flooded the market due to the weakening of purchase power. However, the demands for affordable textile products were still high. Some communities started to make their own products including apparel. They produced in small quantity and sold the products at their distribution store (*distro*) for their own community. It was the beginning of a hobby-based industry in Bandung, which now has been tagged as a creative fashion industry (Rahmanisa, 2008).

Today, Bandung is more prepared for fashion creative industry compared to other city in Indonesia because Bandung had talent and skill workers in textile and garment industries since 40 years ago (Soedarsono, 2006). The growth of its fashion industry has also led to the births of other creative industries. These industries mainly act as supporting industries for the fashion companies and range from independent magazines, graphic designers, photographers to make-up artists.

In the future, Bandung city government has a general vision that by the year of 2010, Bandung is to become a great service city and foremost partner of Jakarta. One of the main strategies is to develop a fair city economy. The Government stress on service industry, tourism and garment/fashion industry sector on their economic policies. They want to make the creative industries to be one of the main resources in the city's revenue. In this case, the creative industries include fashion, architecture, design, and music. [1]

The Government would also like to establish Bandung as a pilot project for Creative City in Indonesia. The policy is to support creative industries, with fashion industry as the locomotive, by broaden business network, as well upgrading machinery, so that the productivity may increase. The government believes this kind of policy will gain more access to production capital.

WHY FASHION DISTRICT?

The fashion industry in Bandung ranges from garment companies, jeans manufacturers, factory outlets retailers to clothing companies selling their products in distribution stores (*distro*). Despite the many forms the Bandung's fashion industry takes on, this paper will focus on creative fashion industries [2]; the ones whose main assets are their ideas and design, product innovation, technology and intellectual property.

Although the creative fashion industries in the city grow enormously, in line with it, they are facing multifaceted problems embedded. In order to simplify the analysis process, the problems are classified into four main categories: production matters, educational matters, policy matters and promotion matters.

In production matters they are facing a problem that the products of creative fashion industries are not competitive. Both from the price and product innovation viewpoints, the products have significant weaknesses. Two main issues in price are the local raw material producers for fashion industries are using out of date technology and producing on a small number. These causes make the products become costly. Limited access to information about new materials, production techniques et cetera results in the lack of product innovation. These problems occur because the stakeholders in the city's fashion industry grow sporadically. They need a hub that connects them to speed up the flow of information and make their works more efficient.

In educational matters they are facing a problem that a large number of the creative fashion companies are run unprofessionally. These are the creative fashion companies that are run with a lack of management skill and not based on clear research and development. Generally the owners are young people without strong management knowledge. The other main reason is that most of the fashion products have a lack of quality improvement in design and material. Asymmetric ability in design and material comprehension of the labours within the creative fashion industry leads to it.

In policy matters they are facing a problem that government policy prevents promotional activities of the creative fashion industries. At present, the government still regards this industry from tourism industry point of view. Therefore, their main consideration is to increase the number of tourists' arrival with this activity, instead of considering how to sell the products in the global market.

In marketing matters they are facing a problem that Bandung's creative fashion industries are not visible on the global market. Currently there is no representative and sustainable event to highlight their regular promotion activities and also there is no representative place for them to exhibit their work to the market. Only limited numbers of companies are able to reach market because there is no place for new designer to put out them selves to the public. All of the problems lead to several risks meant for the creative fashion industries. The risks are: the products might lose in the global market competition; most of them will be bankrupt and only a small number can continue to exist; the products will have limited access to reach their potential market that leads to small demand for the product; and that the industries will not be able to develop themselves. The general effect of these situations is a premature decline of creative fashion industry that was supposed to be the first and foremost creative industry to sustain.

Analyzing the problems of Bandung's creative fashion industry, we can see that there is a need of a place where the people of this industry can work better in their production and marketing process. Now the question is: in what form should the place be for it to be able to meet the need of increasing the efficiency of production and marketing process? Agglomeration is believed to be one of the best ways to increase efficiency. Reflecting to the industrial cultural district which could generate positive externalities as powerful as a district can, a recommended place for fashion designers, therefore, is within a form of a cluster. Whilst the designers gather in one cluster, they could exchange information easily as well as organize cultural events together, such as fashion show.

Casual, informal and teem with pop culture, which is why Bandung is famous for, should be appointed within this place. Therefore, the cluster will have to emphasize those qualities and to have a common activity centre so that they will not have to rent a space outside. Also, the scale of the space should be intimate. Low-middle-rise and street level scale are believed to be the most suitable characters. And, of course, the cluster is not merely focused on retail aspect only. In another words, not another shopping malls.

Basically, the cluster will consist of studios where designers work, hall and open spaces to hold fashion shows, galleries or retail space where designers exhibit their work. Last but not least, it has to be supported by other amenities such as cafes and restaurants.

Fashion is categorized as cultural goods that had to be experienced before consumed. The future buyer needs information as much as they can before they are willing to pay some certain

amount of money for a designer's apparel. Fashion shows, daily exhibition, and other cultural events are among the most effective ways to spread the information.

When the activities and interaction planned for the cluster are dense, this place might have to have good access. It is not only for locals, but also for other visitors from out of town or foreign countries. One of the most eligible places to be appointed to become a fashion district is Braga.

BRAGA

In order to develop creative society and industry, the municipality of Bandung needs to make a pilot project within its area which could be implemented in another area. There are many potential factor attached to Braga area that can make this project successful, both tangible and intangible. First, a festive and lively atmosphere of the city is a good opportunity to keep the industry popular. Currently, on the weekend and holiday, people organize cultural event, such as music performance, art performance, etc. Second, the image of Braga street as a 'fashion street of the old days' still relevant to be put into present day context. Unfortunately, there are not many constant or significant fashion activities held in the area.

Braga, with all embedded historical and aesthetical value and the fact that the Bandung's Government wishes to revitalize it, is the most feasible place to be considered. Braga lies in the downtown of Bandung, within the CBD area and near to transportation node.

Today, there are not many creative activities happening in the area. Retail activities slowly declining marked by several stores due to close their operation. Some of them are only partially open. Recent data shows around 55% from 120 shops along the main Braga Street are actively open, 12% are partly open and the rest 33% are passively open or empty. [3] Some of the empty buildings are government's properties and used as temporary exhibition places.

Braga's historical values have not been elaborated by making the area more attractive to visitors. Despite some occasional cultural events being held, there are no other catalysts to significant creative activities along the area. Furthermore, this has set the creative society apart from the area, both on local and urban scale. Lack of support and incentives are also discouraging investor to invest. The plan to revitalize Braga by infiltrating a shopping mall into the area has not shown significant results.

...for the sake of its future development the Braga district should establish itself as an anchor point of creative activities, which could then be supported and elaborated by other districts. Once Braga district successfully achieves to set-up a major agglomeration of small and premium enterprises of creative industries, there will be great potential to promote it as the icon of high quality Bandung design, architecture and advertising. (Hanan, 2006)

BENEFITS

Forming a fashion district in Bandung will be beneficial to the fashion industry itself since the agglomeration will automatically speed up the flow of information and reduce time and energy expenses within the stakeholders of this industry. That way, the fashion industry will have a greater chance to improve and increase their earnings. This kind of improvement will surely lead other supporting industries to growth. [4] Like a snowball effect, the growth of its supporting industry will mean even greater chance for the fashion industry to find its way to success.

Many fashion districts throughout the world has proven to succeed not only in increasing the industry's efficiency in their work process, but also in giving many benefits to people living in and around the neighborhood. These benefits enjoyed by third parties are called positive externalities.

The positive externalities that can be generated by a fashion district come in forms of a high rate of birth of new firms, often of household size, as a result of social capability and interactive learning; and finally, the ability to be district minded, to become a local system, and to produce positive externalities in the field of design, technological innovation, managerial organization, the creation of new products, labor market flexibility and commercial distribution. [5]

Furthermore, having a fashion district will also heighten Bandung's position as the center of fashion in Indonesia. The land value in and around the district will increase and from the buyers' point of view, the forming of Bandung's fashion district will make it easier to find many kinds of products within a cluster.

CONCLUSION

Having fashion industries with great potentials, it is only natural that the city of Bandung forms a fashion district within its area. Assigning a designation of a fashion district will enhance Bandung's fashion industries chance of improving and sustaining. The benefits of having a fashion district are not limited to the fashion industries, but also to people and industries in Bandung, as well as the government of the city will be able to enjoy positive externalities generated by the district.

ENDNOTES

- [1] City of Bandung official site, <http://www.bandung.go.id>
- [2] Included in creative fashion industries are the fashion design studios run by practicing and/or aspiring designers, clothing companies, etc.
- [3] Braga Revitalization data, Bandung Society for Heritage Conservation, 2006
- [4] As happened during the blossoming of Bandung's clothing companies in 1998
- [5] Cultural district and economic development, Walter Santagata

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