

Raising Environmental Awareness through the Making of Craft-Based Object

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Abstract

The creation of craft products plays a vital role in increasing environmental awareness and creating a better environment. This research aims to explore several activities that raise public awareness. The methods used are cultural studies and interdisciplinary. The research results show that craftsmen and business people have carried out the basic principles in making environmentally friendly craft products. The reason is that it is an ancestral cultural heritage and the natural character of craft objects. The education and financial sectors need support to maintain the environmental awareness movement.

Keywords: Environmental awareness; craft-based object

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1.0 Introduction

Environmental issues will never be separated from daily human life. The creation of craft products has a vital role in creating a better environment. One way is to use environmentally friendly and sustainable materials and a process prioritizing nature conservation. Our predecessors have done this by applying organic materials or using materials around us, as well as slow processes. Optimizing materials can also minimize fuel use to save energy and reduce pollution. This is evident from the environment maintained in its beauty; the air feels cool and clean. Of course, they all impact the health of awake residents, who have a long and good quality of life. That was the situation in the old days. Currently, the condition has changed. Artificial materials, synthetic dyeing, and fast-paced processes have changed everything.

This situation is inseparable from the increasing needs of the community, economy, society, business, and even politics. Likewise, market demand must be accommodated quickly and as much as possible to reap profits. From the data obtained, Indonesia's original craft products have been proven to provide significant economic benefits for the country. In 2023, the figure touched USD 912.2 million. This revenue decreased in 2022 due to the influence of the recession and the global economy. However, the craft industry sector is still a profit generator for MSMEs and exporters. In addition, craft products in Indonesia have many global enthusiasts (ukmindonesia.id). On the one hand, market demand is high, which benefits many parties, especially business actors, and increases the country's foreign exchange. On the other hand, the negative impact of this phenomenon is that business owners will exploit natural resources and ignore

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the losses caused (<https://money.kompas.com>). This situation cannot continue because it will cause a domino effect, leading to more devastated disasters with unexpected losses.

This article will discuss several activities that can be done to raise public awareness, especially business actors in the craft-based art sector. Craft objects or products produced by craft business activists can show consumers or the wider community tangible evidence of their contribution to protecting the environment.

This study is essential to educate various parties in each line about preserving nature in craft product production, starting from business actors, marketers, intermediaries, consumers, and even students or students interested in doing business in the crafts field.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Environmental Awareness

Environmental awareness can be interpreted as understanding how one or a group of people protect the ecosystem and environmental sustainability (Pramita *et al.*, 2023). Not only as an introduction to problems and understanding, environmental awareness can directly and indirectly affect environmental behavior (Grob in Ferreira *et al.*, 2023).

Environmental awareness is an action or behavior directed toward understanding the importance of health, a clean environment, etc. Environmental awareness can be seen in the person's behavior and actions in a stress-free situation (Amos, 2008). Decisions should be taken according to environmental management in a way that suits human needs by preserving or improving the quality of the environment.

Four factors affect environmental awareness. One of them is the humanitarian factor. Humans can choose what is right and wrong because of their natural nature. Humans also have sensitivity and a sense of humanity, impacting their concern for other humans. He is concerned about caring for others, wants to do his best, and does not harm other human beings as much as possible. This reason gives humans a sense of responsibility to be more aware of the environment and take care of it for the common good. Another factor is lifestyle. The lifestyle influences a person's level of concern or awareness of the environment. The higher a person's interest or attention in a green lifestyle, the more they will care and focus on environment-related behaviors. Any action or behavior will refer to environmentally friendly activities and how they can save the damaged environment (Amos in Gabriela and Sugianto, 2020).

2.2 Craft-Based Object

Craft-based objects or products have many definitions. Craft objects were understood as making something with hands and thinking through hands by manipulating and exploring materials (Nimkulrat, 2010). This understanding follows Adamson's (2007) view that the concept of art is a way of thinking through various activities. It starts with processing mediums, techniques, tools, and ideas and ends with finally becoming a work with a message. Different with design thinking, craft thinking relates thinking and intelligence to actions performed by hand since craft is putting collaboration with the material on centre stage (Brinck, 2024). Thus, what people called the endeavor of material.

Craft items are currently separated into traditional, modern, or contemporary crafts, just like other fine art categories. Reproducing cultural forms, models, and designs using particular techniques determines what constitutes traditional crafts (Walker, 1989; Nugraha, 2012). Practices, artifacts, places, the environment's interactions with nature and history, and the preservation of professional tacit knowledge and disappearing traditions are all examples of traditional craftsmanship (Nugraha, 2012; Kokko & Kaipainen, 2015; Unesco, 2003). On the other hand, many also interpret traditional crafts as handicraft products, but ontology can be said to be different. The reason is that handicraft products lack innovation, are functional and practical, and tend to be made in mass production. On the other hand, traditional craft pieces feature elements of originality in notions and images, even though they employ old equipment and techniques. Not only are these items non-functional, but they are also handmade.

It is also said that Craft includes 'formal knowledge, tacit knowledge, physical and mental skill, contextual awareness, innovation, and personal creative autonomy' (Press & Cusworth, 1997, p. 16). Adamson (2010) considered craftsmanship to be small-scale production with knowledge based on materials and skills. One of the most significant inputs is the knowledge gained over many years of apprenticeship (Gamble, 2004, p. 190). Through this knowledge, craftsmen bring a product to the market using specific tools and try to understand and overcome the difficulties that arise outside their control during the artifact's creation (Hoxie, 1920, p. 131).

Craftworks are the result of contemplation since many things can be conveyed from a craft object.. A craftsman will dedicate time, energy, and mind to produce timeless, substantial works. Contrarily, a reliable craftsman is also good at responding to situations to create an artistic object that is in harmony with the spirit of the times.

3.0 Methodology

The methods used are the cultural studies approach and the interdisciplinary method. Operationally, this approach and method work by placing culture as a form of behavior, attitudes, ideas, and works of the community as something dynamic, daily, and complex. Therefore, culture cannot be understood from a monodisciplinary perspective (Puspitasari, 2016, p. 58). ecological, aesthetic, and cultural theories are used. Ecological aesthetic theory explores the link between art and the environment, promoting how a work of art reflects and responds to ecological principles. Cultural theory discusses how cultural values, beliefs, and activities affect human behavior and environmental attitudes. This theory also makes it easier to understand how cultural contexts shape artists' and/or craftsmen's

approaches to environmental sustainability. The method used in this research is to examine craft objects that are considered to be an example of concern for the environment in the aspect of the manufacturing process.

4.0 Findings

Craft objects whose realization process shows concern and awareness of the environment usually start from selecting environmentally friendly materials. Of course, it is not only the selection of materials but also the basic principles that are the main thing in making environmentally friendly products. These principles are: Refine, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recovery, and Retrieve energy (disperindag.jatimprov.go.id).

Small-medium business actors have applied most of these aspects to craft object production. It also aligns with the natural character of crafts, namely, using organic materials. The ancestors used natural materials to make objects to support their daily lives, such as food containers, cooking utensils, household utensils, furniture, etc. Then, in line with the development of the times, the product or craft object incarnates in various forms, such as fashion, home décor, art-craft work, and other furniture.

One of the things that has received exceptional attention is what was done by fashion business actor (women's bags) Dewi Febriana Syamri, the owner of the local brand Sakombu Eco Basket. From the name, it can be seen that the products produced from the Sakombu brand are environmentally friendly. Interestingly, Dewi uses organic materials from the process stage, which is very natural. She mobilized women, namely housewives, to be directly involved in the production of the bags so that these mothers would always be used to caring about the environment. This is because they know that if the environment is damaged, the bag-making materials will experience difficulties, so the production process is hampered. The ingredient for making Sakombu is Mansiang, a weed that grows in swamps. The manufacturing process can take up to nine months, starting from harvesting, drying, picking, and scraping. This is done so that the fiber is easy to weave. In the dyeing process, around 90 percent of Sakombu products use the original color of mansiang fiber, so there is no chemical process. The rest, as many as ten percent, apply synthetic dyeing. Dewi also seeks awareness of the environment through educational activities for craftsmen. She regularly visits and even stays overnight at the homes of artisans who are, on average, 50 to 80 years old. Together with her craftsmen, Dewi weaves and discusses the latest designs, emphasizing the importance of protecting the environment by creating environmentally friendly products (<https://kemenparekraf.go.id>). That way, the artisan mothers understand the importance of caring for environmental sustainability, and this knowledge is passed on to their children and grandchildren. Below are products from Sakombu Eco Basket, whose production process emphasizes eco-friendly products.



Fig. 1. (a) Women's handbag with natural dyes; (b) A craftswoman weaving fiber
(Source: <https://kemenparekraf.go.id>)

5.0 Discussion

More and more businesspeople in craft products, craftsmen, and artists are applying and disseminating the use of environmentally friendly materials and production processes to attract a wider audience. One way is to introduce environmentally friendly concepts in schools and communities. This method is more or less effective in increasing ecological awareness among high school students and the community. Through creative, fresh, and innovative delivery, the awareness of caring for the environment is more accessible to channel. Craftsmen and businesspeople also convince the community that preserving the environment is a shared responsibility and is part of daily activities. It is just that because it has become a habit, they often do not realize it.

From a contemporary perspective, concern for the need to take care of nature has been consistently expressed by an alumnus of the craft study program, faculty of fine arts, ISI Yogyakarta. Novi, better known as Novi Bamboo, is the owner of CV. Panelindo produces various pieces of furniture made from bamboo and other fashion (eco-fashion). Apart from being an entrepreneur, Novi can be called an environmental warrior who consistently spreads her knowledge, insights, and experience to many parties related to eco-fashion. They are starting with students in elementary and secondary schools, the general community, and people with disabilities. Uniquely, people with disabilities feel that by using the hammering technique in the eco-print process, they can release their pent-up emotions. What makes them happier is that they are delighted with the final result, although sometimes it is still far from perfect. Of course, this is a very positive thing. Novi is also often asked by the Office of the Ministry of Cooperatives to share knowledge with small- and medium-

sized entrepreneurs concerned about using natural materials. She also does not hesitate to help in marketing and introduce the SME product at a higher level if it is considered sufficiently qualified. Interestingly, Novi always emphasizes that craftsmen utilize natural materials around them to cut production duties. She always reminds businesspeople and craftsmen of the importance of prioritizing ethics. This is because the market for eco-friendly products is still very wide open and can continue to survive with strength in quality, storytelling, and the consistency of environmentally friendly production processes. Below is a photo of an eco-fashion product produced by Novi Bamboo.



Fig. 2. (a) Eco-fashion by Novi Bamboo; (b) Women's Top eco-fashion by Novi Bamboo
(Source: www.novibamboo.com)

At best, a new sustainable fashion system can create value for people, the planet, and profit (see Figure 3). The system can create a safe environment for people by using fewer chemicals in production, i.e., safe products for end-users. This system can also promote greater product satisfaction through better quality and longer-lasting products. Less materialistic consumption can promote well-being and happiness (Niimäki, 2010). We can learn to invest in higher quality and more expensive products, use them longer, own less, and take good care of our possessions. This is what is commonly known as the 6 R's related to concept of environmentally friendly technology namely Reduce, which means reducing the amount of waste by optimizing the use of materials. Refine, which means using materials that are environmentally friendly and through processes that are safer than previous technologies. Reuse, which means reusing unused or waste materials and processing them in a different way. Recycle, which means almost the same as reuse, except that recycle reuses materials or waste and is processed in the same way. Recovery, which means the utilization of certain materials from waste to be processed for other purposes. Retrieve Energy, which means saving energy in a production process (environment-indonesia.id)

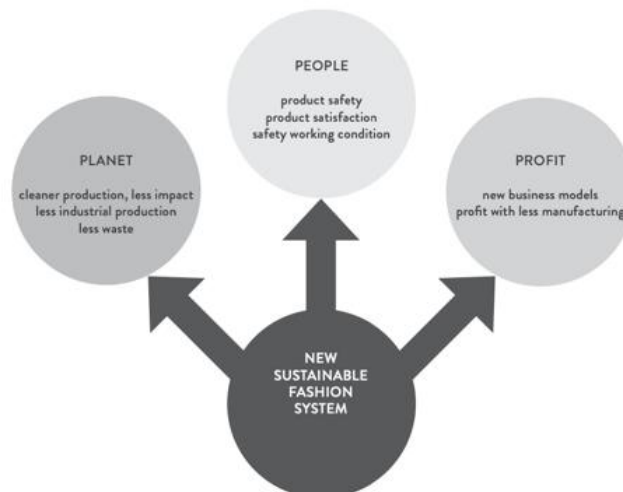


Fig. 3. Value for people, planet, and business created by sustainable fashion
(source: <https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/>)

The thing to remember from the activities of environmental activists is the aspect of improving living standards based on the financial benefits that can be obtained from environmentally friendly businesses. Undeniably, these business actors or craftsmen must be able to continue to exist in business so that if they lose instead of profit in running a business, they are certainly not interested in continuing it. For this reason, the product or craft object produced from the environmentally friendly process must not only have aesthetic value but also be able to reflect the principles of ecological alignment.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

It is essential to understand the need to increase environmental awareness, which needs to be done consistently, sustainably, and continuously. Especially from the aspect of education, both formal and non-formal education. Children need to be taught the importance of protecting nature from an early age through innovative and refreshing activities. The goal is for them to respond enthusiastically and easily permeate their memories.

As seen from the preceding explanations and examples, a craft object, one of the cultural goods, plays a significant role in raising public awareness and comprehension of environmental issues, especially regarding production aspects. The reason is that environmentally friendly craft products must start from upstream to downstream, from material selection, preparation, production process, and finishing to marketing. They are also very aware of the importance of ethical trade, which benefits producers and consumers. The existence of direct sales from producers to consumers, both online and offline, will facilitate communication between the two parties. This allows manufacturers more freedom to campaign to consumers on environmental issues.

It is also important to underline that makers, craftsmen, and entrepreneurs in the craft field can make social changes at the post-colonial level and in the global economy. The basis is the skills, insights, and way of working that make them instinctively and sincerely able to collaborate with the local community. Art workers, craftsmen, and craft business actors are used and trained to create works that can arouse the environmental awareness of their audience. This is because of various experiments, actual activities, cultural values, customs, and norms that are always carried out continuously. All of them affect the way of thinking and behaving towards environmental awareness.

It can be said that craftsmen play an essential role in contributing to the issue of sustainability, not only by producing sustainable products and embracing audiences but also by observantly being able to take advantage of business gaps to be at the forefront of business activities. This provides real benefits for craftsmen, entrepreneurs, and craftsmen so that their enthusiasm to create quality eco-friendly products is maintained.

Some aspects that need to be improved are the involvement of educational elements on various scales to disseminate an understanding of the need to protect the environment. Educational infrastructure needs to be continuously developed and maintained to ensure that sustainable development can be created. The reason is that economists or businessmen argue that the existence of a quality learning experience can produce humans who can think critically. From this critical thinking, environmentally friendly objects that continue to be sustainable are created. In addition, collaboration between the realm of crafts and other fields in the scope of fine arts and science needs to be strengthened to enable the creation of craft objects that are not only full of cultural content but also artistic and sustainable.

Another aspect is the involvement of financial institutions supported by the government. Assistance in the form of funds is significant for developing research and development for both independent craftsmen and business actors. This is so that all parties can continue to be productive and innovative in creating quality eco-friendly products that can be accepted globally.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of craft in particular and visual arts in general. In the craft field, students and teachers need to understand the importance of protecting the environment and inviting the surrounding environment to care more. This starts from the production process of selective and nature-based craft objects. For business people, environmental awareness will provide profits financially and in terms of production cost efficiency. A preserved environment occurs when there is a positive synergy between craftsmen, business people, teaching staff, and the community to prioritize environmentally friendly production processes that create environmentally friendly products. The full support of policymakers, government, and the wider community strengthens this.

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