



EXPLORATION OF TEENAGERS' PERCEPTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY BATIK DESIGN INNOVATION

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Abstract

This research explores teenagers' perceptions of contemporary batik design innovation, focusing on teenagers aged 15-19 in high schools in Yogyakarta. The method used is qualitative, where data is collected through structured interviews with 20 informants selected purposively. The research results show that teenagers have diverse views regarding contemporary batik, where aesthetic factors, self-identity, and the influence of globalization play an essential role in their interest. In addition, this research identifies the challenges faced in integrating traditional and modern elements in batik design and the importance of community experience in the batik-making process. These findings can provide practical recommendations for artisans and communities to attract the younger generation's interest in batik and become the basis for further research on batik and the younger generation. Thus, this research contributes to understanding how innovation in batik design can accommodate the needs and tastes of the younger generation and strengthen the sustainability of Indonesia's cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Batik, Contemporary, Perception, Youth.*

INTRODUCTION

Batik is one of Indonesia's cultural heritage sites with deep aesthetic and historical value. Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009, batik reflects visual beauty's deep meaning and philosophy (Smith, 2018). The world recognized batik through UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage on October 2, 2009, so Indonesia should be proud of this coronation. This decision did not escape the repertoire of batik in an agrarian country that thrives on thousands of patterns and a wealth of philosophical values. Batik is a form of masterpiece that is a marker of the origin of the batik. (Sugiyamin & Susanto, 2020: 9619)

Batik also functions as a means of cultural communication that connects generations. Every design and technique for making batik carries a story related to history, tradition, and local wisdom passed down from generation to generation. The batik-making process often involves communities where knowledge and skills are transferred from generation to generation. These traditions strengthen social bonds among community members and ensure that this cultural heritage remains alive and relevant.

However, the younger generation's interest in batik has fluctuated recently. This phenomenon raises questions about how innovations in contemporary batik design can influence this interest. Various psychological factors, such as self-identity, social aspirations, and aesthetic

perceptions, can influence adolescent's interest in contemporary batik. Along with the times and the influence of globalization, teenagers tend to be more open to new ideas that can reflect their personalities. It is in line with the opinion of Hofstede (2011), who states that "Culture is learned and transmitted patterns of behavior, which shape the Way individuals interact with the world."

Lifestyle changes that are more inclined towards international fashion threaten the continuity of cultural heritage and reduce the younger generation's desire to learn and understand complex batik-making techniques. To ensure the sustainability of batik, it is essential to innovate in design and production techniques, making it appealing to modern consumers while preserving its cultural essence" (Prabowo, 2022). Making batik, which requires time, skill, and precision, is often considered impractical in this world spinning fast. Therefore, it is important to study and implement contemporary batik transformations that can bridge the gap between traditional values and the needs and tastes of the younger generation.

Innovations in contemporary batik include using digital techniques, minimalist designs, and collaboration with young designers, making batik more relevant to the needs and tastes of the younger generation (Hartono, 2020). Research by Surya and Riani (2021) shows that teenagers prefer simple and modern designs, allowing them to express their identity and creativity—Richard Gregory's theory of perception explains how individuals understand information from the environment. In the context of batik, teenagers' perceptions are influenced by cultural background, education, and personal experience. Understanding this theory helps explain the dynamics of cultural interest among the younger generation (Gregory, 1966). Special skills are needed to make a piece of batik cloth, both creativity and patience. Making and finishing a piece of batik cloth will take time, or it can take days or even weeks, depending on the difficulty level of the motifs. One of them is to embody the students' character. Character education is essential for them, especially those who take the Textile and Batik Creative Craft Expertise Program. (Henny & Susanto, 2019: 656).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between innovation in the arts and the young generation's interest. For example, research by Rahadi et al. (2020) shows that innovative and simple designs are the most preferred batik products and those that are preferred to be purchased, such as traditional motifs with modern designs. Apart from that, research by Yasmin & Ivanna (2023) found that many Gen Z think that batik is very suitable to be used as a fashion trend because they feel that batik must start to be prepared for the international arena but still need to increase the number of batik clothing models and design them as unique and beautiful as possible. It could be adjusted for specific events. However, there is still little research that specifically examines the psychological aspects of adolescents in the context of contemporary batik innovation. Therefore, this research aims to explore how innovations in contemporary batik design can increase teenagers' interest and understand the psychological factors that influence their preferences. By understanding these dynamics, effective strategies can be found to promote batik as part of a relevant cultural identity for the younger generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Definition of Batik and Cultural Heritage

Batik is a form of art and craft that functions as an aesthetic medium and is an integral part of Indonesia's rich and diverse cultural heritage. The history of the development of batik can be traced back several centuries, when the techniques and motifs produced were influenced by interactions between local and foreign cultures, creating a unique cultural tapestry. In 2009, UNESCO recognized batik as an Intangible Cultural Heritage and confirmed its importance globally. It demonstrated efforts to preserve and appreciate cultural diversity (UNESCO, 2009).

Each batik motif is visually beautiful and holds deep philosophical meaning and symbolism. For example, the "Parang" motif symbolizes strength and courage and reflects harmony between humans and nature. In contrast, the "Sido Mukti" motif is expected to bring good luck and prosperity to the wearer (Smith, 2018). Thus, batik is not just a cloth used for clothing; it is a medium of communication that conveys stories, history, and traditional values of Indonesian society (Hidayah, 2020).

In this context, batik also acts as a symbol of cultural identity that can connect generations, maintaining the continuity of knowledge and skills that have been passed down. From one generation to the next. Making batik involves the community, thus strengthening social ties and building a sense of togetherness in the sustainability of this cultural heritage (Tanjung, 2021). Therefore, batik is an art product and a dynamic representation of Indonesian identity and Culture that must be maintained and preserved.

2. Development of Contemporary Batik Innovation

The development of contemporary batik innovation includes various aspects of design and technique that enrich this tradition in a modern context (Hartono, 2020). One important breakthrough is the application of digital techniques, which facilitate the creation of more complex and efficient motifs and speed up the production process (Widiastuti, 2022). Collaborations between young designers and traditional artisans are increasingly common, creating a synergy that combines innovative ideas with classic craftsmanship (Rahayu, 2021). In this collaboration, young designers bring new perspectives, while traditional artisans supply in-depth knowledge of the techniques and philosophy behind each motif (Prabowo, 2022). Design is about aesthetics, creativity, and taste. (Susanto, 2020: 196).

The application of minimalist and modern concepts in batik design is increasingly gaining a place in the hearts of the younger generation, who tend to look for simple but meaningful aesthetics (Surya & Riani, 2021). This approach responds to changing market tastes and provides space for personal expression (Iskandar, 2023). Thus, the development of contemporary batik innovation is not just an aesthetic change but is also part of a more significant effort to maintain, preserve, and adapt this rich Culture to face the challenges of the times.

3. Young Generation's Interest in Batik

Various complex psychological factors, including self-identity and social aspirations, influence the younger generation's interest in batik. Research shows that changes in aesthetic preferences among teenagers, in the context of globalization and modernization, make them increasingly open to innovative and contemporary designs, which allows them to express themselves in ways that are more relevant and attractive in the eyes of society (Prabowo, 2022). Modern lifestyles, often characterized by an accelerated rhythm of life and a tendency towards fast products, also significantly influence their understanding and appreciation of batik. In this fast-paced atmosphere, interest in exploring traditional batik techniques and values is often neglected, resulting in a decline in interest in the in-depth cultural aspects (Susanto, 2020).

Therefore, understanding these dynamics is essential so that batik can remain relevant and attractive to the younger generation. Integrating traditional elements with innovations that suit their tastes is key to maintaining continued interest in batik. Thus, this research not only aims to explore teenagers' perceptions but also to formulate effective strategies for promoting batik as an integral part of cultural identity that can accommodate the needs and desires of the new generation.

4. Cultural Perception and Interest Theory

Richard Gregory's theory of perception provides deep insight into how individuals understand and interpret information received from the surrounding environment. Gregory argues that perception is not a passive process but a dynamic activity where individuals utilize experience, knowledge, and context to form their understanding (Gregory, 1966). In the context of batik, teenagers' perceptions of contemporary design are greatly influenced by their cultural background, education, and personal experiences.

Gregory also emphasizes the importance of social context and expectations in the perception process, which can explain how teenagers interpret the design elements contained in contemporary batik (Gregory & Ainsworth, 2020). Research shows that interest in cultural products is often influenced by aesthetic perceptions that develop along with changing times, including globalization and modernization (Rahayu, 2021). Thus, a deeper understanding of perception theory can help explain the dynamics of cultural interest among the younger generation.

The advantage of using perception theory in this research lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how teenagers respond to and appreciate contemporary batik designs. This theory allows researchers to explore the visual aspects of batik and how psychological and social factors influence teenagers' attitudes and preferences toward local cultural products. By utilizing this theory, this research aims to identify design elements that the younger generation finds attractive and understand how their cultural context and personal experiences contribute to their interest and appreciation for batik. Through this approach, more effective strategies can be found to promote batik as part of a relevant cultural identity for the younger generation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a case study approach with a data collection method through structured interviews. It is designed to gain in-depth insight into teenagers' perceptions of batik as an Indonesian cultural heritage and the design innovations accompanying it. Data was obtained from 20 informants who were teenagers aged 15-19 years in high school in the city of Yogyakarta. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, taking into account specific criteria that ensured the representativeness of their perspectives on the issues raised in this research (Creswell, 2020). This research data collection using structured interviews aims to create an atmosphere of dialogue that allows informants to express their views, experiences, and understanding of batik in more depth. Each question is designed to stimulate critical reflection and exploration regarding how youth define batik in the context of their cultural identity. The interview was conducted face-to-face and recorded with the informant's consent to ensure accurate information collection (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

After the interview, the data collected through audio recording will be transcribed verbatim. This transcription process is important to ensure that all informant statements are recorded accurately. Next, this transcript will be read and categorized based on emerging themes relating to perceptions, cultural identity, and responses to innovations in batik design (Nowell et al., 2017). Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach, which allows researchers to identify significant patterns and themes from interview transcripts. The first step in this analysis is to identify initial themes based on the research questions and focus that have been determined. Next, the researcher will code the data, grouping the information into relevant categories. This process will be repeated several times to ensure that all relevant aspects of the data have been considered (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The results of this analysis will be interpreted to understand the social and cultural meaning associated with batik among the younger generation. Thus, the findings from this research can provide more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of the younger generation's perception of batik. These findings will reflect individual views and identify collective patterns that emerge in their perspective on the sustainability of cultural heritage. Furthermore, this research will explore how innovation in batik design can contribute to the sustainability and revitalization of the younger generation's interest in local cultural products. By understanding the psychological and social context that influences perception, more effective strategies can be found to promote batik as part of a cultural identity that is relevant and attractive to today's generation. It is important to consider the challenges batik faces in maintaining its existence amidst the increasingly strong currents of modernization and globalization. Thus, this research does not only focus on the results obtained from interviews but also seeks to construct a broader narrative about the relationship between Culture, identity, and innovation in the contemporary batik context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted by interviewing 20 teenagers aged 15- 19 in Yogyakarta. This interview was attended by eight teenage boys and 12 teenage girls. Of these 20 teenagers, all stated that they knew about batik. Then, from these answers, the researcher wanted to find out more about what they knew about batik and got various answers, which were grouped as follows;

Table 1. What Do You Know About Batik

Answer			
Cloth	Local Characteristic	Heritage	Other
11	6	2	1

Based on the table above, 11 teenagers answered that batik is a traditional cloth that has motifs originating from Indonesia. 6 other teenagers answered that batik is a characteristic of Javanese Culture, two other teenagers also answered that batik is a cultural heritage in Indonesia whose sustainability must be considered and one other teenager did not answer according to the question. Based on all these answers, teenagers have pretty good knowledge of batik. However, this research wanted to find out whether these teenagers knew about contemporary batik and got the answer that 13 teenagers knew about contemporary batik and seven teenagers did not know about contemporary batik. Based on these answers, the researcher raised questions about what they know about contemporary batik and received answers that were grouped as follows;

Table 2. What Do You Know About Contemporary Batik?

Answer		
Combination	Modern	Other
9	10	1

Based on the table above, nine teenagers answered that contemporary batik is a batik that combines various motifs to produce attractive designs. Ten other teenagers answered that contemporary batik is modern in design, motifs, and colors, while one other teenager did not answer the question. Based on these answers, teenagers have quite a good understanding of contemporary batik and its visuals.

Based on teenager's knowledge of batik, the researcher wants to know teenagers' views about batik, which is called Indonesia's cultural heritage, and received answers that were grouped as follows;

Table 3. Views Regarding Batik as Indonesia's Cultural Heritage

Answer			
Pride	Identity	Sustainability	Other
9	5	4	2

Based on the table above, it was found that nine teenagers answered that they were proud of batik, which is a traditional cloth that is Indonesia's cultural heritage; five other teenagers answered that batik was an identity for Indonesia, four other teenagers answered that batik must continue to be

preserved because batik has a vibrant history so its sustainability must be maintained. In comparison, two other teenagers did not answer the question. All answers concluded that teenagers were proud and pleased about batik as Indonesia's cultural heritage. Their pride in batik became a strong reason to see if contemporary batik could appeal to them. The following are the answers to this question;

Table 4. What is Interesting about Contemporary Batik Designs

Answer		
Color	Design	Other
3	15	2

Based on the table above, three teenagers answered that they were interested in contemporary batik because of its diverse and attractive color choices. Then, 15 other teenagers answered that contemporary batik was quite interesting because its design was simple and modern and followed current teenage trends. In comparison, two other teenagers did not answer the question. From this answer, teenagers find contemporary batik quite interesting. Judging from teenagers' interest in contemporary batik, they understand how to compare traditional batik with contemporary batik. It is in line with the answers they gave during the interview process; the following are grouped answers regarding this statement;

Table 5. How to Compare Traditional Batik with Contemporary Batik

Answer		
Standard	Design	Other
5	13	2

The answers listed in Table 5 show that five teenagers see the difference between traditional batik and contemporary batik as lying in their standards, where traditional batik has exceptional standards or rules in placing its motifs, while 13 others answered that contemporary batik can be seen its design, which tend to be more innovative, simpler, keep up with the times and are more flexible to express. The other two teenagers did not answer the question.

Teenagers' understanding of both traditional batik and contemporary batik is a sign that batik is still in demand by teenagers. However, regarding teenagers' interest in batik, it is still questionable whether batik should be made into the cultural identity of today's young generation. For this reason, when asked and received answers, these questions were from the 20 teenagers: 5 teenagers answered important, and 15 others answered critical. From these two answers, it can be concluded that teenagers agree that making batik the cultural identity of the younger generation is very necessary; apart from being a medium for expression, batik could also ensure its sustainability.

Batik as a cultural identity for the younger generation cannot be separated from freedom of expression, reflecting a teenager's identity. Contemporary batik is deemed suitable as a medium for expressing youth, which will support its users in showing their identity. In this case, 14 teenagers agree that contemporary batik can be used as a personal identity because contemporary batik can represent a teenager's interests and preferences for something. Meanwhile, six other people felt that batik could not yet be a medium for expressing themselves. This research found that these 20

teenagers liked traditional batik and contemporary batik. This case shows that teenagers accept traditional batik well but also support innovation in batik, so the existence of contemporary batik is a pleasure for them. However, in terms of interest, a comparison of the two batiks found that 13 teenagers were more interested in contemporary batik than traditional batik.

They like contemporary batik because they think it has a more straightforward design, a variety of colors, and is suitable for the current teenage clothing trends. Meanwhile, seven other teenagers stated that they were more interested in traditional batik because, according to them, it had value and essence in its motifs; apart from that, it was also full of meaning and philosophy in each motif. This answer shows that contemporary batik is the batik that is more popular with teenagers from a visual perspective. However, it still does not abandon existing traditional batik, and its sustainability must be maintained.

Teenagers' interest in batik is good enough to maintain sustainability in the current generation, but social media and the surrounding environment also influence this. It can be seen in the answers, which have been grouped as follows;

Table 6. Which Influences Interest in Batik More?

Answer		
Social Media	Environment	Both
12	7	1

From the table above, it can be seen that 12 teenagers admitted that what made them interested in batik was the role of social media, the many advertisements for batik clothing, and the trend of clothing using batik that fit the tastes of today's teenagers. Then, seven other teenagers admitted that their interest in batik was influenced by the environment around them, where they witnessed the use of batik directly at certain events and those who witnessed or were involved in batik production directly. Another teenager felt that these two things influenced their interest in batik.

This research found that almost all these teenagers had been involved and had experience in batik, whether making, wearing, or drawing batik motifs. There was only one teenager who had never had direct experience with batik. Even though some have never had Experience in seeing or using batik, all teenagers have the same answer: feeling pleased and proud of batik products. The suggestions and wishes for batik that are of interest to teenagers are conveyed as follows;

Table 7. Suggestions for Increasing Teenagers' Interest in Batik

Answer		
Support MSMEs	Design Innovation	Socialization
3	6	11

Based on Table 7, 3 teenagers hoped to support MSMEs more so that batik products could be better known to the public. Six teenagers suggested that batik designs should be further innovated to keep up with the times and adapt to current trends. Furthermore, 11 other teenagers wanted to socialize with batik and increase the activities involved so that it would be widely known to the public. The following is an example of contemporary batik;



Figure 1

Contemporary Batik Fabric (Left) & Clothing Using Contemporary Batik (Right). Gaheldi Documentation

This example of contemporary batik shows motif designs that complement the standards and tastes of teenagers who like simple and cheerful models. In terms of color, it looks different from traditional batik, whereas contemporary batik has varied and brighter colors to suit teenagers' cheerful nature. This contemporary batik can be used in any activity and is even suitable for everyday use. Examples of traditional batik are as follows;



Figure 2. Traditional Batik Cloth (Left) & Clothing Using Traditional Batik (Right).

Pinterest.com documentation

This example of traditional batik shows that the motifs look full and tight because traditional batik motifs still follow standards that have special meaning and philosophy. Judging from the clothes, even though they follow a casual model, they still look too stiff and mature for teenagers. Traditional batik is more suitable for formal events or traditional activities, but it does not rule out its use in everyday life. It is what the teenagers mentioned during the interview, which meant that they had hope that batik could continue to innovate with simpler designs and follow the tastes of teenagers.

CONCLUSION

This research explores the perceptions of teenagers aged 15-19 in Yogyakarta regarding contemporary batik design innovations. Based on the results of interviews with 20 informants, it can be concluded that teenagers have a good understanding of batik, both traditional and contemporary. They recognize batik as an important cultural heritage and show pride in Indonesia's cultural identity.

Teenagers prefer contemporary batik, which offers simple, modern designs that align with current trends. Aesthetic factors, the ability to express one's identity, and social media influence are the main drivers of their interest in contemporary batik. Nevertheless, they still appreciate the values and philosophy contained in traditional batik.

This research also identifies challenges in integrating traditional and modern elements in batik design. To increase the interest of the younger generation, it is recommended that artisans and designers innovate in design while still respecting the cultural heritage of batik. Apart from that, outreach and support for MSMEs and increasing direct experience in batik making can help attract teenagers' attention to batik products. Thus, innovation in contemporary batik design can be a bridge to maintain the sustainability of batik as part of a cultural identity that is relevant and attractive to the younger generation.

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