



THE EXISTENCE OF BATAK TOBA SOUVENIRS IN TOMOK MARKET AND THE PROBLEMS IT FACES

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Abstract

Products in Indonesia's creative industries are generally handicrafts, an expression of local cultural products with the aesthetic value from various arts. One of the famous traditional handicraft markets in North Sumatra is Tomok Market. Tomok Market is a crowded market visited by the tourists who come to Samosir Island, Lake Toba. This research was motivated by invading souvenir products from Java and Bali as a rival for local products in traditional markets, Tomok Samosir. This research is a qualitative descriptive study that examines the original description of various typical Batak Toba souvenirs sold in the Tomok Market, analyzes the number of Batak Toba souvenirs and compares them with other souvenirs available in the Tomok Market, and to find out what problems that cause a decrease in the presence of Batak Toba souvenirs. The results indicate the number of Batak Toba souvenirs such as Tunggal Panaluan, wood lizard carving, Replica of Bataknese Traditional House, Bataknese Calendar, and Hasapi is not as many as souvenir products from Java and Bali. This product is due Batak craftsmen who make souvenirs has decreased. Another factor is the lack of availability of indigenous wood as the primary material for making souvenirs, and the number of wood hunters in the region is declining. As a result, Batak Toba souvenirs were more expensive than other souvenirs from Java and Bali, and sales declined. In addition, the lack of advertising and information media that explain the cultural value and uniqueness of these local products diminishes the interest of tourists.

Keywords: *souvenirs, local products, Tomok Market.*

INTRODUCTION

North Sumatra has a very plural ethnic diversity, namely Batak, Simalungun, Karo, Mandailing, Malay, Nias, Phakpak Dairi and Batak Toba (Farihah et al., 2021). These tribes are a great potential of most other provinces. Every tribe has a legacy or heritage tradition that has lasted centuries ago. Therefore, the potential has to be a tremendous asset in the creative industries as a pillar of developing the creative economy sector. This potential can view from various prototypes, models and artwork, crafts or visual arts, the performing arts or dance, ritual processions and other ceremonies that lasted until now. One of the most efficient in presenting, marketing, unique variants, packaging and affordability are the creative industries sector-based craft or art, such as gift or souvenir.

Indonesia has so many tourist attractions. One of the most famous is Lake Toba, located in North Sumatra province. In addition, North Sumatra also has famous hill and beach tourist attractions. As a result, North Sumatra was selected as one of the Indonesian government's top tourist destinations under the "Visit Indonesia Program" (Lubis et al., 2019).

The Batak Toba is the majority of the tribes in the Lake Toba area. If we go on a trip to Lake Toba, we will find many traditional Batak Toba houses with their uniqueness. The architecture is unique, with saddle-shaped roofs (ijuk) covered with sugar palm fibers, as well as ornaments (Gorga) made of wood and metal carvings and some paintings (Anele, 2019). Tourist destinations play a

strategic role in the region's economic development and the community around them (Manurung et al., 2020); (Triase et al., 2019). Usually, souvenirs sold at a tourist spot will reflect the characteristics of the culture that exists in the area (Syahputra et al., 2020). The visitors of Lake Toba generally shop souvenirs at traditional tourist markets, namely Tomok Market. It sells various souvenirs typical of Batak Toba (Sitohang et al., 2019). However, the souvenir products traded at the Market are still dominated by-products outside the region, such as Java and Bali. About 80% of products sold in Tomok are derived from Yogyakarta, Bali and Bandung.

The existence of creative industries has created economic added value, even for social, cultural and civilized changes in human development. Three sub-sectors dominate Indonesia: culinary, fashion, and crafts (Erna, 2018). Local governments in the Lake Toba area are encouraged to cooperate with related parties to integrate policies, programs and tourism development activities related to urban branding based on creative industries (Sidauruk, 2018). Creative industries require to carry out promotional strategies to increase their competitiveness (Nasrudin & Agustina, 2015). But unfortunately, most of the creative industries around Lake Toba do not, including the creative industries engaged in handicrafts (Lumbanraja et al., 2018).

According to data from the Tourism Office of Samosir Regency, the number of visits in 2020 reached 405,203. Compared to the number of visits of 418,271 in 2019, it decreased slightly (Waspada id, 2021). The number of tourist visits to the reign of Samosir in 2019 and 2020 was considered reasonably good. Despite the Covid19 pandemic, visits to the Samosir region have not declined significantly between the two periods. The invading of outer souvenir products from Java and Bali eventually became the rival of local products in the traditional Market, Tomok Samosir. However, North Sumatra has a considerable potential to express the people community tradition. *Sigale-Gale* Statue, *Hoda-Hoda*, *Gaja Dompok*, *Ulu Paung*, *Singa-Singa*, *Tabu-Tabu*, *Poting* (water compartment from bamboo), *SAPA* (plates from wood), *Padung Curu-Curu* (earrings of metal) and many others are the work of a very expressive, indigenous, in identical of other tribes. Instead of the indigenous expression is the trademark and authenticity proof of foreign tourists visiting Samosir.

Generally, the tourists hardly recognize local products. As a result, the low market demand reduced the productivity of sculptors, carvers, and artisans in the Samosir area of Lake Toba. Concerning the existence of Lake Toba today, (Simatupang, 2017) in his article *Revitalization of Dalian Na Tolu* to improve cooperation of Lake Toba Preservation invites people to revive the cultural heritage, which once had the vitality of life as a means to give a new life that is productive to make a positive contribution to the cultural and social life followed by efforts to improve the economy. It is also concerned with typical local cultural imagery.

This study would discuss the original description of various Batak Toba souvenir products sold in the Tomok Market, analyze the comparison of the number of Batak Toba souvenirs with souvenirs

from other regions in the Tomok Market, and find out what problems have caused the decline in the existence of Batak Toba souvenirs. Batak Toba souvenirs.

METHOD

This study applied *descriptive qualitative research*. It aims to describe, explain, confirm and answer in more detail the problems to be studied by studying as much as possible an individual, a group or an event (Sugiono, 2016). The study was conducted in Tomok, Samosir Island, 200 km from Medan. The study was conducted to find out the original description of various Batak Toba souvenir products sold in the Tomok Market, to analyze the comparison of the number of Batak Toba souvenirs with souvenirs from other regions in the Tomok Market, and to find out what problems caused the decline in the existence of Batak Toba souvenirs. Observation and interviews are data collection techniques used in this study. Observations were made by looking directly at the souvenir trading activities at the Tomok Market. Researchers interviewed traders, artisans, and tourists, both local and foreign tourists who visited the Market, to obtain valid data. The data obtained were then analyzed following the objectives of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Souvenir Product Identification

The analysis in this study includes substance and descriptions of local products in the form of souvenirs made of wood or other materials. The substance of the nature of the souvenirs in the Tomok Market is related to the philosophical meaning. In other words, it is an actuality of philosophical values that are still valid for local communities (Batak). From the interview conducted with Syahrudin Harahap, a gallery owner around Samosir (tuk-tuk), there has been a creative distortion for souvenirs marketed in his gallery. This Market does not show the response of rejection from the local community. It can assume that the philosophical meaning of art and souvenir products is no longer sacred. The loss of transcendent power on these souvenirs is the influence of productivity in the quantity scale. Generally, these objects are only expressions of the identity of the community. Information about the essence of the product cannot be presented due to the absence of facilities or media such as brochures or leaflets that describe it correctly. Without the brochure or leaflets, it will be complicated to explain the nature and essence of local souvenir products in Tomok Market. Whereas, with this media, tourists can understand these objects' essence and uniqueness.

Based on the research findings conducted during observation, Batak Toba souvenirs in the Tomok Market are still quite a lot to be found. However, according to traders, only about 2 to 3 people in a month buy these objects. Generally, they see uniqueness and price considerations. However, they do not get authentic information about the natural meaning of the object. Many of these objects is a myth in the cultural order of Batak society, especially in Samosir.

In history, the very sacred Batak Toba souvenir is *Tunggal Panaluan*, which means the magic stick owned by kings in Batak and Batak traditional figures. *Tunggal Panaluan* stick for the Batak community is a symbol of the power owned by the owner. Although today the Batak people have embraced Christianity, myths and legends about the stick are still attached to the Culture of Batak Society. However, the function is no longer sacred as during their ancestors. At present, the *Tunggal Panaluan* stick is made in mini sizes so that the object could be a souvenir and have economic value. The price of *Tunggal Panaluan* with the original size can reach 5-10 million rupiah. But, with the mini size, it only costs around 400 thousand to 1 million rupiahs. *Tunggal Panaluan* has a variety of old-fashioned ornaments and motifs. This place should be more interesting if explained in brochures or other promotional media. Understanding and knowledge about these objects can attract foreign and domestic tourists.

The ratio of Number of Batak Toba souvenirs with other souvenirs in Tomok Market

The number of souvenir items invaded the Market in Tomok souvenirs ranging in the thousands. At least there were 500 pieces of souvenir items contained in each shop located in the souvenir market. From the observations, there were around 40 productive shops, so that there are about 2.000 souvenir items in the Tomok Market. From interviews with traders in Tomok Market, the number of local souvenirs, especially from Batak Toba's pattern, is decreasing compared to previous years. This product is due to the reduction in Batak artisans who make souvenir items. This impact decreases tourist interest, especially local tourists, buying souvenir items from Samosir. Meanwhile, the best-selling sales are dominated by accessories primarily derived from Bali and Java. The following compares the number of Batak Toba souvenirs with souvenirs from Java and Bali in the Tomok Market.

Table 1. The ratio of Batak Toba souvenirs with other souvenirs

No	Souvenirs	Best-selling Size	Ratio
1	<i>Tunggal Panaluan</i>	50 – 100 cm	1: 5
2	Replica of Bataknese Traditional House	20 cm length, 10 cm width, 20 cm height	3: 5
3	Bataknese Calender	20 - 30 cm by hanging on the wall	4: 5
4	<i>Hapi</i>	Made of wood with a strong rope. 40 cm in measurement, it seems like a boat.	2: 5



Figure 1. Statues from Bali for sale in Tomok Market

Another factor that makes the decline in local souvenirs is that artisans still use wood materials. At the same time, local wood and timber seekers are also increasingly reduced due to environmental regulation and community specialization in finding wood in the forest.



Figure 2. Tomok Market is filled with accessories from Bali and Java

The types and motifs of souvenirs that are of interest to tourists

The materials and motifs used in Tomok distinguish the different types of souvenirs. The primary material used is wood, carved and carved according to the motifs that characterize the Toba Batak. The

motifs used are generally mystical: the shape of a human head, lizard, Batak calendar, lions in a Batak traditional house, tunggal panaluan stick, palehat stick, ulu paung statue rumbi- rumbi, hombung, and Batak knife.



Figure 3. Batak Toba Souvenirs

From an interview with one of the souvenir traders in Tomok, Ibu Sinaga, the most popular is generally the Tunggal Panaluan motif. This stick is a Batak Toba characteristic thick with historical, mythical and mystical meanings. Batak Toba people from abroad always buy Tunggal Panaluan as a souvenir or gift for their relatives. In addition to its uniqueness, it also has a legendary history among the Batak Toba people. But this is not the case with other tourists. Generally, they do not have information about the nature of Tunggal Panaluan. Although the shape is unique, it does not necessarily attract tourists to buy it.



Figure 4. One of the craftsmen who still survived in the Tomok Market.

Tourists who bought a Tunggal Panaluan were more interested after hearing about the story and the legend of Tunggal Panaluan. But unfortunately, not all traders can explain fluently the legend of the Tunggal Panaluan. Therefore, if this information is contained in a brochure or leaflet, it will encourage the tourists to buy it. Likewise, on other objects, there are still many other motifs with unique and exciting stories and legends. Unfortunately, there were no printed promotional materials about Batak Toba souvenirs in the Tomok Market at this research. Promotional media is beneficial to increase the number of visitors to a tourist spot and the income of the creative industry in the vicinity (Awais, 2021). According to traders, brochures or leaflets were made by the Tourism Office of Samosir Regency. However, the number is not enough and is not sustainable. Because the brochure is no longer available, the traders have to explain orally the nature of the souvenirs they sell. However, this cannot do optimally because traders also have to serve buyers with different products.

Traders sell Tunggal Panaluansouvenirs in various sizes. Starting from small about 40 cm, 70 cm, 100 cm to reach 150 cm. Each size has a different price ranging from 400 thousand rupiahs to 20 million rupiahs. Although sometimes the price is relatively high, compared to other carving types, Tunggal Panaluan has a more complicated carving shape than others. Even for the 150 cm size, it is made with a plug-in system for easy portability.

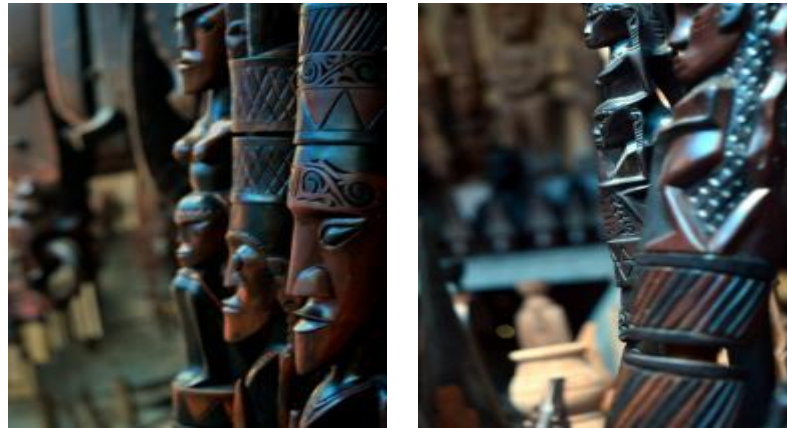


Figure 5. Tunggul Panaluan in Tomok Market

In addition to the Tunggul Panaluan, there is also wood lizard carving, the prima donna of typical Batak souvenirs. The lizard motif is a motif that has historical and mystical values. Commonly, only Batak Toba people can understand the meaning behind these objects. The general public, especially foreign tourists, hardly understand the symbolic meaning behind the souvenirs. So they need information media that can explain the nature, both legends and myths behind the souvenirs. The information posted on the media, such as leaflets or brochures, will add to the attraction and attract local and foreign tourists to buy it because some legendary stories or myths are unique and exciting.



Figure 6. wood lizard carving

The next souvenir in demand is a miniature of Bolon House or a replica of a traditional house. In terms of manufacture, Bolon House souvenirs do not have complicated carvings. The shape and carving are much simpler than other products. So that Bolon House souvenirs are in great demand by domestic tourists, students or college students because the prices are relatively low, starting from 50 thousand rupiahs to 100 thousand rupiahs. The replica of this traditional house is made from the type of pule wood, which is softwood and is easily obtained in the Samosir forest area. However, it does not mean dominance in sales because there are many other, much cheaper options in the Tomok Market, namely accessories from Yogyakarta and Bandung.

Besides the replica of *Bolon* House, another interesting souvenir is the Batak Toba calendar. This calendar is called Portal. This calendar is made of a combination of wood and bamboo engraved with Batak letters or script. In general, this calendar is difficult to understand. However, because of its uniqueness with a size or dimensions of approximately 20 cm, this calendar is still in demand by domestic and foreign tourists. This calendar is not intended for calendars but for predicting auspicious days. Until now, the Batak group that still uses it is Parmalim. Parmalee is a sect of Batak ancestral religious beliefs.



Figure 7. Replica of Bataknese Traditional House

Batak Toba souvenirs that are also still in demand are *Hasapi* musical instruments. *Hapi* is a traditional musical instrument with strings or strings like a guitar. Although enthusiasts or music players only play a musical instrument, non-music circles also demand souvenirs typical of the Batak Toba.



Figure 8. Hapi

CONCLUSION

Currently, the competition between Batak Toba souvenirs and other souvenirs sold in the Tomok Market is very tight. The existence of typical Batak Toba souvenirs in the Tomok Market is decreasing compared to souvenirs from Java and Bali islands. This situation happens for several reasons. These souvenirs are due to the reduction in Batak artisans who make souvenir items. Another factor is the lack of availability of local wood as the primary material for making souvenirs, and the number of wood seekers in the area is decreasing. This process makes the price of Batak Toba souvenirs more expensive than other souvenirs from Java and Bali, so sales have decreased. In addition, the lack of promotional media or information media that describes the cultural values and uniqueness of these local products causes tourists to be less interested. But even so, Batak Toba souvenirs still have buyers. They buy because they are interested in Batak culture and know these items' historical value and mystical value. Some Batak Toba souvenirs that are still in demand by tourists are *Tunggal Panaluan* stick, Wood lizard carving, Replica of Bataknese Traditional House, Bataknese Calendar and *Hasapi*.

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