

Twenty Years of Existence of Damar Kurung Gresik: Analysis of Tajfel&Turner's Identity Theory

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

Damar Kurung is a Gresik Visual cultural heritage popularised by Masmundari since it was raised by cultural experts and exhibited in national galleries. In 2017, *Damar Kurung* was officially recognised by the government as an intangible visual culture. This will allow the research to study Damar Kurung further, which is now used as one of Gresik's cultural identities. The research method used is a case study that focuses on journal outputs and social media track records as the primary data and an interview method to confirm the analysis results; the research object is a journal with the theme of Damar Kurung from 2004-2024. The theory used in dissecting the data is the Tajfel and Turner identity theory, studied from the employer branding perspective. This research will find cultural value for psychological, functional, and economic benefits. In addition, it also explains how commodities help to raise *their self-esteem*. The usefulness of the commodity to the environment. Community acceptance in the damar kurung and the last. Moreover, the evaluation of the group tries to determine and use it as a reference material for other groups, specifically through social comparisons in the form of attribute values or characteristics. This research will improve understanding of how cultural heritage can be preserved and promoted as an important part of regional identity.

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1. Introduction

Damar Kurung, as a cultural product, can have a positive influence on its connoisseurs. So many meanings can be transferred to the symbol of Damar Kurung. It can be used for all groups, especially children or teenagers who like pictorial decorations (Alif, 2018). Indirectly, Damar Kurung can affect a child's mindset and imagination. Damar Kurung is a handicraft that arises as a composition of the shape of a lantern, becoming a symbol of cultural heritage that has been made for generations to welcome the arrival of the month of Ramadan. The lantern, painted on each side with images of social activities and a combination of bright colours, makes Damar Kurung a work of art that represents the life of the Gresik people with all their joy. The symbols depicted in Damar Kurung's work communicate and express what Masmundari sees (Christianna et al., 2023; Suardana, 2013).

The image of Damar Kurung, which is used as a typical intangible heritage of Gresik, contains a touch of Masmundari's signature in 2017, so it has a style that is easy to recognise as an icon of Gresik. In addition to being applied to Damar Kurung, Masmundari's style images are also used as Geber

decorations and Gresik government banners. Damar Kurung, with Masmundari-style paintings, also decorates the Bumbu Jangkep restaurant and displays it along the protocol road of Gresik city. This makes the Masmundari style Damar Kurung painting known to the public as one of the visual cultures of the city of Gresik. The concept of Masmundari's Damar Kurung painting can elevate the local culture of the Gresik people. Some of the themes raised in the painting are the themes of activities that only exist in Gresik, such as the Milkfish market and the Earth puppet rite (Affifuddin & Marsudi, 2021). Other themes include daily life, such as watching *Hadrah* music, *ngremo Manang*, catching dragonflies, and playing mounds and kites. These themes have indirectly recorded traces of the development of Greek culture from year to year.

Characteristics of Damar Kurung's Painting Masmundari's Style always displays a cheerful atmosphere, the imagination poured into the work makes Damar Kurung's paintings very interesting. The figures displayed are primarily women; the themes raised often show women's social activities. The genre factor of the painter, who is often associated with his community, can affect the creation of figures in his works. The figure displayed by Masmundari in Damar Kurung will not be separated from the social influence he experiences daily. It is mentioned in Indrakusuma (2003) the theory of thought, according to Art Van Zoest, that the interconnectedness of several social assumptions can affect the use of signs. Thoughts and attitudes come from individuals, but group activities that are carried out daily cannot be separated from social power. The image in the Masmundari style Damar Kurung contains elements of tradition combined with religious, social, and educational elements. The meaning that results from combining these elements has many messages from its creator. During this time, Damar Kurung, which the Masmundari family developed, saw a change in the concept of images in planting values.

Identity is the most essential aspect of the concept. Each identity element will affect how a commodity perceives its phenomenal world, observes it, and assesses it as it functions. In reality, identity is closely related to oneself as an actor or community. Identity dramatically affects the behaviour of an individual and vice versa. Self-identity is also influenced by the self as an actor (Kusmanto, 2015) in visual identity, which can be seen from the visual existence embedded in a commodity, namely Damar Kurung. According to Tajfel, in his book (Weismann, 2009), the general assumptions regarding social identity are as follows: 1) Every commodity always seeks to maintain or elevate its self-esteem: they strive to form a positive concept. 2) Social groups or categories and members associated with positive or negative value connotations. Social identity may be positive or negative depending on the evaluation of 3) which refers to social consensus, even across groups) that group contributes to an individual's social identity. 4) Evaluation of one group is to try to determine and also as a reference for other groups, specifically through social comparisons in the form of attribute values or characteristics. The value of the concept of identity can be examined through employer branding, which is the strategy of a community. Employer branding aims to increase the attractiveness and reputation of a community. Because it will be seen by the community when they recognise a community or culture in their society (Anggraini, 2024). The objectives of this research are as follows: 1) Explain how Damar Kurung takes care of and improves its self-esteem from the perspective of employer branding. 2) Analyze community support for the Damar Kurung self-esteem improvement program. 3) Evaluate the implementation and results of programs related to Damar Kurung.

2. Materials and Methods

The research method uses a case study approach with interdisciplinary studies. This research was conducted by collecting data from the results of social media, Instagram, damar kurung, and journals in the 2004-2024 time range, as many as 32 journals. The main goal of a documentation study is to collect accurate and relevant data by analysing the digital footprint. The use of interdisciplinary studies is because this study requires data that cannot be analysed from one discipline alone. Viewed from the perspective of cultural identity, this study analyses the concept of Tajfel and Turner's identity theory through *employer branding*, according to Ambler and Barrow. In order to uncover the deep meaning, this research was carried out using an interpretive qualitative method related to the study of the identity of *Damar Kurung*. Qualitative methods can support research conducted naturally as one of the direct data sources. This allows research to explore the meaning of each phenomenon and synchronise it with the theory used. The data validity technique was carried out by triangulation, which compared the findings with in-depth observations and interview results.

3. Results and Discussions

Damar Kurung is an original traditional art from the Gresik district. It is a paper lantern with a bamboo frame on the sides filled with paintings about daily life. The picture's theme includes households, markets, streets, mosques, and beaches. However, what makes it unique from other works of art is that the story in *the damar kurung* always moves to the left, like the movement of Arabic writing. Having a picture character that uses bright colours of yellow, red, green, and pink seems inseparable from the big name of its originator, Masmundari, which is now continued by his daughter named Rukayah.



Figure 1 Rukayah Putri Masmundari

Source: (Doc. Masmundari family)

Every commodity always strives to maintain or raise *its self-esteem*, *Damar Kurung*. *The self-esteem of Damar Kurung* has been built since Masmundari was exhibiting. His work has been widely known to the public since it was exhibited at Bentara Budaya Jakarta in November 1987, it shows the characteristics of *Damar Kurung*, which has similarities with the concept of wayang beber but has an honest childish style, which is often rarely a characteristic of artists. In a study by Ika Ismurdiawati 2005, he also mentioned the unique features of *Damar Kurung* that can elevate *self-esteem*, namely a

flat time space and an image flow that resembles a temple image. The traditional art, which is the pride icon of the Gresik regency, is still echoing. Although Masmundari, who popularised the art of damar kurung painting, was called by Allah in December 2005, damar kurung still exists today, even becoming increasingly contested by art collectors.

Social groups or categories and members are associated with the connotation of positive or negative values of *Damar Kurung*. In the exposure of the 32 articles that have been analysed, no one has explored the negative things of *Damar Kurung* or what causes it in a negative direction. Many media often document *Masmundari-style Damar Kurung*, including the daily newspaper *Surya*, *Jawa Pos*, or *Radar Gresik*, which covers dialogues about Damar Kurung, padusan events, Damar Kurung Islamic boarding schools, and the Damar Kurung festival which is held once a year in the month of Ramadan, into comics, animations, illustrations, and virtual museums. The community's concern and enthusiasm for the development of Damar Kurung is shown by the development and socialisation of Damar Kurung in the international arena as done by the Daun studio, which invited its students to hold an exhibition at Saatchi Gallery [London, England](#), from the end of March to the beginning of April 2016. Moreover, for the 2024 program, there is a 1 village, 1 *Damat Kurung*, initiated by Mr. Kris, a Gresik artist and cultural expert who owns the Mataseger studio.

Damar Kurung, from the point of view that refers to social consensus, which is part of the condition to become an identity, has been reflected in the theme of the image raised in *Damar Kurung products*, mainly the Masmundari style. The relationship between the symbols in *the Damar Kurung painting* shows that the culture of the Gresik people is more inclined to religious activities, so the cultural impact shows that almost all activities have Islamic elements in them. On the other hand, the symbolic relationship between one theme and another shows that hard work, diligence, obedience, appreciation, creativity, and love for the homeland have become a culture for the people of Gresik. The attractiveness of *employer branding* has been measured using a scale of Four. The scale was developed by Berthon et al. in (Sihite, 2015) and is derived from the Ambler & Barrow dimension for psychological, functional, and economic benefits. This scale consists of five dimensions:

a. Interest Rate,

This value describes the extent to which the public is interested in commodities, in this case, *Damar Kurung*. Five studies discuss *Damar Kurung*, which is used as a medium and a means of expression (Maghfiroh & Damayanti, 2018), evidence of the continued existence of festival activities and *the Damar Kurung community* proves that the community is still enthusiastic about preserving its visual artefacts. The activities in disseminating *Damar Kurung* were workshops that delivered the material in Masmundari's typical style. However, workshop participants were free to express themselves to foster creativity and develop imagination. The theme raised is finally biased according to the participants' social capital. If taught in schools of adolescence, the results of the images are based on the culture of that generation. So, the interest in learning, understanding and developing *Damar Kurung* is still a trend in the Gresik community.

b. Social Values

The value of Damar Kurung's paintings is divided into three elements. The social field is more inclined to direct people to respect each other, and the character education contained in Damar Kurung's paintings directs them continuously to work hard and love each other (Prayoga & Ismail, 2022). The figure displayed by Masmundari in Damar Kurung will not be separated from

the social influence he experiences daily. It is mentioned in Indrakusuma (2003) the theory of thought, according to Art Van Zoest, that the interconnectedness of several social assumptions can affect the use of signs. Thoughts and attitudes come from individuals, but group activities that are carried out daily cannot be separated from social power. The values contained in Damar Kurung's paintings are oriented to community culture so that the surrounding environment indirectly shapes the community's character (Christianna et al., 2022). The relevant meaning of the Damar Kurung painting is a mission that refers to an invitation to obey Islam The field of religion that invites people always to obey Allah, this meaning contains a religious mission that is influenced by the Gresik environment as a city of *Santri*/student.

c. Economic Value

Damar Kurung has the potential to be commercialised, as evidenced by previous research that made souvenirs in the form of Damar Kurung, a building architect who originated the idea of Damar Kurung to become a culinary house. Fashion design is the source of art ideas (Christianna & Renaningtyas, 2018; Dheva & Safirin, 2024). In addition, when viewed more deeply regarding identity, Damar Kurung originally functioned as an ornamental lamp, which was part of a craft object. However, after recognising visual cultural identity, Damar Kurung was modified into an object of identity of a city with a higher novelty.

The production of Damar kurung cannot be found permanently because it is seasonal; Damar kurung is only produced when there are activities, although the Damar kurung community is still active in selling damun on a small scale because it is no longer a needed item but a cultural identity item. Market demand is more towards training for manufacturing knowledge in the form of workshops, not as commonly traded products. For consumers, Damar Kurung is a medium to commemorate culture. Again, as stated earlier and from the results of interviews with the Masmundari family, the environmental and social impacts of the product's production and use have made Damar Kurung's price soar, especially in the context of increasing consumer demand for products at certain events.

d. Development Value

This value is more focused on the material contained in *Damar Kurung*; the development of culture will change over time. However, the philosophy of positive values is still embedded in it (Christianna, 2018), examples that have developed are children's games, which are found in the previous Damar Kurung are cockfighting, playing pigeons, and jagongan (gathering and chatting with friends). While what is now developing more towards the image of children playing cub lek-cub lek sewing, ankle, or gobak Sodor, the development is not too significant. However, some games have been considered inappropriate because they are included in the category of gambling, which incidentally is prohibited by the government. They still maintain the traditional game to carry the cultural message but leave what is considered taboo.

From the analysis of the stages or conditions, it can be said that Damar Kurung's identity met the criteria. Supported by employer branding analysis, it is reinforced that Damar kurung has many values that should be maintained. However, it needs to be re-examined that almost all journals that discuss Damar Kurung take the positive side, although some opposing sides are implicitly conveyed, it would be more scientific if there was a separate study regarding criticism of Damar Kurung so that

later there would be improvements. Some of those who are intertwined against the opposing side include different cultures that are now more developed; cultures are influenced not only by time but also by the underlying regulations. When Damar Kurung is one of the cultural identities, pseudo-regions should be given attention in its spread so that it does not be used only in some areas.

4. Conclusion

The self-esteem of Damar Kurung has been built since the time when Masmundari was exhibiting. In Bentara Budaya Jakarta in November 1987, it shows the characteristics of Damar Kurung which has similarities with the concept of wayang beber but has a naïve style (childish and honest), in addition to having characteristics such as the technique of drawing temples, namely flat time space. Damar Kurung. In the presentation of 32 articles that have been analyzed, there are a lot of media that often document Masmundari-style Damar Kurung, including the daily newspaper Surya, Jawa Pos, or Radar Gresik which covers the dialogue about Damar Kurung, padusan events, Damar Kurung Islamic boarding schools, and the Damar Kurung festival which is held once a year in the month of Ramadan. animation, illustrations, to virtual museums. The community's concern and enthusiasm for the development of Damar Kurung is shown by developing and socializing Damar Kurung in the international arena. As done by the Daun studio which invited its students to hold an exhibition at Saatchi Gallery, London, England. As well as the 2024 program, there are 1 villages 1 Damar Kurung. Socially, it is mainly Masmundari's style. The relationship between the symbols contained in the Damar Kurung painting shows that the culture of the Gresik people is more inclined to religious activities. On the other hand, the symbolic relationship between one theme and another shows that hard work, diligence, obedience, appreciation, creativity, and love for the homeland have become a culture for the people of Gresik. Bracket resin has many values that are worth maintaining. Culture is not only influenced by time, but also influenced by the underlying regulations. When Damar Kurung is one of the cultural identities, the whole region should be given attention in its distribution, so that it does not tend to be spread only in some areas. However, it needs to be re-examined that from the entire journal that discusses Damar Kurung, it takes the positive side, although there are some negative sides that are implicitly conveyed. So in the next research, it is recommended to critically analyze the shortcomings of Damar Kurung to be able to develop as one of the visual cultural heritage in Gresik.

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