

Problems in Consumerism at Senen Jakarta and the Solutions

May Gen (Ret) Bibit Santoso

Member of Expert Professionals on Social Cultural and Defence,
Institute of The National Resilience, The Republic of Indonesia

Abstract: Because researchers are curious about how consumerism is affecting urban life in District Senen, Central Jakarta, this study aims to identify the declining cultural values that influence urban consumerism understand the factors that affect people's lives, particularly those in the Senen Sub-district community of Jakarta and gauge the influence of consumerism on the social and economic life of this community in Senen. The research applies qualitative methods to examine the phenomenon of social and human problems. In this methodology, the researcher fully examines the results of officials report from the local government of District of Senen, Central Jakarta, responses of residents and data gathered from documents, interviews and field observations. This study found that television significantly influences consumer habits. Television is a dominant influence in Senen Sub-district urban life. Because both young people and adults are always watching television, themes presented on television and included in print media have become dominant in urban life. The total population is expected to increase faster and unemployment increases the rate of theft which affects the safety of the community, rendering people less comfortable. The use of radio and the internet was found to have no significant effect on the whole society. People generally watch television instead of relying on radio or the internet for information because they find it more practical and economical. No significant difference was found in consumerism displayed in shopping malls and traditional markets.

Key words: Consumerism, public security, television, radio, internet, significant impact

INTRODUCTION

Globalization characterized by the "triple T" forces, the development of information and communication technologies, transportation and tourism has led to the absorption of other cultures including various forms of consumer culture. This process has occurred in central Jakarta's Senen sub-district community. According to Featherstone (2007), consumtivism is an ideology for consumptive life whereby people are no longer considering the functionality or usability when purchasing goods but considering the prestige attached to the goods through print and electronic mass media influence. The term is often used to denote consumerism. According to Indonesian Wikipedia, consumerism is an ideology that leads a person or group to consume or use goods excessively or unsustainable consumption. The ideology can become a mental illness. The use of the word has been abused and thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville have stated that uncontrolled of consumerism will cause relative poverty (relative deprivation) within a society (Abdullah, 2009). According to Suparlan in conditions of economic crisis such as those experienced by Indonesia, consumerism continues to increase (Adarno, 1981). This argument is consistent with the findings of Kartjono who claims that current Indonesian

political developments in Indonesia are causing consumerism to meet artificial needs due to both structural and cultural factors influencing Indonesian people since the Dutch colonial era.

The theory of globalization emerged as a result of developments in social theory and particularly as a reaction to modernization theory (ADB, 2009). Instead of focusing only on the West, globalization theory examines transnational processes that occur autonomously, independent from any nation or region (Aldin, 2006). The tendency towards homogeneity is often associated with cultural imperialism of a particular culture.

This tendency is most visible in Marxian and neo-Marxian theory but, it can also be found in other theories such as Durkheim's thoughts about the division of labor; Weber's work on the birth of capitalism in the West and its failure to thrive in other parts of the world; Simmel's analysis of the cultural tragedy caused by the proliferation of human-generated products; the work of the Chicago School and conflict theory that pays attention to the relationship between workers, employees, leaders and followers. Far less attention is devoted to consumption and consumers. Exceptions exist such as the famous works of Veblen (1899) on "excessive consumption" and Simmel's writings about money and

style but most social theorists focus on production more than consumption. Nonetheless, consumerism is a great danger to the social and ethical substance of the Indonesian nation.

These methods can inform knowledge and associated actions (Arikunto, 1993). The field of cultural studies is built upon an organized method of discussing objects which is an underlying problem and gathered around key concepts, ideas and points of attention. Although, it only indicates the naming of a fragment or a glimpse of an intellectual project that is constantly changing, cultural studies at times interprets itself by Barker (2011).

According to Marcuse, a critical thinker from the German Frankfurt School, artificial needs are emerging in Indonesian society. These apparent needs encourage Indonesian people to enjoy and consume things, erode critical power and popularize things that are instant and fast. This pattern signifies consumerism (Arikunto, 1996a).

The social impact of consumerism inevitably occurs in Indonesian society. Alexis de Tocqueville claimed that uncontrolled consumerism in society causes relative deprivation (relative poverty) (Arikunto, 1996b). That is people feel poor not due to actual financial depreciation but by comparing their lives with the lives of others (Armando, 1998). Urbanization occurs when a city begins to expand, encroaching on surrounding towns or villages (Bakel, 1984).

Society itself can be defined as a unit of human life that interacts according to certain customs that are sustainable and bound by a sense of shared identity (Bandrillard, 1998).

Urban society is constantly trying to improve the quality of life and accept outside influences that encourage technology. Information technology is growing rapidly in urban communities because its use significantly improves the quality of people's lives (Barker, 2011). Urban communities tend to buy goods that are of interest so that their work supports only the enjoyment of products (Baumam, 2007).

According to Suparlan, consumerism continues to increase in Indonesia despite the conditions of economic crisis the country is currently experiencing (Belinda, 2004). In general, Indonesians work as private employees, construction or factory workers, maids and merchants with a small fraction serving as government officials (Boudrillard, 1970).

The formation of urban society can eliminate the target. Hall (2008) demonstrates that although cities can be managed very effectively, plans may not accommodate the consumption values of the culture. Hall bases his understanding on analysis of prominent cases and people.

Only approximately 7% of the total population lives in housing provided by the government and many urban residents are less able to be able to have a home despite relocation plans and a variety of considerations and incentives (Boudrillard, 2004).

The risks of failure of the theory of monopoly capital and imperialism are categorized by Gilroy and indicated by Giddens as a weak point of vital assistance (Burton, 2008). According to Soerawidjaja in Wijendaru, capitalist ethics create a belief that people who are exploited do not feel the pain (Chaney, 2006).

Formulation of the problem: The nature of urban life and the problems that it faces attracted attention from several early American sociologists in the Chicago School which concentrated on researching urbanization and its problems (Coafee, 2009).

According to Ian Connell in his article titled "TV news and social contract", 'impartiality' of television news and the latest socio-political events are now widely regarded as a myth. This study aims to explain how the impact of consumerism on the cultural values of society and the social and economic lives of those in urban communities in District Senen, Central Jakarta. The three main issues are:

- How consumerism operates in cultural practices in the lower, middle and upper economic classes in District Senen, Central Jakarta
- The factors that influence consumerism in urban life, particularly in the Central Jakarta Senen sub-district community
- The discovery of impact phenomena occurring on the main television media thus lowering the cultural values of society through consumerism that affects the social and economic life of urban communities in District Senen, Central Jakarta

Authenticity research: Research on the level of consumerism in the life of an urban community in District Senen, Central Jakarta, must be performed on current objective conditions. A study by HW Dick found that from 1960 to 1976, urban public spending was double spending in rural areas and 50% of total spending occurred Jakarta, including the Senen District. The cultural and economic impact of consumerism on urban life in the Central Jakarta's Senen District has not previously been studied to support the region's economic resilience.

Research benefits: The authors hope this study can yield the following three outcomes:

- Recognizing problems with consumerism that can affect the economic life of the people of the capital, as represented by Senen Sub-district
- Practical utility for policy makers in the field of urban consumerism
- Identifying factors related to the consumerism that can affect the economic outlook of a society

Research purposes: This research aims to identify and explain the main issues of consumerism in urban public life in Senen Sub-district, Central Jakarta. Specifically, this study has the following goals:

- To identify the process by which declining values in consumer culture has influenced the lives of those in urban communities in Jakarta's Senen District
- To understand the factors that affect urban consumerism, particularly in Central Jakarta's Senen Sub-district community
- To determine the influence of consumerism on social and economic factors in Senen

Theoretical basis

Cultural studies: Cultural studies will not be able to retain its name without a focus on culture. As Hall has stated, "What I mean by culture here is the actual environment for a variety of practices, representations, language and customs of a particular community. What is meant is the various forms of mutually contradictory sense very deeply rooted and help shape, the lives of many" (Corner and Pels, 2003).

They are produced, displayed, used and understood in a particular social context (Dick, 1985). Cultural studies focuses on three related issues: "the production of cultural, textual analysis of these meanings and cultural studies undertaken and the lived experience". Research in this field is directed toward all forms of culture, including "works of art, popular music, popular literature, news, television and the mass media". A study of these cultural forms is influenced by theories, such as post culturalism and post modernism and Denzin's interaksionalisme symbolic attempt to associate study and theory.

According to Denzin, symbolic interactionism should play a greater role in cultural studies. One basic problem is that symbolic interactionism tends to ignore the idea of linking the "symbol" to "interaction" and "communication" which is the main concern of cultural studies. Denzin attempted to resolve this issue.

"In an effort to escort the symbolic interactionist perspective of cultural studies, I chose to focus on the terms and terteorikan lost their perspective. Of course,

there is a paradox here; because communication is interaction and that interaction can walk, interacting parties must communicate" (Engel *et al.*, 1993).

Consumerism: According to Featherston (2005), consumerism originally from consumerism is a consumption ideology to live consumptive. Moment mark one of the processes which are formed as individuals. What it means to be a person, subjectivity and how to describe yourself to others, identity became a major concern of the field of cultural studies in the 1990.

Cultural studies scholars disagree on how to explain the field's most significant concepts because the field leaves room for healthy debate and argument which can be rude, boisterous and hostile (Evans, 2002).

According to Habermas (1964), ethics concerns consensus because it is produced through discourse to obtain a joint agreement on values. Rahmanto (2009) said that viewed from the perspective of communication, consumerism can be seen as a result of the manufacturer's marketing efforts through various media. "The media itself today is experiencing rapid expansion so that the message to buy and buy is everywhere" he said through, the critical paradigm of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, particularly Herbert Marcuse's Critical Theory in "The Human Dimension", this study seeks to understand and explain why people continue to suffer (Farris, 1986).

Materialism: Materialism is an ideology or a stream of thought that assumes that the world is nothing besides nature and the physical world is the result of material interactions.

Materialism is different from ontological theories based on dualism or pluralism. In providing the sole explanation of reality, the opposite of materialism is idealism (Featherstone, 2007).

Media theory: McLuhan (1965) of the University of Toronto wrote that "the medium is the mass-age". We live in a unique era in the history of human civilization: the era of mass media.

McLuhan's theory is the core of technological determinism which focuses on the discovery or development of communication technology that actually changes human culture. As Karl Marx assumed that history is determined by the productive forces, according to McLuhan, human existence is determined by changes in the communication mode.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Site selection: Central Jakarta's Senen District is located in the middle of the city. This region has a high

population density in which almost 50% of the urban immigrant population lives. Most Senen district residents, both urban migrants and indigenous people, fall in the middle class with average incomes but they still measure below the average eligibility standards for urban residents. Rapid advances in technology have facilitated the construction of various community facilities, such as modern shopping areas, hotels and entertainment facilities and the wide availability of means of mass media and communication but traditional markets are also still present.

This study focused on Central Jakarta's Senen District. Community groups were divided into three groups: lower, middle and upper classes. This area was selected because the region is a benchmark in the capital region of Central Jakarta which is a strategic location to gauge the influence of consumerism on social and economic factors through the mass media and shopping centers.

The upper class in Senen includes those who are able to rent rooms at the Plaza Atrium. Commercial facilities in the Senen District include auto parts shops, grocery stores and well-known luxury apparel brand stores. The area also includes office spaces, hotels, restaurants, workshops, banks, bookstores and a motorcycle dealership.

Methods used: This study applies a qualitative research process to investigate a social phenomenon. In this method, the researchers fully examine statements made by Senen Sub-district officials and the views of local respondents and they conducted a study based on data gathered in the field. This study examines the activities of 32 members of the community from the lower, middle and upper classes members from April 25, 2011 until July 25, 2011. The researchers used three key methodological tools: documentation, observation and interview.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study indicated that the Central Jakarta Senen Sub-district community includes mostly new urban residents from various ethnic groups in Indonesia who initially came to earn a better living than they could from where they originated, even if the improvement in their lives was only psychological.

Some people in the study succeeded in attaining a living that fulfilled all their needs. For example, researchers met a rice field salesman who earned more than 10 million dollars per month. However, the income expectations of most urban dwellers are unmet.

Based on public records about Senen Sub-district demographics, most Senen Sub-district community residents are middle class. Globalization has significantly increased prices without a commensurate increase in income in many countries such as Indonesia. Middle class urban residents in places such as the Senen district in particular are encountering an increasingly heavy burden to meet their everyday needs.

However, conditions have little influence on consumer desire for most people living in Senen who still wish to follow modern trends without sacrificing income required to meet their other needs. Examples of this tension emerge from observations of residents engaging in recreational shopping at the mall, snacks at McDonalds and purchasing the latest styles of clothing, jewelry and other accessories, as if carried away by the influence of the development of urban communities. Mobile phone communications, vehicle trends and hair styles also follow developments people have observed via mass media, particularly television.

Research observations indicate that television influences the daily lifestyles in Senen Sub-district. Advertising is provides information and reminds and persuades viewers to use promoted products or services. Advertising is used both by product marketers to persuade consumers to buy their products or services and by retail businesses to encourage consumers to visit and spend money.

Television has an important role as an agent for distributing the ideology of consumerism. The ability to present verbal messages and moving images simultaneously is an advantage that no other media, such as newspapers or magazines, possess. Television is able to penetrate people's lives in Senen Sub-district. In a sense, television has become an integral part of the community. Several factors affect consumerism in Senen.

The analysis indicated that television significantly influences the daily habits of consumers. Television is the dominant factor in urban life Senen Sub-district because children and adults watching television absorb influences on such behaviors as how to speak, eat and drink, wear their hair and wear apparel and accessories.

The same results were obtained for newspapers but the results indicated that newspapers were less influential on consumer habits than television. Newspapers broaden the perceptions of personal needs. People obtain information on what is happening around them from the media.

According to this study, radio had no significant influence on consumer habits in Senen District. Few respondents reported listening to radio and respondents appear to prefer watching television. Similarly, the study

found no significant relationship between internet use and consumer habits. Young people use the Internet to communicate via Facebook or play online games but adults rarely use the internet because they are too busy working and less interested in multimedia technology such as the internet

Shopping in modern retail areas or traditional markets had no significant influence on the consumer behavior. This result may reflect conditions under which respondents for this study were randomly selected respondents. Most respondents were men, 40 years old and over. In total, 23 of 32 respondents were male respondents and 15 of those 23 respondents were age 40 or older.

The analysis detected no significant relationship between certain products on consumer habits. Products did not appeal to respondents unless the respondents could clearly perceive benefits to using the products.

In this case, structural factors affect consumerism. The government policies resulted in structured poverty instead of protecting people not affected by consumerism. The latter goal is difficult to achieve because Indonesian cultural values welcome new ideas and the government prefers to attract foreign trade. Cultural factors are another factor that is difficult to avoid because Indonesian people want to feel more powerful and prestigious. Thus, many people desire unnecessary purchases to look trendy based on mass media influences.

The problems of consumerism affect all society. The Senen population is significantly increasing due to the lack of family planning and urban migration from villages. Mass media influence, particularly television, has powerful effects upon family income burdens. Rising unemployment leads to an increased crime rate and a disruption in public safety.

CONCLUSION

After the research has been performed in major cities, national-level conclusions can be drawn so that Indonesian people understand the positive values of consumerism and can prevent the negative impact of protracted poverty and reduce poverty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How can the consequences of consumerism be avoided? Some consumption is reasonable but people today have succumbed to a culture of consumerism. These cultural values are dangerous because of their negative impact on livelihoods, social relationships and public engagement.

Consumers must behave more critically instead of gullible and dependent on media. Individual consumers must begin to control themselves by spending money only on necessities, resisting marketing influences and beginning to question the processes behind the manufacturing of the products we consume. Consumers are entitled to determine everything.

In large urban communities such as the Senen Sub-district, it is particularly important to avoid the objective values of consumer culture because they trap people in a structure of poverty. Resistance to consumerism is necessary to oppose foreign cultural values and maintain Indonesian cultural values, although resisting globalization is difficult, particularly in Indonesia.

Government should be selective in accepting outside intervention and should not fear rejecting external culture. Stemming the culture of consumerism is difficult. For example, Indonesia produces potatoes domestically but imports them from the PRC. Indonesia does not produce wheat but McDonalds restaurants are everywhere. Chicken thighs must be imported from America and these imports cannot be blocked due to Indonesia's interest in palm oil exports to the United States.

Senen Sub-district residents should be able to resist consumerism because it is very dangerous and harms the environment and society. Moreover, most people in Senen Sub-district are middle class people from various Indonesian tribes who are vulnerable to poverty.

Government agencies and officials, who have the authority to empower people, should create an investment program. The government should encourage a culture that prioritizes financial saving and investment, starting with the lowest level of society. By saving or investing, people will be able to boost the economy. The government should also regulate marketing and advertising so that the public is not fooled by false advertisements and can avoid scams.

This study can be developed and expanded to analyze other major cities so that those in urban communities, who generally originate from rural villages, can avoid the culture of consumerism and resist the excessive consumption of goods promoted in the mass media.

REFERENCES

- ADB., 2009. Survey of employers economy class lower, middle and upper class. Asian Development Bank, Jakarta.
- Abdullah, I., 2009. The Construction and Reproduction of Culture. Student Library, Yogyakarta.

- Adarno, M., 1981. *Forward Culture We Disconnected: Prisma*, No. 11. LP3ES., Jakarta.
- Aldin, A., 2006. *The resistance Lifestyle: Theory and Reality*. Jalasutra, Yogyakarta.
- Arikunto, S., 1993. *Prosedur Research: A Practical Approach*. Rineka Reserved, Jakarta, Pages: 124.
- Arikunto, S., 1996a. *Techniques and Methods*. UGM., Yogyakarta.
- Arikunto, S., 1996b. *Procedure Research*. Rineka Reserved, Jakarta, Pages: 46.
- Armando, 1998. *Cild Property and Cash Transfers*. LP3ES., Jakarta.
- Bakel, J.W.M., 1984. *Philosophy of Culture: An Introduction*. Karisnes, Yogyakarta.
- Bandrillard, J., 1998. *The Consumer Society*. Sage Publications, London.
- Barker, C., 2011. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. Sage Publisher, Yogayakarta.
- Baumann, Z., 2007. *Consuming Life*. Polity Press, USA.
- Belinda, W., 2004. *Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity and Difference*. Routledge, Taylor and Finance Group, London.
- Boudrillard, J., 2004. *Public Consumption. Creation Discourse*, Yogyakarta.
- Boudrillard, J., 1970. *Selected Writing*. Galiword, Paris.
- Burton, G., 2008. *Introduction to Understanding Culture and Media*. Jalasutra, Jakarta.
- Chaney, D., 2006. *Life style: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Jalasutra, Jogjakarta.
- Coafee, J., 2009. *Terrorism, Risk and the Global City: Towards Urban Resilience*. Ashgate, England, USA.
- Corner, J. and D. Pels, 2003. *The Media and The Restyling of Politics*. Sage Publication Ltd., London.
- Dick, H.W., 1985. *The rise of a middle class and the changing concept of equity in Indonesia: An interpretation*. Cornell Southeast Asia program, No. 39, Indonesia.
- Engel, J.F., Blackwell, A. Roger, D. Miniard and W. Paul, 1993. *Consumer Behaviour*. Binarupa Script, Jakarta.
- Evans, P., 2002. *Livable Cities: Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability*. University of California Press, London.
- Farris, N., 1986. *Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Syndicate of the University of Cambridge Press, Australia.
- Featherstone, M., 2005. *Postmodernism and Consumer Culture*. Translation by Misbah Zulfa Elizabeth. Student Library, Yogyakarta.
- Featherstone, M., 2007. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. 2nd Edn., SAGE Publications Ltd., London.
- Hall, M., 2008. *Tourism and the Consumption of Wildlife*. Routledge, Taylor and Finance Group, USA.
- Hebarmas, J., 1964. *Critical Theory*. The University of Frankfurt, Germany.
- McLuhan, M., 1965. *Under Standing Media: The Extenshion*. Herald Tribune, London, New York,.
- Rahmanto, A., 2009. *Media and Popular Culture*. PPMUNS., Klaten.
- Veblen, T., 1899. *The Theory of The Leisures Class*. Macmillan, USA., Pages: 400.