

EMPOWERMENT OF JAMBI'S *SONGKET* BUSINESSES THROUGH PRODUCT DIVERSIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Jambi is a part of Malay history and customs, therefore *Songket* fabrics become a common view during wedding or royal events. Over time, *Songket* cloth has become part of the social life used by all strata of the society. This condition makes *Songket* initiated the establishment of a group of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Jambi, dedicated for *Songket* manufacturing and selling. The effort to develop local culture as a national asset is a duty for all Indonesian people, including Jambi University through the “Darma of Dedication to the community”. Community service program initiated by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education through the scheme of Export Product Development Program (PPPE) aims at conducting guidance and assistance for Jambi's *Songket* SMEs through product diversification in order to increase the business of SMEs. The methods of assistance used for SMEs include lectures, discussions, training, demonstrations, mentoring and program evaluation. Lectures, discussions, demonstrations and training were conducted to increase the knowledge about diversification of products made from *Songket*. Further assistance was done for all the discussions that had been given. To measure the success of the program, the team would conduct an evaluation from the beginning until the end of the program. The assistance provided by the PPPE of University of Jambi to SME partners of Jambi's *Songket* business was able to produce wallets, ladies handbags, tracks, clothes, seat cushions, frames and sandals. The strategy of product diversification is able to increase the revenue for the SME involved.

Keywords: empowerment, SME, Jambi's Songket, product diversification, revenue

INTRODUCTION

Songket cloth provides its own value that can address "greatness" for people who wear and make it. The series of threads that are neatly arranged in a symmetrical pattern show that *Songket* is made with skills requiring not only understanding of cloth making, but also instilled skill and precision. The development of *Songket* cloth occurs due to the intergenerational learning process. In addition, *Songket* is not just a piece of cloth wear, *Songket* is a cultural symbol that has been integral in the lives, traditions and value systems of society.

Sumatra is well-known for its *Songket*. Every region in this island even has its own woven characteristic. The inter-ethnic and the unique mix of woven in Sumatra are possibly due to geographical locations that are close to each other. For instance, Palembang *Songket* has a cursory effect on cloth in Jambi, Riau and North Sumatra.

Songket is a lavish cloth that is usually worn during festivity, celebration or party. Over time, *Songket* cloth has become a part of social life used by all levels of society. According to Viatra and Triyanto (2014), the continuity and change of *Songket* is influenced by various factors, namely internal and external factors. The process of change is influenced by cultures, weavers, government institutions, academic institutions, and private companies or institutions. Changes in the art of *Songket* weaving craft occur in shape, motif, size, technique, color, material, and function.

Songket can be worn like a sarong, draped over the shoulder, or as a headdress or *tanjak*, or as a headband decoration. According to Marianti and Istiharini (2013), *tanjak* is a kind of headdress hat made of *Songket* which is commonly used by the Sultan and Prince, and the nobles of the Malay Sultanate.

The Jambi malay-esque Headband design is known as *Lacak*. *Lacak* is made of

red velvet fabric dotted with thick paper inside to make it firm. This headband has two towering parts, with a higher fold on the front.

Over time, changes in art and craft of *Songket* cloth that exist today can affect people's lives, especially in Jambi. The change is accompanied by innovations that occur in accordance with people's needs today. *Songket* weaving has undergone through many innovations such as women's dresses, men's suits, handbags, wallets, shoes, frames, lampshades, seat cushions and many more.

Songket has become an important part of the social life used by all levels of society. This condition grows the home industries as well as small and medium enterprises (SMEs) group focusing on *Songket* production and trade, especially in Jambi city (Margarettha et al., 2017a).

The development of *Songket* business in Jambi is mostly located in "Seberang Kota Jambi". However, Jambi's city *Songket* crafters are mostly centered around Jelutung district. *Susi Songket*, for instance, is one of the *Songket* business that has been run for 10 years; nevertheless, it still requires coaching and assistance for its progress.

The effort to develop local culture as a national asset is a duty for all Indonesian people, including the University of Jambi through the "Darma of Dedication to the community". Community service program initiated by the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education through the scheme of Export Product Development Program (PPPE) is established to conduct guidance and assistance for Jambi's *Songket* SMEs through product diversification in order to develop the business of SMEs.

METHODS

The methods of assistance included lectures, discussions, training, demonstrations, mentoring, and program evaluation. Lectures, discussions, demonstrations and training were conducted to increase the knowledge about product diversification. Further assistance was done for all the discussions that had been given. To measure the success of the program, the team conducted an evaluation from the beginning until the end of the program.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Addition of Non-Machine Tools

The PPPE program gives new innovations for SMEs (especially our partner) to achieve low-cost *Songket* production in order to improve the production capacity in short space of time. The addition of Loom, a non-machine equipment for *Songket* sewing (ATBM) for our partner (Figure 1), is to shorten the production time within 5 to 7 days (Margarettha et al., 2017a).

Scaling-up production does not mean lowering the quality of *Songkets*, instead, it will create high-quality products with the right mixture of design and purpose.



Figure 1. ATBM or The Loom

Songket made from ATBM equipment becomes the focus for product diversification. Furthermore, the partners work closely with national level designers such as Barly Asmara and Siki Purnomo along with other local

fashion designers from Jambi (Margarettha et al., 2017b). They collaborated to produce high-quality fashion shirts (Figure 2). The existence of this cooperation further enlarges the marketing area of partners.



Figure 2. Dresses made from *songket* and designed by national designers

Products Made From Jambi's *Songket*

Products that were made by our partner, in addition to *Songket* cloth for women's kebaya and wedding dress, were

also produced in the form of wallet, purse, track (tanjak), seat cushion, frames and sandals (Figure 3, 4, 5 and 6).



Figure 3. Variety of purses made from *Songket*



Figure 4. Bags made from *Songket*



Figure 5. *Lacak* made from *Songket* cloth

The high demand for goods made from *Songket* cloth, especially for women

wallets, provides opportunities for our partners to collaborate with other craftsmen.

This positive cooperation between our partners and other *Songket* craftsmen allow the incentives for the emergence of creative

economy in Jambi especially in the byproduct of *Songket*.



Figure 6. Pillow case, figures and lamp cover made from *Songket*

Partner's Cash Flow

Assistance activity provided in the field shows a very significant impact on the

cash flow (revenue). By 2017, the cash flow of our partner from January to September 2017 is shown in Figure 7.

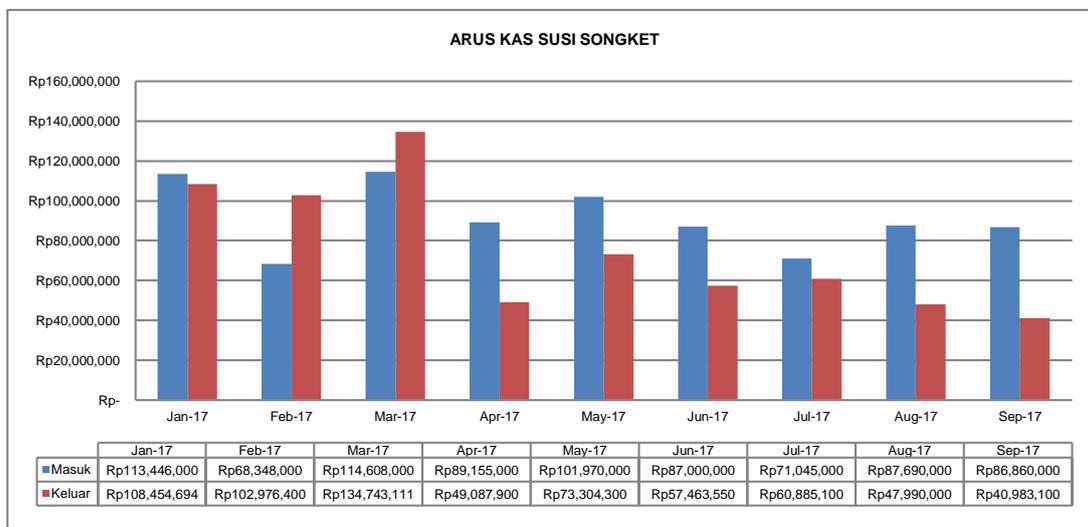


Figure 7. Susi *Songket*'s cash flow of January - September 2017

Cash flow from January to September 2017 showed a sharp increase. The increase in revenue was also due to a variant of *Songket* products that had been produced by our partner, namely women's handbags, shoes, *lacak* (headband), cushions and wall hangings in the form of frames.

Our partner gain IDR 820,122,000 on revenue between January to September 2017. Our partner also achieved 46% increase in revenue compared to the previous year's

revenue (2016). It is estimated that until the end of 2017 the revenue will continue to increase.

CONCLUSION

The assistance activity provided by the team of PPPE of University of Jambi was able to increase the revenue of our partners through the application of product diversification.

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