

Handmade Eco Print as a Strategy to Preserve the Originality of Ria Miranda's Designs in the Digital Age

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Abstract Digital technology eases many aspects in human life and leads to the phenomenon of working without human touch. Although human skills are still required to operate the system, 90% of final products are produced by software called the digital applications. Moreover, the applications work automatically after the 'save' and 'create' buttons were clicked. Product characters that have been resulted by digital applications tend to be consistent in terms of visual and efficiency, production time, as well as quantity. This is one of the problems for fashion designers that have personal touch on their limited, private, and exclusive product designs. Regardless of the trend and market demand influence, a strategy for maintaining originality concept is absolutely necessary. The majority of consumers today have been adept at distinguishing between the works that are produced by mature concept or works that are only good in physical appearance. This paper describes the reasons behind Ria Miranda's strategy in making muslim woman fashion designs with handmade eco print in terms of concrete form, originality criteria, and the impact of the strategy implementation to her product image and other supporting aspects. The interesting finding about Ria Miranda's designs using handmade eco print is that it can eliminate the impression of mass produced products and bring a new image for her design branding as eco fashion designer. Furthermore, her works with handmade eco prints result in an exclusive form, because it has advantage point of not being able to be reproduced with the same form repeatedly. This strategy is called One Process One Product (OPOP). This technique makes it difficult for plagiarists to make similar works in mass quantity.

Keywords: *handmade, eco-print, fashion, digital era*

Eco Print Sebagai Strategi Mempertahankan Orisinalitas Karya Rancangan Desainer Ria Miranda di Era Digital

Teknologi digital memudahkan kehidupan manusia di berbagai lini kehidupan manusia. Hal ini terlihat khususnya pada bidang desain fesyen, aplikasi digital telah memudahkan desainer dalam menuangkan ide kreatifnya, hingga dapat diaplikasikan sebagai *digital print* pada produk kreatifnya. Karakter karya yang dihasilkan pun cenderung konsisten secara visual, efisien waktu produksinya, dan berpengaruh dalam hal jumlah. Hal ini menjadi permasalahan untuk rancangan fesyen yang mengutamakan sifat personal, terbatas, intim, dan eksklusif. Terlepas dari pengaruh tren dan pasar, strategi untuk mempertahankan orisinalitas mutlak dilakukan. Uraian alasan tersebut menjadi pokok bahasan yakni strategi di balik rancangan Ria Miranda, yang pada awalnya dikenal sebagai desainer fesyen muslimah dengan teknik *digital print*, beralih menggunakan teknik *eco print* untuk mempertahankan orisinalitas karyanya. Temuan yang menarik tentang rancangan Ria Miranda dengan *eco print*, yakni mampu menghilangkan kesan *mass product* dan memunculkan *image* baru terhadap rancangannya sekaligus *branding* sebagai desainer fesyen muslimah ramah lingkungan.

Kata kunci: *reka tekstil, handmade, eco print, fesyen, era digital*

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INTRODUCTION

Digital technology facilitates human life in various lines of human life and makes it easier for people to work on their various life needs. This can be seen especially in the field of fashion design. Digital applications have made it easier for designers to express their creative ideas, make various design alternatives from these creative ideas, and apply digital print works to their creative products. This can be seen in the works of designers such as Itang Yunasz, and Dian Pelangi who digitally apply floral, geometric figures, and abstract motifs, as well as modifications of traditional textile decoration such as batik on their design products. This production strategy is done because of the increasing market demand for unique and exclusive design works. According to Andriana (2017: 3), to produce exclusive textile motifs, designers choose digital print application techniques on textile materials so they can freely express their ideas and produce exclusive works because they are not mass-produced.

Ria Miranda is one of Indonesia's well-known designers who use digital printing method in producing their design works. For the record, Ria Miranda does not work alone. She formed a creative team that work as Ria's idea visualists for her variety of Muslim fashion collection series in her production House named "Ria Miranda fashion house." In the beginning, Ria Miranda carried the shabby chic theme which was dominated by pastel colors, as well as natural and pale like dusty pink, salmon, beige, and others in her design, because according to her every Muslim woman would look soft, polite and calm in those colors. In its development, Ria Miranda applied *renggaan* motifs or the stylation motifs that were natural to her designs. However, a red thread is still visible from the colors she uses, namely the colors that describe the femininity of Muslim women with the impression of elegance, natural, romantic, clean and "chic" (Andriana, 2017: 19). Because of the need to express her design ideas, the surface design of textiles on her design products were also made with digital printing techniques.

In the beginning, the process of digital printing in Indonesia was identical with expensive production method, because consumers had to pay for a prototype-priced product that cost several times the production cost that was done in bulk. But the emergence of digital print service providers who compete on a large scale using the digital printing process has brought changes to the fashion industry. This has made the price of digital printing machines, as well as the cost of their work, cheaper and more accessible to the wider community. This gave a rise to the proliferation of plagiarism (Gani, 2016).

The impact of plagiarism stroke Ria Miranda's collection as well. Her design and creative team's works were reproduced by other manufacturers and were more in demand by the consumers. The competitors played at lower levels

of material types and production costs so that the selling price was automatically lower than the original product. Plagiarism competition always occurs for any product on the market. Ria Miranda's decided to switch from digital printing techniques to manual techniques or handmade with eco print for the design and it has been quite effective in reducing design plagiarism activities in the digital era, as well as opening employment opportunities (labor-intensive) for the community. This is a socio-economic sustainability. The eco print concept that is done by human hands without machines (handmade) was chosen by Ria Miranda to maintain the existence of her works in the Muslim fashion industry. This research is essential to be conducted to find out the process of the creative team from House of Ria Miranda designing Muslim clothing using handmade concepts with eco print techniques so that it becomes an exclusive work or commonly referred to as One Process One Product (OPOP) method. In addition to effectiveness, function, originality and excellence criteria are interesting aspects to be described in relation to the strategy of maintaining the originality of Ria Miranda's design works in the digital era with eco print.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research using concept analysis approach. The method selection was based on the objectives and needs of the study to descriptively find out the related to strategies, concepts, and results through analysis which is followed by extracting deeper evidence so that an understanding can be found. The findings were then described systematically with a series of sentences based on the results of the primary and secondary data that were taken from the presentation of the resource person, image and writing documentation, as well as archive data. The collection of data and facts in the field related to the title was carried out with a focus or emphasis on the reference to how Ria Miranda's concept processes is started, realized in stages, and manifested (Raco, 2010: 129-198). The results of this study were reduced based on the final data obtained by referring to the formulation of the problem, the initial hypothesis, and the objectives, so that the obtained answers and findings was limited to the related research title. The nature of this research is objective because data was collected from valid and scientific multi-sources.

The main research object was the concept of handmade eco print technique which is used as a material for Muslim clothing at the House of Ria Miranda products, so that the final product is not only a visual display but also started from the detailed concept including the supporting aspects, functions, and advantages as an effort to minimize the plagiarism of products made digitally in bulk. This research is a mini research which means that it was done to find out the description and concept of action as a form of answers to the problem at the level of understanding not in a structured, systematic, and detailed manner. In contrast

to large research that takes a long time because it aims to find answers that are more detailed. The time needed to complete this research was brief and adjusting to the needs of the research.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Eco print, eco fashion, eco green, eco art, eco design, eco-friendly, eco building, eco product, eco technology, eco action, and so on in the last 10 years has been a series of words that are often selected, written, and presented in a praxis in the realm of art and design. The eco concept comes from human awareness to reduce the negative impact of environmental damage and global climate change, which has become an alarming reality in several countries. Ideas, materials, processes, shapes, functions, and sustainability are a collection of eco-related keywords. Basically, the eco concept is trying to offer alternatives and efforts to reduce or even stop 99% of negative impacts on the environment. The environmental damage is caused by a series of activities and objects produced by human creation, taste, and intentions, either individually or communally (Barendregt, 2014: 86-89).

The concept of eco for fashion products is also implemented by designer Ria Miranda since 2017. Her choice to use eco print techniques on Muslim fashion designs is reasonable and appropriate. The materials, processes and products produced have superiority and durability in terms of quality, aesthetics and ethics. The quality is shown from natural materials that are comfortable to use and have minimal negative impacts (eg allergies when in contact with skin) for the user. The aesthetics can be seen from the physical appearance that is distinctive and different from other designs that use ready-to-use materials although with premium quality. The warm impression of the dark and sweet colors of the light color produced by eco print. The ethics is indirectly summed up as environmentally friendly behavior by choosing eco fashion as a concept and eco print as a technique or process of materializing the work so that sustainability can be achieved. Preserved cleanliness of the surrounding environment and renewable supporting elements are some of the purposes of sustainability even though when production activities are carried out repeatedly (Fletcher, 2008: 41-43, 95-98).

The Stages of the Clothing Production Process in the House of Ria Miranda

Like the detailed stages in designing exclusive clothing by a fashion house, from the first step to the marketing stage, Ria Miranda formed a creative team with structured task sharing, starting from the descriptions of ideas, concept interpretation, theme determination, material selection, production or visualization, finishing, packaging, and marketing stages. The initial stage (the description of ideas) and the final stage (marketing) are the determining point for the success of the works to be responded to and accept-

ed by the market.

As the master mind of House of Ria Miranda production, Ria Miranda realized that the key to describing ideas as the initial stage plays an important role. The entire design, although interpreted by different designer assistants, still carries Ria Miranda's famous lines, characteristics and characters with soft, pastel and natural nuances. In making the collection with eco print techniques, House of Ria Miranda is assisted by a creative team from Aesthetic Fabric which was interpreted by assistant designer Wiranti K. F. for the headline '*Eucaflora*'. This collection shows the aesthetics of the selection of materials from natural fibers, natural dyes, touch of accents from eco print and eco dyeing. This collection was made in 2017 for the *Ria Miranda Signature* series, and as many as 10 and 25 of these '*Eucaflora*' works were exhibited at the Dubai Modest Fashion Week, see Figure 1 below (Wulandari, 2017).

The interpretation of concepts into design requires a common vision and mission in a creative team. Evaluations and revisions are carried out after alternative designs are made. Special considerations including consumer goals, trends, signature designs, and novelty are a must. The initial mission objective of this design work as "*the one and only*" must be achieved (Indriyani, 2017). The possibility of similar design with other fashion houses can occur. Ria Miranda completed the concept by improving references and seeing other fashion designs that have been launched. This is intended as a guide not to create the same design lines, because it can lead to plagiarism. Even the characteristics of her own previous designs were also used as a reference so that she would not repeat the same collection, because it would create a monotonous impression and not in accordance with the exclusive concept.

The design or collection theme was determined based on an agreement with the creative team. The basis for this determination varies; one of them is the international fashion design forecast trend. Usually, a large fashion house does not follow the forecast. Instead, the forecast is used as a reference to not follow the trend, because if you follow the trend, the design lines will not be visible. The special markets and consumers who are loyal to the design of Ria Miranda are the ones used as a reference to determine the theme. The dynamic and repetitive nature of a design, sometimes leads to inspirational themes from the past two decades. Technical factors can give a touch of novelty to the design. The determination of the theme is not intended for the entire collection in the same year. Consumer levels, fast changes in taste, and the influence of foreign fashion trends make Ria Miranda and the team to move quickly by providing multi alternatives for production.

The material is chosen as an aesthetic key or point of interest in the overall final appearance of the design. Eco print and eco dyeing techniques are one of the advantages of this



Figure 1. One of Wiranti K. F. design for *House of Ria Miranda* entitled *Eucaflora*. The material used was a collaboration result with the *Aesthetic Fabric* using *eco print* technique. (source: instagram photo collection @aest.fabric, 2017)

design. Ria Miranda managed to introduce a green Muslim fashion concept (eco fashion), in collaboration with young talents who are members of *Aesthetic Fabric*. The motif produced by the eco print technique is exclusive because it cannot be repeated and the results are certainly different for each piece of fabric. This is caused by the consistency of the work process using the hands which cannot be standardized like a machine or robot (see Figure 2).

The eco print technique itself means printing natural materials on a medium. The most popular media for printing natural materials are fabric and paper fibers. The process of making eco print begins with *mordanting*, which is soaking the cloth using alum water for one hour. This method is done to maintain the basic color of the fabric and to open the fabric pores so that the image can be printed. After the cloth dries the motif printing process can be done. Printing eco print motifs can be done in three ways. The first method is to arrange natural materials, such as leaves and flowers according to the desired pattern on the fabric. After that the cloth is rolled tightly and then tied and steamed until the color comes out of the natural ingredients. The second method is to arrange leaves and flowers in accordance with the desired pattern above half the fabric, then the cloth is folded and the parts with leaves and flowers are beaten until the color comes out. And the third method is a combination of the two techniques that have been mentioned, namely by beating and steaming. After the desired pattern is printed on the cloth, the cloth is cleaned of the remaining leaves that are attached and the fixation process is carried out. The fixation process is done by soaking the cloth that has been printed with alum mixed water. This process is useful for binding motifs and colors that have been printed on cloth.

Eco dyeing techniques have the same meaning as natural coloring techniques and can also be called as natural dyes. Natural dyes are obtained by extracting plant and animal pigments by firstly crushing, then boiling the material with water. The coloring results of the p fabric reduced from eco dyeing techniques also cannot be produced consistent-

ly, considering the difference in plant size and water composition will result in different colors.

In making the “*Eucaflora*” collection, the materials and techniques determined by the team were unique. One of them is the selection of fabric using fiber from Eucalyptus trees (Flint, 2008: 120-133). In the process of making eucalyptus oil, it only uses distilled leaves, leaving the tree trunks less productive, so it is usually sold only for the purpose of making furniture or fuel which causes further pollution. Ria Miranda is observant that she used it as a substitute for cotton yarn to be woven into high-quality fabrics. The use of Eucalyptus tree trunks as clothing material indirectly stops the chain of environmental pollution. Based on an interview with the *Aesthetic Fabric* team (on February 25, 2018), the big theme of the ‘*Eucaflora*’ collection is “*dream*”. Then a number of color tones was determined to be adjusted to the theme, to make various color explorations of fabric with eco dyeing techniques. The colors produced from the various explorations are pastel colors such as dusty pink, cream, soft beige, very light green and purple taro. This illustrates the characteristics of Ria Miranda’s designs so far, namely the softness of Muslim women. For the eco print motifs, it was obtained from a variety of flowers and leaves from the surrounding environment, while eco dyeing coloring was extracted from flowers which have been discarded or unused in Rawa Belong Flower Market. In addition, avocado shell waste which is obtained from the juice business on the street was also used. Colors and motifs were produced through boiling, steaming, and beating on fabric fibers so that the color pigments remain in the fabric (Novianty, 2017).

Work on eco print motifs is done after the cutting process of the material, and it is done manually on 2 to 5 meters cloth for 1 dress. If there is a slight error in setting of the motif on the fabric, the results of the design of the clothes can change. Because the setting of the motif on the fabric, the pattern of the a dress can be affected. The setting of motif requires patience to get precise placement of the motif. This process took up to 7 months, even though the collection of ‘*Eucaflora*’ consists of only 25 clothes.

Strategy and Function of Eco Print Technique Application in Ria Miranda’s Work

Consumers or eco-friendly fashion lovers have now grown and have the awareness to choose products that do not damage or ‘hurt’ the earth by getting the knowledge regarding the processes and ingredients that are good for consumption (eaten, drunk, and used) for most educated and upper middle class society has grown well enough. The information they get from the mass media and educational and commercial activities have raised the eco concept in their daily life. One of them related to this topic is eco fashion. The visitors who watched the fashion show stage were not only given the latest collection treats, but they were also asked to be involved in making this green

concept event a success by bringing their own shopping bags. The committee also prepared goodie bags that did not contain plastic elements and could be reused.

The visualization of the design products of exclusive ready-to-wear Muslim clothings takes cutting details and good workmanship into account. This young designer who graduated from ESMOD Jakarta fashion school always prioritizes on the process. She always promotes about the concept of eco fashion that was done that “the end result is not the focus, but the process of the journey towards the result should be enjoyed and grateful for” (Wardah, 2017). The advantages of handmade concepts with eco print techniques are OPOP, one process one product. Fashion size is single, all size or general size of the average woman so that the design is exclusive. Consumers feel special, because the products that are worn are not marketed in mass like other collections made in various sizes (S-XL) for one collection. The final process for this process was the finishing. The addition of sequin details, embroidery, and hand embroidery gave a touch of aesthetic from the design of the House of Ria Miranda.

The packaging for this design was not a product wrapping but rather a presentation to be commercially introduced (sold) related to marketing. The presentation of the work was carried out through an exclusive fashion show collaborating with the winners of the fashion event sponsored by one of the Indonesian cosmetic brands for women, especially Muslim women. Working with the concept of eco fashion is not just pursuing mere satisfaction and commercial benefits for Ria Miranda. This is a form of accountability and contribution to nature and to help care for and protect it from damage caused by fashion production activities. She realizes that the fashion industry is categorized as “*fast fashion*” (the production process is fast and mass) which has a negative impact on the environment and the working class involved (Choi, 2014: 9-19). The demands to work outside of working hours and cheap wages, forcing them to continue to work for a greater amount of pay regardless of health and psychological safety (Minney, 2017). Women workers sometimes get racist behavior and sexual harassment, even sexual crimes such as rape from supervisors. This concern was addressed by Ria Miranda by prioritizing female employees to be involved with the standard working hours, health insurance and proper life safety. The manual process that still pays attention to ethics and aesthetics is known today as the term “*slow fashion*” (Minney, 2016: 1-5).

Characteristic Advantage of Handmade Eco Print Product by Ria Miranda

Eco-friendly, anti-allergic, good aesthetic appearance, and high sales value are some of the advantages of Ria Miranda’s Eco-print design products. However, the main priority advantage of a handmade products is its one and only characteristic; it is reproducible and will not be repro-



Figure 2. Ria Miranda and the team working on *handmade eco print* using natural materials.

(source: video capture at minute 0:32 produced by Wardah, 2017)

duced. The concept of one process one product is applied here, even ‘one’ in the sense of the overall appearance. The character of ‘green’ in fashion is needed now. Fast fashion characters are applied by the majority of fashion houses that only prioritize on the speed of production to achieve a large production results so that they can sell as many products as possible in a short time. This has become one of the contributors to the damage on earth. The use of billions of liters chemicals for the beautiful appearance of fashion collections should be stopped. This is a new ‘spirit’ for Ria Miranda’s fashion work. This young designer chooses ethical and green slow fashion.

Another advantage of eco print handmade products is the element of surprise from the unpredictable end result. The majority of the final results of eco printing process does not aesthetically disappoint or even better than the original design. The angle of the slope of the color sweep and the arrangement of the different leaves will produce different motives. This will not be obtained from the machine process which requires complicated program settings for one type of motif. If it has to be changed, it requires a high operational cost. Revision of motives or the addition of novelty is incidental which is very possible because there are no standards and limitations like machines. The touch of the human hand gives a ‘soul’ to the work. The level of durability is much better depending on how to use and clean. The treatment of this product is in line with the natural process, it is not recommended to wash using chemicals including soap. Fabrics that are processed in a natural way will give off a special and distinctive aroma. If the substance is mixed with human body odor, it has dampening properties.

The last advantage is actually not directly related to the character of the product, but rather to the positive side effects with the use of eco print techniques. The motives produced with manual techniques will be more resistant to piracy or plagiarism, especially in this digital era. In the realm of creative industries such as fashion, fine arts and design fields are very prone to imitating activities. Ownership or copyright claims for products are also widespread. Basic techniques and natural processes have provided solutions to reduce the number of adverse cheating ac-

tivities. Plagiarism is basically detrimental to two parties, namely victims and hijackers. The victims are materially harmed, but concepts and ideas can never be replicated, while the hijacker is at disadvantage in terms of creativity. In the law of supply and demand a saturation point will occur due to the level of consumer confidence. Gradually consumers will find that the quality of the goods they pay at high prices turns out to be imitations that are not original and lack of quality.

CONCLUSION

Ria Miranda's move to prioritize good processes with the eco fashion concept is appropriate and strategic. Eco fashion is sustainable. Although this concept is not yet popular in Indonesia the awareness and responsibility of 'green' behavior must be improved and socialized for the actors and all parties involved in the fashion industry in the country. The standard aspects (such as SNI or accreditation) for fashion products in Indonesia should begin to be added with the label 'eco fashion'. This label should not be a label claimed by the makers or actors their work, products and designs is eco designs but it should be given by a special body that assesses and grants the label. From this categorization consumers will be gradually educated and wiser in choosing the products that are worth consuming. The next question is what products are processed and what impact will they have on the environment.

The description of Ria Miranda's strategy to avoid plagiarism in the digital era is interesting to be used as a big discourse and evaluation. This is related to the awareness of industry players to respect originality. The ease provided by digital systems and applications to replicate and reproduce in seconds should be controlled and monitored. Legislation for product plagiarism is still weak. The awareness of the maker or owner for administrative discipline in registering intellectual property rights of a work is also still low. Most people think that they will not lose if the other party plagiarizes. This indirectly educates the public that copying the works of others as long as there is no legal protection is legal. The digital era opens up many positive opportunities and changes the face of the world. Human orientation also changes to achieve as much commercial profit as possible. Plagiarism is not an elegant way. Indonesia needs agents of change in the fashion industry in this digital era. Ria Miranda's footsteps deserve to be followed and continued in terms of ways of thinking and work processes, which are ethical to maintain originality and quality.

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