

# ARTS AS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC CAPITAL IN TANA TORAJA, INDONESIA

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## ABSTRACT

*Since there is still little attention focusing on the art as entrepreneurship and economic capital, as a consequence, not much information found in the scholarly literature relates to the circle of the art entrepreneurship and economic capital. This study aims to fill this gap. This longitudinal case study used interviews and a series of observations conducted in Torajan art communities, Indonesia. The finding reveals that there four stages of art entrepreneurship including art material selection, production, promotion, and selling and distribution. This art entrepreneurship is also recognized as a form of economic capital for communities. This article is important because it provides a case of arts entrepreneurship that can be educationally important for students, lecturers and researchers particularly those who are concerned with the development of art as the aesthetic values and arts as one of the commercial purposes benefiting communities.*

**Keywords:** Arts, Entrepreneurship, Economic Capital, Torajan Communities, Indonesia.

## INTRODUCTION

Arts entrepreneurship has becoming an important topic to discuss both by researchers and art producers, and artists. The development of arts entrepreneurship is perpetuated by three factors:

1. There is an increase on tourist mobility across the nations which bring the cultural acculturation.
2. There is a demand on the alternative creative industry that can boost economic development.
3. The need to maintain identities is important for local people to filter the impact of globalized world and technology development (Ward, 2008). To respond to these reasons, the development of arts as entrepreneurship manufacture and economic devices are essential.

The arts entrepreneurship aims not only for commercial purposes but also for identity maintenance. For commercial purposes, the arts entrepreneurship echoes the tourism development that may change cultural dimensions of the society. One of the examples of cultural dimension is the intercultural acculturation where there is a more dominance of outside culture than local tradition (Ward, 2008). To reduce this intercultural influence, the arts entrepreneurship is established as a gate to preserve local tradition that can be purchased commercially by both domestic and international visitors.

The arts in the form of entrepreneurship and economic capital represent values and meanings. It can represent social values, modes of interactional relationship, and social identity (Harper & Leicht, 2015; Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Migdal, 2015). The arts in this case symbolize the norms of the society, rituals, patterns of social orders, and social life (Harper & Leicht, 2015).

There is still little attention focusing on the art as entrepreneurship and economic capital. As a consequence, not much information found in the literature relates to the circle of the art

entrepreneurship that can be used for educational purposes. Therefore, this article is significant because it provides a case of arts entrepreneurship that can be educationally important for students, lecturers and researchers particularly those who are concerned with the development of art as the aesthetic values and arts as one of the commercial purposes benefiting communities.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Key authors on arts entrepreneurship and economic capital have discussed a number of topics including definitions of art entrepreneurship from different scholars (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015), perspectives on arts entrepreneurship (Gartner, 2015), toward a theory of arts entrepreneurship (White, 2015), and arts entrepreneurship and economic value (Phillips, 2011). This literature review covers two important themes: arts entrepreneurship and arts as economic capital. It begins with arts entrepreneurship.

## ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Seminal research on arts entrepreneurship has done by several scholars. For example, Chang & Wyszomirski (2015) explored various definitions of arts entrepreneurship in the scholarly literature. Arts entrepreneurship is “*a management process through which cultural workers seeks to support their creativity and autonomy, advance their capacity for adaptability, and create artistic as well as economic and social value*” (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015). They argue that this process of management covers continuous stage “*innovative choices and risks intended to recombine resources and pursue new opportunities to produce artistic, economic, and social value*”. From this definition, it can be grasped that arts entrepreneurship not only relates to the aesthetic production of arts but also the economic value which refers to business development of the arts production itself.

Then, Gartner (2015) investigated the focus of art and entrepreneurship that have published in many scholarly journals. Gartner (2015) describe entrepreneurship as “*entrepreneur, owner-manager, innovation, organization creation, uniqueness, value, and growth and art is both a product of organizing as well as a sensibility in how organizing, itself, occurs*”. Gartner (2015) further recommended that it is important for any artists who involves in arts entrepreneurship should invent various ways that value is produced and perceived for these artistic practices and valued through some kind of exchange function. Gartner (2015), in the short term, identified arts entrepreneurship as “*organizing aesthetics*” that is available commercially and publically.

In addition, White (2015) explored the number of institutions offering the course of arts entrepreneurship across the United States of America. White identified that at least ninety-six institutions are delivering and dedicating the courses and programs for the study for entrepreneurship in the context of the arts. The course encompasses the arts and creative sector, the teaching, and learning of skills, competencies and behaviors necessary for self-employment in the arts and creative industries. This employment process of art eventually becomes the investment to gain economic capital, which will be discussed next.

## ART AS ECONOMIC CAPITAL

The study of art as economic capital relates to the symbolic value of arts as social and economic status such as social status and the role of rituals (Shaver, 2015), symbols and artifacts (Gagliardi, 2017), and the value of Torajan art (Suherman et al., 2017).

Shaver (2015) explored that investigated the roles of economic capital in the performing ritual and arts of Fijian people in Pacific regions. Shaver (2015) concluded that the economic and social status influence in the way Fijian and missionaries in rituals participation: church services and kava drinking ceremonies. Shaver (2015) studied the practice of social inequality in relation to their participation in rituals and religious practices in Fiji. Shaver (2015) concluded that the ritual and the religious practices are not equal to Fijian communities. The social status and hierarchy influences on the involvement to be preachers and leaders in the community. On the other hand, the younger, single and low-level community tends to be in the periphery of the important events and roles. This suggests that social status and hierarchy influence the way they practice their rituals, religion and roles in a community.

Suherman et al. (2017) conducted a specific study on the characters value of sculpture of *Tau Tau* (effigies) in Torajan communities Indonesia. They identified seven values of *Tau-Tau* including respect, responsibility, wisdom, love and compassion, hard work, integrity, and gratitude. They recommend that further research on the symbolic meaning and representation of *Tau-Tau* is important to further explored in order to provide comprehensive understanding of the indigenous Torajan communities.

Even though the reported studies above focus on arts, entrepreneurship and the economic capital of the art, there is still the need for examining the cycle of art entrepreneurship and economic capital in another context. So far, no empirical endeavor has looked into the cycle of arts entrepreneurship and economic capital because it underpins the systems and values that lead and guide the practice of art in Torajan communities in Indonesia. To fill this gap, the present study attempts to continue the scholarship of art entrepreneurship and economic capital perspectives.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method covers the research design, research question that guides this paper, data collection and participants, and data analysis.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The case study research is “*an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context*” (Yin, 2009). The current phenomenon of the case is the maintaining tradition of production of funerary art based on the social status of the noble families. The current phenomenon is also investigated according to the real-life context because it is study within natural setting of the communities. This longitudinal descriptive case study took places more than one year in Torajan communities.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study follows the research questions:

1. How does the cycle of arts entrepreneurship in Torajan communities?
2. What is the economic capital as the result of arts entrepreneurship?

## DATA COLLECTION AND PARTICIPANTS

Data collection for this study used semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentations of photos and effigies. The semi-structured interviews were conducted for approximately one hour for each participant. The participants for study were chosen purposively. There were only four key participants to be interviewed in this study: Palungan, Batto, Passapan, and Sarira. Two of them represent the art producer and entrepreneurs from the centre of the town, one representing the suburb, and one representing the highland of the Torajan communities, Indonesia. In addition, observations were carried out in the three areas of the Torajan communities: centre of the town, suburb and the highland to witness the process of *Tau-Tau* production.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data in this study was analyzed using thematic approach. The thematic approach included several steps:

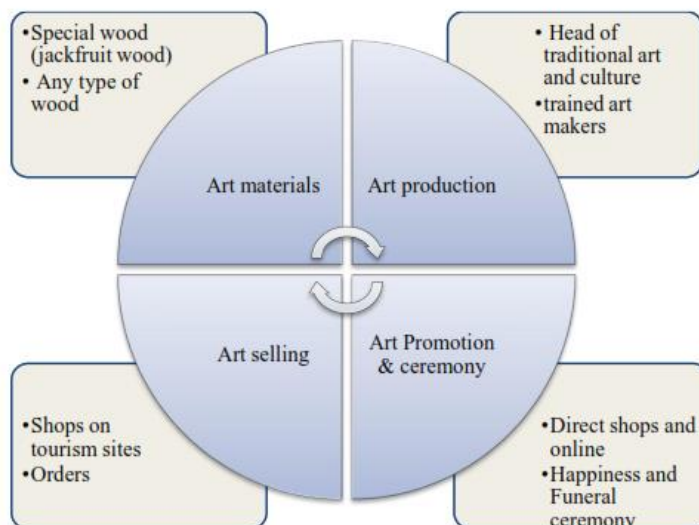
1. All data gained in the field were coded based on the theme appeared from the data.
2. The data were arranged and classified.
3. All the data were categorized to determine major categories.
4. All data within major categories were tabulated using Ms Word to determine key categories. This process of thematic approach was also applied by other researchers (Abduh & Rosmaladewi, 2017; Abduh et al., 2018) within the Indonesian community settings.

## FINDINGS

The research finding describes art as form of entrepreneurship and as form of economic capital.

### ART AS A FORM OF ENTERPRENEURSHIP

The finding from fieldworks, interviews and observation indicate that the art entrepreneurship of statue production called *Tau-Tau* in Torajan communities follow the circle in Figure 1.



**Figure 1**  
**ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP CIRCLE IN TORAJAN COMMUNITIES**

**The Cycle 1: The Art Materials**

The art materials for arts entrepreneurship of *Tau-Tau* take from two main materials: jackfruit wood and mixed of any wood, as summarized in Table 1 below:

| <b>TABLE 1</b><br><b>BASIC FEATURE OF STATUE AS ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP</b> |   |
|---|---|
| Premium statue  | Basic features: Jackfruit wood.<br>Height of statue: 10 cm–150 cm (for tourist purposes) and depending on the order of buyer.<br>Custom: gold fabric. |
| General statue  | Basic features: mixed of any wood or cement.<br>Height of statue: 10 cm–150 cm or depending on the order of buyer.<br>Custom: casual fabric.          |

The basic materials of statue are taken from both demographic places: the wood growing in Toraja and the wood growing in any part of the world. The criteria of the wood are it is from sustainable forests that do not damage the environment and it should not from the young tree. For tourist’s purposes, the statue (*Tau-Tau*) is crafted in various sizes, ranging from the size of 10 cm to 150 cm, with a traditional customs of Toraja. Thus, *Tau-Tau* used as a source of imagination and creativity of the craftsman to create a replica of living people and dead persons. The production of *Tau-Tau* souvenir takes one or two days and depending on the statue ordered by buyers. Due to the strong support by local government and the development of technology, the craftsmen can craft the statue in various shapes, styles, sizes, that still maintain the locality of Torajan people.

### **The Cycle Two: Art Production**

All the materials were brought into ware house. There are various forms of Tau-Tau statue existing in Tana Toraja that describes someone or the dead people. The statue can be in the form of portrait statue of his family members from the statue of artists, and can be in the portrait of local artists and national artists. Based on my observation, there are two debates on the process of making statue as arts entrepreneurship in Toraja:

1. The production of statue still follows the tradition of their ancestors following ritual procedures. This type of statue is made by the head of local art and culture. It is commonly ordered by the Torajan noble families. For example: one noble family ordered the portrait statue of his family that is made by specialists.
2. On other hand, the production of statue follow the trend and the need of the buyers. It is a form of simplification that suits the demand from both domestic and international visitors.

### **The Cycle Three: Art Promotion and Ceremony**

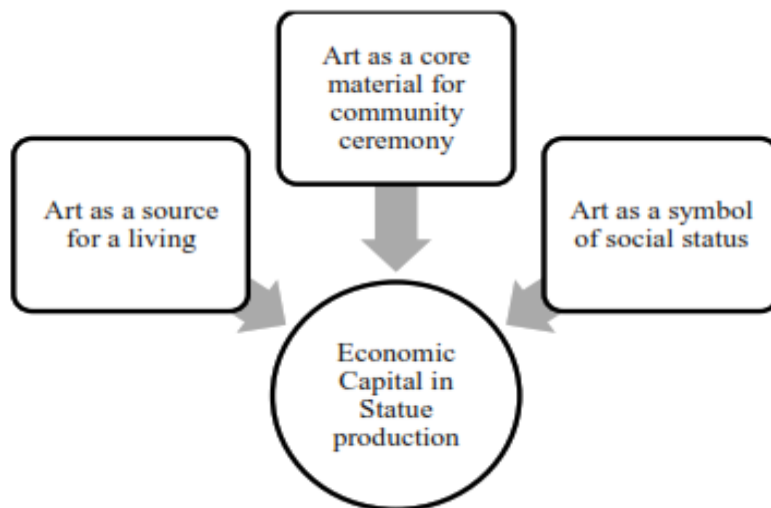
The statue as art entrepreneurship promotion is done in two ways: the promotion of statue in the ceremony and direct display in the shops. In relation to the ceremony, the statue is displayed in many parts of the happiness ceremonial sites so that every visitor both local and foreigners can see directly the shape, the physical appearance and the beauty of the statue. In addition, during the display, visitors can also ask the meaning and values of the statue. The current Torajan communities described the art entrepreneurship of the statue as *Tau-Tau souvenirs* (statue for souvenirs). The emergence of *Tau-Tau* souvenir is due to the development of Toraja as one of the most important tourist destination places in South Sulawesi province, Indonesia.

### **Cycle Four: Selling of the Art (Statue)**

The *Tau-Tau* statue souvenir can be purchased in the tourism sites in many parts of Toraja region. The *Tau-Tau* is displayed in a variety of places that are accessible and visible for local and foreign tourists. Due to the high demand, the price of *Tau-Tau* statue ranges from very cheap to the most expensive ones. This statue can last for years because of the good quality materials. The other way for people to obtain the statue is through order. Buyers can order the statue by looking at samples displayed by the local government through brochures and leaflets.

## **ART AS ECONOMIC CAPITAL**

The production of statue in Torajan communities becomes one form of the economic capital as illustrated in Figure 2 below:



**Figure 2**  
**ART AS ECONOMIC CAPITAL**

### **Art as a Source of Living**

The production of statue in Torajan communities serves not only as an aesthetic effigy, but more importantly as a source of living. The craftsmen tend to modify their statue that suits the need and demand of local and international visitors. The style of the statue can be in the form of combination between traditional arts exists without divorcing the traditional values, art and cultural of Torajan communities. For example, in my observation, the use of color for their statue: the use of white means a holy thing and spirit, black means a symbol of death, yellow means god blessing, and red symbolizes a living thing. The combination of these colors can be found in their statues.

### **Art as Core Materials for Community Ceremony**

The statue for Torajan people is important especially for funeral ceremony. The bereaved family tends to order the statue to respect the dead people and a way of remembrance of the physical appearance of dead people. For many people, statue of the dead people is a requirement in order to complete the ceremony process. The type of the statue depends on the need of the families. Not only in funeral, the statue is important to portray the people who hold the wedding and other types of happiness celebration taking place in Torajan communities. The price of the statue depends on the materials and the package of customs covered the body of the statue.

### **Art as a Symbol of Social Status**

The statue of *Tau-Tau* in Torajan communities represents the nobility and wealth. There is a tendency that the higher the noble family they have the more premium and the higher quality of the statue produced by craftsmen. For example, in my field note, family who have statue of *tau-tau* made from jackfruit and covered with gold fabric is an indication of the higher noble family in Torajan communities. Because of the high quality materials, the price of the statue can

reach up to millions in Indonesian rupiah. Concurrently, such type of the statue represents the wealth of the family as a symbol of economic and social status.

## DISCUSSION

The art entrepreneurship development in Torajan communities reflects the current trend of communities around the world. Phillips (2011) argued that “*an increasing number of cities have sought to use the promotion of the arts, and especially arts entrepreneurship, as a path to economic development and revitalization*”. With this development of arts entrepreneurship as new form of creative industry, the role of local government is important as can be seen from the local government of Tana Toraja in bolstering the art making and production.

In addition, the diversity of statue production in Torajan communities can drive the economic development. The growth of economy within this creative industry can be in the form of economic capital for both individual craftsmen and the local government. The art production boots the culture and art preference that makes an additional contribution to economic development beyond factors like education and training (Phillips, 2011). This will influence, for example, the establishment of training and education relating to the craft around the local communities. This finding implies educators, craftsmen, local people, visitors and the local government, that is described next.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study extend the understanding of the art entrepreneurship and economic capital particularly from statue production. This finding has implications including for local people, craftsmen, visitors, education institutions, and local government. For local people, the art entrepreneurship can be a form of creative opportunities for entrepreneurship establishment. For craftsmen, the increasing demand of the statue brings them to be more creative and more open to innovation without forgetting the essence and values of local people. For visitors, the variety of statue displayed can attract visitors to buy in larger quantities either as a form of business or a private collection. For educational institution, this form of art can be a source of education and learning for entrepreneurship and business students, art students, and art teachers. For the local government, the support for the sustainability of art entrepreneurship is paramount because the statue relates to the local Torajan identities and culture and their representation to wider communities.

It is suggested to conduct further study on the evolution of the aesthetic values of Torajan art and communities in relation to the rapid development technology and globalization. The research is also important to carry out within wider participants looking at non-noble communities’ attitudes and responses towards the inherited tradition and ceremonies of Torajan families. It is also interesting to investigate the impact of tau-tau practice within decision making both in public and private institutions and the roles of noble families in the government sectors.

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