

## THE COMMODIFICATION OF MURALS

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### ABSTRACT

*This article discusses the commodification of murals in terms of their development, which is a strategy for tourism sustainability in Bali. The mural is considered one of the aesthetic dishes, to show the exoticism of Bali. Based on field observations with the Seminyak area as an observation location, there are many murals that support the exterior and interior spaces, as a selfie area and also devoted as a photobooth to attract tourists. The study focuses on the commodification and degradation of murals, by examining the presence of new meanings that are in line with the development of tourism and the arts in society. Sources of data obtained through a qualitative approach using descriptive analysis and observation methods. The theory used is the Baudrillard Commodification, semiotics by Charles Sanders Peirce in the form of representations, objects and interpretations to understand the signs in the mural. As well as aesthetic theory to see the distinguishing power of the presence of murals that enliven the tourism scene. The study shows the current mural position that is intertwined between art and tourism as well as the position of art and tourists. Murals in Bali have now adopted a new survival system. By bringing all forms of beauty as bargaining power, instead of attracting the interests of tourists and local people, to force themselves to be read through new perspectives by adapting a positiveistic realm.*

*Keywords: Commodification, Degradation, Murals, Sustainability, Tourism*

### PRELIMINARY

Talking about mural art is important to allude to street art (graffiti) or now better known as street art, which at the beginning of its appearance visually led to many text strokes. The visual form of street art is increasingly diverse, graffiti is no longer in the form of text strokes, but also combined with images resulting from the use of diverse techniques. The word "street" in this term relates to activities without government permission or illegal. It is this unlicensed problem that causes street art to be synonymous with vandalism because it is considered as an act that damages the property of others or contradicts government policies regarding the beauty of the city. Meanwhile, if it is associated with culture, street art is considered not to represent Indonesian culture, instead it is labeled as a cultural imitation of the periphery in several major cities of the world and this imitation is often considered as the impact of globalization in the cultural field (Barry, 2008: 20), These phenomena and dynamics can also be observed in Bali and this can be an interesting object of study, because there are several values and interests which then clash with each other. Street art in Bali is more visually dominated by frescoes or known as murals, although the existence is not as wild and as massive as murals in big cities in Indonesia, such as Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Jakarta, mural art in Bali is quite visible showing its existence as a movement to speak out from the community or the lower classes, incidentally carried out by the younger generation who are shedding sensibility in responding to various social dynamics that are happening in their environment.

This phenomenon can be witnessed around the cities of Denpasar and Badung. From the observations made, the murals are conceptualized well and seriously,

with message content embedded in every visual narrative, but some are just drawing, in a form that looks unclear, especially when talking about the application of artistic value and aesthetically, moreover there is no clear message delivered, so that the impression is indeed more directed towards acts of vandalism, there are certain groups or communities that intensively carry out mural activities collectively by carrying out certain issues related to social, political and ecological discourse, seen from the technical ability displayed is also quite qualified, although on the other hand there are also other groups or communities that do not seem to master the drawing techniques well.

Nevertheless, mural art in Bali continues to grow and enter the realm of modification of values and functions, most of the murals created are no longer in critical areas, such as the presence of murals in the Badung region especially Seminyak where the murals were created due to tourism orders. Seminyak is known as a very popular tourist destination, tourists who come and visit have different characteristics from the bourgeoisie to the Backpackers. If seen in its development phase, the Seminyak area is still one of the prima donnas of tourism in Bali, despite the boom at that time in 2010. Tourist interest in the Seminyak area starts with the natural beauty that has the basic potential as a tourist attraction namely beaches with white sand, good waves used for surfing and certainly a friendly community. The development of tourism in Seminyak does not stop at the area of natural beauty, but furthermore Seminyak is now used as a place for socialites related to the trend of young people to get together, talk about daily life, business chat, a vehicle for selfie until the evening tour. This situation is well read by various actors who have an interest in the Seminyak area, to reap even more profits. Various kinds of things are done by the actors, to piggyback on tourism in the area, one of which uses the concept of sustainable tourism by playing the role of art in it.

The concept is related to changes in art activities or cultural production that is adjusted to the tastes of tourists. The basic considerations include foreign and domestic tourists who are distinctive distinct communities, because it needs to be presented with a unique art for them. Such distinctive art is called the art of metamorphosis or the art of acculturation or the art of tourism and touristic art (Atmaja, 2010: 197). Touristic art is understood as one of the approaches to read and know the interests of tourists / tourists who come to know Bali through images in the form of images and icons of Bali that are persuasively packaged with the aim of giving the impression of a cradle, so that through art is able to attract tourists to be present and dissolve in the situation, the spaces desired by the actors who use the art, especially murals, as the sustainability of tourism. The presence of the mural actually refers to the problem of commodification which is present only for profit issues related to business and finance.

This study and observation was carried out to see the extent to which the development of the murals was related to the aesthetic aspect which was used as a tool as one of tourism offers that was persuasive, giving selfies as well as being an expression and education for tourists. This fact resulted in a decrease in the quality of murals which was interpreted as mural degradation, a condition of declining values and social significance related to the content of the presence of murals which affected quality and contained certain functions, namely the process of transforming the use value into an exchange value that was understood as commodification. The problem of commodification becomes complicated in the realm of art, because the mural ideally provides an overview of the issues, discourse, phenomena that disturb the space of reason and public awareness in observing and criticizing matters related to inequality, fraud, injustice, injustice, overlapping that occur in social life, political life, and ecological sustainability. But the reality of the presence of murals in the Seminyak area actually illustrates something very different, more referring to the problem of tourism property in the

form of promotions from certain agents who fight for beauty and beauty, with artificial problems related to exotic exposures in Bali and as a tourist attraction.

With the ongoing tourism sustainability strategy in Bali involving murals as its appeal, it has become a new reading in the field of Balinese art in connection with the commodification of murals which now enter the degraded art scene. These problems will be understood by answering a number of creation questions which can be formulated as follows:

1. How to determine the right theory to study the problem of commodification of murals?
2. How is the form of murals experiencing commodification related to tourism sustainability strategies in Bali?

## **THEORETICAL BASIS**

### **a. Commodification**

Interpreted as the process of transforming use values into exchange rates. Commodification removes products from more meaningful social contact into something more useful in terms of business and value ideology.

In this study will use the theory by a post-modern thinker Jean Baudrillard, arguing that the sign value has replaced the use-value and exchange-value of commodities in contemporary culture. In contemporary culture, values are determined through the exchange of symbolic meanings rather than through their usefulness. Thus, a commodity is no longer an object with a use-value but a commodity (a commodity-sign). Referring to this view, all aspects of life are significantly influenced by the commodification so that something is considered authentic and not authentic is no longer determined by ratification based on formal canons or socially established cultural authorities. the choice between existing values and lifestyles available lifestyles is now a matter of taste and style whose area of operation lies in a world of self-sufficient commodities (Barker, 2014: 43). Baudrillard's choice of the theory of commodification was deemed appropriate to dissect the problem of commodification of murals, because the main problem was more about shifting the value of signs where the mural was understood as a social work of art, but in this study, mural was more on the problem of persuasive signs whose orientation was more towards the image certain actor. Related to this, the reading of the commodification of murals was also examined using the Semiotics theory.

### **b. Semiotics**

This study uses the theory of semiotics Charles Sanders Peirce (1931-1958) which is trichotomic, namely representamen, objects, and interpretants. What's interesting is that something that can be concrete things can be captured with the five human senses, which then, through a process, represent something that is in human cognition. So, what Peirce sees as a sign is not a structure, but rather a cognitive process that comes from what is captured by the five senses. In theory, the first concrete thing is a representation called a representamen, something in cognition is called an object. The process of relations from representamen to objects is called semiosis. In the signification of a sign, the process of semiosis is not yet complete, then there is another process which is a continuation called interpretant. So in outline, wear a sign occurs in the form of a process of semiosis from the concrete into the cognition of people who live in society (Hoed, 2011: 4). Peirce's understanding was chosen to facilitate visual assessment of signs representing certain meanings, with tourists as the target. The mural works that are present are deemed not works that have problems, issues and even complex discourse, but rather to what issues are easily captured and even digested by the five senses related to the persuasive mission of the presence of the mural.

### c. *Aesthetics*

The aesthetic theory used is based on aesthetic books, interwoven subjects, objects and values. The aesthetic approach is based on a basic element structure in aesthetics consisting of three parts, namely the study of aesthetic objects, aesthetic subjects and aesthetic values. As for what is meant by the understanding of the three elements are: Aesthetic objects are aspects that are observed and created by a person. The definition that emphasizes aesthetic objects in the form of art is as follows. David Crystal in The Cambridge Encyclopedia states "aesthetics is a philosophical study of art, including fine arts (painting, sculpture, photography, film), music, literature, drama and dance". Likewise, Albert E. Wier in The Macmillian Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians said, "Aesthetics is a scientific discussion through the study and comparison of art to understand and describe beauty". In fact, John Lecthe in the Key Contemporary Concepts From Abjections to Zeno's Paradox states, "Aesthetics, or aesthetics, are generally used as synonyms for art. The aesthetic subject is an observing spectator or creator who creates an aesthetic object, further explained the aesthetic subject in the aesthetic definition is generally summarized in the problem of aesthetic experience. This, among others, was proposed by Paul A. Fishwick in Aesthetic Computing; according to him, Aesthetics is sensory perception and its relation to someone's cognitive which is being influenced by aesthetic experience. Aesthetic value is a benchmark used by subjects to weigh beauty or ugliness, as well as attraction or disinterest in an object (Junaedi, 2017: 6,7,19,35). These three elements will be used specifically in dissecting the shape of the murals which are commodified, both from the various technical variations and the various contexts they present. By weighing the beauty benchmark, the extent to which the development of murals is believed to be one of the strategies for tourism sustainability in Bali is able to show its existence.

### DISCUSSION OF THE COMMODIFICATION OF MURALS

To find out the structure of murals that have been commodified, the discussion will examine two mural works that have been observed in a seminyak region where the presence of the murals is related to tourism sustainability strategies. As for the study as follows:



Figure 1. Murals at Beer & CO Seminyak  
Source: Personal Documentation, 2020

One of the interesting places located at Jalan Petitenget no 10A Kerobokan kelod - Badung, with the characteristics of a cool and comfortable place to be used to gather and use the mural as its identity. The selection of mural works is intended as one of the strategies to attract tourists. Through images that represent the image of Bali, it is realized that the work has the power to inspire feelings and stimulate the five senses, so that the work present has a purpose to attract tourists who are oriented towards profit. The commodification side of the mural is seen when the imagery presented, refers to the promotion of what is in a business related to the product being sold.

This mural is placed right on the main wall which also serves as one of the selfie rides. Everyday, the position is filled with chairs and tables for people to sit and relax while drinking beer. The presence of murals, supports a relaxed atmosphere by highlighting the Balinese identity that exists on the characteristics of the murals created. The selection of Balinese identity is very supportive of the presence of the mural because if understood further, Bali is something that is very exotic to be exposed where Bali itself is also known as an island of paradise, and as if those who sat while drinking there, were in a situation or condition like being in heaven. Such images are deliberately prepared to pamper tourists who attend and visit the Beer & Co Seminyak.

This work also has many signs that can be studied, from its visualization in the form of gestures, objects and atmosphere. The issue of signs related to the study of semiotic theory will be explained through the following object points:

A woman dressed in white kebaya poured a beer drim that seemed to refer to a waitress with a thick kebaya identity that would be typical of her Balinese. Underneath is a woman receiving the beer with a very large glass as if to explain the amount of pleasure / satisfaction obtained from Beer & Co. There are two men, one next to a woman carrying a drim with a big and strong figure carrying a large rock that reads Beer & Co which is the logo of the company. Right across from the other man, the male figure also bears a large stone with the letter "complete" with the attributes of kebalianya. The problem is that bearing in reference to the sensitive condition of "nyungsung" in Bali is considered or deserved to be endured (bear) is something big, grand and pure. it is realized by actors who want their business to look big, grand and holy. Two women who were engrossed in conversation by bringing each large beer back emphasized the joy of satisfaction and satisfaction. Opposite there is a woman who embraces the intimate of a lobster where the gesture is seen emitting a great desire to enjoy. A man with a tattoo motif on his body as if explaining the modern identity in Bali, because Bali is not only dissolved in the area of tradition but is able to be on two sides of the modern and traditional. One object that is enough attention because the portrayal of the woman's figure refers to tourists, it is seen from the use of its attributes, namely bikini and surfing while enjoying the waves. The depiction is central enough to take center focus, as if the tourist figure is the target of Beer & Co. What is quite intriguing from this work, the position of women is placed higher than men, because those who feel the satisfaction or enjoyment of the beer is described only by women's dialectics. It also refers to the issue of gender which seems like this work wants to display equality because in Bali or Hindu-Balinese beliefs the position of women is equal to men. This is evidenced from the public trust Seeing the position of Lord Shiva and Dewi Parwati, known as Ardhanaresuari.

This work represents the current situation of Bali, where Bali is not dissolved in tradition, but also liquid towards modernity and it is very clear this work refers to the signs of commodification because the main point is the business and product representation of a business namely Beer & Co. This work interprets cheerfulness, pleasure, something that hedon something that is indeed right in the middle of the island of paradise where to release all anxiety and problems.



Referring to the aesthetic theory used, the object of the mural is seen from the elements and principles of the preparation of fine art, namely the creation of works that take the style of Balinese tradition where mural works are arranged using the main characteristics of Balinese painting such as the placement of full compositions and nuances of works that are also distinctive with an artistic perspective rock painting. the work also displays a situation simultaneously namely the depiction of the ocean, rice fields and mountains into one frame that gives the impression and natural beauty of Bali plus the presence of "angkul-angkul" (the gate of Bali) which characterizes the beauty of being in the paradise island of Bali. Aesthetic subject related to experience or empirical power, through this work tries to explore and combine traditional and modern images, merged and displayed in an event that emphasizes the beauty, both nature and the cheerful situation of the object presented. Aesthetic value is seen visually, in mural works the form of the work has a lot of appeal both from extracting signs and its aesthetic realm. It can be said that the visual structure of work is in a good position. However, if reviewed with an initial understanding of the birth of the mural, this work is inadequate to intersect with the field of Balinese art, because the presence of the work does not provide something unsettling to offer. The work only presents the beauty of Semata and Citra of Bali whose purpose is only as an attraction for a company to reap business profits.

Next the work located at Motel Mexicola which is located at Jalan Kayu Jati no 9x Kelurahan Seminyak – Badung.



Figure 2. Murals at Motel Mexicola Seminyak  
Source : Personal Documentation, 2020

This work, if examined using Baudrillard's theory of commodification, reads signs and symbols to get the value of its commodification, that overall the structure of the composed symbols is not narrative, or if it is read as a complete picture in a flat area does not offer a story line. The structure of this image consists of various symbols which are composed in one field, including logos and text, there are standalone diction, there are images that specifically store certain meanings, and from this collection of images carry their own missions. If it is observed deeper than these symbols, it seems to be a picture of an era or a mass that carries the industrial world as the orientation of its existence. This has become a kind of branding to declare itself as part of industrial life, which in this case refers to the tourism industry, where in this region all pleasure is offered, all entertainment is prepared, various products are the main menus to be enjoyed. Overall, the visuals

that are shown indeed lead and are closer to a form of media promotion approach used by the industrial world for the means of advertising or commercializing a product. There are certain brands that are considered to have the power to compare the place as a place that offers the value of pleasure, entertainment values, space to keep the mind and imagination from the reality of a world full of problems. This has become a characteristic of the culture of capitalism which is always able to find loopholes to build new myths about happiness, pleasure by playing the images and values of diverse material worlds, playing the mass imagination to a certain standardized achievement, a only lasting happiness. Commodification will always change a philosophical value to a material value only. Values that no longer target human reason and intellectual power, to develop intelligence and awareness, which will lead to wise behavior, but commodification becomes a form of servitude to joyful pragmatic values, activities that are only entertaining, an act of escape from true relativity shows not only pleasure, but also suffering, irony.

Then from the semiotic value there are three things that can be read, namely in terms of objects, then the interpretation of these objects and the representation of objects that are composed in the field of images. Overall, if observed objects drawn in the form of figures, text composition, there is also a merging of the two, such as pictures of ice cream, corn, pineapple, beverage bottles, roses, female and also male figures, packaging from a product, logos, and diction are arranged vertically, horizontally and diagonally, in terms of color can also be seen tend to use bright color compositions and pastel colors that nuanced calm at the same time festive, sparkling, pleasant, relaxed and so on. The composition of the colors orange, blue, yellow, white, green and others whose objects are arranged in such a way do look like they want to build an atmosphere or atmosphere that is comfortable, friendly and just like the atmosphere at home, and the use of white and orange backgrounds become a special allure, that the impression to be conveyed when entering the place is a comfort that is clad in hospitality. The figures of men and women or symbols of feminism and masculinity that are read from the objects of women and men drawn on the wall, then the composition of the text combined with the logo, seems like a picture from the packaging of a product, then there are also pictures of food such as ice cream , corn, pineapple, as a symbol of pleasure, addictive sweet taste.

The symbols drawn and collected in one area of this image represent a form of reflection of a pleasure, the comfort of a place to enjoy all forms of pleasure, which then if related to the existence of the island of Bali where this mural is located, can also be said as an affirmation of the nuances heaven has to offer, as we know from the myth that there is no sorrow in heaven, no suffering there is only happiness, pleasure and peace.

The aesthetic approach is based on a basic element structure in aesthetics consisting of three parts, namely the study of aesthetic objects, aesthetic subjects and aesthetic values. Aesthetic objects or objects drawn have a form that is quite artistic, although the tendency of the style carried is more directed to the naive style, is not bound by the rules of formalism, or refers to the concept of painting with authentic hissing orientation or imitation of nature, then in terms of the aesthetic subject that is related to the orientation of the mural maker, there is also an attempt to highlight the impression of freedom by exploring naive expressions, this can be read from images of women and men, then also the logo and text appearing, technically the overall picture is not so worked neatly , precision and using other considerations related to formalist values. Then the aesthetic value offered in this picture is certainly associated with the concept of the restaurant where the mural is placed, which can be read from the pictured object, color selection, as well as inaccurate placement of objects, if read visually the nuances shown are nuances of beautiful tropical nature, Bohemien's relaxed life, the last

paradise, this which later became a commodified aesthetic value, was involved in the tourism industry which was heralded based on cultural tourism.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study of the commodification of murals begins with looking at the phenomenon of mural degradation related to the context presented, as well as the birth of murals which now refers to the order process of the actors to support the presence of a business and business. Observations were made in the Seminyak area, seeing the rapid progress of tourism which is supported by works of art (murals) as a promotional medium.

Two mural works which are examined using three theories namely commodification are used to see the process of commodity related to the tourism sustainability strategy in Bali. Semiotics describes the structure of hidden signs that are inserted by the actors as a persuasive tactic with tourists as the target. Aesthetics describe the value of beauty and perspective of mural works that intersect with the Balinese art scene from its birth process to its history now.

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