

Symbolic Meaning: Lifestyle and Consumptive Behavior of Farmer Society During Tobacco Harvest Season in Temanggung

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Abstract: Research Objectives: 1. Discovering the influence of tobacco harvest season for the economic condition of tobacco farming community. (2) Discovering the pattern of consumptive behavior of tobacco farming community during tobacco harvest season. (3) Discovering the pattern of economic behavior of community of farmer after the harvesting season of tobacco. The research used qualitative research method, data validity technique using triangulation of the data. Data analysis techniques includes: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or verification. Research result indicated that tobacco harvest season was able to increase economic income of farmers. The income was able to increase prestige and status and it was used to pay debt, to overly fulfill primary and secondary basic needs, to build and renovate the house, and to buy investment goods. After the harvest season, however, tobacco farmers tended to buy basic needs sufficiently and economize or sell their valuable goods or even owe to fulfill their basic needs. Suggestion: (1) The community has to be able to manage the income during tobacco harvest season wisely, so that in the next planting season they will not depend on debt to loan shark or bank. (2) The local government has to be able to supervise the tobacco trade so that any deception and price manipulation can be minimized.

1 INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the location of the research subjects: *Temanggung* district is one of the tobacco producing areas in Central Java Province. The farmers' status consists of tobacco traders, farmers and workers who each have different work patterns, attitudes, and lifestyles. Tobacco becomes the main crop in the area because the price of tobacco is higher than other agricultural crops. The increasing of income from tobacco leads to consumptive behavior during the tobacco harvest season.

Life style and consumptive behavior could happen in rural and urban societies. One impact of technological, globalization and communication development is the growth of consumption society. Consumption society tends to buy goods not because of their value of benefit but due to the lifestyle and prestige directed and shaped by advertisement and mode through media of television, film, drama series, infotainment and others. As a consumer, people are no longer look for the benefit of the goods they consumed instead they would consider whether the goods or services could give them an image of having modern lifestyle (Baudrilla, 2009)

This consumptive culture not only brings out the functional nature of fulfilling human needs but also the material and symbolic nature, for example, by only consuming products that lead to the establishment of identity for the user of the products. Consumptive behavior becomes polemic for Indonesian society (Nanang, 2011) stated that consumption rationality in consumer society system has changed because currently societies buy products not as an attempt to fulfill the needs but as a fulfillment of desire. The only object to fulfill the desire is a desire object that imaginary and subconsciously emerge and it has gone and only able to look for its substitutes in the world of objects of consumed symbols. The logic is operated in the current society. Consumer society will buy the attached symbols of an object, thus the benefit and exchange values of most consumer objects have eroded. Image distinguishes an object as having higher value than other objects. Image is also able to motivate individual to willingly sacrifice for consuming an insignificant function good.

Research from Firmansyah, Asep, and Sri Hartati (2014) on Changes in Consumptive Behavior and Lifestyle in Vegetable Farming Community: A Case

Study in *Desa Kerinjing, Pagar Alam, South Sumatra* showed that farmers preferred malls or convenience store compared to traditional markets. In the aspect of food consumption, people preferred catering system compared to cooking by themselves. In terms of appearance, people judged it from the ownership vehicles or house as social status.

One of impacts of technological and communication development is the emergence of consumer society and it occurs in urban as well as rural societies. Even the traditional rural society with subsistence farmer as the main livelihood has affected. Rural society who used to live a simple life depending on agricultural products to fulfill their needs now tends to have consumptive behavior by purchasing various goods to show their identity. Consumption is not only based on needs but also desire.

Mountains areas with fertile soils support the cultivation of various agricultural crops. There are various agricultural crops planted such as tobacco, paddy, corn, and various vegetables. Tobacco is the superior crop for farmer in mountains areas because the areas supported with their cool climate could produce quality tobacco. Society prefers tobacco farming to food crop farming because the selling price is higher. This high selling price could give higher income for farmers. Tobacco leaves are known as "gold leaves" that able to improve farmer society economy. Tobacco becomes the main livelihood for farmers in various tobacco producer areas in Indonesia. The planting season of tobacco is started in the beginning of dry season, which is in April, until the harvest season in August and September. Farmers mostly look forward to the harvest season.

Arrohman's (2014) study on the economic morals of tobacco farmers showed that the economic benefits of tobacco as a commodity crop was because tobacco's price was much higher than the subsistence crop. Social and cultural advantages were related to prestige symbols, there was pride if succeeding in cultivating tobacco.

Tobacco gives higher profit for farmers and it is a promising export commodity, thus it could increase farmers' income. An increase in income from tobacco product causes a change in consumption behavior of society. Markets are more crowded during tobacco harvest season compare to other harvest seasons. Farmers visit the markets to spend their profit from tobacco farming. Stores that sell main necessities, electronic goods, and motor cycle are busier than usual. People tend to buy necessity goods excessively and even buy goods beyond the primary needs.

Khanisa's research (2012) on the Analysis of Tobacco Farmers' Income in *Desa Menggoro, Kecamatan Tembarak, Kabupaten Temanggung* showed that the bigger the tobacco agricultural land, then the higher the income. Factors like land area, production cost, commodity price, and production quantity, gave a real influence to the lifestyle and consumption of tobacco farming community.

Mihic and Culina's article (2006) which was *Buying Behavior and Consumption: Social Class Versus Income* showed that social status and income significantly influenced consumptive behavior. High social class will consume and buy products that reflected lifestyle values, like products that looked more expensive which related to class symbols.

2 METHOD

The research used qualitative method to describe consumptive behavior, lifestyle and economic behavior pattern of farmer society after tobacco harvest season. Research location was in Temanggung. The location was chosen because most of the people worked as tobacco farmer. Data collection method was based on observation and interview with the informants. Triangulation was used as data validity (Denzin dan Lincoln, 2000)

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesia is able to increase farmers' income through tobacco export because tobacco is a more commercial commodity than other agricultural commodities, thus it has an important role for farmer's economy. Its high selling price is believed to be able to improve the prosperity of farmer, especially farmers in Temanggung Regency. Supported by fertile soil and cool climate that suitable for tobacco planting has caused tobacco to be the profitable and a mainstay commodity for farmers.

Tobacco harvest season was a time that been looking forward by farmers. In this season, the village would be very crowded. There were many small trucks carried tobacco stacks in and out the village. Farmers were *ngrajang* (cutting the leaves in small pieces) or drying the tobacco leaves around their house and often they had to do overtime work until the next morning to cut the leaves. This hard working was worth with the profit gained by farmers.

The income of tobacco farmer was influenced by the area owned. Farmers with wider area will gain

more profit. In average, tobacco farmers owned area of 0.5 to 1 ha. The farm land could be farmers' own land or rented. An area of 1 ha was able to produce 24 baskets each contained 33 – 35 kg; therefore, in one season farmers were able to produce around 792 kg.

Income was also influenced by season or climate. Unpredictable rain fall was the obstacle for farmers because the quality of tobacco depends on the rain fall. Excess rain fall will decrease the quality of tobacco and in turn the selling price to the factory. A good quality tobacco is tobacco that completely dry with sunshine.

Price determined by the factory had influence on the level of company's income. The price of tobacco for each grade has been determined by the factory based on various criteria. Farmers only estimated the price and the decision would be in the hand of employer and factory. Farmers received every decision of the employer and factory regarding the price.

The initial capital received was also determined the income gained by farmer. If the initial capital was gained by borrowing money to the employer, the employer usually would apply interest to the capital owed and cut the price of the tobacco from the farmers who borrowed the money. The interest applied to the money owed by farmer was highly influenced the farmer's income because farmer needed to pay the interest. Despite the fluctuation in tobacco price and uncertain dry season, tobacco was still the main priority for society in Temanggung Regency.

Tobacco is the main crop in Temanggung Regency due to its high price that brings more profit for farmers. Agricultural products, such as rice, chili, cabbage, eggplant, corn and other vegetables, are usually sufficient for fulfilling daily needs and if the produces yielded have less quality, the farmers will experience loss and they might need to borrow money to fulfill their basic needs. The main influence of tobacco for the economy of Temanggung society was that it can increase farmers' income.

Borrowing money (debt) had been the culture of Temanggung society. They borrowed money for planting from their employers (capital owners), bank and farmer group and to fulfill their daily need they would owe to the nearest food stalls that often to give loan to the farmers. Debt was still their option despite the uncertain production result.

Actually, loans obtained from the employers were detrimental for farmers because if they borrowed money of IDR 10,000,000.- they would have to return for IDR 15,000,000.-. Farmers were also required to sell their tobacco to the same employers who gave them loan and sometimes the employers were

cheating by giving a lower price than those determined by the factory. However, farmers continued to depend on the loan from the employers because without it they were unable to plant the tobacco.

Tobacco harvest season was also used as a mean to increase farmers' prestige. There is certain pride if farmers were successful in planting tobacco. The success was manifested in form of goods. The society preferred to buy goods that could increase their prestige to saving the money for next planting season. The goods bought were in form of car, motor cycle, electronics, home furnishing. In addition to buy goods, the profit was also used to renovate their houses.

The ownership of valuable goods became the benchmark for determination of social status of tobacco farmer society. When tobacco harvest season came, many people appeared to hustle to spend their profit from farming. Generally, farmers went shopping to the market. Tobacco was not only profitable for farmers but also traders at the market and the whole economic sectors in Temanggung.

Crowded could be seen when tobacco harvest season came. People raced to present themselves based on their income from tobacco, such as vehicles, house renovation and electronic goods. There was certain pride for the people when they managed to grow tobacco and it was manifested in form of goods although they had to borrow money for the next planting season.

The Symbolic Meaning, Lifestyle and Consumptive of Farmers during Tobacco Harvest Season Consumption in the perspective of sociology is not only the fulfillment of physical and biological needs but also related to the social and cultural aspects. Consumptive is related to taste, identity or life style that could change because it is conducted on the symbolic quality of the goods and depend on the perception of taste from others (Damsar, 2000)

The increase in income causes an increase in consumption behavior of society and vice versa. As well as within tobacco farmers in Temanggung, an increase in income gave rise to the tendency of consumptive behavior among the society. Tobacco farmer's income was varied based on the status of tobacco farmers.

Consumptive behavior pattern of tobacco farmer during tobacco harvest season was by buying large amount of basic needs. When tobacco harvest season came, farmer overly spent their profit for basic needs such as soap, tooth paste, soy sauce, flour, oil, clothes and others. At this time, markets were more crowded. Farmers and farm workers were rented a mini truck

to make them easier to bring various basic needs they bought for their daily supply. When other farming was less profitable, the goods and other needs could be paid directly. Profit from tobacco farming usually used by farmers to pay debt when other farming was less profitable and the remaining was used to buy primary, secondary and tertiary needs.

Farmers bought goods based on their income and status as tobacco farmers. The level of the income was also influencing a place where farmers went shopping. Tobacco employers who had the highest stratification among farmers usually went to the mall or supermarket for shopping. The goods sold at the mall or supermarket was different than those at the market. The goods were branded goods and could not be found at traditional market. Whereas, owner-farmers and farm workers chose to go shopping at the supermarket or traditional market. After tobacco harvest season, the shopping location was shifted to traditional market only or even to the nearest small shops to owe.

Lifestyle and consumptive behavior of tobacco farmer was also seen when they bought goods to show their identity. The goods they bought have symbolic meaning that show about their success as a tobacco farmer. This symbolic meaning could also construct their identity and relationship with others who were in the same symbolic world.

Consumption expresses one's social position and identity in the society due to the change in one's perspective toward respected status. Consumption is no longer an object but also social meanings in form of hidden symbolic. According to Weber (1947), consumption of a good is an image of certain lifestyle of a social status group. Consumption of a good is an indicator of farmer's stratification and status; the distinguished is the relationship to production and goods bought. Farmer's consumption of luxurious goods was a certain lifestyle of the stratification and status of tobacco farmers. During the tobacco harvest season, farmers bought home furniture and electronic goods such as table, chair, cupboard, refrigerator, washing machine and TV even though they already have the goods.

According to (Mead and Blumer, 1982) Consumption was no longer based on the need with functional values but based on merely desire and satisfaction. Buying furniture was done only for an ornament without considering the utility value of the goods. The good was only use for prestige symbol with symbolic and stratification meaning. Mead and Blumer (1957) stated that one's opinion is not made toward others' act but based on the meaning given toward the act itself. In this case, tobacco farmers

conducted consumptive behavior in a hope that it could increase their prestige and stratification among the tobacco farming society to a level similar to those of tobacco employers (capital owner).

Consumption is the amount of expense of a household to buy various goods and services for a certain level of income and period. Consumption is no longer the fulfillment of physical and biological needs but it is related to the social and cultural aspects. Consumption is the use of goods and services to fulfill daily needs — it can be related to taste, identity, symbol or lifestyle — that could increase prestige and solidarity within a group. The lifestyle and consumption behavior of farmers during tobacco harvest season was no longer based on the fulfillment of physical and biological needs but based on the desire related to social and cultural aspects, identity and symbol. When they bought certain goods, they expected an appreciation from the society as a successful tobacco farmer.

3.1 The Symbolic Meaning and Lifestyle of Farmers after Tobacco Harvest Season

After the tobacco harvest season or rainy season, farmers planted rice, corn, chili, eggplant, cabbage and other vegetable crops. Rice planting will need 4 months for one planting season. The cost for the cultivation during rainy season was also gained from a loan from the capital owner or the Bank because the profit they gained from tobacco farming had spent consumptively. After tobacco harvest season, farmers no longer had consumptive behavior and tended to saving. Sometimes they had to owe or sold their valuable goods that they bought during the tobacco harvest season, such as car, motor and electronic goods, to fulfill their daily needs.

Managing a farm land that depended so much on nature had caused farmer to have uncertain income. When the weather was bad, the crops were attacked by pest or the price of tobacco decrease farmer would experience a loss. Due to the loss, farmers were unable to pay the debt and they had to owe again by mortgaging their land certificate and vehicles document. The debt will be paid with profit gained from the next tobacco harvest season. The unstable price of tobacco and unpredictable season had forced farmers to have strategy in managing their income that gained during tobacco harvest season. Consumptive spending would make farmers continue into debt.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The main influences of tobacco harvest season in Temanggung were the ability to increase farmers' income that can be used to pay debt and to fulfill their basic needs, the emerge of consumptive behavior by buying various valuable goods, improving prestige by buying primary, secondary and tertiary goods such as car, motor and electronic goods. Tobacco harvest season was also used as a mean to improve symbolic status, lifestyle, consumptive and identity of tobacco farmers. After the harvest season, farmers tended to buy sufficiently basic needs and they did not buy any goods that show their identity. Moreover, when the agricultural product was less profitable, farmers would owe or even sold their valuable goods to fulfill the basic needs.

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