

TERE LIYE'S WORKS: BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND CREATIVITY

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Abstract

This research was conducted with the best-selling background of the works of Tere Liye's novel. It can be said that almost every millennial teenager in Indonesia, male or female, has at least read the work. Therefore, the problem of this research is how the works of Tere Liye as a product of the cultural industry construct the identity and lifestyle of its readers. The research method used is a qualitative method. Meanwhile, the theory used is the theory of cultural production. The results of the discussion of the best-selling works of Tere Liye are indeed in accordance with the lifestyle of millennial teenagers. These works are mass produced as one of the popular culture products taking into account the market share of the reader. These works also succeeded in constructing the reader's identity and their lifestyle. As mentioned earlier that Tere Liye's work had a macro impact; these works have a high economic effect. As a popular cultural work by Tere Liye, it is very dependent on marketer's analysis. Not only depending on the quality of the work, in its production and post-production, the works of Tere Liye rely heavily on precise strategies and tactics and unique ways of meeting the needs of the market segment so that they are able to generate and explore the needs of the segment. This is what Tere Liye and his team did to make these works become idol of millennial teenagers and indirectly construct their identities and lifestyles.

Keywords: Tere Liye, cultural production, market segments, millennial.

1. Introduction

The name Tere Liye in recent times is often heard. There are those who admire him, but there are also many who scoff at him even some who are 'allergic'. He is an author from South Sumatra whose real name Dervish has produced 31 works. The works of the Dervish novel real name, Tere Liye, are almost all in demand. In 2018 his novel entitled *Pulang* came into the top ten sales at Gramedia. His work of *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* has even become material for thesis writing. Some of them can be mentioned by Jamaludin (2104) and Tanjung (2012). These studies mostly discuss issues that concerning educational value, especially in relation to the teachings of Islam. What is interesting is that many people talk

about the novel's work from various backgrounds. As seen also in the back cover of one of the novel's works, *You, Aku, and Sepucuk Angpau Merah* (2012) that Belinda commented on a dentist, Ayu Aditya Saputri, an SLB teacher candidate, Ariza, a kindergarten teacher, Umi Futikhah, a teacher, and Putri, a factory worker.

In addition to publishing novel works, Tere Liye also publishes a collection of quotes or wise sentences in the form of #About Love. This author is known to be very good at composing words into sentences that are full of love, romance so that they touch the heart and are liked by many people, especially the young. It seems that this is what distinguishes his from other authors. Some wise sentences from him that people like include "The headscarf should protect the wearer properly". In the 80s, our mothers, even had to deal with intelligence, discrimination, being expelled from work, schooling, being slandered by poison headscarves, only to wear a headscarf.

Tere Liye is also one of the authors who has questioned book publishing in Indonesia. He once asked Gramedia and Republika publishers to stop printing their books because of the unfair tax treatment to the author's profession in July 2017. The decision attracted public attention. However, in January 2018, he re-published his works. This seems to be interesting to talk about related to the production process of a literary work. What is the role of the publisher and government in this matter in protecting and protecting the rights of an author? Will a writer then stop writing because he is no longer able to face the giant world of business in such a terrible book? How creativity becomes limited because of the problem of the production of the book facing it.

The Tere Liye case became easily overcome because his works were classified as works sought by publishers. So, what about the writers' works that are not sought by publishers? Whether they have to give up or maybe there is another way to go. This paper specifically addresses the works of Tere Liye. As mentioned earlier, his works are works that are sought after by publishers because they sell well in the market. The aim of study is to reveal how his work has been successful in the market, is it because the works fit the lifestyle of the reader. This is the main question in this study, why his works are constantly favored by their readers? How does this book writer deal with the book trading business? Therefore, the problem of this research is how his works is a product of the cultural industry construct the identity and lifestyle of its readers.

Tere Liye's works are often underestimated by the community because they are considered popular works. This may be due to the community thinking it is just a form of teenage love stories that talk about nonsense things. However, it turns out that his works have been discussed as thesis material for students, not only Indonesian Literature students, but the most are students outside the Indonesian Literature department. One of them is done by Mahmudah (2009), who found that the content (novel by Tere Liye) can be used in the learning process—both in the contents of the novel itself and in the methods used in the process of family education and also education in society. The content of the novel is full of emotional content, the learning process and how to respond to life within limitations can be used as a reference by educators in educating their students. This easy conclusion shows that it turns out that his *Bidadari-Bidadari Surga* can be one of the references to the process of children's education not even formally as well as formally. It seems that this opens up the possibility that his work can enter the school world. This happens because of "moral and religious values contained in it" (Amelia, 2018). What are the moral values contained in this novel's work? Rahmawati (2013, p. 3) states that the author succeeded in describing success achieved by hard work, sincere sacrifice, and gratitude.

According to Susetianingsih (2016) and Rahmawati (2013), Tere Liye's works have the potential to construct an ideal behaviour identity, such as hard work, sincere sacrifice, and

gratitude. This indicates that the works mentioned earlier can be one of the ingredients to build the construction of Indonesian human identity, especially the millennial generation. Meanwhile, this research is purposed to confirm the statement. Other research on Tere Liye's work is not only on the novel *Bidadari-Bidadari Surga*, but also on the *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* novel (2005). As in the previous research, the foundation is dwelling on Islamic education and the cultivation of moral values, too. The work is said to be able to become a persuasive communication medium in *da'wah* activities by packaging the novel script through beautiful and interesting material and style of language and writing to read so that the Islamic teaching material contained in it makes the reader able to feel it directly (Uyun, 2017, p. ii). Therefore, it is indeed in accordance with the object of study in the existing thesis works. Students who write theses are more interested in Islamic works. However, unlike other writers, Tere Liye also wrote in various genres. His works are not only Islamic, but they are also socially critical related, such as in the novel *Negeri Para Bedebah* and *Anak-Anak Mamak*. These works are full of social criticism and loved by readers from various backgrounds.

2. Literature Review

The theory used is the theory of cultural production. Tere Liye's works can be said to be one of the cultural productions in that this is popular culture. In the beginning, popular culture was mass (general), commercial, and open. Popular culture is values that come from the advertising, entertainment, media, and fashion symbols which are then directed at the general public. Another term in pop culture is mass culture, which is a culture produced and consumed by the masses. Culture of mass is considerably defined as a collective dream culture, where people with same hobby and passion—especially by adolescents—are bound or celebrate holiday together (Falamah, 2019).

As revealed in the introduction, how to be part of popular culture and so successful in almost every work emerge as questions. One of them is its connection with the issue of identity. In the view of identity postmodernism not only as an absolute term, but also as a political representation of culture which includes the construction and continuous re-creation through the creation of images and narratives in visual texts from high culture and popular culture. Identity is a major area of concern in cultural studies, in other words cultural studies explore how a person becomes who he is now, how a person is produced into a subject, and how a person equates himself (or emotionally instills himself) with a picture of male or female, black or white, young or old (Barker in Falamah, 2019). Furthermore Hall in Falamah (2019) said that is that cultural identity in the study of cultural studies is more emphasizing that as with the problem of similarity, identity is organized around a number of differences. Cultural identity is not seen as a condition or reflection on something that is permanent and natural, but as a process of 'being'. Hall in Falamah (2019) further argued that there is no essence for identity to be sought, will but cultural identity will continue to be produced. Cultural identity is also not an essence but a position that continues to experience change and the point of difference around the identity can cause it to become diverse and evolving.

Meanwhile, according to Hall in Falamah (2019), in relation to identity construction, in general there are two schools in seeing cultural identity. The first cultural identity has a fixed, unchanging, and unbroken nature. Secondly, cultural identity is seen not as an essence but as a positioning. In this case cultural identity has its origin and history, but continues to undergo transformation and can change, which among others can be influenced by history, culture, and power (Falamah, 2019). In cultural studies and the constructionist approach, the second flow is chosen to be used in viewing identity. Cultural identity continues to be

constructed through narration, memory, and myth. In the case of Tere Liye it seems that the reader's cultural identity cannot only be seen in individuals to individuals but must be seen as cultural identity in fan groups. Although there is no mention of the typical Tere Liye fan group, the fan-page created by the author to gather his fans has manifested the identity of the reader in the form of a fan group identity.

3. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative method. Qualitative methods are called naturalistic research methods because their research is carried out in natural conditions. Research is carried out on natural objects. Natural objects are objects that develop as they are, not manipulated by researchers and the presence of researchers does not affect the dynamics of the object. In qualitative research the instrument is a person or human instrument, namely the researcher himself. Data collection techniques are triangulated. Data analysis is inductive. Qualitative methods are used to get deep data, a data that contains meaning. The results of qualitative research emphasize more meaning than generalization (Sugiyono, 2015, p. 8). This research is indeed appropriate to use qualitative methods because the expected research results are meanings. In addition, the object of research in the form of novel works is a natural object that develops as it is, not manipulated by researchers and the presence of researchers does not affect the dynamics of the object. Meanwhile, this research indeed relies on researchers as an instrument to obtain data.

4. Results and Discussion

Tere Liye's works can be said to be diverse. The novels *Hafalan Shalat Delisa*, *Bidadari-Bidadari Surga*, and *Rindu* can be said to be Islamic works because they express the dominant moral values of Islam. *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* published in 2005 was initially not well known. Only in 2008 did this work become famous until it was filmed. Through this work, Tere Liye became known as a writer and finally succeeded. The other works of Tere Liye (2008) that were filmed were *Bidadari-Bidadari Surga*. *Hafalan Salat Delisa* became famous because the community seemed to link this work with non-fictional figures of a child in Ulee Lheue Aceh who were victims of the Tsunami in Aceh. This non-fictional character is named Delisa Fitri Rahmadani. This novel's work is a work set during the tsunami disaster in Aceh.

Tere Liye is a creative writer. In just one year he can publish five to six works. That seems to be the result of his life experiences in childhood and his writing principles. He has the motto that the writing is actually the same. According to him, the difference is a different perspective, a special one. He gave an example of what Kang Abik did with his work. *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* became successful in the market because it offered a different thing at that time, namely that the romance story setting in Egypt is usually a romance story setting in Italy, Paris, or other places. This is one of the reasons why this novel works well in the market. Tere Liye, in one of the Writing Seminars at the MBS PPM in Sleman Yogya, stated that his creativity began when he listened to stories in his hometown. He said that in his village in his childhood there was one of his family members, Bakwodar, who was very fond of storytelling. He told stories while being massaged by children. The children who listened to him were asked to name one of the objects and Bakwodar would start telling stories using the name of the noun. The story he conveyed is actually the same, but Bakwodar tells stories using different perspectives. This is one of the keys to the success of the best-selling Tere Liye in the market industry. He offered the same thing that was known in general but with a different touch.

Some of his works, *Matahari* and *Falling Leaves Never Hate the Wind* in 2016, are considered as the works that have no sign or stamp as best seller. So is *Stars and My Fathers* (no) *Liars* in 2017. Some readers admit that they like the work of Tere Liye because the author can skillfully rummage through the readers' feelings. Another thing that drives Tere Liye's work to be a best seller is to make himself an artist figure. Some of the things that helped Tere Liye's fame were his figure as an author. As already mentioned, one of them was because Tere Liye stopped publishing his book because of expensive writer's tax. Tere Liye caught the attention of the public when he stated that the socialists did not have a role in independence and LGBT as a contagious disease. So did his anger when his quote was quoted as a caption on Facebook. These things seem to make this author even more famous.

Many readers are curious about the pseudonym of the word "Tere Liye", which originates from the Indian language and indicates that the author is someone who is graceful. There is also the mystery of who Tere Liye was before. Some readers even suspect that Tere Liye is a female writer. These things seemed to make Tere Liye and his works more famous.

Perhaps these things have indeed become one of the publishers' strategies in "boosting" the sales of these works. Besides, the usual marketing strategy. This is in accordance with what Tere Liye often said that when delivering something it must be from a special perspective. This seems to be one of his characteristics that makes it different from other authors. When he announced that his works would not be published again, of course this encouraged readers to look for books by him. Such a strategy raises the sympathy of the reader for the existence of the author and the book that will encourage sales. Various things were indeed seen by publishers and he boosted sales with some of the controversial things.

Another thing that caught the attention of readers by Tere Liye was his comments on LGBT "homosexual, lesbians, sissy, those are all psychiatric disorders, diseases, and can be transmitted by lifestyle". This attracted the attention of the public and certainly made "people" even more curious about the figure of Tere Liye. This will certainly increase sales. The next controversy was his statement about communists, socialist thinkers and human rights activists who had never fought Dutch, British and Japanese soldiers. Also his anger when the quote was quoted as 'people' status on Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. All of the horrendous controversies are indeed similar to the way the artists raise their ratings. A similar tactic seems to be used by this author to raise his name more in the eyes of the public. The popularity is not only for the "works", but also the author's figure will also add to the sales value of his works.

This is kind of publishers and author's strategies to increase the popularity of work and publication. Tere Liye is indeed an all-out author. In the sense of his work not only known as one or two, but almost every work is a best seller, and widely known by the public, unlike Habiburahman who is only skyrocketed when his novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* was published. Andrea Hirata only skyrocketed with his work *Laskar Pelangi*, which later caused Belitung to become a well-known area of interest for tourists from home and abroad. Typically for Tere Liye, it can be said that almost all of his works have become best sellers and are known by the public. This can be proven by nine out of 15 readers by Tere Liye who mentioned more than one work that he had read¹. This proves the existence of beauty in his creativity.

Indeed, it can be said here that Tere Liye's fame originated from his novel entitled *Hafalan Shalat Delisa* which was filmed. However, based on his confession in an interview conducted by Supartika (2018), this writer acknowledges that at first this book was rejected by the publisher because it was considered not to be sold in the market. And when published,

¹ The researchers broadcasted a simple questionnaire distributed to 95 people and were responded by 21 readers.

some bookstores put it wrongly on the 'Islam' or 'Praying' section. However, the uniqueness of the author's point of view and impressive historical event depicted in the work—namely the Tsunami of Aceh—make the novel sold well and finally filmed. The transferring factor into a film also plays an important role in boosting the fame of his novel works.

As acknowledged in an article written by Supartika (2018), Tere Liye was able to use social media well. He promotes social media (Facebook) and also conducts writing research and knows the stories public wants. A popular work as said by Kaplan in Damono (1993, p. 41) presents a world that is already well known to its devotees, in which the devotee looks without taking a single step from where he stands. Popular art enthusiasts feel safe to be in a well-known world. For example, as described in the article by Supartika (2018), "When he made the series *Bulan, Bintang, Matahari*, he designed a special segment for teenagers. In 2014 he began serious research and met with Gramedia publishers. He concluded that fantasy novels in Indonesia did not sell because they were similar to foreign fantasy novels. After almost a year of research, the theme of the parallel world emerged and no one worked on it. The idea of a parallel world was obtained from a survey on Facebook, of the three thousand who commented the most chose the theme". This is what drives and becomes the material of the Moon, Stars and Sun trilogy. This proves that Tere Liye is very dependent on the demands of his fans in this case can be referred to as market demand.

In this all-digital era in which capital entrenched which determines cultural production, the existence of Tere Liye's works proves that art in this case the novel's work can become a commodity that accommodates the wider need for subtlety of language which in the past only became belonging to the elite is limited (Damono, 1993, p. 38). His work are not exclusive literature for few people reading. These works spread to various groups and groups. Hence, the comments on the back cover of his works are not filled by literary observers, literary experts, nor people who claim to be writers. The back cover of his work is filled by common readers who seem to have been tried by the authors and publishers from various groups, groups, in Indonesia.

Another interesting thing that must also be revealed is that the presence of Tere Liye's work gave rise to his own reading community. This is one of the characteristics of the next popular art. As stated by Damono (1993, p. 44), popular art is closely related to the state of modern society where humans are deprived and isolated creatures from their environment. Popular art managed to appear as a filler of remoteness. In other words, popular art managed to infiltrate far to the lowest levels of society and create a kind of brotherhood among its members. The Tere Liye community emerged with a high sense of brotherhood because besides being bound by the novel's work, it was also bound by the figure of the authority itself. The attachment is getting tighter when nowadays it is filled with the presence of social media, namely Facebook, which has been used by its authors well.

Tere Liye is one of the authors who has a fan-page. His fan-page is followed by 79.4 k and, interestingly, in the fan-page, he states that he is not a motivator. In this fan-page, he announces and discusses the storyline, characters, and also the number of pages of work that will be published. Here, he indeed deliberately research about "the readers' wishes". Here is one example of the discussion conducted by Tere Liye, "Btw, cerbung *Pergi* is most likely finished in chapters 25-30. It's already very thick. I canceled entering Bujang's mate because his father's love story needed a lot of pages" (Agnes, 2019). This author also announced his sample of work on the fan-page. For example and doing it in 2017 is the novel sequel to *Pulang*. The chapter per chapter has been posted by the author on the fan-page.

It seems that with this fan-page Tere Liye can properly maintain the loyalty of his fan community. Fan-page formation done by the author seems to be realized by the author and raises the identity of a typical fan group. Fan groups (fandom) in this information age can be connected well and coordinated with other groups throughout the world. However, because of technological advancements and increase participation in the virtual world, the formation and maintenance of people who are members of groups is at stake. It will appear clearly that fans who gather online as a method or way to create their own space where they can easily consume, make, and share their information and culture with other members and even other fan groups (Falamah, 2019). Cases in fanfiction as discussed by Falamah (2019), fan group members can be creative, they can write and speak. Meanwhile, in the fan group, Tere Liye has only passive members. Indeed, the reader gives an opinion on the work to be compiled, but as a writer Tere Liye can be said to have "absolute power" to produce his work.

Fan groups or readers of Tere Liye's works are different in nature from fanfiction fan groups. Fanfiction is text produced by fans from the media and literature. These fans adapt original works, such as novels and original films and process them into imaginary stories written in the form of fiction according to what they expect (Falamah, 2019). In the case of Tere Liye, texts are produced only by Tere Liye, the fans only gave ideas, corrected a little, and gave what they expected to the author. The author then processes and writes it and then throws it back to the fan group. The author also announces on his fan or can also be called a fan group to read and comment on part by piece what he has written. After the work was completed, the author also announced and promoted and sold his work to his fans. One of the ways that was announced on his Facebook account was the announcement of meeting readers and writers "It's free. Open to the public. There is no registration, please just come to the location of the event". The event was also enlivened by door prizes, discussions, and pieces of books. The announcement was interesting and made other readers in other cities also hold similar events. This also seems to make the book more in demand. In addition, the author and publisher carry out book review competitions. The prize for the competition was quite interesting, namely the tour package to Japan. This is also one way to boost sales of his books. This is constantly being done. Up to his last work, he continued to do so. It seems that this is the reason why later the works of Tere Liye were constantly successful on the market.

The lifestyle of the reader or can be called a fan in this case is constructed and simultaneously constructs the works of Tere Liye. That goes not only in one direction but in two directions. As already stated, cultural identity is constructed not as an item that is not an essence, but as a position. Identity keeps changing. Most readers of Tere Liye's works are millennial youth. Of the 21 people who read, 12 people aged between 17 and 25 years². Based on the questionnaire³ that was disseminated the most liked by the readers was the story of moral wisdom (38.9%), after that, only a love story (27.8%), and the next was a story of adventure (22.2%).

What's interesting to mention here is that based on online lifting, what readers like most is how to solve problems. 50% stated that what was liked by the idolized figure was the way to solve the problem. This is most likely because the readers like the wise quotes in the novels they read, although Tere Liye stated that he was not a motivator. Thus, it can be said that the three works of Tere Liye are indeed novel works which can be an alternative material for Islamic moral learning. It seems that the works of Tere Liye are the successor of the presence of Islamic literary wave that emerged in the era after the 2000s.

² From the online questionnaire distributed.

³ The researcher launched a simple questionnaire to find out the situation of reading Tere Liye's work.

5. Conclusion

What Tere Liye does may be different from what happens in other fan groups, fanfiction, for example. He gets ideas, ideas, and even stories from fans. He then packs it into a work and throws it into the readers with alluring marketing techniques. Great marketing techniques may only be an addition, but the most important is when fans read these works, they are like in their own world. They feel well received in the world of these works. Fan identity is not only constructed in these works, but that identity also constructs the works of Tere Liye. This can easily be supported by social media—in this case, Facebook with its fan-page. Actually, the marketing techniques carried out by Tere Liye are popular literary marketing techniques that have been done before by other authors. However, nowadays it becomes massive and moves rapidly when social media plays an active role. In the past, relying on printing technology took time for the printing process. Now, with the presence of social media and the internet these things can be done in an instant and reach vast distances.

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