

# From Practice to Theory: White Ocean Strategy of Creative Industry in East Java Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study focuses on implementing the white ocean strategy in the creative industries. The discussion included identifying business activity types, antecedents, and the consequences of implementing the white ocean strategy—data collection through in-depth interviews with 48 key informants, including the owners and consumers of the creative industry, in East Java, Indonesia. Research results show that businesses or corporates need to pay more attention and leverage the white ocean strategy to increase their value and differentiation advantage. They also need to maintain religiosity and corporate Altruism and want to keep ahead in the creative industry. The study results that there are five propositions. Religiosity and Philanthropy are the basis for companies to do a white ocean strategy. It increases customer's social and emotional value. Also, it would be the marketer's differentiation advantage. Altruism and product quality trigger consumer purchasing decisions. The paper contributes to the literature and future research. Consumer care and product quality trigger consumer purchasing decisions, strengthening the white ocean strategy's influence on consumer response.

## Keywords

Creative Industry; Philanthropy; Religious; Value; White Ocean Strategy

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## Introduction

The creative industry is a strategic business sector that encourages competitiveness, boosts competitiveness, productivity, sustainable growth, employment, and export potential (Ren, 2021). Indonesia is the third-largest country globally when looking at the creative economy's contribution to GDP after the United States and South Korea. East Java is one center of potential creative industries in Indonesia (Alifiana, Susyanti, & Dianawati, 2021). In the global market, product quality is not the only reason consumers want to buy a product. Consideration of the company's business ethics is one of the reasons for purchasing decisions. Business ethics is the key to winning in high competition, products or services with the same relative quality. Companies must develop appropriate competitive strategies at the global market environmental issues is essential. White ocean strategy (WOS) is a widely used alternative business strategy, especially in the creative industries. The WOS is a competitive strategy that focuses on People, Planet, Profit, and Passion (Aithal, 2016). WOS concern for the environment. The creative industry is an industry that relies on creativity that is closely related to business ethics. Creative industries are prone to unethical business activities in chief competition; companies create innovative products (Hartini, Premananto, & Sulistiawan, 2017). Businesses implementing the white ocean strategy do not prioritize material benefits, but community welfare and environmental sustainability are essential. Creative industries could produce unique and innovative products. It affects not focusing on achieving public trust. This study is exploratory to identify the antecedents and consequences of implementing a white ocean strategy in Indonesia's creative industries, especially East Java. Creative Industry, Business Ethics, and Corporate Responsibility. The creative industry has become a priority economic sector for governments worldwide (Parimita, Purwana, & Suhud, 2021). Creative industries are connected with creativity in creating products or services. (Pratt & Jeffcutt, 2009). However, managerial innovation and experimentation and new organizational and business practices stimulate innovation and entrepreneurship in other sectors of the economy (Lampel & Germain, 2016; Messeni Petruzzelli & Savino, 2015). Business competition is also an enormous challenge. Sometimes, marketers in creative industries are too ambitious to win the business competition only. They use unethical ways of doing business. So, this unethical behavior will affect the business in the long run. Unethical company behavior will make consumers become provoked, and then there is a decline in the company's value. The company handles its shareholders, including the community and the environment, various corporate activities, affects the environment, and instead of versa. People still do not believe and doubt a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) implementation. In developing countries like Indonesia, consumers wonder about CSR activities (Gunawan, Budiarsi, & Hartini, 2020). Almansoori, Lafta, Matrud, Asghar, and Haiyan (2021) found that it provides further evidence that green manufacturing has a significant and positive relation to environmental sustainability. CSR can allow companies to get a bigger market, build consumer loyalty and penetrate new market shares (Gunawan et al., 2020). Companies that carry out corporate social responsibility, in general, will also ease the burden on the government as a regulator that has a great responsibility for the welfare of the environment and society. CSR will provide an opportunity to get an award, which will give a company pride (Bushnell, 2016; Gunawan et al., 2020; Mohammed & Al-Swidi, 2019). The company uses several strategies to win the competition, including the Red Ocean Strategy, Blue Ocean Strategy, Green Ocean Strategy, Black Ocean Strategy, and White Ocean Strategy. A red ocean strategy involves competing in industries that exist. The key goals are to beat the competition and exploit existing demand (Kim, 2005). Blue Ocean Strategy dominates through the Red Ocean Strategy by expanding the business market range. The factors that support the Blue Ocean Strategy's success are when marketers can find the right target market and dominate business competition (Kim, 2005). Green Ocean Strategy allows companies to turn their pro-activeness into long-term competitiveness and sustainability. It achieves via brain-driven, technology-oriented social innovations. Green Ocean Strategies can run companies' mission and vision to compound sustainability over existing and profitable performances for adequate customer value creation (Markopoulos, Kirane, Piper, & Vanharanta, 2019). Black ocean strategy is one type of corporate survival strategy, both legally and illegally, ethically or unethically (Aithal & Kumar, 2015). WOS more focused on social and environmental aims and objectives. Businesses with the WOS implementation do not prioritize material benefits, but community welfare and environmental sustainability are essential. WOS is a concept that focuses on 4P, namely People, Planet, Profit, and Passion. According to Aini, Auliana, and Rizal (2021). WOS is a strategy in which entrepreneurs manage the company. WOS requires companies to conduct business by upholding

moral values to increase benefits for their environment. WOS is a flexible strategy that can be applied in various situations. It can help strengthen its position and enhance competitiveness by building an image by emphasizing moral values. The WOS is a long-term strategy. The existence of a company is aimed at positive impacts on society. WOS will create a competitive advantage. According to Aini et al. (2021); Porter ; Tangkilisan (2005), The competitive advantage arises when a customer receives more value from a transaction than a competing organization. Competitive advantage is the company's business advantage, where its benefits are used to compete with other organizations. Competitive advantage is how to utilize the organization's powers to achieve the organization's goals by competing with other organizations.

## Methodology

The research method used is case study qualitative analysis. This study is used as the basis for building theory, creating theoretical constructions and propositions based on cases and empirical facts (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Inductive theory building is generally used to formulate propositions about phenomena that have not been explored much. The theory and empirical evidence are still limited (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Shah & Corley, 2006; Siggelkow, 2007). This study focuses on implementing a white ocean strategy in the creative industry, especially in East Java, Indonesia. The determination of cases used theoretical sampling. Data that fit the category for the development of propositions were only taken. The criteria for determining the number of cases used theoretical saturation (Pandit, 1996). This saturation produces a consistent category to maintain the study's dependability (Frambach, van der Vleuten, & Durning, 2013). This study uses multi cases, namely six creative companies in East Java, Djava Coffee, Heirstatic, Batik Manggur, Kopi Doa, Tiara handicraft, and Bakpia Nuris. This study will use several data collection methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and literature. The use of several ways of collecting data is as an effort to triangulate the method. It is to obtain consistency of research findings and substantial evidence in the preparation of constructs and propositions. Data collection about marketing activities in the creative industries identifies the key factors that affect the product's performance. This study focuses on the creative industries subsector, namely culinary, fashion, and craft, with the most significant contribution. We used an in-depth interview with a total of 48 key-informants were conducted (17 managers of creative industry companies in East Java, 28 consumers of the creative industries, and three marketing experts). The conversations were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. To collect data, we used a semi-structured interview guide. The validity of data is obtained from the triangulation method and source. The method used in-depth interview, observation, and literature, and the source of data by interviews with consumers (28 persons), business owners (17 persons), and academics (3 persons) Data analysis was carried out in three stages: (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding (Howarth, Ermanis, & Goodman, 2020; Pandit, 1996). The entire data analysis process was carried out with the help of the NVivo 11 Pro software.

## Result and Discussion

The focus of research is on companies that implement the white ocean strategy. Companies in the creative industry focus on specific goals and are not entirely profit-driven. However, they focus on building a business based on White Ocean Strategies. Therefore, this study proposed six propositions.

### **The religiosity of company managers is the determinant of the white ocean strategy**

Djava Cafe Surabaya is one of Surabaya, East Java, which applies the white ocean strategy. The Djava Cafe Surabaya business owner is a religious leader concerned with many drugs trafficking around cafes. He is worried about the many cafes to expose more young people to bad relationships. The initial purpose of the establishment of this cafe is for da'wah and discussion of spiritual values. With time, many other religious leaders came to the cafe to discuss various mental benefits in life. The customers get the unique value of the cafe. Many consumers find solutions to problems encountered through discussions with fellow cafe visitors. At first, this cafe was designed to be a means of da'wah. This cafe's uniqueness makes consumers feel the cafe is different from

other cafes. Many consumers do worth of mouth. The image attached to Djava Cafe Surabaya as a unique cafe with a spiritual model attracts the public's attention to investing. The cafe is a top priority when consumers plan to visit the cafe for refreshing. The uniqueness of this cafe increases the superiority of the cafe compared to other cafes. Djava Cafe Surabaya is now proliferating already has many branches. It can be concluded that the purpose of establishing a religious café. It creates the advantage of cafe differentiation, which ultimately creates high consumer retention and ultimately creates profit. Kopi Doa is an instant coffee beverage product packaging. This coffee's creativity offers coffee products with additional prayers (written on the product packaging). The owner Kopi Doa was intended to invite the public never to leave a prayer in their activities. Drinking coffee with prayer will be more beneficial for life. So, the company's initial purpose of producing Kopi Doa is a religious goal, worship, constantly reminding people about the importance of still praying in every activity of their lives. Many business people in creative industries do not realize that they are successful because they use the WOS. They only think that work is worship; fortune will be abundant if it is intended by prayer. The Djava Cafe Surabaya owner stated that the purpose of the Djava Cafe Surabaya establishment was for prayer. They are providing a means for the community to discuss spiritual issues that make people become well-being. Djava Cafe Surabaya's existence is intended to transfer media knowledge about matters related to religion or belief, spread religious and spiritual values. Consumers can learn a lot through discussion and drinking coffee; they learn together by not feeling patronized; they think the cafe brings many benefits. The cafe owner states that life is for worship, so it must be creative in prayer. There are many ways to worship, one of which is by combining worship and work with the principle of doing business. Aydemir and Egilmez (2010), in their study of the ethical behavior of managers in Sarajevo, shows that the religiosity of managers will determine the business ethics of the companies he leads or manages. The level of the manager's religiosity will determine the direction of the organization's activities. Spiritual values in the organization lead to organizational culture prioritizing the environment, the natural environment, and the social environment. WOS is a corporate strategy that prioritizes people, planet, profit, and passion. This strategy is very concerned about the social and natural environment. The results of in-depth interviews with the owners of Djava Cafe Surabaya and Kopi Doa show that the company owner's religiosity is the basis for choosing a business strategy. The Djava Cafe Surabaya Company aims to worship and transfer knowledge of spiritual values. The Kopi Doa, intended for worship that is constantly reminding people to always pray in every activity. It can be concluded that religious company owners' behavior will reduce unethical actions. Companies with faithful managers will do all activities related to worship.

### **Corporate philanthropy is the basis for companies to do white ocean strategy.**

The hey STARTIC is a fashion label born from the brilliant idea of cement sacks into sustainable fashion—all products, bags, and wallets. Hey STARTIC was founded because of waste, environmental pollution, and the flooding phenomenon in Indonesia, especially Surabaya. In the processing process, hey STARTIC involved many parties. They start from assisted residents collecting waste, waste bank partners, contractors (who use much cement in the construction process), and food factories for their cardboard waste. The innovation can make consumers proud to use recycled products. Finally, through this product, hey STARTIC can educate anyone aware of the environment or the wider community. Now, hey STARTIC is stable standing as a well-known social enterprise. Like hey STARTIC, another business, Tiara Handicraft, is also engaged in fashion. If heySTARTIC focuses on the product material from environmental waste, Tiara Handicraft focuses on human resources. The owner has great attention to social issues. They hope to contribute knowledge and business relationships to create new businesses that involve people with disabilities and school dropouts. In the product label packaging, Tiara Handicraft stated that people made the product with disabilities. The owner's heart's kindness is the main reason for this Tiara Handicraft and heySTARTIC business. Batik Manggur makes batik cloth with natural dyes located in Probolinggo Regency, East Java. Batik Manggur is famous for using natural dyes derived from leaves. For example, the red color of the leaves of teak trees, the jet-black color from the burning of rice leaves. Batik Manggur also utilizes the surrounding community as employees. It, besides being environmentally friendly, also provides expertise and additional income for the community. Batik Manggur has a popular product as a pioneer of batik with dried leaf prints. It invited the government's attention, and business owners are often asked to become mentors. Their products are in high demand by foreign tourists from Singapore, Japan, and the

Netherlands. Bakpia is a traditional Indonesian food made from starch with a filling of green beans, chocolate, and cheese. Bakpia Nuris owners train students to learn to do business, make income independent, and set profits for their needs. It makes Bakpia Nuris's product famous as a typical Islamic boarding school product and makes it memorable to Surabaya. Each business has a unique thing: heySTARTIC and Batik Manggur get many purchases because consumers are interested in business attention on environmental sustainability. They use waste and environmentally friendly materials for their production materials. Tiara Handicraft and Bakpia Nuris aim to open up employment opportunities for people with disabilities, school dropouts, homemakers, and religious school students. They make the company unique, grabbing consumers' attention. Gardberg, Zyglidopoulos, Symeou, and Schepers (2019), in their study, shows that doing business with philanthropy principles has a significant influence on the company's performance reputation. Characteristics of the company's philanthropic portfolio activities are good predictors of the company's reputation. Philanthropy is the company's strategy to improve its image as a company concerned with social problems. Likewise, the Tiara Handicraft owner's Philanthropy triggers the WOS, which focuses on solving social issues by providing employment opportunities for disabled people and school dropouts. heySTARTIC, with fashion products made from waste such as cement paper and Batik Manggur, focus on natural colors and Batik patterns that use molds from dried leaves. It shows the company's concern for nature. Chelminski and Coulter (2007) state that a person's tendency to warn others about negative experiences to not feel negative is called Altruism. Altruism is a concern for people in their environment, both the social environment and the natural environment.

### **The White Ocean Strategy increases consumer's social and emotional value.**

Djava Cafe Surabaya's owner prioritized sharing knowledge with consumers over the benefits of having a cafe business. Over time, consumers' comfort when drinking coffee at Djava Cafe Surabaya and a unique community to discuss spiritual values benefit consumers from drinking coffee at Djava Cafe Surabaya. Consumers can add many friends who study religion without feeling patronized. Djava Cafe Surabaya, from the beginning, was intended as a means of da'wah. They aimed to contribute to the community's mental development, creating a forum for people to gain knowledge by discussing life's problems. The owner provides competent resource persons regarding the material being considered. Establishing Djava Café Surabaya is a business activity and a meeting medium for discussion for the youth community. Customers who come will get comfortable facilities and meet with apt sources about religion. They will have a casual discussion while enjoying food and drinks, making consumers feel at home in the cafe. Economically, the cafe will get more customer visits and increase cafe turnover. Djava Cafe Surabaya's positive image as a unique café with knowledge transfer increases consumers' emotional value. They feel comfortable and happy because they find the answers to their questions about life in the cafe. Likewise, the Batik Manggur company aimed to utilize the abundance of wasted Mangga and grape leaves. Batik Manggur owners want to take advantage of these leaves so they are not wasted. The colors of batik products produced from manga and grape leaves look unique. Many consumers are attracted to Batik Manggur because of this unique color. Consumers appreciate the Batik Manggur company's purpose, which is not profit-oriented, making more consumers buy the product. They feel well received by the social environment by buying or using Batik Manggur. That is because society highly values people who care about social and environmental concerns. Buying Batik Manggur will create positive emotions for consumers because they feel involved in protecting the environment. Additional prayer in Kopi Doa gives consumers emotional benefits because they get emotional comfort by drinking coffee has been given a prayer. Consumers think that besides liking the unique color of Batik Manggur, consumers also feel involved in protecting the natural environment. The same is felt for consumers who buy Tiara Handicraft products who employ people with disabilities and school dropouts. Consumers think they get emotional benefits such as feeling proud because they helped the disabled and children drop out of school. Consumers feel the social benefits of consuming the products mentioned above. They think their image in the social environment as people who care about the environment increases. The social climate accepts feelings because they are considered people who care about the environment; consumers feel more valued in their social environment. In his study of organic food, Qasim, Yan, Guo, Saeed, and Ashraf (2019) surveyed the relationship between consumers' perceived value to behave related to organic food. Companies focus on the People, Planet, Passion, and Profit, such as heySTARTIC companies,

Batik Manggur, and Tiara Handicraft, concerned with Planet components. Djava Cafe Surabaya and Kopi Doa are companies that focus on the Passion component. People who consume products or services produced by the company will feel emotional benefits because they feel affirmative action. These consumers will also feel accepted by their social environment because they are considered wise people by consuming these products.

### **The white ocean strategy will create superior differentiation.**

The company's creativity will create uniqueness, ultimately establishing its superiority compared to its competitors' products. Djava Cafe Surabaya, with the transfer of knowledge of spiritual issues, makes the cafe unique compared to other cafes. Kopi Doa consumers feel that the coffee is different from other coffees because of the added prayer. Likewise, natural coloring in batik creates an advantage in the minds of consumers compared to other batiks. The uniqueness that consumers feel will improve the superior position of Batik Manggur compared to other batik products. Tiara Handicraft with a product label states that people make the product with disabilities, and children drop out of school. Consumers feel that these fashion products are unique compared to those produced by other companies, from the above explanation following Gardberg et al. (2019), which explains that its Philanthropy determines its reputation. Companies that implement WOS include Tiara Handicraft and Batik Manggur, which are people-based companies. The company is focused on handling social problems in the community. The heySTARTIC and Batik Manggur companies are planet-based. They prioritize maintaining natural sustainability by using waste paper wrapped in cement and batik coloring and making printed batik patterns with dry leaves. Kopi Doa and Djava Cafe Surabaya focus on passion, and spirituality is their primary goal. The 4P's approach will create uniqueness in each business, where the uniqueness will create a competitive advantage while at the same time bringing in better profits.

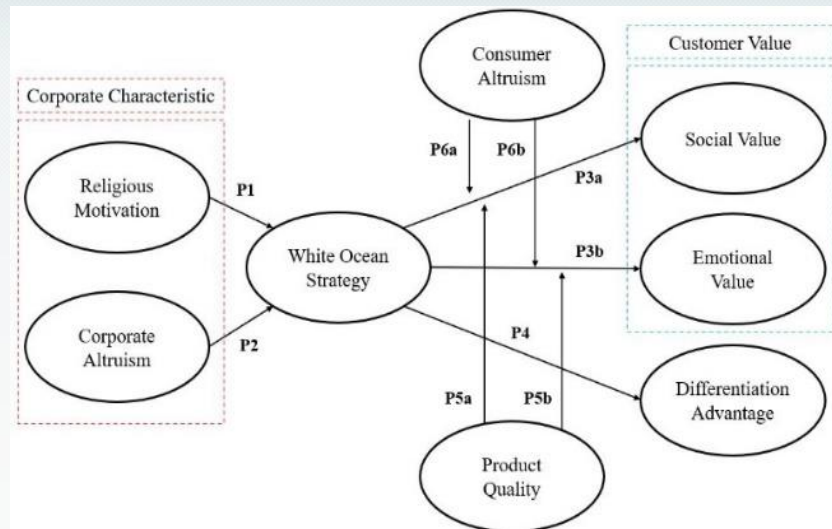
### **Product quality reinforces the effect of the white ocean strategy on consumer response.**

Not all consumers have a concern for environmental and social issues. Most consumers buy products that meet the brand's functional needs, such as product quality and value. A product will still not succeed without good quality. High product quality will increase consumers' assessment of the benefits of products that care for the environment. Batik Manggur's consumers pay attention to natural coloring and consider the motifs and materials used. Likewise, with Kopi Doa, consumers find the taste of the coffee. Comfort and excellent performance. When Tiara Handicraft products are used, it manifests quality. It is essential in increasing consumers' perceived value. Product quality remains an important consideration for consumers in responding to product or service offerings. In this case, consumers' perceived emotional and social value will be higher if the product has high quality. Companies implementing a white ocean strategy will increase consumers' perceived value when interacting with top product quality.

### **Consumer altruism reinforces the influence of white ocean strategy on customer value.**

Some consumers want to pay dearly for an environmentally friendly product. Altruism is the attitude of consumers who care about the environment. Djava Cafe Surabaya consumers are willing to pay dearly to help people who are experiencing a spiritual crisis. They feel responsible for creating a better generation in the future. For consumers with high Altruism, the greater the social and emotional value felt when consuming products from companies that apply the WOS. The consumer environment can be distinguished from the social environment and the natural environment. Also, consumers' benefits from companies that implement WOS will be higher for consumers who have a top concern for the environment (high Altruism). Consumers feel a strong bond (self-brand connection) in the form of consumers' common goal with products concerned about the environment. Consumers who have a deep concern for the environment will judge products that care about the environment as more superior or unique than products that are not environmentally friendly. Thus, the influence of the WOS on consumers' perceived value will be more significant for consumers who care about the environment (high Altruism) than consumers

with lower levels of concern. Based on the research proposition, the conceptual model can be arranged as follows.



**Fig. 1.** Proposition Model WOS in Creative Industry

**Source:** Research findings

## Conclusions

This study focuses on the implementation of WOS in creative industries. The study found six research propositions: First, The Religiosity of Company Managers is The Determinant of WOS Second, Corporate Philanthropy is The Basis for Companies to Do WOS. Third, WOS increases consumer's social and emotional value. Fourth, WOS will create superior differentiation. WOS is considered capable of creating differentiation advantages for business owners, especially controlling a resource that supports business processes and creating superior products. It can provide uniqueness, which is an added value to compete with other products. Fifth, Product quality reinforces the effect of WOS on Consumer Response. Finally, sixth, high product or service quality will affect the WOS's success on customer value.

## Limitation and Future Studies

The six research propositions need to be examined empirically to form a robust theoretical model. In future studies, it is advisable to test the research model empirically. This study was only conducted in 3 sub-sectors of the creative industries, fashion, culinary, and craft. It is expected that further research needs to be assessed in other creative industry subsectors. The subsector grows fast, including the game industry, visual communication design, advertising, and music. Each subsector of the creative sector has unique characteristics, and subsequent studies can be compared between one subsector.

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