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Digitalization as a Solution to Raise Indonesian Furniture Market: A Study of the Development of Furniture E-Commerce Platform in Jepara, Indonesia

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Abstract

Furniture is one of the potential commodity owned by Indonesia. It ranks second from the top tropical country that exports furniture. However, Indonesian furniture industry has fallen down year to year and faced the degradation of the total amount of furniture export. It caused of several issues, which are the high cost of logistics, high minimum wages, high taxes, low worker's productivity and the government's regulations that burden local industries, including Jepara, one of the potential city that produced high-quality of wood furniture and contributed 10% of total amount of the national exports. On the other side, the growth of digital industries in Indonesia is growing rapidly in last 6 years. As a result, many e-commerce arose in order to resolve various problems in distinct field, also gave an impact on economic value in Indonesia. Furthermore, in 2019 the growth of national digital industries is expected to grow above 11% per year. Hence, in this paper will discuss the background of the condition and its potential of Indonesian furniture industry, particularly in Jepara and how important the digitalization to be a solution to develop Indonesian furniture market with the adoption of the business model in e-commerce such as B2B and B2C. The outcome of this paper is expected to get a support from the Indonesian government and stakeholders to implement the idea to build platform technology that can help Indonesian furniture industry to raise the market and the number of exports.

Keyword: Furniture Industry, Export, Digitalization, E-Commerce

Introduction

One of the main exports commodity owned by Indonesia, besides gas and oil, is furniture, especially wood furniture. It is very potential to be developed. In 2001, Indonesian furniture's contribution in export activities reached 3% with total of \$738 million (Sampurna and Shihab, 2015).

Jepara is identically known as the city that produced furniture and handicrafts. The data showed that 75.603 people work in furniture industry and there are 5.870 business units in the furniture industry (Jepara Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Jepara's people believe that furniture is not only commodities to raise their economic condition, but also historical value and culture that must be protected and preserved time to time (Purnomo *et al.* 2010).

However, Indonesian furniture is facing a decline in exports from year to year. Purnomo *et al.* (2010) mentioned the global financial crisis in 2008 inflicted 50% degradation of the total exports number in this industry. In 2016, it fell down 16% from the total amount of \$1.9 billion to \$1.6 billion. In addition, the total amount of Indonesia exports has beaten by some other countries such as China—which is the market leader of this industry, Vietnam—which reached \$6.9 billion in the total export, and Malaysia—which reached \$2.4 billion in the total export (Indonesia-investment, 2016).

Furthermore, Indonesian import in this industry is relatively high. During December 2016 to January 2017, data showed that the number of import improved 5.72%, and it inversely proportionally with the number of export which only improved 4.38% (Kemenperin, 2017). It was ironic since Indonesia has huge resources of the main materials that can be renewable, which is forest.

This condition has no different that happened in Jepara. The competitive pressure rising in furniture industry, due to cost-cutting competition from other countries in the region (Posthuma, 2015). This phenomenon has been becoming a new challenge for local industry regarding selling their products in the market, moreover, the pressure of global business competition and the rapid growth of technology forced them to brainstorm in order to survive in this business industry (Astini *et al.* 2017).

On the other hand, the rapid growth of technology from year to year has been rising the concept of digitalization since the emerged of internet in 1990. Digitalization is an “on-going transformation on contemporary society that encompasses many fields” including business (Hagberg *et al.* 2016) with the adoption of technology to generate, process, share, and commercialize information (Kaz *et al.* 2015). It also can help the companies learning more about their customers and ecosystem (Weill and Woerner, 2015) to raise the market of the digital era.

In summary, digitalization could give opportunities to Indonesian furniture industry, especially in Jepara (Fafurida *et al.* 2015). It could be done by creating the innovation on technology in order to improve the production and distribution (Trigkas *et al.* 2012). Furthermore, it would help the industries to increase business competitiveness and better regional development (Davies, 2010).

Aims

This paper will discuss the idea of developing furniture business model with technology based on online business or electronic commerce (e-commerce) in order to help Indonesian furniture industry to raise its market either local or international, including export sector and to get support from government and stakeholders to implement the idea.

Literature Review

The growth of technology forces a rapid changes in business environment. It gives an impact on the adoption of technology with the results of the emergence of digitalization. Digitalization or digital technologies give opportunities to enhance productivity across the sector and broaden the participation of the economic value in all communities, besides it also impulse marketing sector, decision making, consumer experience, and create the new model of business to optimize the value chain and efficiency (McKinsey, 2016). Digitalization is also claimed to change consumer behavior, with the consequences of products and brand (Lipiäinen, 2015).

Digitalization leads to a new business model called e-commerce. E-commerce or electronic commerce refers to trade goods and services through the internet (Lee and Griffith, 2004). It also refers to share business information, maintain business relationships, and run a business through the internet (Tsai and Cheng, 2011) and from the consumer perspective, it means buying or ordering goods via internet for a consumer's personal or household's consumption. Information technologies is important part for business model for e-commerce, with those information technologies, it can increase sales, improve customer retention rates, reduces cost and also give competitive advantages (Dwitya, 2016).

E-commerce has grown to have a great influence on the global economy (Ho *et al.*, 2007). The growth of e-commerce furnishes the overall business environment and productivity enhancing activities of a nation (Krovi, 2015). The participation of e-commerce in global and national economy advancements is no longer an alternative, but rather imperative which e-commerce practice of executing the business process via the internet (Ngale & Mann, 2015). This e-commerce expected to increase furniture exports due to superiority of Indonesian furniture which is distinctive in shape and price, also the resources in both raw materials and human aspects is expected to be able to develop

national furniture export (Suhardi et al. 2015). The Indonesian furniture export was driven by SMEs which play an important role in reaching a global market (Loebis and Schmitz, 2014).

Regarding to huge population of young people, and millions of Indonesian people entering middle class, awareness of using internet & gadget, and e-banking gives positive point of view to Indonesian market on e-commerce industries (Dwitya, 2016). Dwitya added, Indonesian e-commerce should be expanded not only in local market but also global market. With the well-known reputation of Jepara's furniture and relatively high demand of the foreign market, it has potential to implement platform e-commerce that utilize resources from Jepara's furniture industry to raise the economics in that region and also broaden the Indonesia's e-commerce market.

In a research study by McKinsey, (2016) The adoption of digitalization in Indonesia can increased an estimated USD 150 billion in growth or 10 percent of GDP in 2025 and also the digitalization offers ways in boost productivity among sectors and expand participation in the economy all segments of the population. Based on these potential it is possible to implement the digitalization in Indonesia especially Jepara. By adopting an e-commerce model as the solution to increasing market share of furniture in Jepara and increasing the revenue of Jepara furniture industry.

Methodology

This study based on exploratory framework and literature review to describe how the condition of Indonesian furniture industry, particularly in Jepara and the growth of technology which drive us to conceptualize the idea to create an e-commerce based on digitalization. The literature explained about the e-commerce and it's adoption and development of using e-commerce technology in some countries that drive efficiency and effectiveness into business process and it's also noted the impact into several sectors of business area. Many companies including small-medium enterprises (SMEs) started to adopt digitalization process as a tool to gain market and operational efficiency (Li et al. 2009).

Discussion

The Potential of Furniture Industry

Jepara, a city located in Central Java, has been widely famous for its wooden furniture industries. Since the 16th century, Jepara was already a thriving commercial center. After a long dormant period, the local industry was resuscitated in the 1970s through a revival of domestic demand and renewed appreciation for traditional-style furniture. With this development, Jepara has re-risen as the center point of a burgeoning industry, with approx. 3,000 firms, including 100 huge and medium undertakings scattered crosswise over 80 towns (Sandee et al. 2002). Roda et al. (2007) mentioned Jepara wooden furniture industry has been supported by approximately 15,271 units of furniture industry, dominated by small-scale industrial units (14,921 units).

Farfurida *et al.* (2015) added furniture industry in Central Java is one of the biggest industry and it has competitiveness on the national and ASEAN level. Jepara identified as export-oriented on wood furniture (Tulus, 2009). In 2009 it is also noted that Jepara contributed 29% of economic in Indonesia (Purnomo 2010). The value of this industry reaches more than 1 trillion rupiahs. In 2017, Jepara exports improved from \$110 million to \$150 million and give 10% of total amount of national exports, \$1,5 billion dollars (Jepara Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Local industries play its role as a contributor to the national economic value, and it's crucial to be developed (Rokhim *et al.* 2017). In a research study by Tulus (2009) small-medium enterprises (SMEs) have an important role in the development and the growth of Indonesian exports, particularly in manufacturing.

However, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) industry does not pay attention to the needs of the technology which is affecting export performance directly. It means that the adoption of technology is important for improving the export performance of furniture's SMEs (Astini *et al.* 2017). Loebis & Schmitz (2014) mentioned that SMEs also are demand driven but they rarely enjoy 'information-rich relationships' with their buyers. Regarding, the number of SMEs in Jepara working in the furniture

sector, it is potentially to be developed with the adoption of technology to improve industrial performance, especially exports.

In order to adopt any technology, Davis (1989) proposed a technology acceptance model (TAM) to illustrate how technology adoption is working. It is started with the person's attitude toward using the technology which influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use. This attitude then could push personal intention which could predict the actual behavior, the technology adoption. This model could give an overview on how the technology adoption could happen to furniture SMEs in Jepara.

E-Commerce Furniture Platform

E-commerce has a profit-giving opportunity for businesses in developing countries driven by the perceived Internet potential of reducing transaction costs by passing through multiple intermediaries and facilitating links with global supply chains (Licker and Mola, 2005). In order to take advantage of these potentials, the business must adopt eCommerce. Indonesian furniture industry and environment is one of the potential sectors that can be developed, particularly in Jepara.

Schneider (2002) mentioned e-commerce can be defined as "any economic or business activity through website storefronts to enable buying and selling products and services and to facilitate the transactions of the business and activities between and amongst individuals and organization". E-commerce offered very potential benefits for SME and large business (Mira, 2006). In a research study by Shia *et al.* (2015), there are 4 types of business model that can be implemented on the e-commerce platform, included: B2B (business to business), B2C (business to consumer), C2C (customer to customer), and C2B (consumer to business).

B2B refers to procurement, logistics, and administrative process occurring between firms (a supply chain model) (Gereffi, 2001). B2C refers to sell products directly to the customer through the website (Shia *et al.* 2015). Besides C2C refers to e-business model which occurs among consumers and C2B is the model of serving consumers and businesses by pooling together a strong purchasing group with a large number of users (Ye and Ma, 2017).

Creating platform through website media is becoming primary things and also facilitating the transactions between consumer and seller to protect the transactions. The website is a means by which enable the flow of information; which in turn can alter the perceptions that buyers may have regarding a brand in the market (Virtsonis and Harridge, 2008). The website serve as a communication channel for bidirectional information transfer, a platform for transacting, an interface for providing customer service and facilitate marketing initiatives with goal such a market the products/services and maximise profit/shareholder value by allowing transactions online with another party, organisations that incorporate such technologies still need to have a sense of what proportion of their business will be online, their target audience, their value proposition, and most importantly, the path for delivering maximum customer value (Ghandour *et al.* 2008).

Through the platform, selling the furniture goods that supply from the local seller especially in Jepara becomes the primary model of the business process. The platform adopts the model of B2C and B2B. B2C refers to sell products directly to the customer through the website (Shia *et al.* 2015). Besides that, the B2B model also can be implemented regarding of so many local companies has been becoming a supplier to the other companies from other countries. Initially, they started selling to the foreign tourist who came to Jepara, then started to export the products (Tambunan, 2009). With B2B model, the platform is becoming the third-party media for communication and transactions between those parties. Both adoptions model is consists of organizational and external factors as a supplier, buyer and companies, IT activity, managerial IT knowledge and structure (Sila, 2013).

The emerging of the e-commerce furniture will raise the market on digital era based on fact that some customers may have a limited time so they can save time and take advantage of the convenience of buying online (Salehi *et al.* 2012); the consumer needs to be informed in case to be able to access social knowledge and experiences (Lu *et al.* 2016) and influenced by their social interactions (Godes *et al.* 2015) to make a purchase decision.

The Impact of E-Commerce Platform

In order to enhance the competitiveness in the today's global market, the ability to communicate with the customer, supplier, and companies is important. With the information technology of e-commerce, it is significantly offered wide opportunities to enhance the product and services (Treleven et al. 2014) on international market. Moreover it shorten the manufacturing cycle, improve the spread of information, create new informational products and new channels (Barsauskas et al. 2008), and also giving customer and supplier access to more knowledge (Singh, 2002). With the adoption of model B2B and B2C, connecting customer and supplier to the companies through the platform will enhance **communication** between those elements. Good communication increases the availability of information among parties and improve the process of business (Singh, 2002).

Some academics and practitioners also defined the benefits in both B2B and B2C model, included :

1. B2C model :
 - a. provide personalised accurate customer information with a better tracking, delivery and payment details is an online service (Singh, 2002);
 - b. provides in contrasting prices and value added services (Alzola and Robaina, 2007);
 - c. cost reductions by technology-enabled efficiencies (March and Ngai, 2006); and
 - d. the possibility of acquiring products and/or services 24hours/day, 7 days/week; and being able to access more information about goods or services they wish to obtain and saving on distribution costs.
2. B2B Model as defined by Chong et al. (2010) :
 - a. increasing customers relationships;
 - b. improving production and supply capability; improving personalization; and customization of product offerings;
 - c. enhancing customers relationships;
 - d. reducing marketing costs compared to traditional marketing media, and reducing numbers of marketing staff;
 - e. operating 24/7 and round the clock in 3-5 days;
 - f. facilitating global presence exploring to new market segments; and interact more effectively in terms of services marketing communication.

The benefits of B2B and B2C models can be achieved through the website platform. The website platform specifically defined as a e-marketplace for SMEs furniture industry in Jepara to sell their product and increase the market share. Furthermore, the e-commerce will enhance the access for SMEs to conduct transactions with both local or global parties and consumer.

In a research study by Barsauskas et al. (2008) the new technology drives companies had **efficiency** improvements in the business process. The adoption of e-commerce technologies will manage more efficiently information exchange with business partners and in order to improve internal efficiency (Desruelle et al, 2005). The concept of efficiency in economic, particularly in manufacturing defined as relation between input and output. E-commerce becomes a tool for output amount improvement and so for input reduction. **Supply chain** management becomes part of the efficiency. In the B2B models, supply chain becomes the main area that can offer big positives impact on the business process. As the results, it can change cost structure such as lowering the cost of material ordering process, material inventories, and moreover, it is not only about the cost, but also the faster and cheaper identify suppliers, shorten intermediaries, to stimulate the competition between suppliers (Barsauskas et al. 2008), enhancing competitive advantage, building market share, and scaling business models (Young and Johnston, 2003). Due to the business process in Jepara, the industry still conducted the business by buyers who came to the locations (Tambunan 2009), e-commerce with B2C adoption will give benefits for consumers to avoid travelling and long queues.

Logistics also becomes the important sector that can be developed on e-commerce platform regarding to the traditional business process of logistics in Jepara. Thus, e-commerce platform offered service on logistics. In a research conducted by Cho et al. (2008) firms that use outsourcing in e-commerce will affect the firm performance, enhance logistics capability, and impact on customer

satisfaction. They also noted, firms that outsource logistics capability will be stronger than firms that do not outsource.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the digitalization as a solution to raise Indonesian furniture market in Jepara, Central Java. Some studies show the adoption of digitalization especially e-commerce will give advantages to the industry. With a number of SMEs that work on the furniture sector, it is potential to adopt the e-commerce. The adoption of e-commerce will extend their businesses beyond conventional marketing boundaries, and more effectively plan the participation into the e-environment.

Based on those benefits, adopting the e-commerce b2b and b2c will give more preferences to the SMEs furniture industry in Jepara in selling their products. Through the website as the platform, the furniture industry will have more access to conduct transactions with business parties and consumers both local and global. Also, this increasing access will develop Indonesian SMEs furniture industry in Jepara to raise the global market and increasing exports.

Further Research

An interesting extension of the above work is to further explore the dimensions of e-commerce services from the B2B and B2C for Indonesian furniture industry. Subsequent research may include:

- contribution of e-commerce services of B2B and B2C e-marketplace to business performance in furniture industry;
- critical success factors associated with B2B and B2C e-marketplace service performance; and
- a similar study with a bigger sample, or different countries.

Furthermore, in terms to enhance the competitiveness of Indonesian furniture industry, further research on how the e-commerce or government's regulations could make lower cost of labor, and improving labor productivity is important fields to be discussed. Countries such as China and Vietnam have already focused on that issues, and the results they could become top 5 countries of exports furniture in the world.

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