

Zine

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Zine as alternative media: A case study of football-themed zines

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ABSTRACT: Popular culture has changed a lot from time to time in terms of form and function. This includes the use of popular culture as a medium to express the producers' voices. As a product of popular culture, zine is closely associated with stigmatized groups such as football fans. This paper aims to explain the spirit raised by zinester in producing a zine and the ideas they convey to the readers. Data were obtained through interviews with three sources, namely the authors of Sorak-Sorai Zine, Footballtropika, and Fortuna Zine. Those three sources are the authors of football-themed zines. The result of this paper is that among football fans, zines are used as a medium of expression because so far, through the mass media, football fans are often considered something that is given a bad stigma and through zines, football fans finally have unlimited space and do not need to rely on mainstream media. By producing zines, the author of Sorak-Sorai Zine, Footballtropika, and Fortuna Zine had shown the spirit of do-it-yourself culture.

1 INTRODUCTION

The existence of fast-spreading mass media such as newspapers and television has changed the order of ideas in society. The spread of ideas originating from other countries is also carried over to a country by the mass media presence. Things that are popular in society also cannot be separated from the role of the mass media, which continues to discuss and provide information related to the popularity that many people like. Popular culture has its characteristics and forms in different periods of time. Popular culture is also almost always associated with something popular that existed in the past. The commercialization of popular culture is getting easier to find and obtain information because of industrial and economic demands increasingly pressing the community. The definition of popular culture also varies; even one definition defines it as a culture that many people like, significantly depending on the calculation of sales of goods such ¹ sales figures for CDs, DVDs, books, and the number of attendees at a concert or sports event. This definition is a quantitative definition based only on calculations. In other words, something that is popular can be proven by its popularity (Storey, 2014).

Do-it-yourself (henceforth, DIY) culture is one of the sub-cultures that emerged in response to pre-existing popularity. DIY culture can also be said to be a counter form to something that previously dominated a particular segment. The debate regarding whether popular culture can be categorized as a culture has occurred. Still, one thing that cannot be denied is that popular culture has become a habit that accompanies and even becomes a guideline for the daily life of certain people. The term zine is very closely related to magazines or magazines, but several aspects distinguish the two. By definition, zines are magazines published independently and with minimal capital to construct identity, create community, and explore social activism (Chidgey, 2020). This non-commercial nature is what distinguishes zines from magazines in general which are usually found

in bookstores. By category, 'zines' can be divided into 15 different genres: fanzines (related to music, television, sci-fi, etc.), political and activist zines, personal zines, underground scene zines, sex zines, travel zines, comics, literary zines, art zines, and others that are not included in typology (Duncombe, 2008). Zine as a form of DIY culture is generally written by non-professionals and produced and distributed by the author (Spencer, 2005). In addition, Zine is a product that is not paid for and is usually only distributed to the closest people or within the same subculture. Interestingly, the people who write zines are not very money or profit-oriented, which means specific reasons cause the idea to be applied. Zine has been produced by many people from various regional and political backgrounds. What can be known more profoundly is whether in the modern era and capitalism as it is today, zinesters still apply the early characteristics of zines, such as not being profit-oriented and the author's form of expression.

Zines are not trivial products but are diverse voices from the underground world trying to show their identity amid capitalism and the shadows of the mass media (Duncombe, 2008). It can be seen that DIY culture has a solid community base but tends to be narrower because it has been focused on one subculture (Spencer, 2005). Janice Radway (2018) argues that zines are produced as a response to commodification of mainstream society. Considering its 'rebellious' characteristics (Ferris, 2001), zines do not really follow any specific formats in terms of content and design (Duncombe, 2006).

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate the various purposes of zines. In the area of literacy research, zines are examples of literacy as situated social practices that are constantly negotiated with people's roles and goals of the social groups (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). Previous literature has shown that there are at least two approaches to the study of zines: zines to show resistance and zines to tell one's life stories (Kempson, 2015). As DIY culture, zines have been used as alternative media for underrepresented groups to express the voices that show how girls use zines to express their voices as adolescence and develop social capital through network and support from their peer supporters (Schilt, 2003). While zines may not have an explicit intention to promote social change, some might have had cultural or political impacts by increasing public awareness of a particular issue (Radway, 2018). This is exemplified by Kempson's (2015) study of feminist zines, which reveals that zines also serve to voice instances of third wave feminism as a way to exercise feminist subjectivities. Studies on zines as life stories offer an alternative approach to zines not as a medium to challenge cultural and media hegemonies, but more as a channel to construct people's narratives which may not find a place to be distributed in mainstream media (Poletti, 2008). In this study on football zines, both approaches—zines as resistance and zines as personal life stories—can be traced through the contents and process of production. Carrying a similar characteristic of DIY culture, football-themed zines are argued to serve the purpose of offering different sides of Indonesian football which may not likely be covered in mainstream media. Moreover, the zines under study also inform the slices of life of people who are at the backstage of the football field. Borrowing Erving Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical concept of Frontstage/Backstage, this paper argues that football-themed zines demonstrate the zinesters' attempt to portray how people earning their living from football negotiate the spatial boundaries.

2 METHODS

Data collection was carried out directly by conducting interviews with three different sources to understand the broader and real context. These three resource persons are also people who have produced zines or commonly referred to as zinesters. Interviews were conducted with three sources at different times. Interviews at various times were conducted to avoid having answers that tend to follow other sources. The three interviewees were zinester Sorak-Sorai Zine on 5 June 2021, Footballtropika on 6 June 2021, and Fortuna Zine on 8 June 2021. The three sources were zinesters who wrote football-themed zines.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Zine as a form of expression

The zine categorization covers different themes from personal affairs, art, and music to political elements. Zine as an alternative medium for expression was chosen by zinesters because there are no standard rules that require zine writers to exist and follow specific writing standards. In a written zine, of course, there are messages or ideas to be conveyed to the reader. When deciding to produce a zine, the initial purpose was for various reasons, and one of the main ones was actually to fight the domination of the mass media and build the mindset of the readers. The narratives constructed by the mainstream media are considered to have changed people's perspectives to become uncritical. Concerning football, the target community is the football fans themselves to think more sensitively and critically on events that involve the mainstream media and football fans. Sorak-Sorai's initial goal of producing a zine was to ignite and change the mindset of football fans in Indonesia who have always been the target of the mainstream media to become the "accused" for things that happened inside and outside the stadium.

"Basically to change people's mindset. How, from now on, we're aware of the existence of new sub-cultures among fellow supporters. Come on guys! Let's change our mindset that's still attached to the early 2000s. When supporters are associated with riots and chaos. This is what we've been trying to change. When you're stigmatized by the society, you know how to behave and react. Also, when the club you're proud of is having a situation, you know what to do to support."

(Sorak-Sorai Zine, 2021)

Rebuilding the mindset, especially for football fans in Indonesia, is the main goal so that they are not easily perceived as a problem in the social life. In addition, efforts to build criticality towards clubs that are supported by supporters are also considered a foundation for maintaining a better relationship between fans and clubs. Lastly, zine as a product also symbolizes or has a purpose so that a zine is not considered trivial and lower than a book because, in the zine itself, the values of freedom of speech are solid.

"This zine is actually a medium that may be considered trivial, not worth mentioning in books or academic writing. I admit that zine is mostly based on opinions. But then the point is how the content is accepted by fellow supporters who come from various backgrounds."

(Sorak-Sorai Zine, 2021)

Commercialized products such as books have indirectly created categorization in written works. This is what zinester Sorak-Sorai has been trying to change so far, that written results in the form of zines are also worthy of consideration and appreciation.

Zines are also an alternative media to express the author's opinion departs from the ideas and experiences that the author has done before. Zinester Footballtropika, who previously learned a lot from the street library movement, decided to start writing zines as a form of exhaustion for the football ecosystem in Indonesia.

"Ideally there should be writings related to football. Not just technical matters that show mismanagement in Indonesian football. Supporters' voices have never been represented."

(Footballtropika, 2021)

Efforts to create a space that is not dependent on mainstream media is the goal of zinester Footballtropika so that Indonesian football fans have a place to voice and express their opinions. By doing this, the voices of football fans in Indonesia who previously had no space can finally speak their aspirations and views.

Likewise, zinester Fortuna Zine, who wrote about the world of football superstars, especially PSIM Yogyakarta, produced a zine. Around 2015, there was not much access to information and space owned by PSIM Yogyakarta supporters. For that reason, Fortuna Zine tries to build space so that supporters can have more space and even know information about PSIM Yogyakarta.

"To say it's about football...well, not really. It's more like a fanzine. In fact, it's a supporters' zine. So, lives of being supporters are what this zine is about. The sections in this zine talk about what happens outside the field. We talk to people who are involved in PSIM, but not technically about the game. There's also a section on players. But their lives not related to football. Such as what he does for a living apart from being a football player. And then we also write about rising stars. You know...new player who are on the spotlight. And then there's music closely identified with PSIM...and also the historical notes...with the help of bawahskor. And the last section is opinion section."

(Fortuna Zine, 2021)

As one of the active elements in football, football fans do not always have room for expression. On the other hand, many mainstream mass media reported more about riots involving football fans than reporting on creative activities carried out by football fans. Because the dominant mass media is more focused on portraying supporters on something that is not good, the efforts made by Fortuna Zine can be a solution so that the dominance of the mass media can be countered or even balanced. Zines are not trivial products but are diverse voices from the underground world trying to show their identity amid capitalism and the shadows of the mass media (Duncombe, 2008). Through the zine produced and the idea initiated by Sorak Sorai, Footballtropika, and Fortuna, it shows that as football fans who are often smothered by the culture of capitalism, such as the inner demand to buy original merchandise made by club officials and the bad news and stigma that is imaged by the mass media, they do not necessarily remain silent. This idea of a zine is something that is produced as an attitude to their use and judgment.

3.2 No profit, just gain support

Do-it-yourself culture is often associated with doing things independently. In terms of production, DIY culture relies on its capital (no other party to finance it). One important thing that needs to be built and maintained is communication with fellow DIY culture activists or, in this context, the zinesters. According to Spencer (2005), zinesters have an awareness that the strength of the zine community lies in communication between fellow zinesters by supporting each other to provide resources and share experiences with the aim that others are also able to produce their zines.

The independence of capital from other parties is an advantage that zinesters have to be freer in conveying ideas or propaganda to readers. Even when asked about the profits made from producing zines, Sorak-Sorai mentioned that the profits obtained so far were used again to produce future zines.

"We have never taken any profits. What we get, we use it for production. I suppose it's because our system is different from mainstream magazines. They are funded. This may be a unique characteristic of zine. But in fact there is a zine about a well-known group band in Indonesia. It's funded and can enter Gramedia bookstore. This created a controversy. There's also another interesting example. We have a fellow zine from Bandung. One whole page is open sponsorship. But then we cannot say it's an industry. They use a partnership system. Like...there is a friend who runs a garment business. They put it there."

(Sorak-Sorai Zine, 2021)

What Sorak-Sorai mentioned about the sales profits that are reused to produce zines and how the relationship with other parties, such as fellow zinesters or with other parties, supports what has been explained by Spencer (2005) about the significant role of communication between similar fellow communities. From this, it can be seen that DIY culture has a solid community base but tends to be narrower because it has been focused on one subculture.

Zine can also be produced from a person's point of view or a personal point of view. Footballtropika, a zine writer who uses his point of view, agreed with how relationships with fellow zinesters have a significant role to play in helping in making zines in the future. The same applies to the profit distribution of zines that are reused to produce future zines.

"From the beginning there has been a zero capital. We didn't even have tools for writing. So we borrowed from friends who had the equipment. Initially it was digitally distributed, but then I thought that this zine wouldn't receive appreciation if distributed for free. People may think that it's there to

be shared and uploaded. But not to be read. When the zine was printed and sold, it actually received more appreciation. We use the profit for production and we do research...gather data out of town. Once we distributed the zine in a digital format following the hard-copy one. It received quite an attention...until we had an issue with erroneous link. Having connections with fellow zinesters really helps us get more ideas and references.

(Footballtropika, 2021)

The fluid nature of zines makes it easy for anyone to contribute. There are no fixed rules or standards that make zines an alternative for people who feel they have no place to speak. According to Jesse (2010), zinesters and readers use zines as a medium to share and learn the kind of knowledge based on personal experience that can become a daily practice.

Meanwhile Zobl (2009) asserts that zines function as spaces for active participation and critical reflection. This is what Fortuna Zine applies in distributing zines. The selection of print zines aims to get a more comprehensive network of people interested in consuming their zines. In addition, Fortuna has their ideal idea of not getting paid for the zines they distribute because creating a zine in print format is for networking.

"It's free you know. Free so that we can meet new people personally when delivering it. When people want to pay, we don't accept it. From there...interesting conversations occur. That's how new networking is built. I think that's the main purpose of creating this zine in a print format.

(Fortuna Zine, 2021)

What Sorak-Sorai, Footballtropika, and Fortuna have done is a form of their attitude towards what has been received so far (in this context, it is a negative stereotype that is always associated with football fans). In addition, there are efforts to ward off and prevent homogenization that continues to be applied by the mass media to this day. According to Jesse (2010), zines are a struggle because zines are the product of action based on the zinesters' articulated opposition to media companies and their simplified representation and homogenization impact.

4 CONCLUSION

Through zines, groups, or people who were not previously exposed or even only exposed to the wrong parts are able to express their ideas freely. By not relying on any party, zinesters are able to prove that those whom the mass media may have poorly reported about actually have capacities to do positive activities. In the long term, if things like this are done, they can certainly fight the dominance of the mainstream mass media. By implementing a DIY culture in this zine, the zinesters of Sorak-Sorai, Footballtropika, and Fortuna desire to break away from the stigmas built by the mainstream mass media. Departing from the zine they created, football fans' independent mindset and attitude is expected to create a platform to express their voices so as to be independent from the mainstream mass media. By implementing and developing this DIY culture, football fans in Indonesia are on their way to create their own path to strengthen their identity.

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