

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

The relations between Indonesia and Singapore are close and productive both bilaterally and multilaterally. The two countries need each other and have complementary interests. Singapore has the capital and expertise needed for Indonesia's development, while Indonesia has natural resources to offer Singapore (Sucita & Prasetya, 2021). This framework for cooperative relations between Indonesia and Singapore has become the foundation for developing more binding bilateral relations. Various domains of cooperation are built in the name of state interests in security, social culture, tourism, politics, and economics (Mahfuzh, 2020).

Specifically, in terms of the economy, both countries have increased their focus on developing a creative economy. The history of the creative economy industry in Indonesia began in 2009. However, the contribution of the creative economy sector was still insignificant then. Meanwhile, Singapore has long recognized the creative economy's potential and has been developing this industry since the early 2000s (Utomo, 2017).

Furthermore, Indonesia and Singapore have great potential in creative industries, such as design, art, music, film, and fashion, especially in the fashion sector. Fashion is an aesthetic expression popular at a particular time, place, and context, especially in clothing, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, makeup, hairstyles, and body proportions (Kaiser, 2019).

Indonesians are increasingly aware of the importance of fashion in supporting appearance. This makes people more interested in following the latest fashion trends so that fashion-related needs continue to increase. In addition, Indonesia has the potential for natural and cultural wealth that can be used as raw materials for the fashion industry. For example, rayon and polyester products are Indonesia's mainstay. Other than that, natural resources that can be characteristic of the archipelago, such as hemp, silk, banana fiber, or pineapple fiber, as well as natural dyes, also have potential in the fashion industry and, at the same time, support green fashion.

Indonesia's rich culture, reflected in its diverse designs, weaving heritage, and distinctive traditional motifs, offers a uniqueness that is hard to match. Additionally, combining tradition with

modern design trends provides a unique appeal to consumers in international markets, including the diverse fashion market in Singapore. The creative potential that continues to develop in the Indonesian fashion industry has become an attractive magnet for the global market, including the high sensitivity and appreciation of consumers in Singapore for the beauty and richness of Indonesian culture. These are several factors that make the fashion industry in Indonesia attractive. Fashion also often called one of the backbones of the export of the creative economy industry regarding its positive contribution towards Indonesia's GDP. Fashion has made a very impactful contribution to the Indonesian economy as a source of foreign exchange by exporting fashion products and job opportunities. Fashion also has enormous potential to be developed to make Indonesia become a fashion hub in the regional region. Although it has considerable potential and contribution, many problems still need to be solved in the development of the creative industry in fashion. One of the challenges is the need for more product promotion, especially Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) products globally (Utomo, 2017). It is undeniable that personal branding of local products to penetrate the international market is difficult. In addition, the perception that export products are of better quality is still very attached to people's minds.

Meanwhile, Singapore has a fast-growing fashion industry and a popular fashion-shopping destination for Indonesian tourists (Abdullah, 2016). Singapore's fashion market has developed rapidly and is a worldwide distribution center for fashion products. The fashion industry in Singapore is also supported by various luxury shopping centers and famous designer boutiques. According to the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), the fashion industry in Singapore has significantly contributed to the country's economy (Singapore Tourism Board, 2019).

Singapore is a global business hub in the fashion sector. Thus, it has a vital role in promoting Indonesia's creative industries in the international market. The prospects for the fashion sector are significant, and Indonesia should continue to strive to cultivate partnerships with Singapore. Indonesia can use the more mature Singapore market and access global markets through Singapore. Singapore is a strategic international trade gateway. So, by accessing the Singapore market, Indonesian fashion designers and brands can expand their market reach internationally.

In this regard, efforts to foster partnerships with Singapore to achieve the national interest are the responsibility of government actors. In particular, the government referred to in this case is the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Singapore. The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia to Singapore has the main task of promoting and increasing the intensity of bilateral relations between the Republic of Indonesia and Singapore—in terms of politics, economy, and socio-culture to protect Indonesian citizens. The potential and opportunities of the fashion subsector mentioned earlier encourage the Indonesian Embassy to make diplomatic efforts to utilize this instrument.

It must be understood that fashion can be a significant instrument of diplomacy. The fashion industry can be a powerful economic motor and a symbol of cultural identity, promote cross-border cooperation, and influence perceptions and understandings between countries. Thus, using fashion as a diplomatic tool is not only about clothing or design but also about utilizing creative expression to build relations between countries, introduce culture, and promote cooperation and understanding between nations. Therefore, this thesis was written to determine how Indonesia implements fashion diplomacy towards Singapore through the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore.

## **B. Research Question**

Based on the background of the problem as described above, the problem of this undergraduate thesis can be formulated in the following question:

“How does the implementation of Indonesia's fashion diplomacy towards Singapore?”

## **C. Theoretical Framework**

To answer the research question above, the theory is used, and it is expected to clearly explain the Fashion Diplomacy that Indonesia can implement towards Singapore. The theory used in this thesis is:

### **1. Cultural Diplomacy**

According to Tulus Warsito and Wahyuni Kartikasari in their book, cultural diplomacy is the state's effort to fight for its national interests through cultural dimensions, either micro, such as education, science, sports, and art, or macro, by the main characteristics, such as propaganda and others. In its application, cultural diplomacy is divided into micro and macro. In the understanding of cultural

diplomacy in the macro scope is generally all the results and efforts of human cultivation towards the environment, which can be interpreted by culture as a whole system of ideas, actions, and works of society in community life, which then has a result that can be learned and used as a tool in achieving a national interest in the cultural dimension. Micro-cultural diplomacy results from applying macro-cultural diplomacy, namely education, science, sports, and arts (Warsito & Kartikasari, 2007).

Another opinion from Mohtar Mas'od is that cultural diplomacy is an effort to fight for a country's national interests through culture. Culture can be influential as a medium of diplomacy because culture has universal elements where elements are found in all cultures of nations in the world (Mas'od, 1989). Some say culture is a whole system of ideas, actions, and human works in the framework of community life that is made human property by learning (Koentjaraningrat, 1979). Therefore, this diplomacy is carried out by utilizing every cultural element considered part of a nation's culture.

Cultural diplomacy aims to influence people's public opinion in other countries to support a particular foreign policy (Warsito & Sari, 2007). Although not always visible and measurable, the cultural diplomacy program undoubtedly directly affects those participating. The feelings and impressions left behind on the audiences involved can be felt and may last long (U.S. Department of State, 2005). In addition, cultural diplomacy seeks to utilize cultural elements to influence foreign audiences in order to (Waller, 2009) :

1. Have a positive view of the country's society, culture, and policies;
2. Encourage greater cooperation between the two countries, assist in changing the policy or political environment of the target country;
3. Prevent, manage, and mitigate conflicts with target countries.

To achieve this goal, cultural diplomacy can be carried out by governments and non-governmental institutions; it can even be carried out by individuals, collectives, or every citizen. The pattern of cultural diplomacy relations can occur between anyone, be it governments, government and private sectors, individuals-individuals, government-individuals, and others, with the aim that the main target is the community of a nation-state, not solely directly to its government (Warsito & Sari, 2007).

In the process, cultural diplomacy can be done by utilizing every element of culture that can be considered part of a nation's culture. Cultural diplomacy must be carried out by the public to fight for national interests through the dissemination of information or influence public opinion by utilizing cultural and communication facilities.

The forms of cultural diplomacy according to their objectives can be seen in the following table.

**Table 1. 1 The Relationship between situation, form, purpose, and tools of cultural diplomacy**

Situation	Form	Purpose	Tools
Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Exhibition</li> <li>- Competition</li> <li>- Mission Exchange</li> <li>- Negotiation</li> <li>- Conference</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confession</li> <li>- Hegemony</li> <li>- Companionship</li> <li>- Adjustment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism</li> <li>- Sport</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Trade</li> <li>- Art</li> </ul>
Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Propaganda</li> <li>- Mission exchange</li> <li>- Negotiation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Persuasion</li> <li>- Adjustment</li> <li>- Confession</li> <li>- Threat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Politics</li> <li>- Mass media</li> <li>- High-Level Mission</li> <li>- Public Opinion</li> </ul>
Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Terror</li> <li>- Penetration</li> <li>- Mission Exchange</li> <li>- Boycott</li> <li>- Negotiation</li> <li>- Competition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Threat</li> <li>- Subversion</li> <li>- Persuasion</li> <li>- Confession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public Opinion</li> <li>- Trade</li> <li>- The Military</li> <li>- Official Forum</li> <li>- Third Parties</li> </ul>
War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Terror</li> <li>- Penetration</li> <li>- Propaganda</li> <li>- Embargo</li> <li>- Boycott</li> <li>- Blocade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hegemony</li> <li>- Threat</li> <li>- Subversive</li> <li>- Confession</li> <li>- Conquest</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Military</li> <li>- Smuggling</li> <li>- Public Opinion</li> <li>- Trade</li> <li>- Supply of consumptive goods (including weapons)</li> </ul>

Source: Tulus Warsito & Wahyuni Kartikasari, *Diplomasi Kebudayaan: Konsep dan Relevansi Bagi Negara Berkembang*, Ombak, Yogyakarta, 2007, Hal.31.

Based on the table, the more negative the relationship between two (or more) nations, the more intensive cultural diplomacy is adopted. Meanwhile, in this case,

Indonesia's bilateral relations with Singapore, which have been established for 57 years, show that these two countries are at peace. Relations between the two countries are becoming more robust, with various cooperations built in various fields, especially economics, politics, law, and security.

Based on the reference table, one of the forms of cultural diplomacy that Indonesia may use towards Singapore in this kind of situation is an exhibition. The exhibition is one of the implementations of cultural diplomacy that exhibits concepts or works of art, science, technology, or social values or ideology from one nation to another nation. Exhibition is a conventional form of cultural diplomacy because it adheres to an exhibitionistic and transparent basis. Exhibitionistic means that every nation has a desire and even a necessity always to show off its advantages in order to obtain a higher honor and transparent because advances in information technology result in every phenomenon that occurs in a particular country being known by other countries (Warsito & Kartikasari, 2007).

The exhibition aims to confess Indonesian culture, improve the image of Indonesian products, and increase regional economic development through the sale of products abroad or export, as well as a place to introduce local culture to attract foreign tourists. Everyday reality proves that exhibitions can get recognition associated with national interests through trade, tourism, education, etc. (Warsito & Kartikasari, 2007). So, it is possible that the Indonesian Embassy to Singapore, one of the significant actors in holding this role, wants to hold an exhibition to promote domestic products to foreign communities.

One of the works of art that can be included in the exhibition as a form of cultural diplomacy is fashion products such as clothes, bags, or shoes. According to Joanne Entwistle, fashion is a form of social practice involving clothing and accessories to express identity and build social relationships in society. Fashion can be a powerful tool in cultural diplomacy because clothing and style can reflect traditions, values, and cultural identity. Examples of the application of cultural diplomacy through fashion, such as fashion exhibitions, fashion shows, or specific clothing campaigns, can be a means to expand understanding of the culture. In addition, cooperation between fashion designers, brands, and fashion industry players from various countries can be part of cultural diplomacy aimed at strengthening relations between these countries through mutual understanding of culture. This concept is called fashion diplomacy, which is the practical art of

negotiating by involving fashion and art in dressing (Zoe, 2013).

Not many studies have attempted to go deeper into the fashion phenomenon in politics, either as a tool for branding or as a diplomatic approach. Nonetheless, several studies have found a connection between fashion and how it influences decision-making. According to Adler Rodman's *Understanding Human Communication*, non-verbal cues like gestures, movements, looks, and facial expressions can significantly impact the audience (Adler, 2014).

Often, the term fashion diplomacy is understood as a female public figure, generally the spouse of a world leader or female official, who uses their selection of clothing at an event as a form of statement or to send a specific message. Michelle Obama is often referred to as an icon of fashion diplomacy because she applies fashion as a non-verbal communication tool to shape her image in front of the public. When Barack Obama served as the US president, his wife stole attention with her fashions, which were considered to have a specific message (Uschan, 2010). However, Fashion Diplomacy can also be interpreted as a country's diplomatic efforts by utilizing the local fashion industry to encourage and promote it abroad, both as a form of culture and as a trade commodity.

Using fashion as an element of cultural diplomacy is expected to increase positive relations between the two countries, and foreign people can get to know more about Indonesia's diverse culture through fashion products and generate interest in Indonesian products.

#### **D. Hypothesis**

Based on the background and problem formulation above, Indonesia's Fashion Diplomacy towards Singapore is implemented by the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore as the actor by promoting Indonesian fashion products through organizing exhibitions in Singapore to get recognition, which is then associated with national interests.

#### **E. Scope of Research**

To limit the focus of the discussion in this study, this research will focus on Indonesia's diplomacy towards Singapore through fashion. The scope of research is in 2017-2023, as well as programs that have been implemented. This scope is used because 2017 was the initial momentum of the Indonesian Embassy for Singapore to organize the program as a form of application of Indonesian fashion diplomacy efforts toward Singapore.

## **F. Research Methodology**

### **1. Data Collective Method**

This research will use qualitative methods. The author will use library research techniques to collect needed and relevant data for the topic discussed. The primary data is obtained from online and offline journals, existing books, articles, and other literature from official and valid resources. Moreover, the author will also interview an Indonesian diplomat assigned to the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore, specifically in the economic function section.

### **2. Methods of Analysis**

The author will use a qualitative research method to collect, compile, and interpret existing data to describe or explain events or what is usually called descriptive analysis.

## **G. The Purpose of Research**

Based on the background and problem formulation above, this thesis aims to show that fashion, one element of the creative economy industry can be a diplomatic tool for a country. This thesis also explains how fashion is applied as a diplomatic tool based on case studies in Indonesia and Singapore.

## **H. Thesis Outline**

This thesis will be divided into four chapters. The chapters contained in this paper will be described as follows:

**Chapter I:** This chapter is an introduction consisting of the background of the problem, research questions, theoretical framework, hypothesis, scope of research, research methods, research objectives, and thesis outline.

**Chapter II:** This chapter will contain an overview of the dynamics of Indonesia-Singapore relations.

**Chapter III:** This chapter will answer the research question regarding implementing Indonesia's fashion diplomacy towards Singapore.

**Chapter IV:** This chapter contains a conclusion of the explanations from the previously presented chapters.