

Consuming Midnights: Indonesian Youths' Stay-up-Late Lifestyle in Branded Places

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Abstract: This article inquires into the meanings associated with urban youths' stay-up-late lifestyle in 24-hour branded cafés and convenience stores. These branded places are spreading now, in both big and small cities of Indonesia. Providing free Internet access and cozy sitting spots, they are a magnet for youths, who crowd up there with their "work gadgets," such as laptops and smartphones or sometimes just chat with friends through the night, consuming snacks and beverages. Using a qualitative approach, we observed and interviewed some informants and found that the stay-up-late lifestyle for urban youth is a form of insomniac expression for worldly pleasure and the desire to succeed, intertwined with a workaholic identity construction. These personal discourses are inseparable from the media and social discourse that develops within the community.

Keywords: Midnight Culture, Workaholic Identity, Social Pleasure, Wakefulness, Branded Space

Introduction

Midnight² went in. The clock pointed at 12. Instead of quieter branded minimarket located on Kaliurang Street, Yogyakarta,³ Indonesia was even more swamped with visitors, who were mostly young people. Some visitors went straight to the cashier to order a pack of cigarettes, while others went off to the cooling rack of beer products. The next visitor went to the warm drink counter, pulled out a pack of the coffee brand, poured it into a paper glass, and brewed it with the available hot water. A few moments later, after paying at the counter, the visitor went to a long and empty desk that opens on the corner of the minimarket, pulled a laptop out of his bag, and drowned in the excitement of the folding computer device. A short moment later, another visitor came and did the same. Up till dawn, the room and the long desks were full of visitors performing the same rituals: staring at the laptop screen enjoyably, turning on Wi-Fi, and putting on headphones to listen to music.

Who knows what these youths do—working on their homework, chatting online, browsing, or simply listening to music on their a laptop while sipping coffee. For sure, this phenomenon makes us aware of the presence of exciting events that seem to transfer daytime activities to the nighttime, or it can also be a 24-hour frenzy in public spaces. More interestingly, a few brands affirm this phenomenon by providing value or facilitating their customers. Several meters from the minimarket, there is a donut café (global brand) that provides similar 24-hour facilities and services that allow its customers to engage in midnight activities. Only a few meters from the restaurant, there are also lines of hawkers who offer late-night culinary services. If we pull the string wider, it is not an odd thing to see an advertisement in a shopping center that offers a discount for late-night shopping, commonly known as the “midnight shopping promo.”

Society's midnight activities are not a new fad. In Indonesia, there is a night patrolling habit in the *kampung* (township) housing and middle–low housing complexes. However, these activities are “typical night activities,” which are commonly performed only during the night to maintain the

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² Midnight refers to a transition time, indicating the turn of the day at 24.00 or 00.00. In Indonesia, as a tropical country, one is considered to have stayed up if still awake at 22:00 (10:00 p.m.), so the midnight moments in this article refer to the time range between 10:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.

³ Yogyakarta is one of the big cities in Java Island, Indonesia, known as a multicultural city.

security of the village, and have a schedule and are not carried out en masse. Coffee shops and hawkers who function at night have been seen before, but they did no more than cater to sporadic consumption activities and were purely functional in nature (i.e., just for dining). However, once the “hard-to-sleep habit” or insomnia symptoms hit the urban youth, reproduced and commoditized massively by brands, it soon became a new lifestyle. Initiated by a convenience store brand, 7-Eleven minimarket, in Jakarta in April 2009, this phenomenon—24-hour dining and hangout facilities with free Wi-Fi—was followed by midnight hangout spots with similar services and facilities that spread to other big cities in Indonesia, including Yogyakarta.

Consumption activities are no longer a functional activity to fulfill basic needs but have become emotional fulfillment activities—symbolic and even social. This is proved by the burgeoning crowds in public spaces provided by minimarket brands, such as 7-Eleven, for hanging out and “working,” not just shopping. Sometimes, someone only comes to buy a glass of drink or a slice of bread, but at another time, he may spend time there with his friends till morning. Activities involving a laptop, chatting, listening to music, and watching TV are commonly occurring in franchised branded convenience stores and cafés that are flourishing in big cities in Indonesia.

This article explores how urban youths construe the stay-up-late culture and reflect it in their lives as discursive practices. Also, what dominant discourses in a sociocultural context influence their conversation, how the media takes part in the development of the issue, and how the idea of stay-up-late culture is reproduced and commoditized by branded 24-hour convenience stores and cafés.

Cultural Shifts

Culture, according to Williams (2008, 113), is interpreted as “our reactions, in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of our common life.” Therefore, a culture is characterized by our reaction (in the community), change of conditions, and living together. It means culture is inseparable from the discourse of individuals who live in a community as a form of reaction to the dynamic conditions that developed in the everyday life of the community. Culture is not static, nor is it solitary. Culture is a dialectical process between the individual and reality shaped by the presence of a vibrant communal life.

Furthermore, Williams (1981) categorizes culture as dominant culture, residual culture, and emergent culture. In this case, the dominant culture is a culture that is still being practiced and survives and dominates the life of a given society. Although called “dominant,” it does not mean that the entire community fully accepts the culture. Of course, there are always community members who do not agree, but also cannot deny its presence. A robust construction system of meaning can sustain the viability and dominance of culture through institutions such as the media. However, due to the dynamic nature of perception and argumentation, the dominant trait can be changed.

The next category is that of residual culture, the culture that is “neglected” and therefore considered obsolete or “unused.” This residual culture could previously have been a dominant culture that was no longer so due to the presence of an emergent culture, which is the new culture that emerges to replace, modify, or enrich the previous culture. Thus, although the dominant culture, residual culture, and emergent culture look systematic, as if chronological and linear, in reality, they are circular, liquid, parallel, and intersecting. In a sense, when the emergent culture is present, it does not mean that the dominant and residual cultures have completely disappeared. These three can still live in society together. This categorical idea of culture is methodologically essential because it helps to show that culture is a dynamic process—vital and complex—not rigid, simple, and universal.

From Nights to Midnights

It is hard to deny that nightlife is not an urban culture. This culture has been developing for centuries, especially in Western society. The nightlife lifestyle experienced tremendous growth from the industrial era to the postmodern age today, mainly due to the growth of manufacturing centers that form the working-class community, which impacted entertainment and recreation consumption (Ransome 2005). Besides, the exceptionally high mobility of people is supported by the development of transportation and communication technologies, which make it very easy for everyone to travel between cities and countries and interact for either work or pleasure. This condition becomes increasingly prevalent with the massive commodification of nightlife centers through infrastructure development in urban areas (Gallan 2015). Entertainment centers such as pubs, nightclubs, cafés, and style bars dominate the nightlife infrastructure in the West (Chatterton and Hollands 2003).

In Indonesia, people have long been familiar with the term *dugem* (clubbing), which stands for *dunia gemerlap* (glittering world). Glittering here refers to the disco lights flickering, the DJ's voice booming over the foot-stomping music. Clubbing is synonymous with the disco, and because the disco is open only in the evenings, it has always been synonymous with nightlife. Gradually, *dugem* extended to encompass all matters related to nightlife—partying, hanging out, and night stroll.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the discotheque emerged as a very lively nightlife symbol as well as an identity marker for cool young people and classy urban society. A birthday party, even the graduation party, was often celebrated at the discotheque. Yet, later, this dominant culture—to borrow Williams's term (1981, 2008)—got rusty (becoming the residual culture) and was replaced by the booming of nightclubs, cafés and karaoke centers, and even night spas. Nightclubs, cafés, and karaoke centers, which previously constituted an emergent culture, have become the dominant culture of nightlife for the urban youth. Special events are often held every Wednesday and Saturday night at the clubs, with exclusive promos such as “Ladies' Night” for female visitors. These clubs also have their segments: There are clubs for executives, gays, lesbians, socialites, and so on. In holding a party, the cafés (which are a modification of Western-style bars and restaurants) are anything but quiet, and are always crowded; likewise, karaoke centers are usually located in business or shopping centers.

Nevertheless, the nightlife of urban society is inseparable from the negative stigma. Besides widespread reports of drug raids and arrests in nightclubs, the nightlife is also identical to free sex. Not seldom, nightclubs and cafés become the means to meet and pick ladies or men for casual affairs. A term such as “one-night stand” becomes very familiar among young urban nightlife enthusiasts, not to mention the prevalence of striptease or naked dance, sex party, and so on. People often accuse karaoke bars and night spas of veiled prostitution. Thus, people who live in an Eastern culture like Indonesia generally tend to avoid nightlife places.

In the decade of the 2000s, young urban nightlife in Indonesia tended to shift to something more “positive” and “safe.” This perception grew with the development of information and communication technology that spawned online social media and recreational shopping centers. The meaning of “entertainment” and “night leisure” was no longer solely centered on nightlife that was “dim” and “festive” (read: noisy). Night entertainment and recreation could be “silent” and “brightly lit.” Silent because the loudness of night entertainment shifted to the virtual space—the buzzing noise got expressed on social media such as Friendster, community mailing lists, and Yahoo Messenger, which was then followed by Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on. Brightly lit, because the meaning of night entertainment can present in open public spaces with bright light, such as malls or cafés, fast-food restaurants, and minimarket convenience stores that provide Wi-Fi facility. *Warnet* or *Warung Internet* (Internet café) also became an attractive option site for the young urban. This site, borrowing the term of Horkheimer and Adorno (2006), can be referred to as the “intellectualization of entertainment.”

Not only that, the duration and the time shifted from half night to all night. Especially with the collaboration of work and entertainment functions mediated by communication technology, the “curfew” changed to midnight. Mainstream media broadcasting also conspired with urban lifestyle by showcasing programs across 24 hours. Besides several cafés, fast-food centers, and minimarket or convenience stores that eventually involved providing services 24 hours, several shopping centers also extend their service hours until midnight. They offer promotions such as “Midnight Sale” or “Late-night Shopping Promo,” especially for Saturday night. Cinemas also offer midnight show times.

A midnight lifestyle that tends to be “positive” and “safe” is finally becoming an emergent culture that is replacing or accompanying the dominant culture of nightlife, which has had a “negative” connotation. For Rowe and Bavinton (2011), this night economy phenomenon and nighttime economy only cause complexity in urban life culture, while Rodríguez-Ferrándiz (2014) sees this as a characteristic-of-the-century of the postindustrial culture that always merges entertainment charm, recreation, creativity, and design.

From Recreation to Work to Recreational Work

Nightlife in cities (mainly large cities) in Indonesia is synonymous with night entertainment. It may have been influenced by the Western culture’s night bars, night clubs, discotheques, and so on, which constitute entertainment infrastructure, leisure activities, and pleasure for urban people and tourists (Gallan 2015). Night becomes an entertaining moment for workers to release the pressure and tension experienced all day during office tasks. Of course, night entertainment infrastructure is growing, not only in terms of variants, but also classes, ranging from upscale nightspots, five-star jet-set hotels, elite offices and business areas to lower levels as in shop houses or even dimly lit stalls. They are generally located in the business district and tourism area.

As time goes by, the nightlife characterized by entertainment and leisure is finally becoming a residual culture. A new discourse has emerged—about workaholics, office workers obsessed with the idea of success related to career growth. Working overtime has become a trend among white-collar workers (Carrasco and Mayordomo 2005). As a matter of fact, in some professions, such as advertising and media, employees are required to work for more than the general office hours of 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The working time and patterns have changed. Also, in big cities like Jakarta, which face major traffic congestion in the morning rush hours (6:00–9:00 a.m.) and return hours (4:00–7:00 p.m.) employees sometimes intentionally delay their return home and decide to remain in the office to continue their work. This habit shifts nightlife from consumptive to productive. Borrowing Williams’s term (1981, 2008), the emergence of a new culture of overtime can be called “emergent culture,” which makes the previously dominant culture—the late-night leisure lifestyle—become rusty (residual culture).

However, after the overtime lifestyle becomes the dominant culture, another new lifestyle becomes the emergent culture, that is, a culture that merges the overtime lifestyle with late-night leisure, with the overtime lifestyle gradually changing into the residual culture. This unique recreational working lifestyle is characterized and driven by the booming of shops and restaurants that remain open until late at night, and then evolve into a 24 hour service. This phenomenon does not come by itself. Before offering new values for consumers, the brand usually obtains consumer insights to determine the desires, needs, dreams, or new habits of consumers (Keller 2013). Overtime workers want a new environment while completing their jobs, a place that allows them to be more relaxed, comfortable, and (even) entertained, in contrast to their office atmosphere during the day. Recognizing this, restaurant brands and department stores provide facilities that meet the needs and the desires of late-night workers, who are potential consumers. In addition to the comfortable interiors, 24-hour service, free Wi-Fi, and power outlets for laptops and other gadgets in some corner of the room, convenience stores serve not only the purpose of purchase of goods, but also add dine-in facilities.

Williams (1981) says that although the categories of dominant culture, residual culture, and emergent culture, at first glance, seem to appear gradually and chronologically, these three actually intertwine and complement each other. Thus, nightlife characterized by a consumptive lifestyle in the business and leisure districts continues to live, and the overtime–entertainment culture in restaurants and convenience stores continues to grow.

From Rural to Urban

In Indonesia, especially in some areas, the habit of staying up late is not entirely new. Staying up late is something usually done by a few youths, or when the villagers take a turn doing night patrolling to safeguard the community. Staying up late is also traditionally done by people together when there is a celebration in a villager's house. Usually, it is done over a cup of coffee, sometimes with snacks provided by the host, and may include *gaple* (playing cards) and smoking. Sometimes, it is also accompanied by the rhythm of *dangdut* (typical, popular music in Indonesia that is identified with the grassroots), broadcasted by the local radio and set loud enough through portable cassette player. Staying up late with patrolling is done at the guard post or in one of the villagers' homes.

Next, we look at the late-night hanging out phenomenon at the traditional coffee shop in suburban and provincial roadsides involving drivers of intercity freight and passenger services as well as contract workers of a plant or project. This traditional coffee shop phenomenon gradually developed into the *Indomie* stall, following the rise of the enjoyment discourse of eating *Indomie* (a famous and generic instant noodle brand in Indonesia) late at night. The brand constructs the discourse through the media⁴ as well as consumer experiences.⁵

Indomie stalls now flourish in areas around college campuses and rented housing (boarding rooms) near offices. *Indomie* stalls came up as a response to the desire and the need of students (youth) and urban workers to stay up late. In some areas, such as Yogyakarta, *Indomie* stalls are also called *Burjo* stalls as an abbreviation of *bubur kacang ijo* (pureed mung beans), because they serve this food. In Yogyakarta, or in the area where the Javanese language is used, the *Burjo* stall does not stand alone. Along the pavement, there also stands *Angkringan*, a term for a hawker stall that provides tables and a mat-covered floor so that the customer can sit on his knees (*lesehan*). Consumptive staying up late in the famous *Angkringan* is mostly done by youths.

However, the *Indomie* stall, *Burjo*, or *Angkringan* is solely a place to eat while socializing for a short time. Most consumers leave after enjoying the meal, and are soon replaced by other consumers, considering the limited space. This condition is a contrast to the presence of convenient self-service stores and cafés or casual restaurants that provide a larger space with better comfort, tempting consumers to hang around.

Beginning with 7-Eleven, an American convenience store taken over by Japanese businessmen and beginning operations in Jakarta in 2009, providing 24-hour services with free Wi-Fi facility, the phenomenon such outlets spread to other large cities of Indonesia. Interestingly, the branded convenience store in Indonesia is not new, as chains of *Indomaret*, *Alfamart*, and some local minimarket brands have existed since 1988 (Hafiz 2019). The *CircleK* outlet has even been open 24 hours since its presence in Jakarta in 1986 (Djumena 2010). However, 7-Eleven made a breakthrough by adding value services in its mini store with fast-food services; dine-in facilities, including a cozy hangout spot; free Wi-Fi; and, of course, a 24-hour service. However,

⁴ *Indomie* reproduced discourse on consumers' experience with the brand by launching "Your Story" TV commercials that encouraged consumers to share their exciting experience eating *Indomie*, to be aired as an advertisement and involving a prize.

⁵ Some stay-up-late stories describing consumers' experience with *Indomie* have been posted on *detiklife.com* entitled "48 Cerita Lucu *Indomie* Yang Lucu Banget" [48 *Indomie* Funny Stories That Are Really Funny]. <https://detiklife.com/2017/09/11/cerita-lucu-humor-indomie/>

in some neighboring countries, such as Singapore and Thailand, 7-Eleven entered the market with its original concept, that is, as a minimarket or regular convenience store.

Indonesian consumers enthusiastically welcomed the added value offered by 7-Eleven (popularly known as *Sevel*), proven by the crowds of visitors (mostly youths), especially late night. Inevitably, already-existing minimarkets, such as Indomaret, Alfamart, and CircleK, repositioned their brand by following 7-Eleven's concept. Nowadays, we can see some outlets of these three brands open 24 hours, providing free Wi-Fi and serving fast food, as well as having complete dine-in facilities and comfortable socializing or hangout spots, including in Yogyakarta. Not only that, "Sevel Effects" have also hit the outlets of global fast-food brands such as McDonald's, Dunkin Donuts, Burger King, and Hokben. While initially they were open only till 10:00 p.m., now some of the top-brand outlets are open 24 hours, offering free Wi-Fi and providing power outlets for laptops and other gadgets in corners of the room. This situation means they are ready to welcome customers to spend their night time, whether to complete their college or office tasks or just socialize, waiting for the dawn to arrive. Of course, the staying-up-late and midnight consumptive lifestyles are not meaningless things for either the brand (Sonnenburg and Baker 2013) or the consumers, especially for the urban youths who primarily experience it.

Methodology

Trying to understand the experience of consumers in constructing the meaning of midnight cultural phenomena requires a close, empathetic search for information through observation and interviews. Therefore, this research used a phenomenological approach. A phenomenology is a research approach that seeks to illustrate the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Teherani et al. 2015; Neubauer, Witkop, and Varpio 2019). For two weeks, we hung out all night at branded cafés (Dunkin and McD) and convenience stores (CircleK and Indomaret) open 24 hours with free Wi-Fi facility at Kaliurang Street, Yogyakarta, to observe the situation and behavior of youngsters related to the phenomenon of staying up late. We talked casually to some visitors about their experiences and habits of staying up late, but only two informants provided insightful information, so both became official informants of this study. They were Rangga (20), a state university student of international relations, and Gina (19), a medical student of a state university in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In addition to collecting field data, we searched for archival documents and artifacts in digital and non-digital sources.

Results and Discussion

Wakefulness that Is Cool

Summers-Bremner (2008) underlines the insomnia phenomenon of today as a reflection of the media-saturated and hyper-connected society. This phenomenon shows a condition in which people find it hard to switch off their overstimulated brains and to escape from the demands of daily life.

Insomnia will likely increase with the expansion of the 24-hour economy into more and more lives, and more of each life, because wakefulness and the wired world go together. The more interconnected we are, and the more we communicate, the more we rely on our interconnected powers of thinking. (Summers-Bremner 2008, 131)

What is revealed by Summers-Bremner shows that, in this modern world, insomnia has become a common phenomenon, where society is bombarded all the time with a variety of media and communications technology that makes the community always connected and (also) awake

nearly 24 hours. The brain never rests. The meanings are continually produced, consumed, and shared. Urban communities become the “slaves” of time.

The first informant, Rangga (20), a male who claimed that he had insomnia, also experienced it. Although he had not undergone any medical checkup for this yet, Rangga still considered himself an insomniac. This assumption was due to his habit of staying up late, a habit that drove him to the 24-hour Dunkin store a night when interview took place (January 16, 2018).

I am used to staying up since junior high, because I love watching football with my dad, sometimes with my friends, especially during the World Cup or Champions League event. We stay up till late at night. Then, peanuts, Indomie, coffee all on the table. But now because I live in a boarding house, I prefer like this [staying up at Dunkin], it is more practical. (Rangga, interviewed on January 16, 2018)

Insomnia, in medical discourse, is described as “the inability to make oneself get used to falling asleep or stay asleep when someone wants or needs to do so” (Summers-Bremner 2008, 7). Just like a disease, insomnia is commonly perceived as unfavorable and as requiring a cure. However, quite surprisingly, Rangga had a different perspective on insomnia:

Nothing. It is common. After all, it is cool, men! Did you watch [the movie] *Fight Club*, right? It is about people with insomnia. Cool, right? Just imagine when people sleep, we are staying up. That is a sign of our strong physique. Not every [man] could stay up. (Rangga, interviewed on January 16, 2018)

“Cool,” “strong physique,” “not everyone could” shows Rangga’s discourse on insomnia as a reality that could establish a particular identity. It sounds exclusive and slightly heroic. Thus, for him, insomnia was not a problem and could just be a “solution,” helping him cope when he missed spending time with his father and old friends or escape from the demands of his everyday life (Summers-Bremner 2008). To that end, justification is required. The insomnia discourse through *Fight Club*, starring the handsome Brad Pitt (representing a cool guy) and a “heroic” cast may have stimulated Rangga’s longing for his past experiences. This phenomenon, in psychoanalysis, is a form of unfulfilled desire (Lacan 2006). Repressed desires that are living in the unconscious mind will manifest in dreams (Ragland 2000), and the film, according to Metz and Baudry (in Flitterman-Lewis 2005), is the spectator’s dream reflection.

Thus, for Rangga, insomnia is a mirror-stage moment to fulfill his desire (which is repressed by distance and time) for the feel-good experience with his father and old friends again. If we use Freud’s explanation about pleasure, then it is similar to the baby’s oedipal moment, when the father’s presence interrupts the joy of the mother–baby relationship. The baby longs for physical and sexual pleasure, but his incestuous desire can never be fulfilled because of his father’s threats of castration (Lacan 2006; Ragland 2000). The distance between reality and time for Rangga is similar to the danger of the father for the baby, and the moments of togetherness felt by Rangga are as exciting as the moments of a baby–mother relationship, or in Lacanian discourse, moments before understanding the language.

Desire for Success

For baby girls, the oedipal moment is more complicated, according to Freud. The presence of the father makes the baby able to recognize the real object of her desire, so that the repression of the father, on the contrary, would lead to pleasure (Ragland 2000). Lacan (2006) mentions that the father is the symbol of a language or culture, so by culture, the unconsciously repressed desire creates painful fun. The enjoyment comes from a mild pain due to the repressed desire is called *jouissance* (Lacan 2006; Kirshner 2005).

This thesis is refreshing to be used to analyze what was felt and experienced by Gina (19), a female informant. Gina revealed that her habit of staying up late stemmed from her practice of studying till late at night since her school days. Gina was the first of three children. She had always topped her class. Her success at being accepted in the Faculty of Medicine at a famous state university was the result of her hard work.

My parents are very hard at educating their children. It may be because they started from nothing. They taught us if we want to be successful, we have to work hard. At first, it was hard, had to be the first rank, had to pass the test with the best score, if we follow a race, we had to win. Yes, it is repressing. But along the way, I got used to it, even liking it. (Gina, interviewed on January 20, 2018)

For Gina, success was “the father for the baby” from a Freudian perspective, which repressed the form of “hard upbringing parents.” However, the “pain” caused by the repression led to joyful pleasure, which made Gina continue to desire it. Thus, success (whatever form it took) was Gina’s *jouissance*, which, although painful, always triggered the desire to achieve it (Kirschner 2005). No wonder that Gina was willing to stay up late to meet her desire for *jouissance* that although, according to Lacan (2006), will always be driven by the sense of lacking.

This “Gina phenomenon” is common in postmodern society, where success is almost everyone’s goal (Traube 1989). The discourse of success has become the master, and people have become slaves to satisfy it, willingly sacrificing anything to achieve it. Success seems to be a measurement of happiness, glory, and prosperity, so however “bloody” the efforts to accomplish it, people will always have the desire for it.

Workaholic Identity

That night, Saturday, January 23, 2018, the clock showed 10:57 p.m. A girl with shoulder-length hair and a beige cardigan and brown scarf suddenly appeared and asked if the sofa next to us was empty, and after we had said yes, she put her maroon backpack on the couch and pulled out her gray mini laptop, and turned it on. A moment later, she headed to the cashier and ordered a cup of coffee and a donut. After that, she put on her glasses and stared at her laptop screen.

After a few minutes, a girl and a young man approached with an unruly style. Suddenly, the girl with the beige cardigan was “broken style,” that is, although she was calm and tended to be serious when she came in, she now became loud and relaxed. Her friend (the girl) teased as follows:

“Ha..? Since when Caca is wearing glasses?? Oh my God, she is also carrying a laptop...”

“Since Caca realized if she is a.., student, hahahaha,” her boyfriend replied.

“Damn! I’ve been looking like this for a long time agooo..,” said the girl in the beige cardigan defensively.

“It never seems like this.”

“Yeah, you guys just don’t realize.”

“My dear Cacao. We know everything you do, like in CCTV you know. What you’re doing is *terpampang nyata!* (Displayed real!)⁶ hahaha...” [The girlfriend continued teasing her with a sassy style that mimicked an Indonesian celebrity, Syahrini].

⁶ Syahrini, a famous singer and sensational celebrity in Indonesia, who is currently favored by many teenagers because of her sassy style and often triggers unique jargon that later becomes a trend. In addition to *terpampang nyata* (displayed real), which means “it is so showy,” no less popular is *sesuatu banget* (really something), which means “it is a significant thing,” referring to a unique experience that influences someone’s personal life.

“Caca is changing her image, Rin..,” the boyfriend replied again.

“Haha.., so the student is out...”

“Doesn’t suit you, Ca...You look more like a workaholic *Tante-tante* (middle-aged woman with bright makeup), hahaha...”

“Damn! I have many tasks to do, you know..,” the cardigan girl still defended herself.

“Tasks or ‘taaaskssss’...?”

The loud conversation happening beside me gave insights into impression management and identity construction. Moreover, these three youths were then lost in their continuous chat, and the laptop was abandoned. Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luyckx (2011) state that self-identity refers to how an individual defines himself or herself. However, this self-definition also requires social acknowledgment. Therefore, in the construction of the identity, the interpretation is designed to match the self-definition and others’ definitions. From the conversation, we know that the girl in the cardigan is apparently not a “serious” student. She had suddenly taken to wearing glasses, had suddenly bought a laptop, and had suddenly become serious. If it were not for her friends who had dropped in and were teasing her, we (and perhaps other visitors too) would have thought that she was as serious as she appeared to be. An effort to polish and present oneself like this, according to Goffman (1959), refers to impression management. Gina’s story completes our premise that the public space in the 24-hour café is indeed a place to construct an identity (and a personal reality as well) for the young urban while staying up.

So that my parents will be proud, I have to show that I am serious about studying consistently. I don’t want to disappoint them. I must study hard to make them proud of me. (Gina, interviewed on January 20, 2018)

This expectation made Gina always want to be seen as studious, which then brought her into the habit of staying up. Initially because she wanted to look like a child who made her parents proud by studying seriously. Growing up, her desire turned into a passion for success. And when that passion was spectacted in public spaces, she became someone who was “seen as diligent and loved to study” by the public. In this context, the identity and image construction as someone who likes to study occurs, which is intertwined with her strong desire to (always) retain her success.

Looking carefully around the room, we saw that around 50 percent of the visitors (all youths) who turned on their laptops just chatted with friends or were busy watching television and did not even look at the laptop monitor. The portable computers were left alone. In this case, the laptop was a symbol of a gadget for working or studying, of seriousness, and of intellectuality. Laptops have become the cultural material used to produce and construct identity (Jarman 1998). Using a notebook computer while staying up late can give the impression that the person concerned is a hard worker, even a workaholic.

Social Pleasure

However, not everyone in the public space during midnight comes with a set of work gadgets such as laptops, external hard disks, cell phones, and chargers. During the interview, Rangga, for example, was not working. He just sat drinking coffee and smoking, without any gadgets.

It feels comfortable when you see there are many people around you. Rather than feel upset alone in the room, insomnia, better I go here, lots of “friends” (Rangga, interviewed on January 16, 2018)

For Rangga, being in public spaces gives him pleasure because he can be in touch with people. “In touch” means to socialize, communicate, produce, distribute, and absorb the meaning of one another. According to Adler and Proctor II (2017), social need is one of the reasons people communicate. Social needs relate to the relationship with others, and involve pleasure, love, friendship, acknowledgment, getting away from stress, relaxation, control, and so on. Therefore, we can understand why Rangga enjoyed the social atmosphere rather than being alone, which made him feel alienated from the reality that gave him pleasure.

As mentioned earlier, Rangga’s pleasure of social contact late in the night also related to his experience of hanging out with his friends watching football on television. This memory unconsciously provoked the desire to keep experiencing the same pleasure. In this case, the 24-hour open branded convenience stores and cafés like CircleK and Dunkin seemingly commoditize the midnight social desire of urban youth like Rangga. They promise happiness (Costley et al. 2007) through consumptive pleasure (Böhm and Batta 2010).

Midnight Culture, Media, and Brand Discourse

Rangga’s habit of watching football late at night (or early morning) on television with his father or friends, which gave him the pleasure of staying up, shows that the media has a role in constructing personal desire and personal discourse related to staying-up habits. This influence is caused by how the audience perceives the world and himself or herself in daily life (Wijaya 2019), connected to constructive media discourse (Alasutari 1999).

Media produces and reproduces the audience’s desire to stay up through its programs, news, and advertisements. Besides football telecasts happening regularly late at night, the public in Indonesia are aware of late-night entertainment programs. Among them are *Radio Show* on TVOne, *KKN* on TransTV, *Bioskop* (Cinema) on TransTV, *Angin Malam* (Evening Breeze) on RCTI, and some midnight movies programs. Even a few years ago, there were special programs targeted at the youth such as MTV’s *Insomnia* and *Begadang* (Stay Up) on Trans7 that triggered a discourse in youth social media forums such as Kaskus, Indogamers, Lautan Indonesia, and YahooAnswer as programs that are loved by youths who like to or get used to staying up late.

Today, almost all TV stations in Indonesia air programs across 24 hours. Late-night programs in fact stimulate the staying-up-late phenomenon, including a wasteful lifestyle. This is because the media has the effect of creating a consumptive culture lifestyle and citizen-consumers (Keum et al. 2004).

The staying-up-late culture is not just produced and reproduced by the media, but also affirmed by many brands, as a form of cultural commodification (Keat 1999; Wengrow 2010). A telecommunications service provider in Indonesia, XL, for example, launched the promo XL PaketBegadang (stay-up-late package), which offers a low Internet rate between 12:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. As mentioned earlier, cinema theaters have midnight shows and department stores and hypermarkets often hold midnight sale promos during the weekend.

In the postmodern era, companies are not just stocking up on profits by creating the consumptive stimulus through a variety of tempting offerings (Fine 2006), they are also constructing identity or reproducing a consumer lifestyle through product value in a brand. Thus, the brand creates a society that is connected through brand values (Komberger 2010). Hedonistic lifestyle becomes a spectacle (Debord 2002); brand image and individual image are combined, creating constructive desire and pleasure that part of corporations’ economic hegemony (Sköld 2010). When media and brands get married, it stimulates the birth of double *jouissance* of consumer audiences (Wijaya 2015). No exception to the phenomenon of midnight culture.

In this case, urban youth constitute a potential resource to be the object and the subject at the same time (Dunn 2008) in the circle of the consumption system through commodification. They become objects if constructive brand cultural values that are affirmed by the consumers have become a lifestyle that helps to define them in the middle of the social environment (Shah

et al. 2007), and they become subjects if the consumers are actively reconstructing specific cultural values and subsequently affirmed by brands into becoming commodity values to attract back the consumers (Kline 2006).

Similar to the midnight culture, where the urban youth have become objects and subjects at the same time, the staying-up-late culture is not new to the Indonesian people, especially for the youth, because they are fit physically to stay up all night. Savvy brands dig into consumer insights related to the culture of staying up, and then construct particular meaning and feelings in their consumers' minds and hearts, to be internalized into a part of their daily life (Wijaya 2013). That is why brands exist. Convenience store brands such as CircleK, Indomaret, and Alfamart and fast-food brands such as Dunkin, McD, Hokben, and Burger King have done this. Stimuli such as "free Wi-Fi," "open 24 hours," electrical outlets in corners with comfortable seating, good lighting, as well as specific promo packages create comfort that meets the needs and wants of the urban youth to stay up late. Apart from the assumption that this is a brand political strategy to create a "new" stay-up-late culture lifestyle (Shah et al. 2007), comfort is essential for consumers because naturally everyone always wants to feel comfortable with what he or she needs (Miller 2008). Another point is, youths are very easily attracted to matters concerning a materialistic and hedonistic life (Goldberg et al. 2003), as offered by brands. Thus, the "politics of comfort" in the urban youth's midnight culture affects the "cost" of consumers and the "income" of the brand.

Concluding Remarks

Midnight culture comprises the activities, practices, meanings, and lifestyles of staying up late—in the midnight time and space. Some of the midnight culture issues are related to consumptive, productive, discursive, distributive, representative, and regulatory dimensions. The consumptive dimension relates to how the midnight culture triggers consumption practices. In contrast, the productive dimension relates to the individual, community, and institutional activities in producing certain meanings and values. The discursive dimension addresses midnight discourses in various modes and mediums, in the sense of how the media, brands, society, and institutions talk about them and put them into practice (discursive practices). The distributive dimension involves how this culture is replicated, disseminated, circulated, and expanded to become massive and trending practices, both territorial and non-territorial. The representative dimension refers to how this culture becomes a place to represent "something," according to interests and needs, either personally, communally, socially, culturally, politically, or economically. The regulatory dimension refers to governing practices, by either governmental or nongovernmental entities, individually or institutionally.

Midnight culture is usually characterized by several aspects, including identity construction, insomnia expression, the embodiment of male pride, social pleasures, nocturnal pleasures, desire for success. It is also viewed in terms of an escape strategy, excessive fad, the rewinding of pleasant experiences, and the meaningfulness of time and space. This culture is inseparable from discourses on media, brands, society and culture, and technological developments.

Limitations and Future Studies

Although this study has provided meaningful insights regarding the culture of staying up late and the midnight culture of urban youth in Indonesia, several limitations exist. First, this study was very contextual, with the locus being one of the cities in Indonesia. There are currently 34 provinces in Indonesia, and each province has several cities with their unique characteristics; not to mention cities in other countries that have different attributes and cultures. Therefore, further research with similar issues will make it possible to explore the staying-up-late and consumption cultures, including the midnight production of urban youth in cities of various countries. The same

thing applies to the diversity of research subjects. Future studies should focus on informants or participants with different backgrounds, demographically (e.g., youth other than students, younger or older), spatially (e.g., rural versus urban, private versus public), and culturally (e.g., intersecting with certain issues of religion, race, gender, and ethnicity).

Second, since this is a qualitative research study, number of samples (informants) is minimal, so the study cannot be generalized quantitatively. Future studies can take a quantitative path by examining this study's findings with more respondents in several cities to determine the urban youth midnight cultural phenomenon's specific and dominant trends. Midnight culture has various facets, as mentioned earlier (from consumption, production, discursion, distribution, representation to regulation). Several indicators in this study can be developed into constructs in measurements, such as workaholic identity, insomniac expression, success obsession, social pleasure, media discourse, sociocultural discourse, and brand discourse.

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