

## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry



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**ABSTRACT:** This article discusses the creative industry side of Janger Banyuwangi performing arts concerning innovation, creation, and information technology that have implications for improving the family economy. The research method used is qualitative with an ethnographic approach. The ethnographic approach is implemented through activities such as watching Janger performances and understanding them in historical, sociological, and cultural contexts. The material object is Janger Banyuwangi performing arts, while the formal object is focused on the creative industry side with the basis of discussion using creative industry theory. The study results show that traditional arts, in the context of the development of the times, need to innovate and adapt. The development of the Janger creative industry needs support from technology and media and response to audience tastes. Modern technology in sound systems, lighting, and even multimedia has improved the quality of performances and provided a more enjoyable experience for the audience. The use of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has become an important strategy for the Janger groups to expand the reach of their audience and promote their performances. With innovation, creativity, and information technology, Janger Banyuwangi performing arts can improve the quality and quantity of audience responses and the economy of Janger performers' families.

**KEYWORDS:** creation, creative industry, innovation, promotion, social media

### INTRODUCTION

Janger Banyuwangi performing arts is one of the traditional performing arts that is the pride of the Banyuwangi community, especially the Using community. Janger is also known as Praburara, Damarwulan, or Jinggoan. Janger is a local cultural expression that reflects cultural identity. The study of Janger Banyuwangi performing arts can be directed to the issue of the creative industry, based on considering the existence of relatively rapid socio-cultural dynamics so that the community will abandon traditional arts that do not follow the spirit of the times.

Janger has the potential to be developed into a creative industry as a tourist destination while being able to raise the economic level of the artists' families. By combining the potential of local and global culture supported by social media and digital technology facilities, Janger is expected to be more attractive to the audience. The development of the Janger creative industry has positive implications for tourist destinations, the economic sector, and community welfare.

Based on the search from various sources of information to conduct a literature review, several scientific works were obtained, both undergraduate theses, dissertations, and articles in journals that discussed Janger. Existing studies on Janger tend to highlight its history, the issues of performance forms, supporting music, cultural identity, cultural revitalization, and oral strategies. These studies emphasize understanding and internal exploration of the substance of Janger and its supporting elements. Other studies show that Janger is in another cultural area, namely the Sundanese, Lampung, and Surakarta cultural areas (Angelita, 2020; Sholehati, 2020; Permatasari, 2018; Astini, 2020; Crispa, Setiaji, & Husen, 2021), as a form of cultural diffusion. Janger also provides historical insight, cultural values, learning facilities, and economic development (Anoegrajekti, et al., 2022; Miartini, et al., 2018; Sugiyanto, et al., 2016; Sukraka & Sudarsono, 2005; Wahyuni, L. 2004).

## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry

Studies on the historical or historical aspects of Janger were conducted by Puspito (1998), Nurullita (2019), and Astuti (2017). These studies attempt to trace the history or historical aspects of Janger in various ways, including tracing it to the 20th century, the 1930s—1970s, and 2008—2015. The three studies have a common thread: Janger is a folk performing art genealogically inherited from the Blambangan Kingdom. However, its development experienced ups and downs and was influenced by other Java and Bali cultures when kingdoms colonized Blambangan.

The studies conducted by Duija (1995) and Kuardhani (2000) focused on Janger as folk theater. These studies emphasize various aspects of a unified performance, from the drama, story, and actors to the supporting community. For the supporting community, Janger is an expression of local culture that seeks to entertain, provide moral messages, and be a means to unite residents in togetherness. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Arsana (2004), Arsana and Bandem (2005) emphasized the Janger gamelan, or the music accompanying the performing arts. According to him, the Janger gamelan is a mixture or hybrid between Banyuwangi and Balinese music. This finding is related to the historical aspect of the Blambangan kingdom, which was once a colony of kingdoms in Bali.

Another study was conducted by Anoegrajekti (2014) and Ilham (2015), who revealed the revitalization of culture and oral strategies. In its dynamics, Janger experienced revitalization to strengthen its cultural identity. Meanwhile, in the context of orality, Janger became one of the performing arts that preserved oral media, which had implications for strengthening local languages and utilizing language media and other supporting media.

A study related to social phenomena was conducted by Dewantari and Noordiana (2022), by revealing one of the Janger art groups that was able to maintain its existence amid the pandemic, namely Janger Karisma Dewata. The study revealed the joys and sorrows or romance of traditional art groups that were required to be able to support their supporting artists.

These previous studies attempted to explore the substance of Janger internally and the supporting elements that are an important part of performing arts that voice local culture. These studies attempt to explore: (1) arts and entertainment, (2) performing arts and oral traditions, and (3) creativity and ethnic identity.

Meanwhile, the study in this research emphasizes the creative industry of Janger. This means that exploration and in-depth study are carried out on innovative, creative patterns that can be developed to reproduce the performing arts in different packaging and innovations. The creative industry pattern remains based on local culture by combining global culture and utilizing technology and social media.

Based on this description, previous studies need to be supplemented with a study of the Janger Banyuwangi creative industry that explores community creativity, including utilizing information technology. In addition to previous studies, we (the research team) already have a track record related to performing arts studies, creative industry studies, and studies on local culture. A series of studies conducted by Ilham (2016; 2018; 2021; 2023) emphasizes discussions on oral strategies, utilization of multilingualism, means of cohesion, and reconstruction of identity, culminating in the maintenance of performing arts across the ages.

Saputra's study (2012) and several studies conducted by the team (Anoegrajekti, et al., 2015; Sariono, et al., 2009) discuss the creative industry, both those based on oral traditions, such as Using or Banyuwangen songs, local traditional arts, and performing arts. The results of the study show that local traditions and cultures, especially in the Banyuwangi area, have the potential to be developed into creative industries. However, this is not enough to be done only by artists/cultural figures and the community; it must also involve the entertainment industry's role in supporting the production and distribution process. Other studies (Ilham, 2015; Anoegrajekti, 2016; Anoegrajekti & Macaryus, 2018) support this concept so that the local cultural base can be created by combining global culture for cultural products that can improve the economic level of families and communities.

If we trace the conceptual framework (Granham, 1997), the creative industry is another term for the cultural industry, so in this context, both terms can be used in various ways. The cultural industry or creative industry is an institution in society that manages a unique mode of production and corporate organization to produce and distribute symbols in the form of cultural objects and services as a commodity. The creative industry has implications for cultural convergence, characterized by audience behavior in consuming information within the framework of cultural values (Jenkins, 2006; Throsby, 2008). The creative industry needs to be supported by creativity and innovation. The development of the creative industry is a form of economic development efforts (Potts, 2008; Anjaningruma & Rudamaga, 2019; Yuslin, 2021).

Meanwhile, the core work areas of the cultural industry (Hesmondhalgh, 2013; Bhabha, 1994) can include broadcasting, the film industry, content aspects of the internet industry, the music industry, print and electronic publishing, video games, computer games, and digital games, as well as advertising and marketing. Janger is one of the performing arts that can be created in a creative industry. Innovations in the creative industry are related to new technology platforms, attention to consumers, and institutional change (Miles & Green, 2008).

## **Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry**

On the other hand, the creative industry offers four models (Potts & Cunningham, 2018; Hatley, et al., 2013; Potts, et al., 2008) that can be accommodated by creators, namely the welfare model, the competition model, the growth model, and the innovation model. The four models can be selected according to the context. The welfare model considers the common interest, while the competition model emphasizes healthy competition for a quality that is dreamed of. Meanwhile, the growth model must be linked to the social situation, while the innovation model emphasizes renewal.

Another important factor to note is that the development of the creative industry cannot be separated from the use of information technology and decentralization policies (Primorac, 2014.). This is important because each region with different autonomy will have different consequences when packaging creative industry products. As is known, in the context of the creative industry, synergistic cooperation is needed between capital owners, industrial systems, and artist creativity so that massive products will be created. In other words, a strategic relationship is needed between creators and their creativity, financiers and industrial systems, and marketing and distribution.

### **METHOD**

The method used in this study is a qualitative method with an ethnographic approach, especially the emic perspective, emphasizing the view of socio-cultural phenomena based on the perspective of the community being studied (Pelto & Pelto, 1978; Ahimsa-Putra, 1997). As explained by Spradley (1997), the primary purpose of ethnography is to understand a view of life from the perspective of the indigenous population. This activity not only studies society but also learns from society. The discovery of the views held by the residents concerned (insiders) is a type of knowledge that differs from the knowledge that is mainly in outsiders' views.

The ethnographic method is used to find strategies for local communities to organize culture in their minds and use it in life (Alasuutari, 1995). In implementing this study, ethnographic methods are used to comprehensively organize the meaning of Banyuwangi Janger performing arts and Using local culture to construct creative industries as the basis for Using community social productivity. This method is implemented by watching Janger performances, understanding the background of the socio-cultural context of Janger actors, and observing their aesthetic creativity.

The material object in this study is Banyuwangi Janger performing arts. In contrast, the formal object is focused on the dimensions of the creative industry with a conceptual framework in the form of creative industry theory. Data collection techniques are carried out by literature study, participant observation, open-in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD). Given that this study is a field study, the primary data is obtained in the field (the community that is the target of the activity). Supporting data is obtained from literature studies (various supporting documents).

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Banyuwangi community is known to be quite appreciative of the cultural products they have. This has great potential that can be utilized for empowerment and increasing community economic development. One of the typical cultural products of the Banyuwangi community, which has been maintained and even experienced significant development until now, is the Janger Banyuwangi art. This study, oriented towards the creative industry side of Janger Banyuwangi, is presented in three points: stage and property arrangements, creative industry phenomena, and alternative media. The following is the presentation.

#### **Stage and Property Arrangements**

Janger Banyuwangi is a traditional performing art in terms of history, appearance, stories raised, language, and the socio-cultural context of the performance. The text and context of the Janger performing art show local values and local wisdom. This art is the cultural identity of the Banyuwangi community. Therefore, the Banyuwangi community becomes both the actor and the audience that continues from generation to generation, thus becoming a means to preserve this art.

The completeness of the Janger performance needs to be observed, including stage arrangements and properties. Both of these things have developed over time. However, this development does not entirely erase the traces that have been experienced. The Janger performance stage, which is commonly used, is in the form of a proscenium with a size of around 5x7 meters. The height of the stage from the ground is about one to one and a half meters. Some Janger groups that do not yet have an iron stage frame usually use used barrels as stage legs. On the top of the stage is a cloth tent to protect all stage equipment from possible rain. On the right and left edges of the stage there are *sebeng* (side wings), and at the back there are several sheets of *kelir* (screen/backdrop) that function as the scene's background.

The stage layout in the form of a drop and wing in Janger performances is also commonly used in similar traditional theater performances in Java, for example, *Ketoprak*, *Ludruk*, and *Wayang Orang*. *Arja* performing arts in Bali uses a more straightforward

## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry

stage layout; the performance is held on a rectangular piece of land given a boundary in the temple yard rather than on a raised stage. The drawn curtains are installed haphazardly to hide the actors before they enter (Brandon, 1967).

Compared to the dynamic and functional modern theater stage design, the scenario stage design does feel monotonous because the images are only that; in fact, the ornamental background images often feel more prominent than the actors who are in the foreground. However, technically, it is very easy and profitable for the group that uses it. First, there is no need for various properties to depict the story setting, which means reducing production costs because there is no need to buy special equipment. Second, the desired story setting is depicted by raising and lowering the screen in a short time. Palace scenes are realized by lowering the palace screen; forest scenes, caves, village roads, the seaside, and so on, simply by lowering the screen with the picture that is considered appropriate. For the sake of cheap costs and speed, additional knick-knacks are not needed. Hand props usually presented are only those that help act or characterize, for example, keris and sticks (for mpu or older adults). Likewise, other objects, such as banana trees or leafy branches, are presented on stage when needed. The Janger Sritanjung Mardi Santoso group presented two banana trees on stage for a fight scene, and the banana trees were eventually blown up with firecrackers.

The Janger stage setup is also equipped with lighting. However, the lighting in Janger performances can be said to be simple, and its use is often less functional and less planned as a tool to help create the scene's atmosphere. In addition to lamps that produce bright white light, other colors commonly used are red and blue. The simple category here illustrates that Janger performances are dominated by bright white light. Dark or dim light, sometimes interspersed with red or blue light, is presented to accentuate mystical, secret, or horror scenes. Scenes like this can also be lit with disco lights that have colorful lights, spinning or flashing, while the main lights are dimmed or even turned off altogether. However, several Janger groups pay quite a lot of attention to lighting. Janger Sastra Dewa and Karisma Dewata groups have quite good lighting equipment, both in quantity and quality. Janger Restu Kencana Group is gradually improving the quality of its lighting. Initially, the latter group only had simple lighting equipment, namely the type of lights commonly used as garden lighting or billboards (outdoor) that are given colorful filters; now, this group has been able to buy better-quality LED stage lights.

The properties in Janger performances are part of the artistic arrangement that receives the least attention. The screen, which is the scene's background, is sufficient to describe the situation and atmosphere, so other stage equipment is considered unimportant. If a scene takes place in a palace, only the king's throne is specially prepared. A bamboo cradle is enough to describe the desired atmosphere if a scene occurs in a small village house. Even scenes on the street (village road) or the beach only rely on screens; there are no small knick-knacks presented to make the scene more lively. These things make every Janger group compete for a series of screens with beautiful pictures.

Usually, in every story that Janger stages, there are two central locations. In many plays, the location is the palace. For example, in the play *Minak Jinggo / Damarwulan*, the primary settings are the Blambangan Palace and the Majapahit Palace. The throne used in the Blambangan Palace is the same as that used in the Majapahit Palace. This is for practicality alone.

The position of the king/queen or duke's throne is always higher than the chairs for other characters. This throne is always present in every story, and this is the only stage property that must be prepared thoughtfully by every Janger group. Usually, the throne chair is placed on a wooden box measuring 100 X 150 cm, with a height of 15-20 cm. This king/queen's throne is a unique chair with colorful carvings or paintings. Meanwhile, the patch, elders (resi/mpg), queens, concubines, and princesses sit on ordinary chairs on the floor. Their chairs are usually not specially designed, but plastic chairs are also provided for the panjak. Other figures, such as princes, soldiers, and small people, sit on the floor without mats.

To add a dramatic or mystical effect to specific scenes, such as a scene where supernatural beings appear, or two opposing camps compete for magical powers, some Janger groups use a stage smoke machine (fogger machine). Each Janger group tries to show supernatural beings that block the protagonist in the forest. Sometimes, the supernatural being transforms an influential figure. The supernatural being can be a dragon, an ancient animal, or an imaginary creature. In addition to supernatural beings, large Janger groups also have unique costumes for various types of animals, such as horses, tigers, and so on.

The Janger Karisma Dewata and Sastra Dewa groups have had them for a long time, but Rohili, the leader of the Janger Sritanjung Mardi Santoso group, has just bought one. Previously, if he needed a smoke machine, he had to rent it first from another group that had one, with the note that the device was not being used. The smoke machine plays a reasonably important role as an attraction. The Sritanjung Mardi Santoso group now combines it with fireworks and firecrackers.

Janger performances are also equipped with sound systems to make it easier for the audience to listen to the dialogue on stage and the accompanying music. Like the lighting system, the sound system in Janger performances is also simple, but its use is much more functional. The sound system for Janger performances is currently better than in the 1980s. If in the past it only used membrane speakers with low sound quality, now the sound system is equipped with a salon and audio mixer that can produce good quality sound.

## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry

### Creative Industry Phenomenon

Janger Banyuwangi, as a traditional performing art, has experienced significant development over time. The innovations made by Janger groups respond to various factors, which ultimately form a pattern in the creative industry. Important phenomena that need to be considered include adaptation to audience tastes, utilization of media developments, innovation in various aspects of performances, and the influence of the creative industry on the local economy (Saputra, 2012; Anoegrajekti, 2014; Anoegrajekti, et al., 2020; 2022).

One of the main drivers of innovation is changes in audience tastes. The Janger Group strives to remain relevant by presenting performances that suit the interests of today's audiences, including the millennial generation. This is reflected in the selection of stories that not only revolve around the history of Majapahit but also raise folklore, the history of the archipelago, and even contemporary issues. In addition, the addition of dances and songs from other regions is also an attraction.

The development of technology and media, especially social media such as YouTube and live streaming, has opened up new opportunities for Janger. The Janger Group utilizes this platform to expand the reach of its audience, promote performances, and interact with fans. This also allows audiences who cannot attend in person to enjoy the Janger performance.

Innovation is not only limited to the story but also includes other aspects such as properties, performance equipment, songs, and dances. The use of modern technology in sound and lighting, for example, can improve the visual and audio quality of the performance—likewise, the addition of variations in dance movements and more modern musical arrangements.

Innovation in Janger not only has an impact on the performing arts itself but also the local economy. Janger performances can create jobs for artists, musicians, make-up artists, and other parties involved. In addition, Janger's popularity can also attract tourists, which in turn can increase regional income.

Janger Banyuwangi, as a traditional performing art, has shown extraordinary adaptation to changing times. This adaptation is not only limited to changes in the aesthetics of the performance but also reaches the realm of the creative industry. This adaptation includes changes in the play and theme. Janger is no longer fixated on classic stories such as the history of Majapahit. Innovation in the play includes adopting contemporary themes, social issues, and even adaptations from popular stories or legends from other regions. This is in line with the findings of Anoegrajekti, et al. (2020), which state that market demands, especially Janger responders, trigger the development of the Janger play. In addition, this is also supported by research by Anoegrajekti, et al. (2022), which explains that the audience has the authority to change and shape new performances.

Temu Misti Janger Group (and its successors) is known for its innovations that focus on responding to the demands of responders, such as the use of bridal palanquins, unique properties (birds, flying horses), and variations in scenes. This innovation shows an adaptation to market tastes and an attempt to provide more visually appealing shows (Anoegrajekti, et al., 2022). This innovation increases the frequency of responses (booked shows), creating jobs and driving the group's economy.

Many Janger groups today have adopted modern technology in their performances. This includes using more sophisticated lighting, sound systems, and multimedia (e.g., video projection); some have even begun experimenting with special effects. While specific names of groups may be challenging to identify in the sources available to any researcher, this trend is generally observed in the development of contemporary Janger. These innovations have increased the show's production quality and visual appeal, making it more competitive in the modern entertainment era.

Some Janger groups have collaborated with artists from other disciplines, such as modern musicians, contemporary dancers, or visual artists. These collaborations have resulted in shows that blend traditional Janger elements with a modern twist, creating appeal to a broader audience, including younger generations. Specific examples may be challenging to document extensively, but this phenomenon is part of the evolving Janger landscape.

Many Janger groups, both established and emerging, are utilizing digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to promote their shows, engage with fans, and even livestream their shows. This activity significantly expands their audience reach and creates new opportunities for monetization and career development.

### Alternative Media

Various regional arts genres in Banyuwangi continue to develop in line with the times. In addition to being enjoyed in the socio-cultural environment where various Banyuwangi arts grow and develop, the attractions of various types of arts, including Janger, can also be enjoyed via radio, VCD (Video Compact Disk), local television, and the Internet. If radio was initially the only medium other than the stage that the public could access to enjoy entertainment, now other media are also relatively easy to access widely and cheaply without having to use technological devices that are considered complicated.

The use of modern technology in sound systems, lighting, and even multimedia has changed the face of Janger performances. This aims to improve the quality of the performance and provide a more enjoyable experience for the audience. Using digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has become an important strategy for Janger groups to expand

## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry

their audience reach and promote their performances. This also allows direct interaction with fans through comments and live-streaming features. Technology also makes it easier to document and archive Janger performances. This is important for the preservation and development of Janger in the future. Collaboration with artists from other disciplines, such as modern music, contemporary dance, or even fine arts, is also a trend in Janger. This fusion creates innovative and engaging forms of performance for the younger generation.

In addition to being enjoyed live, the public can enjoy Janger performing arts via the Internet, primarily through the YouTube application. This application is a favorite channel for Janger managers to be continuously within reach of the audience. In addition, almost all Janger groups also utilize several other applications, such as Facebook and Instagram, to promote themselves to the public. Thus, social media has made it easier for the audience to access various performances, either live or recorded videos, uploaded by artists through their channels.

The promotional activities carried out by the Janger crew continuously positively impact the life of Janger art. In the long term, this step will significantly contribute to efforts to maintain the existence of Janger art.

As is known, in the last few years, information technology and multimedia have developed in such a way that they have colored almost every dimension of human life. With all its advantages and attractions, information technology has played a significant role in various strategic activities of society. The Internet, the golden child of information technology, has been felt as a vital need for humanity worldwide. The impact of the Internet has penetrated various aspects of life, including arts and culture. Now, society has more opportunities to access and enjoy many things, including entertainment, through online media.

Among supporters of Janger, internet technology is used, among other things, to disseminate recordings of Janger performances so that they can be enjoyed by the broader community in various places. Thus, the presence of the Internet complements the transmission media of Janger art so that this art has a broader reach. Several supporters of the Janger group bring this art closer to the public through the Internet by utilizing blogging, social media, and video streaming.

Supporters of the Janger group write information in the form of news or long/short articles about Janger and upload them to blog pages that can be accessed. Several Janger groups maintain blogs regularly, for example, the Janger Setyo Kridho Budoyo (SKB) group from Bongkoran, Parijatah Wetan, Srono. Through this blog, the account owner informs the public about the vision and mission of SKB, performance schedules, and other things about this group that are considered important for the public to know.

Supporters of the Janger group create accounts on social media in their name or the group's name and communicate with their fans through this media. Supporters of the Janger group upload videos of Janger performances so that they can be accessed and enjoyed by the public. The videos uploaded are not always complete performances but often only excerpts of specific scenes that are considered interesting by the uploader. On the YouTube site, for example, people can watch recordings of performances by the Janger Karisma Dewata group, Sastra Dewa, and others.

By utilizing the Internet, which can be accessed globally, supporters of the Janger art make it easier for some people interested in following this art's development. Now, anyone, anywhere, can use the Internet to watch recordings of Janger performances. The number of Janger performance recordings uploaded to the YouTube site is significant. Most uploaded files do not contain complete recordings; they only contain excerpts. Not a few are only about five minutes long, containing excerpts of singing, jokes, or dance scenes. Uploaders to the YouTube site are not only members of the Janger group but also fans who do not have organizational ties to a particular Janger group. Some examples of performance recordings uploaded are the performances of the Janger Setyo Krido Budoyo group, Rogojampi, with the story *Samparangin Kembar* (Building Saptargo Temple); the Janger Karisma Dewata group, with the story *Sabdopalon Dadi Ratu*; and the Janger Karisma Dewata group, with the story *Damarwulan Winisudo*.

## CONCLUSION

The creative industry phenomenon in Janger Banyuwangi shows that traditional arts can survive and thrive in the modern era by innovating and adapting. The use of technology and media and responding to audience tastes are important keys in developing the Janger creative industry. However, it is still important to maintain a balance between innovation and the preservation of traditional Janger values.

The use of modern technology in sound, lighting, and even multimedia has improved the show's quality and provided a more engaging experience for the audience. Using digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok has become an important strategy for Janger groups to expand their audience reach and promote their shows. With innovation, creativity, and information technology, Janger performing arts can improve the quality and quantity of audience responses, thus having a positive impact on improving the economy of Janger performers' families.

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## Janger Banyuwangi Performing Arts: From Local Cultural Expression to the Creative Industry

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