

## SENSE OF PLACE, THE UNIQUE PROPOSITION THAT EMPOWER INTERIOR ARCHITECTURE DESIGN CONSULTANT

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### ABSTRACT

*The necessity for spatial planning will rise with the population of humans. As a result, the interior business will expand and encounter more rivals where differentiation is required in this industry. The purpose of this research is to determine whether applying the sense of place theme to the interior design consulting business may provide a competitive advantage in this industry. Methods of this research were qualitative inquiry, and data was gathered through observations and literature studies. Observations were conducted at various similar consultancies, while literature studies were conducted through textbooks and related journals.. Triangulation took place with expert validation in business design. The results supported the conclusions about problems and opportunities. The need for suppliers, other actors in the value chain, and stakeholders is the problem in industry analysis, while the globalization-related problem in market forces separates society into two main groups: those who are more interested in global culture and those who are more interested in preserving and developing local culture. In key trends, it is found that the collapse of regional social and cultural norms in Indonesia is a result of globalization. This problem provides opportunities for interior design consultants who emphasize sense of place theme to have an advantage in this industry. After conducting the industry analysis, there are opportunities to work with related parties who want to develop local culture. Thus the results prove that sense of place has been proven to be a competitive advantage in the interior design consulting business.*

**Keywords:** *Competitive Advantage, Genius Loci, Interior Design Consultant, Sense of Place.*

### ABSTRAK

Kebutuhan akan tata ruang akan meningkat seiring dengan bertambahnya populasi dan aktivitas manusia. Secara otomatis, bisnis interior juga akan berkembang dan bertambah banyak. Agar mampu bersaing dalam industri ini, diperlukan diferensiasi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah dengan menerapkan tema *sense of place* pada bisnis konsultan desain interior dapat memberikan keunggulan kompetitif dalam industri ini. Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif, dan data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan studi literatur. Observasi dilakukan di berbagai konsultan sejenis, sedangkan studi literatur dilakukan melalui buku teks, jurnal terkait, dan sumber-sumber elektronik yang mendukung. Triangulasi dilakukan dengan validasi ahli dalam desain bisnis. Hasilnya mendukung kesimpulan tentang masalah dan peluang. Kebutuhan pemasok, pelaku lain dalam rantai nilai, dan pemangku kepentingan merupakan masalah dalam analisis industri, sedangkan masalah terkait globalisasi dalam kekuatan pasar memisahkan masyarakat ke dalam dua kelompok utama: mereka yang lebih tertarik dengan budaya global dan mereka yang lebih tertarik untuk melestarikan dan mengembangkan budaya lokal. Dalam tren utama, ditemukan bahwa runtuhnya norma-norma sosial dan budaya daerah di Indonesia merupakan akibat dari globalisasi, masalah ini memberikan peluang bagi konsultan desain interior yang menekankan desain interior.

**Kata Kunci:** *Genius Loci, Keunggulan Kompetitif, Konsultan Desain Interior, Sense of Place.*

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of globalization has entered Indonesian culture rapidly. The same goes for globalization in interior design and architecture. Standardization of similar designs around the world without unique characteristics. The impact of globalization on architecture has been significant, leading to a loss of unique local identity in many cities (Fahmy et al., 2020). This has created a challenge for local architecture, which must balance the need to preserve its cultural identity with the pressure to conform to global trends (Morghany, 2008).

The result has been a proliferation of buildings that lack distinctiveness and are often replicas of each other (Fahmy et al., 2020). However, there is also a call for a new form of architecture that combines tradition with contemporary spirit, creating a local, cultural, and modern architecture (Kang, 2009).

This shift towards a more globalized and interchangeable architecture has raised questions about the loss of national identity in the built environment (Koolhaas, 2014). Some say that people are forgetting their nation's culture, but there are also those who say that many people want to revive local culture as part of their lives and make it unique as they create their needs. Every project undertaken by an interior design consultant that elevates local values and Sense Of Place, will make every design work a work that is not globally designed but elevates local values and increases place identity.

Sense of place is referred to the particular experience of a person in a particular setting

(Najafi, 2011). The elements of a sense of place encompass various dimensions that contribute to individuals' connections with their environment. Place attachment, place identity, and place satisfaction are fundamental components that form the essence of a sense of place (Erfani, 2022).

These elements are crucial in shaping individuals' relationships with their surroundings, influencing their perceptions and emotional ties to a particular place. Sense of place can be recognized through the process of sensing by humans, both physically and non-physically in a place to be able to capture characteristics that can form an emotional bond between people and the place (Dwiputri, 2021).

Other than that, the second issue of globalization is where post COVID-19 pandemic conditions have revived people's activities, such as traveling, shopping, and holding events together. This will directly encourage entrepreneurs to start or renew their businesses. With the increasing desire of entrepreneurs to start their own businesses, the demand for commercial space will increase. In addition, as part of the 2022 priority program, the commercial sector will be prioritized to boost local tourism, creative economy, and micro-enterprises.

Due to these two issues, businesses are striving to meet the market demand and needs by creating designs that prioritize the local Sense Of Place value in both residential segment and commercial projects (Kusumowidagdo et al, 2015). This is done with the aim that each project has a different design experience and

realization results from each other and can have a positive impact on the progress of the local creative economy and interior design consulting companies can continue to compete by promoting the value of Sense Of Place as a Genius loci in each project undertaken by the company. genius loci is linked to the idea of the spirit of a place, representing the distinctiveness that characterizes each location, said Barradas et al (2022).

Genius loci encapsulates the intrinsic qualities and characteristics that define a place, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and preserving the spirit and essence of different locations. It serves as a foundational concept in various disciplines, contributing to a deeper understanding of the relationship between space, identity, and human experience.

In the field of architecture consulting, incorporating elements that evoke a sense of place, such as local beliefs, community identity, and human ontological matters, can differentiate architectural consultants in the market (Olivier, 2021). This differentiation is crucial in competitive environments, where firms aim to reduce costs, exploit opportunities, and neutralize threats to gain a competitive edge (Newbert, 2008). Aligning organizational capabilities with a focus on creating a sense of place can lead to enhanced employee engagement, a key driver of competitive advantage (Frino et al, 2019). Furthermore, the ability to adapt to high-velocity markets and changing customer preferences is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in

architecture consulting (Oliver, 2015).

The problem statement of this research is the application of the sense of place theme could empower the interior architecture business consulting as their unique proposition and provide a competitive advantage in this industry.

The purpose of this research is to determine whether applying the sense of place theme to the interior design consulting business may provide a competitive advantage in this industry based on Industry Forces, Market Forces, Key Trends, Macro Economic Forces analysis.

## **METHOD**

Methods of this research were qualitative inquiry. Data was gathered through observations and literature studies. Observations were conducted at various similar consultancies such as Endramukti Design, Christ Desain and Roud Design.

Consultants were selected because of their similar indicator of using a sense of place or locality as their strength and advantage of their business. Looking at their career as Interior and Architecture consultants who are using a sense of place as a strength and advantage of their business which is proven successful by the continued establishment of the consulting company from year to year until today.

While literature studies were conducted through textbooks and related journals as shown in the table down below.

Table 1. Literature Studies

Author	Title	Conclusión
G. Rusten, J. Bryson, Unni Aarflot	Places through products and products through places: Industrial design and spatial symbols as sources of competitiveness	Place through product and product through place relationships are used by firms to create place- based identities for their products that provide competitive advantage in the global marketplace. This protects niche producers from foreign competition as the identities and value of their products are related to place and quality rather than price advantages. The article distinguishes between placeless products that are targeted at all markets and those that deliberately exploit place-based associations and identities.
L. Buck	PRODUCTS WITH PROVENANCE: DEVELOPING A SENSE OF PLACE IN PRODUCT DESIGN EDUCATION	Product design is particularly susceptible to globalization; its relationship with technology links it to greater homogenisation. The nature of trends and notions of “good design” engenders a sense of place and localized design identities, but by definition design is a solution, and solutions cannot be divorced from the problems they address, from their context. This is where sense of place comes in and why it is important; it roots design in its most fundamental reason for existing. Without a sense of place, design can look great, work well, be interesting and engaging, but it can't truly be effective.
Q. Kang	Local, Modern, and Cultural New Buildings	The multiple development of contemporary economy, politics and culture has led to the multiplicity of architecture forms throughout the world. Innovation and application of architecture techniques has resulted in the similarity of architecture styles and unity of architecture culture; developed, less-developed and developing countries are all entitled modern architecture

Source : Personal Data Processing, 2024

The design business can leverage a sense of place to create a competitive advantage by incorporating local, regional, and national place-based labels into products and services (Rusten, 2007). This can be achieved by developing a methodology that emphasizes the role of

locale in design identity, encouraging a sense of localism in young designers (Buck, 2022). Place branding can also be used to differentiate offerings from competitors (Petruzzellis, 2017). Finally, evoking a sense of place in brand and branch design can help businesses connect with

customers and create a unique identity (Bielski, 2007). Triangulation was carried out on the validation of Susan, S.T., M.T. as a practitioner and Lya Dewi Anggraini, S.T., M.T., Ph.D. as a lecturer in the field of interior architecture and business design.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Industry Forces**

Based on various industry analyses that have been carried out related to the Interior Architecture consulting company, several bargaining powers that affect the company in this industry were found. The first one are suppliers and other value chain actors such as the first supplier or manufacturer in Indonesia that can meet the needs of local materials, products, and furniture typical of each region. This is done with the aim that the needs for suppliers and other value chain actors in industry forces continue to raise the Sense Of Place value of any region where the project will be carried out by the company.

The second one is stakeholders. Stakeholders are individuals, groups, or organizations that have a direct or indirect interest in a particular project, company or organization. Stakeholders have a variety of related interests such as financial, social, political, or environmental aspects that can affect or be affected by the decisions and actions of the company or project.

The stakeholders of the interior architecture company are divided into two, namely Internal and External with the following details: The Internal Stakeholders

are Company leaders (founder or principal) and company employees. External Stakeholders are Clients, Suppliers & local craftsmen, Investors, Company partners, Contractors, Indonesian Government and Local Authorities, HDII (Himpunan Desain Interior Indonesia) meaning Indonesian Interior Design Association, Mass Media, Local Community.

The stakeholders have responsibilities to ensure that the project runs smoothly, fulfills the client's needs and elevates the value of Sense Of Place. An effective, clear and responsible stakeholder is required to run the company perfectly.

The third one is a competitor. A competitor or insurgent is a rival business whose activities have the potential to reduce another business's share of the market. As a result of the necessity for spatial planning will rise with the population of humans, the interior business will expand and encounter more rivals where differentiation is required in this industry. The need for suppliers, other actors in the value chain, and stakeholders also with competitors and new insurgents competing in this industry. These are the problems encountered through the industry forces analysis.

As the opportunities, the company will grow by expanding its network & partnership especially with local material suppliers and local furniture craftsmen. Also strengthening cooperation with stakeholders who have an interest in the advantages of Sense Of Place in providing interior design business differentiation.



**Figure 1.** Rattan Chair  
Source : Personal work, 2022

Differentiation can be formed for example, by using local material in design or in furniture that will be used or created by designers.

## Market Forces

The issue of globalization is increasingly prevalent in Indonesian culture. The same applies to the globalization of interior design and architecture. Design is moving towards a similar standardization from one region to another without having any special characteristics. Some people are considered to have begun to forget the nation's culture, but some people also state that there are still many people who want to raise local culture back as an identity and distinctiveness, including in the design of their needs.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, Indonesia has a fairly high GPA and is projected to continue to grow stating that the Cultural Development Index Value at the national level with a value range of 0 - 100 Indonesia in 2018 is 53.74. This figure encourages the interior

architecture business company to continue to raise the local value and Sense Of Place of each project undertaken so as to make each design result a work that is not globally designed but is able to bring back the desired local value.

In addition to the issue of globalization, the endemic Covid-19 has revived community activities, such as traveling, shopping, and holding events together, which will directly increase the interest of entrepreneurs to open or revive commercial businesses. With the increasing desire of entrepreneurs to open a business, it will automatically increase the demand for space design for commercial buildings. The commercial sector is also included in the 2022 priority program which includes a focus on the development of the local tourism sector, creative economy and micro-enterprises.

Other than that, the market segmentation in a company is crucial and important to be clearly defined so that the company can walk towards clear goals and target markets, can understand clients better, develop more effective marketing strategies, and meet consumer needs better. With the Sense Of Place design approach that wants to be raised in every project that will be carried out, the interior architecture company needs a market that is also interested in preserving local culture and does not want its designs to be homogenized globally.

For this reason, certain market segmentation is needed, the first in economic segmentation will be

targeted at the middle to upper market segmentation who are interested in raising certain local values and Sense Of Place because it requires sufficient costs in working on the project as desired. The second segmentation is done by psychographic segmentation with values or beliefs and interests or hobbies that want the design to be made by lifting the value of Sense Of Place and using materials and furniture from local craftsmen or suppliers for the entire project process.

In this era of globalization and endemic, encouraging humans to live a fast-paced life and return to socialize with other humans with various activities that are again carried out. In every aspect of human activity, of course, it is carried out in an area and whether we realize it or not, where there are areas and needs, a designer will be needed. The higher human activities, it will make the demand for space design increase as well.

By using the services of Interior designers & Architects, it will certainly make it easier for clients to answer their wants and needs regarding design. This will also shorten the time and guarantee quality compared to doing everything by themselves without clear knowledge or licensing. Interior and Architecture companies also have to present not only to guarantee the quality and answer the problems through space design, but also to raise local elements and Sense Of Place values in each project. So that even in the midst of the globalization era where everything is designed to be similar (global), the company will continue to work by raising local characteristics that are different from

each other but still answer client problems and keep up with the times.

As for the opportunities, there are market issues related to globalization that have divided society into two big camps, namely those who are more interested in global culture and those who are more interested in maintaining and developing local culture so that the target market has been formed. And the Covid-19 pandemic has begun to pass, causing the commercial sector to revive and the demand for the provision of interior services for commercial needs to increase. Also the high Needs & Demands and Revenue Attractiveness of Interior consultants is due to the increase in human activities in a period of rapid change.

## **Key Trends**

The world continues to move with inventions and developments, especially in technology with the aim of making life easier for humans to do everything. Interior Architecture companies could not turn a blind eye to this and will also move to follow these technological developments to fulfill the needs of project work that supports the Sense Of Place design approach.

Following these technological developments to fulfill the needs of project work that supports the Sense Of Place design approach. For example by using CNC or Laser Cutting to cut or shape local materials according to the desired design so that it will not be less competitive with other global designs. The company also can use smart systems in the project according to the joint decision of the

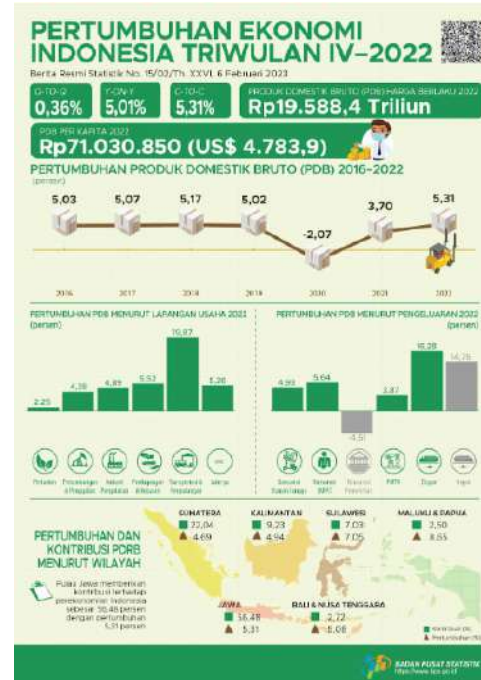
client and designer to add convenience, safety and comfort for users in the use of space and various activities in it.

Running a good company requires compliance with existing regulations. According to Law number 32 of 2009, local wisdom is defined as a noble value that applies in the community life system, among others, to protect and manage the environment sustainably. Also stated by Sibarani (2019), local wisdom is a form of original knowledge in society that comes from the noble values of local culture to regulate the order of community life.

This is an opportunity for the Indonesian people to further introduce Indonesian culture and local wisdom to the international arena by raising local values and regional Sense Of Place values in building design and space design in Indonesia. So that the existence of globalization is actually used to develop the local values of the nation's culture which has been preserved from generation to generation and has undergone natural changes.

Re-interpretation of local cultural elements and the collapse of regional social and cultural norms in Indonesia is a result of globalization.

Indonesia continues to experience an increase in the economic sector as recorded in the data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). Indonesia's economy was recorded and calculated in 2022 to grow by 5.31 percent, higher than the achievement in 2021 which experienced growth of 3.70 percent.



**Figure 2.** Economic Growth Infographic  
 Source: BPS, 2023

The Indonesian economy in 2022 is calculated based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices reaching IDR 19,588.4 trillion and GDP per capita reaching IDR 71.0 million or US\$4,783.9. Throughout 2022, the provincial group in Java Island carved out the structure and performance of the Indonesian economy spatially with a contribution of 56.48 percent and economic performance that recorded a growth of 5.31 percent (c-to-c).

With the growth of Indonesia's economic figures, it proves that the economic movement in the country is recovering and continues to run and even develop well. This also shows an increase in people's welfare followed by the growing interest and purchasing power of the people in Indonesia. This growing economy can have a positive impact on

the company because both in terms of clients who increasingly have growth in interest and purchasing power to use the company's services and in terms of craftsmen or suppliers who are increasingly able to develop and provide local materials and furniture that support the company to raise the value of Sense Of Place as desired in each project.

### **Macro - Economic Forces**

For Global Market Conditions on July 25, 2023, the IMF released data on its World Economic Outlook stating that global growth is projected to fall from around 3.5 percent in 2022 to 3.0 percent in 2023 and 2024. Central bank policy rate hikes to fight inflation continue to weigh on economic activity. Global headline inflation is expected to fall from 8.7 percent in 2022 to 6.8 percent in 2023 and 5.2 percent in 2024. Underlying (core) inflation is expected to decline gradually, and the forecast for inflation in 2024 has been revised upwards.

The existence of inflation around the world weighs on countries' economic activity. In Indonesia itself, inflation continues to occur but can be overcome as the country's economic development continues to improve. The price of the rupiah exchange rate which has decreased compared to the US dollar which has increased has an impact on the increase in the price of imported goods entering Indonesia. However, this is actually an opportunity for the interior architecture company that prioritizes the use of local materials and local furniture craftsmen to support in raising the value of Sense Of

Place. With this condition, it will automatically encourage people's intention to choose to use local materials and furniture in space design or daily needs with the aim of minimizing economic expenses and promoting the nation's local culture and values.

The Capital Market works by offering funding for companies and governments, and can be an investment vehicle for investors. The capital market also offers various long-term financial instruments, such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and derivatives of securities or securities. This capital market has an important role in the country's economy because it performs two functions at once, namely in the economic function and financial function. The economic function of the capital market consists of providing a means for two interests: investors (who have excess funds) and issuers (who need funds). While in the financial function, the capital market provides fund owners with the possibility and opportunity to obtain returns based on the characteristics of the investment chosen.

PT Kustodian Sentral Efek Indonesia (KSEI) noted that until the end of the first quarter of 2022, the number of Indonesian capital market investors reached 8.3 million, an increase of 12.13% from the position at the end of 2021. This has a good impact on the interior architecture company because the increasing number of capital market investors will automatically open up greater opportunities for companies to obtain external funding from investors.



Figure 3. RI Capital Market Investor Data  
Source: CNBC Indonesia, 2022

For Commodity and Other Resources, Primary goods or products that can be traded in the market are referred to as commodities. Commodities themselves can include a wide range of goods, from agricultural produce to metals, energy, and other goods. These products are usually standardized and homogeneous, meaning they have the same quality, size, and other attributes across the globe.

In terms of economic value, commodity prices are still very volatile. The three commodities that are considered to be in the spotlight in 2023 are oil, gas and aluminum. It is undeniable that these three commodities are affected by the ongoing Russia - Ukraine war which causes the price and purchase demand of these three commodities cannot be predicted perfectly. The oil market will tighten due to the EU ban on refined products and crude oil from Russia, continued OPEC+ supply cuts throughout 2023 and insufficient supply from the United States to cover the gap in oil availability. Similarly, gas availability has caused gas prices to rise. In addition, the demand for aluminum is expected to rise with highly volatile prices as it did in 2022. Due to the Russia - Ukraine war, problems

in logistics, increased awareness of the recession and the endemic of Covid -19, aluminum prices are considered to fall but will recover slowly.

These events will not have a huge impact on interior architecture companies which focus on building and promoting the local value of Sense Of Place in Indonesia. Commodity prices that are the center of attention do not really affect the company's development process except in the use of aluminum metal materials which will actually benefit the company from an economic perspective because the price is falling and can be used for project completion.

Other than that, economic infrastructure is a basic facility intended to help the production and distribution process in the economy which includes the construction of roads, telecommunications, waterways, airways, financial institutions, electricity supply, clean water supply and so on. In Indonesia, economic infrastructure continues to progress and improve even though many infrastructure projects have been hampered and disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This infrastructure is the basis of a country's economy and is also a consideration for investors. In addition, infrastructure development in Indonesia is in line with the government's plan to achieve net zero emission and increase the composition of green energy. As such, sustainable infrastructure development plays an important role in the revival of the national economy and the government's grand plan. It is this sustainable infrastructure that

can continue to drive long-term economic growth and the revival of the national economy.

With the continued development of infrastructure, in addition to boosting the national economy which will certainly have a good impact on the company, it will also have an impact on increasing the ease of companies to find and obtain local materials that support the completion of projects within the company. The spread and distribution of these local materials will also run more easily so that companies can increasingly disseminate and use local materials to raise the Sense Of Place value of various regions in Indonesia because all regions will experience equitable development. In addition, the company will certainly also be able to reduce expenses to find and distribute these local materials. Indonesia's economic infrastructure is also continuously improved and developed, making it easier for companies both in project work and in the economic value of buying and selling.

## CONCLUSION

The necessity for spatial planning will rise with the population and activity of humans. As a result, the interior business will expand and encounter more rivals. In order for this area to be highly competitive, differentiation is required.

By emphasizing a sense of place in designs, effectively managing knowledge, fostering employee engagement, and adapting to market dynamics, architecture consultants can leverage these factors as competitive advantages to distinguish themselves in the industry and achieve sustained

success. Thus the results prove that applying the sense of place has been proven to be a competitive advantage that could create a unique proposition in the interior design consulting business.

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