

# Consumerist Spirituality: Considering Spirituality in Consumerism Culture in Disruptive Era

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**Abstract.** Popular culture inevitably emerge in disruptive era. It is like a black hole. Everyone is trapped in that black hole, especially the culture of consumerism. Consumptive behavior makes humans think and act manipulatively. The socio-economic consumptive behavior of individuals can have a bad impact because it has the potential to become someone living a wasteful lifestyle, which degrading their spirituality. From the environmental side, starting from the production process to consumption in the era of disruption has the potential to damage nature more massively. What forms of spirituality must be considered in facing an era of disruption, so both human and nature can be saved? This research intend to answer this question. The research method used is qualitative-descriptive, with a phenomenological approach, and will elaborate popular culture and spitiuality theory as a tool to analyze the issue. The implication of the result of this research is to make us aware the danger of consumerist behaviour in disruptive era, and to keep our planet alive.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Consumerism, Popular Culture, Disruptive.

## 1 Introduction

The 4.0 Industrial Revolution and the Era of Disruption are two popular terms these days. The Industrial Revolution [1] deals with changes in the massive production system. The industrial revolution 1.0 presupposes a manual production system with the help of mechanical devices. This happened in the 18th century when a steam engine was invented in England [2]. This steam machine is used as a mechanical device for producing textiles. With the presence of mechanical devices, eventually, the work that had been using human and animal power was replaced with a machine. Then in the 20th century, there was an Industrial Revolution 2.0 since electricity was discovered. Production equipment, which has been assisted by steam engines, has begun to be replaced by electricity. In this phase, transportation equipment also began to be mass-produced, to facilitate the process of transportation of the products. The 3.0 Industrial Revolution occurred when computers and automation were discovered. The production process is fully controlled by technology, so that human work is completely reduced. In the Industrial Revolution 4.0, computer technology was combined with cyber technology to accelerate the pace of production.

In the rapidproduction process, then came the term called disruption era. The term disruptive itself was firstly mentioned by Joseph L. Bower and Clayton M. Christensen, in 1995 [3]. The notion of disruption in Indonesian and English dictionaries is somewhat different. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary, disruption is revoked from the root [4]. Whereas in the Oxford Dictionary, disruption means disturbance or problems which interrupt an event, activity, or process. Whereas the word disrupt means interrupt (an event, activity, or process) by causing a disturbance or problem; drastically alter or destroy the structure of; (of a

company or technology) cause a radical change in (an industry or market) by means of innovation [5].

In a Public Lecture at Lambung Mangkurat University, Mustoha Iskandar explained the current phenomenon of disruption [6]. He explained the story of giant companies, which previously seemed difficult to collapse, but were disrupted by time and went bankrupt. Iskandar gave an example of how *Nokia* was once victorious, crushed by the presence of *Android* and *iPhone*. *Kodak*, which was used to capture images, was lost with *DigitalCameras*, *Smartphones* and *Instagram*. Established taxi companies are beaten by app-based taxi companies that don't have car assets! As the literal meaning in Indonesian, the era of disruption is uprooting to the root, everything that is established and replacing it with something completely new and unpredictable.

This disruption phenomenon is indeed closely related to the Industrial Revolution 4.0, which uses cyber technology as its platform. Iswan and Bahar explained that the era of disruption was characterized by the emergence of an online-based industry [7]. Examples of the emergence of new companies above as stated by Iskandar guarantee it. *Android*, *Smartphone*, *Instagram* and application-based taxis each use cyber technology as their business platform. Daniel Ronda also agreed with that opinion. He gave an example of how cyber technology played an important role in the era of disruption. The SMS (Short Message Service) which was popular in its time, was replaced by social media *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Whatsapp*, and others. Conventional newspapers are replaced by modern online-based newspapers, such as *Kompas*, *Tribunnews*, and others who have begun to migrate using the cyber platform. Traditional markets are replaced by modern cyber-based markets, such as *Bukalapak*, *Tokopedia*, *Shopee*, and others [8]. All of these companies use cyber technology to expand their market reach.

In such disruption conditions, nothing is established and certain. Everything can be removed. Competition becomes a necessity. Consumers are facilitated to meet their libido. Producers are demanded to be creative and innovative to win the market. This paper builds on this issue. From this issue, the author then formulates the problem in three questions, including amid uncertainty in the era of disruption, what value is necessarily always there? What possibilities can occur in the inevitability of the era of disruption? What forms of spirituality must be considered in facing an era of disruption?

## 2 Method

This research is qualitative-descriptive research, using a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach suggests that there is a new phenomenon in society, and it should be elaborated scientifically. The phenomenon that was studied with a qualitative-descriptive approach is the era of disruption. The author will elaborate on phenomena that occur in the era of disruption, and then conclude what things and values are in them. Then, from that data, project the possibilities that occur in the future, with values that existed in the era of disruption. So, in the end, the writer can propose a form of spirituality that can be considered to face the era of disruption.

### 3 Discussion

In this section, the author describes the phenomenon of the era of disruption and the symptoms that are in it. Based on these symptoms, it can be concluded about the values that existed in the era of disruption. From there then it is easy to assume the possibilities that occurred in the era of disruption. And in the end, the writer explains the form of spirituality that is suitable for facing the era of disruption.

#### 3.1 The Inevitability of Consumerism and Competition Culture in the Era of Disruption

Binov Handitya argues that the era of disruption could not be released by changes in the industrial world, known as the Industrial Revolution, from 1.0 to 4.0 [9]. I agree with that opinion, as explained at the beginning of this paper. The disruption era cannot be released with IR 4.0. The similarity is seen with the platform that is carried, namely cyber technology. If IR 3.0 already uses computers and automation technology, IR 4.0 goes further by using cyber technology in the production process. This is similar to the platforms used by companies, devices, and applications that were present in the era of disruption, namely cyber technology.

Cyber technology seems to be a cultural black hole today. Hikmat Budiman named a new culture that influenced everyone, and everyone could not deny the existence of it so that it became a part of everyone was called the cultural black hole [10]. The existence of cyber technology in the era of disruption and IR 4.0 too. Everyone, young and old, big-small; all big-small companies, startups, and unicorns, can't help but have to use cyber technology.

For example, Gojek. Drivers and users of Gojek consist of all people, young and old, large and small. Everyone who wants to be facilitated to get transportation services without having to search or wait at taxibiketerminal, must be adept at using cyber technology. Only by using a device, someone can use *Gojek* application and can be deliver to anywhere. Both drivers and *Gojek* users are not only specific to certain circles of certain economic strata. Everyone, rich and poor can use this application as a transportation service.

Another example is *Go-Food*. Food vendors, ranging from large-scale industry or household scale can now use cyber technology assistance through the *Go Food* application. By registering his food stall business, the sale can be marketed through the application. People who are lazy or busy and do not have time to walk and buy food at a food stall can use the device to order food, and the food will be delivered.

These two examples are small examples of the many types of goods and services businesses that are starting to use cyber technology to expand their market reach. This phenomenon is what happened in the era of disruption. Established companies can easily be eliminated in this era.

Cyber technology has made it easier and closer to the relationship between consumers and producers, as close as the shaking hands! In such a concept, Dominic Strinati thinks that society is the object of the market [11]. He saw that in a mass-produced culture, there were two roles, namely producers and consumers. Strinati sees the relations of producers and consumers with superior-inferior hierarchies, subject-object relations.

It must be admitted that cyber technology in the era of disruption became a new mass culture, as Strinati said. However, in my opinion, the relationship between producers and consumers is not only seen based on hierarchy, subject-object. In my opinion, in the era of disruption, such hierarchical relations do not apply. Producers and consumers are in the same position, egalitarian. On the one hand, creative and innovative producers can produce a new need in society and are mass-produced, so that no one has the power to reject it. For example,

the taxibike I mentioned earlier. Everyone has no power to refuse the ease of transportation services offered by this company. But, on the other hand, consumers can also be in the position of the subject, when they want to choose the services they will use. For example the option can be *Gojek*, *Uber* or *Grab* services. Companies that cannot compete like *Uber* are proven to be run over and gone. Under these conditions, the manufacturer's position is fragile.

The interesting thing from the discourse in this section is that there are similarities in values, both within consumers and producers in the era of disruption, namely consumer behavior and competition. Consumer culture and high competition become a necessity in the era of disruption.

The era of disruption was marked by the emergence of start-up companies or new unicorns, which were proven to uproot from the roots of previously established companies. This explains that competition in the era of disruption becomes a necessity. Each producer is faced with competition to win the attention of consumers. Within consumers, there is also a similar competition. Every consumer who is deluded by the attractiveness of the product is involved in competition among his fellow consumers. Many artists, celebrities, or *YouTubers* try to show the expensive products they buy to compete with others, proving that they can afford even more capable of buying these expensive products.

When viewed at its roots, competition between producers and consumers is rooted in a culture of consumerism. Companies compete with one another to lure producers, to consume the products or services they offer. Cyber technology in the era of disruption makes producers very close to consumers, as close as the handshake. Only with a smartphone that is connected with cyber technology, every consumer can easily choose which products or services to use. At the very least, these two things become a necessity in the era of disruption, namely consumerism and competition.

### **3.2 The Jeopardize of Consumerism and Competition in the Era of Disruption**

Consumerism culture is difficult to avoid in the era of disruption. Everything in the era of disruption is always related to consumptive behavior. The jeopardize, with the many conveniences, low prices, and many choices potentially can make someone addicted to shopping. The term used for such behavior is a shopaholic. Rifa Anugrahati's research legitimizes this. Anugrahati explained that the shopaholic lifestyle can shape wasteful and even addictive behaviors. He explained the factors that caused the shopping lifestyle like luxury lifestyle, influence from family, advertisements, trends, the number of shopping centers, and social influences. Shopaholic students studied looked good looking because they wore branded clothes, and quickly followed the style that was trending [12].

The danger is not only a socio-economic issue but also a spiritual problem. Protasius Hardono Hadi considers that the advanced era can be a challenge to live faithfully and thinking idealistically [13]. Consumerism culture which can be categorized as popular culture has the potential to obscure individual identities in a community because communal similarities are preferred [14]. As Anugrahati explained earlier, that most of the consumptive culture of shopaholic behavior is the mimicry of the plural trends of the time. Therefore, someone's identity potentially blurred, because he was imitating the trend. So, the culture of consumerism in the era of disruption has the potential to also provide challenges for one's spiritual problems.

On the other hand, consumptive behavior also makes humans think and act manipulatively. In consumptive behavior, humans are positioned as object connoisseurs around them, including nature. This can be called an anthropocentric attitude. Raymundus Sudhiarsa explained that

the anthropocentric attitude considered that humans were the center of all creation. Such thinking makes humans tend to be manipulative, exploitative, even destructive to the environment [15]. The phenomenon of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 illustrates these characteristics. In the Industrial Revolution 4.0, instead of increasing productivity, nature was often sacrificed to increase production activities. For example, the home industry to produce tofu in Sidoarjo, East Java. To reduce production costs, the industry uses plastic waste to fuel soybeans into tofu [16]. In such a process, the preservation of nature is threatened. Not only that but in time it will also have bad consequences for humans.

In the Industrial Revolution, from 1.0 to 4.0, the main emphasis was on increasing production. Robert Borong stressed that the exploitation of resources on planet Earth began during the Industrial Revolution 200 years ago [17]. It was the Industrial Revolution 1.0, which then continues today, the Industrial Revolution 4.0. The problem is at the base of the production process. Next, the consumption process also leaves other problems, such as plastic. The problem of plastic waste is a small example of the issue of consumer behavior. Pramati Purwaningrum explained the issue of plastic waste in her research [18]. He explained that Indonesia was ranked second in the world as a producer of plastic waste to the sea, and the amount of plastic waste in the sea reached 187.2 million tons of waste. This presentation explains that the domino effect of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 as part of the Disruption Era had an impact on high levels of consumerism, thus potentially destroying nature.

On the other hand, in the era of disruption, the level of competition was very high. In competition with high intensity, the law of natural selection as coined by Charles Darwin with the phrase 'survival of the fittest' is inevitable [19]. Herbert Spencer asserted that, when five years after Darwin's publication, he explained that this phrase 'survival of the fittest' could also be brought into the socio-economic sphere [20]. The problem of such competition has spread to various regions, especially Indonesia. With a very high intensity of competition, more and more people will be marginalized.

Besides, the era of disruption that carries the same cyber platform has the potential to marginalize everyone who is technologically illiterate. A simple example of the marginalization process that occurs due to competition in the era of disruption is in Papua, for example in the process of receiving CPNS. Since 2014, the government has used technology and internet platforms to select CPNS acceptance. The problem is, many places in Papua are still having difficulties with the internet, even electricity. Thus, many people in the Papua region are not yet skilled at using computer technology.

The description above explains the challenges and jeopardizes of the era of disruption, which brought about a culture of consumerism and competition. The socio-economic consumptive behavior of individuals can have a bad impact because it has the potential to become someone living a wasteful lifestyle. In addition, someone's spirituality also in danger because there is a possibility someone loses their identity due to massive scours. From the environmental side, starting from the production process to consumption in the era of disruption has the potential to damage nature more massively. In a culture of high competition, the natural law of 'survival of the fittest' has the potential to make people who are not ready to be marginalized. This has become a potential danger from the era of disruption.

### **3.3 Spirituality in the Era of Disruption**

In potential dangers in the era of disruption, it is important to consider a spirituality approach so as not to get caught up in these potential dangers. Abdul Gafar Fahm and Jemeel Sanni in their research explained that the bivariate correlation between materialism and

spirituality was negative [21]. The point is that when someone is more materialistic, his spirituality will decrease. Meanwhile, if it is not materialistic, then its spirituality will be better.

I see this phenomenon from another perspective. When referring to Fahm and Sanni, the consumptive culture or what he termed materialistically is always seen as negative. Meanwhile, consumptive behavior itself in the onslaught of the era of disruption is inevitable. Therefore, I disagree with Fahm and Sanni.

First of all, it is important to give meaning first to the term spirituality. Spirituality is related to the inside or internal of an individual [22]. This term comes from the word spirit or soul, which is then identified with God in the form of the spirit. The word spirituality is an adjective that refers to the noun spirit, which is identified as God. The use of this term is to be a bridge between the worldly and the spiritual [23]. Therefore, consumptive culture need not always be seen as something bad, moreover consumptive behavior itself is inevitable. Therefore, consumptive behavior can be seen from another perspective.

Consumptive behavior can not be avoided by any human. Every human being in his life can be sure is being, ever and will always consume something, whether it is material or service. In the perspective of spirituality, this indicates that a person cannot live without the other. The others here can be other people, other creatures, other objects, or something else outside of themselves. Therefore, the spirituality that must be possessed in the era of disruption is the equality of relations between human beings, creatures, and even nature.

If the egalitarian spirituality of this creation is well lived in an era of disruption, then the potential hazards mentioned in the previous section can be avoided. Nature is no longer seen as a provider and satisfying human needs but is seen as an equal creation. With this view, the manipulative and exploitative behavior of human to nature no longer applies. Humans as given life space by nature, also have the responsibility to be able to preserve nature.

Whereas human relations in the era of disruption can also be seen from the perspective of spirituality which sees that all people are equal. With this spirituality, the idea of 'survival of the fittest' no longer applies, and people who are less fit need not be marginalized. In fact, one's strengths can cover the weaknesses of others, and the strengths of people who are considered weak can cover the weaknesses of people who are considered superior. With such a spirituality approach, the potential dangers of the era of disruption can be avoided, replaced by togetherness, egalitarian and the compassion of fellow creatures.

## **4 Conclusion**

Industrial Revolution 4.0 as the trigger of the era of disruption is supported by the rapid development of information and communication technology that has occurred in human civilization. This era produces new cultures, which certainly have potential danger. The culture of consumerism and fierce competition are two things that are inevitable in this era. Both have the potential danger for human relations with nature, humans with fellow humans, even humans with God. Self-identity, nature preservation, and spirituality are bets that can be eroded in this era of disruption. Therefore, it is important to consider spirituality in this era. Spirituality in the era of disruption should be built first in the human relationship with God in the form of spirit. Spirituality then leads humans to see the equal relationship of fellow creatures. Thus, God manifests His character in humans, to first care about the preservation of

nature, but also care and consider equal human beings. With this spirituality, the era of disruption can be entered with a more friendly approach.

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