



Buyer-Supplier Relationship: The Role of Knowledge Transfer in Enhancing Creativity and Innovation (Studies in Garment Enterprises in Bali)

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Abstract:

This study aims to determine the process of cooperation that occurs between the foreign and local garment entrepreneurs in Bali and the transfer of knowledge that occurs during the process of cooperation in enhancing creativity and innovation in the local garment entrepreneurs Bali. A phenomenological qualitative research design was chosen to describe the experience of garment entrepreneurs in Bali in collaboration with the foreign garment entrepreneurs. The benefits value is an enhancing creativity and innovation of garment entrepreneurs in Bali through knowledge transfer from foreign garment entrepreneurs. This study used 5 informants of local garment entrepreneurs in Bali by data analysis techniques using Creswell four steps are: Finding important questions from the informants, formulating meaning of the important questions, grouping into theme, and making complete description about the theme. The result of the study is about the cooperation process between the foreign and local garment entrepreneurs in Bali identified informal, individual, transactional, and long period when there is compatibility based on the experience of the results of cooperation, there are 3 new cooperation attributes found are: flexibility, time, and equality. Based on the conducted cooperation process, can be arranged a cooperation model Balbed which consists of 5 stages (introduction, testing, ordering, production, continuation). Moreover, it is also produced a model of knowledge transfer Balbed aimed to promote creativity and innovation of local entrepreneurs in Bali, which consists of four phases, namely: idea, information, knowledge, creativity and innovation.

Keywords: Buyer-supplier relationship, knowledge transfer, creativity, and innovation.

1. Introduction

Bali as one of the favorite destinations of foreign tourists in Indonesia, has been expected to contribute positively in improving the economy, especially in export. This is because the foreign tourists come to Bali not only for tourist visits, but more than that there are also some foreign residents and foreign tourists who come to Bali for business purposes. One of the business foreigners or travelers is the foreign garment entrepreneurs. In addition, the garment entrepreneurs are also trying to make Bali as a garment production base and design accessories they want (Wells, 2008).

The foreign garment entrepreneurs desire to make Bali as a production base is because the wages applied are cheaper than the wages of their home countries, in this case is Australia which is the highest number of foreign tourists who come on the island. According to data obtained from the BPS Bali Province is known that during the period of 2011, the foreign tourists from Australia topped with a percentage of 27.90% of the total number of other foreign tourists who come to Bali. Beside the cheap wages in Bali, garment production in Bali is usually more focused on small-volume orders based on the market demand, thus attracting the attention of boutiques that sell to. This is in contrast to the reservation made in China, which despite offering low wages but the given volume of orders has to be large. This makes it unique, because Bali has a charm that is more than China, where the customers are not required to deliver large orders (Wells, 2008).

Another proposed phenomenon is the number of foreign tourists visiting Bali at the moment directly improves the quality of the results of the garment business. The development of garment business in Bali with the arrival of foreign garment entrepreneurs have an impact also on changes in market orientation, i.e. from mass production to small-scale production with better quality and higher prices, but still affordable in the intended market segment. Noting these conditions, then there has been a process of cooperation between garment entrepreneurs in Bali and the garment entrepreneurs from abroad, so impact in the knowledge transfer and efforts to the welfare of community in Bali in general.

Regarding to the conditions and phenomena that occurred during the time in Bali, then it will be studied about the process of buyer-supplier relationships in the knowledge transfer activities of the cooperation and efforts to form the best cooperation model to be applied in the province of Bali, which can lead motivation for the garment entrepreneurs in order to be developed and competitive in the international garment world.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Operational Management

Operational management is the business functions to plan, organize, coordinate, and control the resources needed to produce goods and services of a company (Reid and Sanders, 2009). The Role given by the operational management is to transform inputs into finished goods from the company and the services that are ready to be marketed to consumers. According Haizer and Render (2011) there are 10 decisions in the operational management area, namely (1) the design of goods and services (2) quality management (3) the design of processes and capacities (4) location (5) the composition or design of strategy (6) human resources and job design (7) supply chain management (8) inventory (9) short and medium-term scheduling and (10) treatment.

In regard to improve the performance and competitive advantage of a company, one of the factors of the operational management, the Supply Chain Management (SCM) is considered as an important role (Haizer and Render, 2011).

2.2. Supply Chain Management (SCM)

The definition of Supply Chain Management (SCM) is an important business function that coordinates and manages all activities of the supply chain linking suppliers, transporters, internal departments, third companies, and information systems (Reid and Sanders, 2009). In the SCM work processes, there are three important structures that external suppliers, internal functions and external distributors. By the fulfillment of the three important structures in SCM, the main goal to be able to meet the customer's wishes can be realized. A good and ideal SCM is the supply chain cycle that can improve the ability to compete for every member of the chain without sacrificing any of the parties in the long term.

In the implementation of supply chain management will sometimes have problems in the cooperation between buyers and suppliers, namely a failure in sharing information, concerns the loss of control, supply chain complexity, lack of satisfaction of the supply chain, lack of customer understanding and the not efficient togetherness (Benton and Maloni, 2005).

2.3. Buyer-Supplier Relationship

The definition of buyer-supplier relationship is a close relationship between buyers and suppliers, in collaboration with a definite goal to achieve high productivity through mutual understanding and cooperation (Miyamoto & Rexha, 2004). In a relationship, the attributes that must be included are commitment, trust, knowledge, communication, follow-up, sustainability, cooperation, common goals, mutual dependence and power imbalance, performance satisfaction, structural bonding, and a comparison of alternative and partners, adaptation, non-retrievable investments, transfer of technology and social ties (Singh, 2008; Davis, 2005). The attributes of the buyer-supplier relationship can be described as follows:

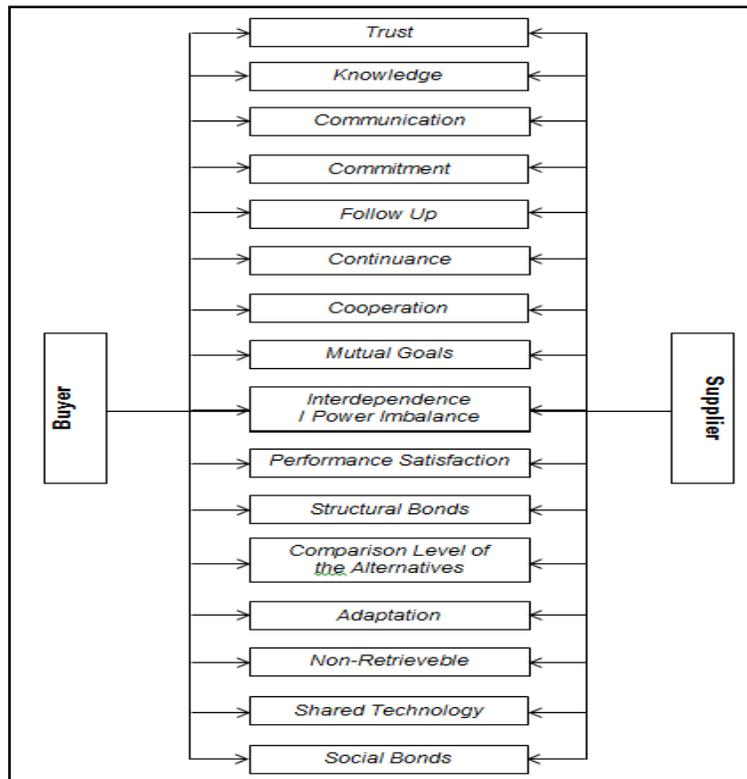


Figure 1: Picture 1. The Attributes of the Buyer-Supplier Relationship Cooperation

In cooperation there is a process that will govern the relationship between buyer and supplier. By adopting the concept of buyer-seller relationships according to Ford (1998), a cooperation process is divided into 4 stages: (1) pre-relationship stage, (2) exploratory stage (3) development stage (4) stable stage. In the pre-relationship stage will be personalized approach aims for mutual benefits. The second exploratory stage will begin the process of mutual exchange of information with one another. The development stage is characterized by the start of the cooperation and the intensive mutual learning. Whereas the stable stage of cooperation between buyers and suppliers has been realized and intensive communication continues to grow.

As with other companies, the concept of buyer-supplier relationships is also needed in the garment industry. The cooperation in the garment industries is important for both sides, so it needs a relationship based on knowledge and communication, and also trust and bond made by commitment through regular follow-up. The bond is expected to assist suppliers to understand the needs of buyers and provide solutions to their needs. The bond is mutually beneficial and reduces many risks involved in the production process. The success of cooperation between buyer-supplier relationships will be achieved when a strong relationship is maintained throughout the process of provision of clothing. (Thomas et al., 2004)

2.4. Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer is defined as the process which the knowledge gained from a situation can be applied to other situations (Argote and Ingram 2000; Inkpen and Tsang 2005). Knowledge transfer is also one of the networks affected by the experience of other network members by emphasizing on the individual's willingness to share knowledge that they get or create with others in an organization. The success of the knowledge transfer process depends on the ease of communication and the intimacy of the relationship between the source and the receiver unit (Szulanski, 1996).

One of the components of knowledge transfer is the ideas creation. The ideas creation is an important factor that will support the development of the creativity of the knowledge receiver (Levine, 1995). The assessment of the individual creativity level can be done by assessing the diversity level of knowledge that can be transferred by the individual. Staw (1995) stated that by the increase variation of inputs such as information, expertise, and views will happen also increase one's creativity in creating new products.

Knowledge transfer is one of the important components in the application of knowledge management. Justin (in Platt, 1998) stated that knowledge management is the right knowledge giving to the right people at the right time. Furthermore, according to the Funny (2005) knowledge management model is divided into the first dimension (bottom) are all activities that are very important for the process of knowledge creation and innovation to get the organization who have expertise in the creation, acquisition, and dissemination of knowledge and the adaptation activities to reflect the understanding and new innovations obtained. This dimension consists of knowledge exchange, knowledge capture, knowledge reuse and knowledge Internalization. Meanwhile, the second dimension (top) is a stage which affects the knowledge creation activity. This second dimension consists of strategy, policy, content, process, technology and culture.

According to Nonaka (1998) Knowledge creation consists of three processes: (1) Socialization that includes tacit knowledge sharing activities by spreading through joint activities, not through written or verbal instructions, (2) Externalization which includes of tacit knowledge sharing activities by having dialogue and also need a tool such as a document in the process, (3) Combination which includes the stage of the apprehension and integration stages of a new explicit knowledge, the dissemination of the explicit knowledge through the presentation and processing of the explicit knowledge, (4) Internalization is the conversion of explicit knowledge into organizational of tacit knowledge.

Davenport and Prusak (1998) state that the concept of knowledge transfer will only have value if it is able to give some change in behavior, development of new ideas resulting new behavior that can be used. The behavior applied and can bring a change would mean the transfer of knowledge is able to produce a quality knowledge. The quality of knowledge is a significant issue for solving problems (problem solving) and decision making (decision making). Halonen and Thomander (2008) stated that in measuring success of the knowledge transfer there are three main stages, namely system quality, information quality, and service quality (in the interaction). Freshness (up to date) of information is one factor that determines the quality of the information. Dalkir (2005) stated that the quality of knowledge covering accuracy, comprehension, accessibility, and the currency of credibility.

Quality can also be divided into two dimensions, namely the level of fitness for use and the level of applicability. Fitness for use is defined as the level of knowledge fitness that includes the accuracy, comprehension, accessibility, credibility and codifying. (Juran, 1992; Dalkir, 2005). While applicability explain more to important aspects of knowledge management through the knowledge transfer process into the need and usable location. The success of knowledge transfer is not limited to the sent or not but at the application level of the knowledge Alavi & Leidner (2001).

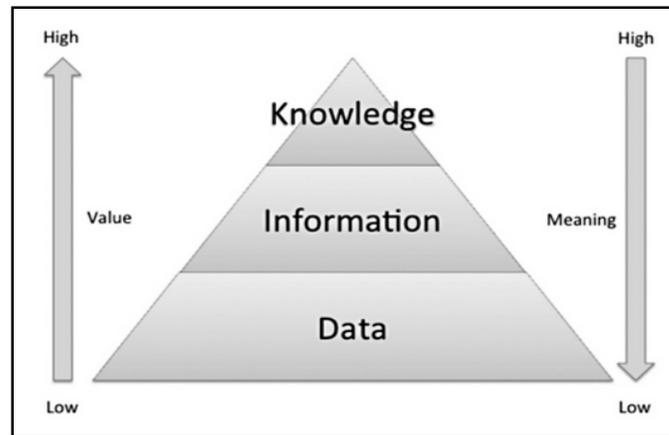


Figure 2: Data, Information, and Knowledge Hierarchy

Picture 2 gives the following meanings: (1) Data as a fact that does not have a clear meaning and value as the foundation of information (2) information as data that has value and meaning to the understanding of a problem (3) knowledge is defined as a combination of data and information with additional of capabilities (skills) and experience.

Increased knowledge will result experience and improve someone ability (skill). Less knowledge will only be information without adding experience and improving skills.

2.5. Creativity and Innovation

According to Drevdahl (in Hurlock, 2000) Creativity is an ability to produce the composition and new ideas which can be imaginative activity involving the formation of new patterns and combinations of past experiences connected with the present situation. Creativity includes four types of dimensions, known as the four P's approach (the four P's of Creativity) namely: person, process, press, and product. Person focuses on the individual or person of a creative individual. Process is the creativity that focuses on the thinking and acting process that raises unique or creative ideas. Press is the creativity that emphasizes on the press or push factors, either the self internal press in the form of a desire and passion to create or implicated themselves creatively, or the external press from the social and psychological environment. And product attempts to focus on the product or what is produced by individuals both something new and original, and also elaboration or merging creativity that focuses on creative products and emphasis on originality.

Innovation is the ability to apply creativity in the context of solving problems and finding opportunities (doing a new thing) (Zimmer, 1996). Innovation will encourage all companies to be able to adapt to the dynamic environment (Hurley and Hult, 1998). Noting that, each company is required to create a new thought or idea and strive to offer innovative products and also improve the services that satisfy the customers.

3. Research Methods

This study is compiled by the phenomenological qualitative methods to understand the suppliers experience in the Bali who cooperate with the foreign garment entrepreneurs which aims to increase the innovation of garment entrepreneurs in Bali through the knowledge transfer gained from the buyer. Samples were taken intentionally (purposive sampling) amounted to 5 informants who have experience in working with the foreign garment entrepreneurs, had more than 5 years experience in cooperation and transactions last time in a maximum period of one year and are able to explain comprehensively about their experience in working with foreign garment entrepreneurs who come in Bali.

The five sampled informants are based on three circles in a relationship (Frederick, 2009), namely: people known to be close by the researcher, people known the researchers from other people, and people who do not have anything relationship with the researcher. Sampling was done by the interview between the employees and the researcher conducted in different times.

4. Analysis Results

The research objective is to know in detail the process of buyers and suppliers cooperation in the garment business in Bali, and the knowledge transfer that occurs in the cooperation in enhancing creativity and innovation of suppliers based on the perception and experience of the supplier. This study does not aim to produce generalization results beyond the experience of the research informants taken.

The results present that the local garment entrepreneurs in Bali in receiving orders gain important experience from foreign garment entrepreneurs in Bali

In the aspect of cooperation process that began from the meeting of the informants and the buyers either who came directly to their business place in Bali or who met at the clothing exhibition abroad, in which the buyer brought some examples of designs suitable with the market demand. The results of the meeting become an initial step of garment entrepreneurs in Bali to begin to formulate and work in accordance with the existing provisions. This cooperation condition continued in accordance with market and trend demands. The cooperation process conducted can be known the characteristics such as (1) takes place informally (2) individual and (3) long-term transactional if there is a match. In the cooperation process can be found eight themes related, they are trust, commitment, communication, interdependence, supplier satisfaction, equality, flexibility, and time.

- Trust has an important and positive role in the buyer-supplier relationship such as the statement of Sigh (2008). It can be the example giving by the buyer to the supplier, testing by the supplier according to the examples and giving orders and sign so by the buyer.
- Commitment is an important factor for both sides in the long-term relationship according to the reviews given by Thompson et al (2004) and Mukherji and Francis (2007). The examples of commitment in the cooperation process in Bali is a supplier committed to not using models, motifs and colors of the buyer's, while the buyer is obliged to complete the repayment of the cost of work after it is completed.
- Communication is dialogue stage between buyers and suppliers during the cooperation process started from introduction to production stage. This effort was conducted to determine what is desired by the buyer (Thompson et al, 2004). One example of the communication activities is when carried out the discussion about the models, motif and colors, and materials used, especially when giving sample for testing. It also may be an effort to share information and ideas between buyers and suppliers.
- Interdependence is the division of roles or functions, in which the supplier has expertise in the areas of production, while the buyer acts as the person who knows about the trends and market knowledge. This is in accordance with the statement proposed by Ganesan (1994) and Webb and Laborde (2005) where the important component in fostering long-term relationships between buyers and suppliers is a mutual dependence between the two sides. The example can be done by the way of division of roles between buyers and suppliers that serve to complement each other, causing a sense of interdependence between buyers and suppliers.
- Satisfaction theme is the satisfaction of the suppliers in working order from the buyer. The satisfaction in this case will have a significant influence in the long-term relationships between buyers and suppliers (Ganesan, 1994; Wilson, 1995). One of the implementation is embodied in the sense given by the buyer because the supplier satisfaction is necessary for the continuity of order production and cooperation.
- Equality is the equal position between the buyer and the supplier with respect to the role of each other and not to interfere in each other. One of the manifestations in cooperation process in Bali is the intervention that should not be done by the buyer to the supplier because it will be its pressure in the effort of completing the work order.
- Flexibility realized in the process of cooperation is the attitude of suppliers in working the order follows the trend and market provided by the buyer. This effort is done by maintaining adaptive behavior so able to develop trust and strengthen the relationship between buyers and suppliers. This is in accordance with Hallen et al (1991) which stated that the buyer and the supplier should make adjustments to one another.
- Time theme is the long processing agreed upon by both parties. Time is one factor that determines the smoothness of the cooperation process. One of the manifestations is seen in the conditions of the Buyer imposing discipline time to the supplier in order to work on time in any order, so it can be a positive influence on the process of further cooperation.

In the aspect of knowledge transfer is known that there are 4 stages to increase the innovation and creativity, they are ideas, information, knowledge, and creativity and innovation.

- Ideas in the knowledge transfer process between buyer and supplier are the information about the models, motifs, and colors of clothing which was delivered by the buyer to the supplier and performed at the early meeting. One example is when the buyer was coming to the location of a local entrepreneur in Bali, with a few models, motifs, and colors desired. This is in accordance with the statement of Chaffey and Wood (2005) which shows that the idea is something that does not have a clear meaning yet.
- Information in the knowledge transfer between the buyer and supplier is the idea of including models, motifs, and colors of clothing that has been studied by the supplier. One of its application is when the suppliers begin to process the buyer idea by understanding the ideas (models, motifs, colors of clothing) to be a meaningful information in the form of sketches with the models, motifs, colors and materials which is appropriated with the buyers request and approved to be made an example of the product (samples). Chaffey and Wood (2005) stated that information is data that already has value and meaning, toward the understanding of a problem, and that is the basis of knowledge.
- Knowledge in the of knowledge transfer between the buyer and the supplier is a follow-up to the information in the form of sketches of clothing including models, patterns, colors, and materials that have been approved by the buyer. This is realized by testing on the products based on the information (sketch image) until the product sample is approved by the buyer then would do production. Chaffey and Wood (2005) revealed that the knowledge is a combination of data and information with additional capabilities and experience.
- Creativity and innovation in the knowledge transfer process for garment cooperation in Bali is when suppliers have been successful in modifying the order of the buyer, becomes an innovative work that is different, but still appropriate with the buyer demand. This is consistent with the statement of Drevdahl (in Hurlock, 2000) which suggested that the creativity is an ability to produce compositions and new ideas that can be imaginative activity that involves the new patterns formation or combination of past experience related with the existing condition in the current situation. Meanwhile, innovation is seen when a local garment entrepreneurs is succeed to make a design that finally ordered and used by the buyer.

The cooperation model that can be formulated from the garment entrepreneurs in Bali with the foreign garment entrepreneurs is divided into the following stages:

4.1 Introduction

The Buyer and supplier parties will have a dialogue to discuss the examples of design as a material for the supplier to the success of samples production process based on the design sample brought by the buyer

4.2. Testing

The process of studying the idea of the order will be made samples of the products to find the maximum results. After the testing stage of production samples is completed, the supplier will show the examples of products that have been made to the buyer. And if the buyers do not feel fit with the results of the tests, then the two sides will return to the discussion and identification of the problems occurred and then the test will be done again to get the maximum results desired by the buyer.

4.3. Ordering

The acceptance of the order is from the samples that have been matched in large quantities. The process is done in writing with the number and the ability of completion. In the cooperation process stage in Bali, the suppliers will provide the concept of offering costs, payment systems, and order processing time to the buyer to be negotiated. After the negotiations are successful, then the supplier will require an advance payment of 30% -50% of the total cost to the buyer as a sign to be ordering, so make a trust for the supplier to do the order for the buyer.

4.4. Production

The process of production or processing previously agreed is the order specifications, quantity and the completion time.

4.5. Continuation

Continuation is a stage where buyers feel comfortable with the work of the supplier of the previous order, so the buyer will give the next order. At this stage, the buyer and supplier have been involved in sustained cooperation so both the parties can mutual benefit in achieving success together.

The five stages above can be made a model as follows:

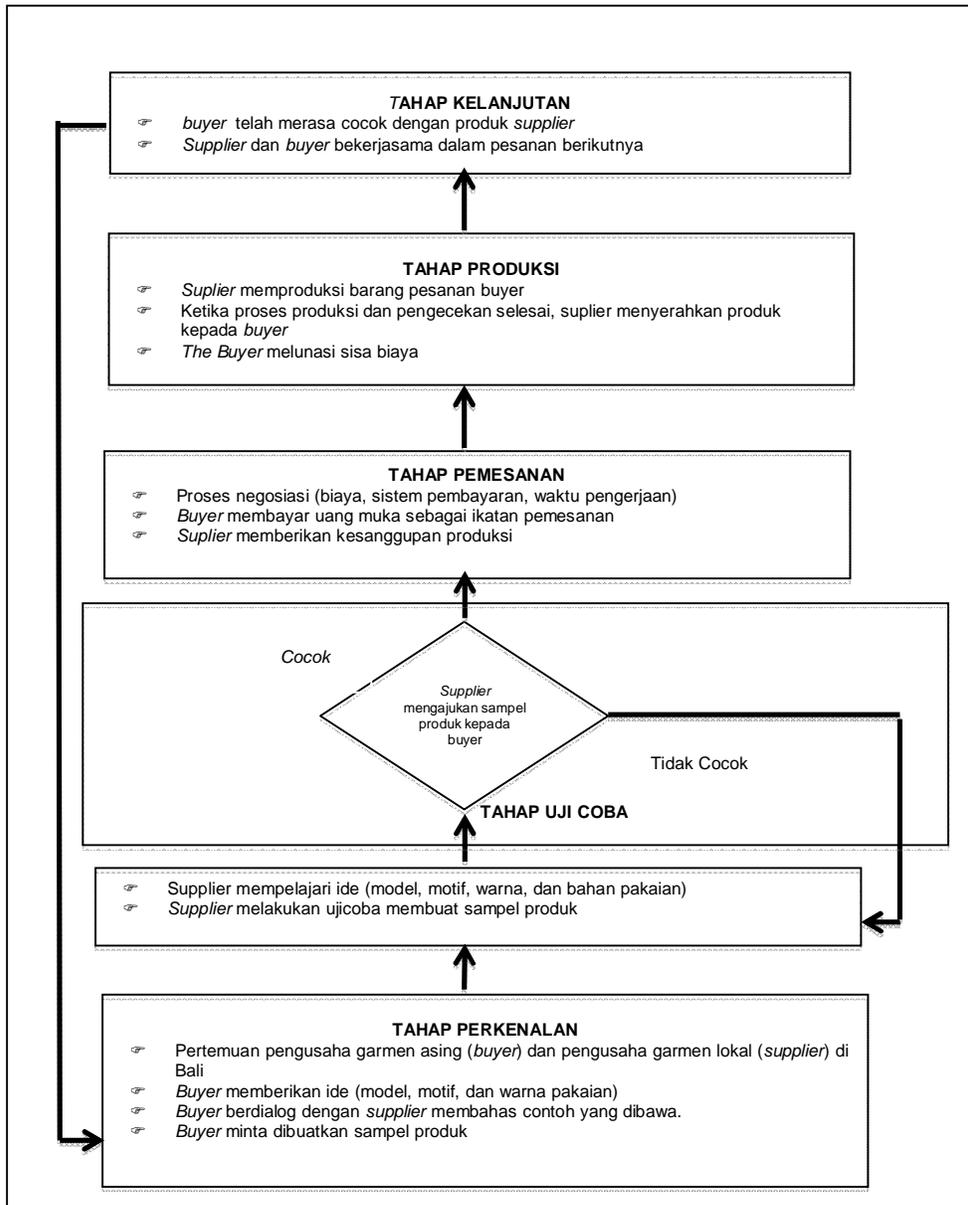


Figure 3: Picture 3 Cooperation Model of Balbed

At the stage of the cooperation process in accordance with the Model Balbed will also be a process of knowledge transfer from the buyer to the supplier. Model of knowledge transfer that can be generated from the cooperation process of the garment entrepreneurs in Bali with the foreign garment entrepreneurs is referred as a knowledge transfer model that can improve creativity and innovation, as seen in the picture of the model as follows:

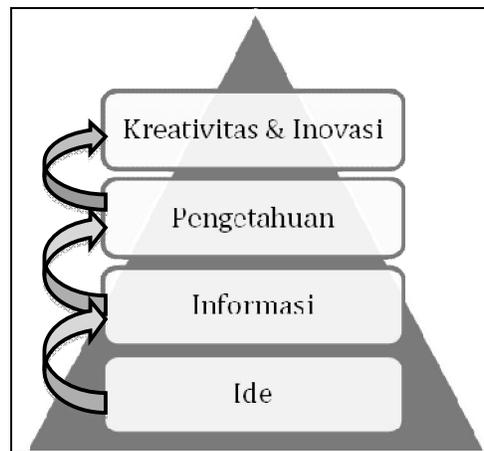


Figure 4: Picture 4 Knowledge Transfer Model of Balbed

Model of Balbed above is the knowledge transfer process between the buyers that provide input or ideas in the form of motifs, models, colors, and clothing materials to the suppliers for producing on demand. The suppliers understand the idea to be meaningful information. When there is an approval from the buyers then the suppliers will continue to follow the information into knowledge which at this stage of knowledge, the suppliers get new experience and can enhance their capabilities. And then from the new experience gained, the suppliers in Bali will have more creativity which is successfully to make modifications of the given orders by the buyers into a unique and different work but still according to the buyers demand. In addition, the creativity of the suppliers in Bali will be able to increase innovation by creating ideas that can be used in their garment business later.

Knowledge Transfer Model of Balbed which is pyramid provides information that at the bottom of the picture (idea stage) has the largest area since the idea is still widespread. Getting to the top area of the field has narrowed, so at the height of the picture (creativity and innovation stage) is more buffs (focus), meaningful and quality.

5. Conclusion

Cooperation model by the foreign garment entrepreneurs with the local entrepreneurs in Bali adopted from a model of cooperation done is the development of models of Ford (1998) with currency on the transfer of information from the buyers to the supplier about fashion trends, the flexibility owned by the suppliers by conducting test in the making examples of products according to the demands of these trends, and timeliness of the work orders given by the buyer. Other characteristics of the cooperation between the local entrepreneurs with the foreign garment entrepreneurs are, (1) informally (2) individual between the countries (3) transactional (4) the same positions on both sides. From the cooperation model, the local entrepreneurs gain some experience and also obstacles.

Beside the cooperation model, it is also gained the knowledge transfer model that lead to an increase in creativity and innovation from the suppliers. The knowledge transfer is from the ideas of the trend given by the buyers to the suppliers which the ideas are used as meaningful information and eventually the suppliers will test for several times to get the appropriate results. Corresponding test results will provide more knowledge for the supplier. The test performed repeatedly can increase the supplier creativity to modify the results and create a new work. The cooperation model Balbed formed consists of the introduction stage, testing, ordering, production and continuation. From the cooperation model is also produced a model of knowledge transfer that increase creativity and innovation which consists of ideas, information, knowledge, and creativity and innovation.

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