Sarinah: Icon of the Indonesian society of the past, in the context of Braga Revitalization

I Rachmayanti, O S C Rombe, S Meliana
Interior Design Department, School of Design, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia 11480

Corresponding Email: ikarachmayanti@binus.ac.id

Abstract. Braga Street is famous for its identity as an exclusive fashion and commercial center. Unfortunately, the region’s popularity faded with the start of the war and Japan’s struggle for power. Thus, their owners abandoned many buildings and no longer functioned, which made the area neglected and not maintained. The city government’s efforts in revitalizing heritage areas in the city have been going on for the past two decades, one of which is the Sarinah shopping center located in the Braga area. The building is now turning into a mixed-use commercial complex with the existence of shopping centers and hotels with a change in function has become a significant effort on revitalizing the Braga area. Sarinah is a humble name with a powerful icon that represents the Indonesian society of the past. This paper aims to review new lifestyle adaptations to the interior design of the revitalization of Gedung Sarinah Braga. It uses a descriptive method of Qualitative methodology by doing the Perceptual Mapping, survey, and document analysis. The result shows that the interior space revitalization does not represent the name of Sarinah.

Keywords: Sarinah, Braga revitalization, interior design revitalization

1. Introduction

The city of Bandung, in its history, is closely related to its identity as a city that has European-style tourist and trade charm during the Dutch colonial era. One of them is the Braga area and its surroundings, taken from the main road, namely Jalan Braga, which was once very famous for its identity as an exclusive fashion and commercial center.[1]

Unfortunately, this region’s popularity faded in line with the start of the war and the seizure of power by the Japanese, which resulted in many Dutch East Indies of European descent returning to their post-war country. Thus, their owners are abandoned and are not being used again, which makes this area neglected. One of them is the building of a shopping center called Onderling Belang.

In the early 1960s, this building was part of the Indonesian government’s efforts to revitalize the Braga area by rehabilitating it into the Sarinah shopping center building, the first shopping center in Indonesia initiated by President Soekarno. This building is attractive because, in addition to being a historical building from the Dutch East Indies era, it has become one of the Braga area’s icons with its existence as the first shopping center in Bandung. After passing through its heyday in the 1970s, this abandoned building was eventually revitalized into a mixed-use commercial complex consisting of
shopping centers and hotels, where this change of function serves as a part of the revitalization plan for the entire Braga area.

This paper aims to review new lifestyle adaptations to the interior design of the revitalization of Gedung Sarinah Braga. The research focuses on the new interior design in this building complex related to the Braga area’s revitalization efforts in general. It is necessary to review the influences and how it correlated to the revitalization plan’s general area.

2. Method
A descriptive method of Qualitative methodology is used in this research by doing survey, questionnaire, document analysis, and Perceptual Mapping describing the phenomenon of the new lifestyle adaptations to the interior design of the revitalization of Gedung Sarinah Braga.

Perceptual Mapping is a visual representation of the researcher’s perceptions about specific attributes to the idea and design. This approach’s expected result is whether the contextual factor of the revitalization and its relation with the new interior space would be determined. It started with a document analysis of the Sarinah and Braga area and its value as a historical Icon. The research continues with a survey, questioner, document analysis, and Perceptual Mapping of the new Sarinah Braga as an Icon of the whole building revitalization. (Figure 1)

3. Result & Discussion
Braga-weg, now known as Braga street (Figure 2), has already become an important area in Bandung during Dutch Colonialism. [2] This area became a bustling area and was quite popular in its time because it was a trade center for European entrepreneurs of Dutch nationality who established commercial buildings in the form of retail shops, hotels, restaurants, banks, cinemas, bars, and other entertainment venues, designed by renowned architects of the time. For example, the Schoemaker brothers (Wolff Schoemaker and Richard Schoemaker), RA de Waal, and others making this area a famous fashion area, considered to resemble Paris, a worldwide hub. Besides, the shops on this street offer European-style commercial and entertainment products that only sell classy goods and food and drinks, such as at Maison Borgerijen (Braga Permai), Onderling Belang (Sarinah) shop, Kimia Farma Pharmacy, Majestic cinema, and Societeit. Concordia later became the Merdeka Building, where the Asian-African Conference was held. By becoming a well-known trade and entertainment center, this area has become an elite area that shows European citizens’ lifestyle with an atmosphere like in Europe that led to the term and nickname of Bandung as Parijs Van Java.[2]
In 1916, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies J.P. Van Limburg Stirum began preparing Bandung as the capital of the Dutch East Indies, and for almost a decade, built a residential area to accommodate the moving civil servants from Batavia to Bandung. This relatively rapid increase in the number of residents contributed significantly to the Braga area to become a bustling and most prestigious area throughout the Dutch East Indies and outside the Dutch East Indies.

Figure 2. Braga Street in 1920s

However, this triumph only lasted between the years 1920 - 1942, wherein the year 1942, the Netherland Indies enters the second period of war, and neither fashion nor other commercial aspects again became an essential aspect at that time. As a result, this area was abandoned by its owners who returned to Europe, which then made this region dim and slowly neglected, even until the Orde Baru government era. Several attempts to improve back the vitality of this area has been carried out, including built a mixed-use complex Braga City Walk in the early 2000s, but has not succeeded in returning its glory as it was in its early days. This area is still an unorganized and unkempt area with many old unused buildings.

In the last decade, the Bandung city government has begun to intensify conservation plans in heritage areas in the Bandung area, including Kasawan Braga and its surroundings. The government’s efforts to revitalize the Braga area are supported by the many policies issued by the city government and efforts to restore and revitalize several old buildings that can still be reused by changing the buildings’ function or returning to their original functions. Likewise, the improvement of public facilities and road conditions is suitable and comfortable for pedestrians.

Preservation itself means an indirectly related activity to the maintenance of artifacts (cultural relics) in the same physical condition as when received by the curator so that nothing should be added or reduced in aesthetic appearance. Any intervention necessary for preservation should only be carried out on the surface or onto its building skin and are inconspicuous. Meanwhile, conservation is an activity related to the physical intervention of existing historical building materials or elements to ensure structural integrity continuity.[1]

According to Mayor Regulation Number: 921 of 2010 concerning Implementation of Bandung City Regional Regulation Number 19 of 2009 concerning Management of Cultural Heritage Areas and Buildings, it reads as follows: Preservation or conservation is any effort to extend the life of an area of cultural heritage in the form of protection and maintenance measures.

Several government policies regarding area conservation have been applied to the implementation of the conservation process during the last ten years, which more or less have a significant influence on the face of this area today, including :

- Guidelines for City Planning 1931 by the SVO (Stadsvormings Ordonantie)
- The front of the building without a front yard, directly connected to the curb. Between adjoining buildings must be continuous, with no space in between. The building’s height is limited to 2 floors, ground floor: commercial and the back and top: residential. Horizontal and vertical views give the impression of harmony. The ground floor area is equipped with an entrance and a glass wall—Bouvenlicht glass windows for interior lighting, equipped with natural ventilation holes. The change was referred to as the previous Bandung city building regulations, which required the form of open bebouwing to become geslotenbebouwing.
- Regulation of the Mayor of Bandung Number: 921 of 2010 concerning the Implementation of Bandung City Regional Regulation Number 19 of 2009 concerning Management of Areas and...
Heritage Buildings states: Region 1 Historical City Center Area: Braga Sub-region, includes: Asia Afrika Street – Braga Street – Perintis Kemerdekaan Street

- Regional Regulation of Bandung City Number 19 of 2009 concerning Management of Cultural Heritage Areas and Buildings

Sarinah Bandung building was formerly one of the famous fashion shops in Bandung in the early 1920s. This building was initially called Onderling Belang, a trendy shop that sells European-style clothing and accessories (Figure 3A).

This shop was a pioneer of clothing stores and fashion trendsetters at that time, which later became a trendy European-style fashion mecca. Onderling Belang reached its heyday between the 1920s and the 1940s, during which time Bandung became the leading destination for immigrants from Europe who were prepared to be part of the plan to establish Bandung as the capital of the Dutch East Indies. This influx of newcomers became the main driving force for economic and fashion development in the Braga area and the Onderling Belang shop. [5]

Onderling Belang underwent a decline in the mid-1940s, where there was a world war and the Japanese occupation. The political and economic situation was devastated by the allied forces defeat, and the Dutch expulsion from Indonesia caused the Braga area to collapse, and many shops were affected, including Onderling Belang. In the end, this shop was closed and neglected.

![Figure 3. A. Onderling Belang [6], B. Abandoned Sarinah Building [7]](image)

At the end of 1945, this building was used for the PoesatDjawatan Tambang and Geology office as the Ministry of Mining and Energy earlier formation. During the independence war, the office moved to another location and let the building be abandoned (Figure 3B). [8]

In the 1960s, this building was taken over by Sarinah, a state-owned company (PT), which is a state-owned company. The company was born from the idea of Indonesia’s first president, Soekarno, which aims to accommodate retail trading activities and is expected to be the Indonesian economy’s driving force. PT Sarinah became the first retail company to establish an integrated shopping center in Indonesia. [9] After its first appearance in the M.H. Thamrin Jakarta, PT Sarinah then took over the Onderling Belang building, restoration efforts were made, and the company tried to restore the function of this building to a shopping center building in line with the government’s plan at that time to revive the Braga area which had collapsed during the era of the war of independence. The Braga area was once quite popular with many gathering places and retail shops and restaurants that reopened in the area. Sarinah shopping center was a fairly popular place in the area until the 1980s. However, unfortunately, this shopping center could not compete with other shopping centers that were more modern and more complex, so it faded back and did not operate again since the late 1990s.

In 2015, a plan to restore this shopping center appeared by Sarinah by developing this building and changing its function to a multi-functional commercial building complex. Most of these buildings were torn down to rebuild with the concept of combining the characteristics of the original building with a modern and functional design, which is quite complicated to do considering that this building is listed as one of Bandung’s cultural heritage buildings with various policies and regulations that must be followed by its developers. [10]
In 2018 the building renovation was finally completed with the reopening of the Sarinah with a more modern concept and new function. This building is equipped with a boutique hotel operated by the Artotel chain, which occupies a new 14-story building connected to the old renovated building, surrounded by a walk through café and Sarinah retail shop podium and along the pedestrian. Although the original building genuinely had an art deco style, this style was not reflected in its new interior. A more contemporary attempt has been made in most interior elements, highly influenced by local artists who contribute to making most of the hotel and building artwork. The art deco style can only be seen in its listplank façade preserved from the original building.

Initially, this building function was a commercial use with the retail store as their core business that it has been preserved since the Dutch Colonialism until their postponed time during the late 1990s. After the renovation, its function is developed from single commercial use to more complex mixed-use, which has a hospitality function added to the new building. This new function was valuably added to the building complex to answer the current market as Bandung became an infamous city to travel and explore.

De Braga Hotel (Figure 4A), as Sarinah’s new name, is developed by PT Atelier Una Indonesia as its hotel development consultant. Their mission is to transform this historical landmark to higher commercial value without eliminating its historical existence as “Sarinah,” so she can still maintain her spirit into her new space.[11]

Architectural side, the existing building can only be preserved from its horizontal listplank in its façade to maintain its original building appearance to keep the building contextual to its surroundings. The rest of the existing building cannot be kept as structurally torn and then replaced with the new 14-story building with more complexity to its function, which adds a 3-star boutique hotel facilities managed by the Artotel hotel chain.

The signage with Sarinah red letter (Figure 4B) is kept to preserve its history and the beautiful story behind because of its historical value. The Sarinah name was carried out by Bung Kano, the first president of Indonesia, as it was reflected his gratitude to his former nanny as a symbol of his respect for the lower class resident.[13] This new building’s overall appearance is still maintained its Dutch’s Art Deco vibe with clean lines and strong horizontal axis as its original identity. [14] Interior side, this building is an entirely new concept regarding Artotel as its hotel management, as these hotel chains are well known as their strong artsy vibe in most of their hotels. They are also known for their concern about the local art existence.

![Figure 4. New Sarinah Development][11][12]

![Figure 5. Hotel Lobby][15]
Although it still maintains the Art Deco nuances for its overall atmosphere, they added more contemporary ambiance to their space by collaborated with seven Bandung’s young artists (Figure 5,6,7). The collaboration was specifically taken Bandung’s nickname Kota Kembang as their main inspiration, which can be seen in their botanical theme across the hotel interior.

![Figure 6. Artwork by local artists[15]](image)

![Figure 7. Ornament implementation[16]](image)

The response from 122 responders from 12 questions as part of the questioners that we share about the experience questions in the Braga area, including the De Braga Hotel building where the Sarinah is part of it, shows 66.4% of the responders were women. Most of them live in West Java and the surrounding city, including Jakarta, with ages of between 25 to 35 years old told that they have been to the Braga area for two significant purposes: culinary and enjoying the historic buildings along the Braga street that represents the colonial architecture. Most of them, 71.3% know and have been to the De Braga Sarinah, and 38.8% of them know that the building had been through the revitalization process from a shopping mall to be a hotel with Sarinah retail store as part of the building. However, 45.5% of them are unsure that the revitalization process met their expectation. The majority, 41.2% of them, agree that Sarinah is an iconic brand to be put on the building’s façade, and the majority, 53.4%, know that there is the retail store inside the building. Most of them agree that the space of the current Sarinah is not proportional compared to the iconic brand on the façade. This survey is conducted during the pandemic Covid-19, which shows that 92.6% of the responders never visited the Braga area during the pandemic season. It assumes that the crowd was reduced significantly.

In conclusion from the questionnaires and site surveys shows that although this new development carries the Sarinah name with prominent signage in front of the façade, the Sarinah only operated in a small showcase area of the interior space (Figure 8), which does not appear as a focal point to the interior. The interior design does not capture the heart of the Sarinah as a representation of Micro, Small, and Medium local enterprises. The interior ambiance does not absorb the spirit of Indonesian culture. The ceiling, floor, wall, and display design do not carry the responsibilities as a representation of Indonesian.

![Figure 8. Sarinah Store and its entrance[17]](image)
As analyzed with the Perceptual map (Figure 9), it shows that the development of its function and aesthetic aspects have brought this new building to more adaptive to the current condition, which has their advantage and disadvantage (Figure 10) such as:

**Figure 9. Perceptual mapping**

| Function | Aesthetics |
|----------|------------|
| Retail   | Dutch Era  |
| Commercial | Art Deco atmosphere, both exterior & interior |
| Hospitality | Contemporary art |
| Socialization | Art infused interior |
| F & B | Exterior Art deco atmosphere |
| Retail | Local artist exposure |

**Figure 10. Advantages and disadvantages of the new development**

- **Advantages**
  - Up to date to the new market and trend. It creates a positive influence to the further success of the surrounding built environment.
  - Looks contemporary and that brings a new vibe to this heritage environment, so that will attract the young generation to visit.
  - Mix-used buildings that are not only limited to the retail area. It will attract more visitors to come.
  - It creates a fresh architectural look into the surrounding area while keeping the historic architectural façade.
  - Maintaining the Sarinah spirit on the façade.

- **Disadvantages**
  - Mixed of a contemporary approach in the hotel interior, although it brings freshness, potentially covers the heritage essential.
  - The revitalization only on the architecture façade’s surface without bringing the spirit of the Sarinah as the main concept in the interior, so the connection with the Sarinah history is not clearly seen.

4. Conclusion

The Braga area’s preservation process that is still ongoing is showing that the government will take back this area to its vitality in current city development. The process affected the outside physical appearance and the individual building inside, which needs to be revitalization. The New Sarinah building known as De Braga Hotel, has become the new landmark of the Braga area that brings a freshness to the entire built environment. Its architecture shows its alignment to the surrounding environment and its effort to maintain the Sarinah name’s history. However, this analysis also showed that the interior space does not correlate with the preservation effort in its exterior. A more contemporary approach has been chosen for the interior space that does not have the same heritage vibe that should be in line with its exterior according to the revitalization spirit.

The Sarinah big name is used only as an icon of the whole revitalization building, and the symbolic meaning behind the big name was fade away in the interior. The interior space for the Sarinah is too small, does not represent the original idea, and does not carry out the same storyline of its big name.
The additional function to its current market is sufficient to attract more arrivals, but at the same time, it should be more adaptive to heritage meaning to the building so that this heritage atmosphere can be maintained to overall property, not only exterior but also to the interior space.[18] However, this effort to the new approach of preserving damaged heritage building is still appreciated, that is not an easy task to overcome all of the building problems. Instead, this case can be an excellent case for the revitalization project of other buildings in Indonesia. For the future, the details review on the engagement of Sarinah name to the building will broaden the knowledge for the revitalization.

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