



Yukka Harlanda, founder and CEO of Brodo

One Step at A Time

With the export-dominated footwear industry declining, Brodo's success story is a reminder that local is the future.



On 10 November 2022, news broke that three shoe factories in Banten, which manufacture for Nike and Adidas, will relocate to Central Java next year to cut labor costs. It follows previous relocations initiated by big-name companies, such as in late 2018 when several Under Armour factories relocated from Banten to Vietnam, contributing to a 12.7% year-on-year decrease in the subsequent semester's footwear export. More recently, factories have reported a 50% drop in export orders due to global inflation and recession.

Reflecting on this recent news, Yukka Harlanda shares, "Our footwear industry can die that easily. So, we have to build a stronger foundation from the inside." As the founder and CEO of Brodo, a local footwear brand that has been around for over a decade, Yukka, and his partner Putera Dwi Karunia (better-known as Uta), have gone through the many ups and downs of the industry.

The widely-known fact that inspired the establishment of Brodo is that Indonesia is one of the world's largest shoe manufacturers. According to Statista, Indonesia produced 1,083 million pairs of shoes last year, just behind China, India, and Viet-

nam. On top of that, the craftsmanship and quality of footwear produced in Indonesia is already recognized worldwide. "The majority of Tier A shoes that are marketed in Europe, the US, and Japan are made either in China or Indonesia," Yukka explains, adding one lesser-known fact that set the stone for Indonesian-made footwear on the global stage, which is local shoemakers' ability to interpret and bring the designer's creations to life accurately. With these facts, the pair slowly built Brodo as a proud local, high-quality footwear brand.

Brodo's journey began with the release of four models of semi-casual leather boots, all handmade by Cibaduyut shoe production center in Bandung, West Java. One SKU from the first collection, "Si-gnore," is still available today. During the earli-

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est days of their business, Yukka and Uta started small by selling to their friends and acquaintances. When ecommerce started gaining momentum in the following years, Brodo quickly joined the emerging bandwagon, earning them recognition from the general public.

As demand constantly grew, Brodo was forced to switch their operations from handmade to factory-made. In the first 4-5 years, it struggled to meet the increasing demand; hence Yukka and Uta decided to develop their supply chain, something they continuously work on until today. Overseas manufacturing is not an option for Yukka and Uta since they pledged to themselves to lift the local footwear industry, "It might be cheaper to produce



STICKING TO THE ROOTS

The idea of Brodo didn't only come from the potential of Indonesia's footwear industry. However, it was also triggered by Yukka's struggle to find size 46 leather shoes he was supposed to wear for a university assignment. Thus, Yukka and Uta decided to build Brodo while still studying at the Bandung Institute of Technology. With Rp7 million in hand, they approached artisan shoemakers in the renowned Cibaduyut area and made their first batch of shoes.

Their journey with Cibaduyut shoemakers led to a longstanding relationship that's still alive today. Though most of their products are manufactured in factories, Yukka still orders a few batches from these shoemakers to give back. But Yukka's aspiration is not limited to keeping the bond alive. In the future, he desires to educate the next generation of Cibaduyut shoemakers so that they can continue and take their business to the next level.

abroad, but we want to prove that we can make high-quality footwear by ourselves," he says determinedly.

Twelve years of experience in the industry have allowed the duo to understand its dynamics. What first started as a leather footwear brand, Brodo, has evolved into an all-lifestyle footwear one as it adjusts to the cyclical nature of fashion trends. Around six or seven years ago, Yukka saw a shift in people's preferences toward more casual footwear, so they started experimenting by creating a new sneaker brand, called NAH project, and officially launched it in 2019. Even President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo has been caught on cameras many times wearing sneakers made by NAH Project, including when he met Elon Musk in Texas last May. The success of NAH Project led to the launch of Brodo's sneakers line, which has

now become Brodo's best-selling product.

Criticisms towards the brand's shift were there, yet, inspired by the success of Nike's versatility, Yukka is determined to shape Brodo into a brand that represents its users' lifestyle and state of mind rather than just style. Brodo's catalog is expanding to include apparel and perfumes more recently. "A pair of shoes can last for 5-7 years, so to maintain growth, we have to be flexible and creative," Yukka states.

Yukka and Uta's ideas and desire for growth unceasingly need financing to be realized. In December 2020, Brodo secured an undisclosed amount of Series A funding led by BRI Ventures. Several venture capitals had knocked on their door before, but BRI Venture's interest in the everchanging domestic market and optimism in Brodo's aspirations sealed the deal. GDP Ventures also participated in the Brodo funding.

Ironically, a few months before it was finalized, the brand was struck by 80% sales drop due to the pandemic; thus, the funding contributed significantly to Brodo's post-pandemic recovery. "It was a dark period for us. If it had lasted, we would've collapsed for sure," says Yukka as he recalls his struggles at the beginning of the pandemic.

Even after years of transformation and expansion, Brodo is not stopping anytime soon. Yukka has big dreams for Brodo, one of which is to go global. Yukka's agenda is to go public in the next five years to make this come true. In the meantime, Brodo continues to grow and become living proof of our local brands' capability to thrive; as Yukka says, "Exports might still be our backbone, but belief in local brands will sustain our nation." **F**

Baby in style

Bohopanna's chic designs have become a go-to for many Indonesian parents when it comes to styling their youngsters.



Devy Natalia (left) and Irene Kristie, cofounder of Bohopanna

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In today's digitally dominated lifestyles, a new phenomenon has been growing among parents worldwide: "*sharenting*". Coined by Stacey Steinberg in 2017, the term "*sharenting*" refers to parents' act in disseminating information about their children on social media, including photos and videos. Its popularity has triggered debates as some argue that each piece of information shared by the parents ends up as a digital record that might define the kids' future. On the other hand, photo-sharing is also an effective way for

them to keep their distant relatives updated. Either way, with high-quality camera-phone technology widely available and a dependency on social media, it has become a habit some parents can't help but follow.

The trend of uploading children's photos on social media has indirectly contributed to a diversification of the children's clothing industry. Statista estimates the baby and kids clothing market in Indonesia amounts to \$0.69 billion this year and is expected to grow annually by 6.54% in the next five years. With kids aged 0-14 comprising more than 24% of Indonesia's total population in 2021, the demand for Instagram-able kids' clothing con-

tinues to increase, and one brand that's been seizing this momentum is Bohopanna.

Bohopanna has been producing clothing for kids since 2017 and is one of the first digital-native local brands to take on the baby & kids apparel market. Its story began when cofounder and CMO Devy Natalia, diagnosed with an obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), struggled to find clothes for her first child that fit her taste. After getting tired of spending millions to ship baby clothes from abroad, Devy realized she could make products with the same quality for less money. Thus, over a phone call in 2016, Devy persuaded her high school friend Irene Kristie to build the business with her from scratch.

While most babywear is decorated in vibrant prints, colors, and patterns, Bohopanna opted for earth-tone looks, which has since become the brand's signature style. Initially, Bohopanna only produced plain clothing, some decorated with embroidered designs, however, to fulfill its goal of becoming a one-stop shopping solution, it started releasing more varieties in subsequent years. Prints were one of the designs Devy and Irene initially avoided as they can quickly look distasteful or tawdry. But after 1.5 years of searching high and low, they finally found the perfect formula and manufacturer to make high-quality prints, which Devy claims cost 70% more than standard printing.

The team releases two to three collections each month, and as of the end of this year, Bohopanna will have launched approximately 270 SKUs of clothes and accessories. As it has expanded, Bohopanna has been adding collaborations with household brands, including Disney and Indomie. It is common to find local brands collaborating with Disney nowadays, but with Bohopanna, you won't find Mickey or Elsa of Frozen in its stores. Noticing that many brands have already used these characters, Devy and Irene saw a window of opportunity in using other well-known yet lesser-used characters such as Tinkerbell and Alice in Wonderland.

"Rather than retreating, we always try to develop the positive side of things and create opportunities from it," says Irene, Bohopanna's cofounder and CEO. The pair held onto this value very tightly, even during the pandemic when dark clouds shadowed many businesses in the industry. Around three months into the pandemic, Bohopanna decided to build its garment factory in Sukoharjo where, because many factory workers have been laid off, Devy and Irene could snatch the best tailors out there by providing them with a stable income when they needed it the most. "That's how a business should be; when we let our blessings flow,

it will come back to us," Irene adds.

Over the past five years, Bohopanna has built a solid fanbase that apparently doesn't only consist of parents as it includes people who aren't married yet. They frequently engage with their community and invite them to spread the word through word-of-mouth and social media, which according to Devy, is their secret to maintaining their products within an affordable price range. "Our customers' support saves us from overly huge marketing expenses, allowing us to focus on quality," she explains.

The brand's potential is an ideal fit for local brand aggregator, Hypefast, which then became Devy and Irene's solution to the one issue they've had since the beginning: inadequate supply to meet growing demands. Even after building their factory, Bohopanna's goal to scale more significantly still needed more capital and when Hypefast's funding stepped in last year, they could fulfill the continuously increasing demand, thus clearing its path for further growth.

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In 2020, Bohopanna established its first offline store in Zaragoza, Spain, after a loyal customer living abroad pitched the idea through Instagram. Although Spanish sales have been dropping due to Europe's unstable economic conditions, launching their first store abroad opened new doors for the brand on the global stage. Spain was the first step of Bohopanna's journey to globalize, as it bridged them to resellers in many countries and regions, including Dubai, the United Kingdom, and France. Last year, the Middle East was Bohopanna's biggest market abroad before Russia and India overtook it recently.

At home, Bohopanna recently opened two stores in By The Sea, Jakarta and Pakuwon Mall, Surabaya. Despite having three offline stores, Devy thinks they are optional to their growth as being a digitally native brand, they still rely heavily on online sales, with support from around 200 stockists that they work with across the nation. Devy and Irene acknowledge that their domestic customers are still highly concentrated in Java, hence they're currently working on tapping more areas. "We are aiming for a massive expansion; soon, we have to be available in all major baby stores outside Java island," says Devy as she explains what's next for Bohopanna. **F**