

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS TO IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING BRANDING OF BLIMBING BATIK SMEs IN MALANG CITY

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Keywords

International
Branding,
Business
Relations, Batik
Blimbing
MSMEs,
Academic
Collaboration

Abstract

This international community service program is a collaborative initiative between Wisnuwardhana University, Indonesia, and Universiti Malaya, Malaysia. This activity aims to strengthen the capacity of Blimbing Batik SMEs to face the challenges of globalization through an internationally oriented branding strategy. The main focus of the community service is building strategic relationships with business partners, the international community, and supporting institutions so that Blimbing Batik can penetrate the global market with a strong cultural identity. Implementation methods include intensive mentoring, digital branding training, developing a batik cultural narrative as a selling point, and facilitating international networking through workshops and business matching. This program also emphasizes the importance of cross-border collaboration in strengthening the competitiveness of MSMEs, with Universiti Malaya acting as an academic partner, opening access to international networks and providing a global marketing perspective. The expected outcomes of this activity are an increased ability of Batik Blimbing MSMEs to build international business relationships, the development of a branding strategy consistent with local cultural values, and the creation of sustainable export opportunities. Thus, this community service not only contributes to strengthening the local economy of Malang City but also serves as a model for cross-border academic collaboration in supporting MSMEs in entering the international market

INTRODUCTION

Hand-drawn batik MSMEs in Malang City hold a strategic position as guardians of tradition and drivers of the creative economy. Malang hand-drawn batik is known for its distinctive motifs that reflect the richness of local nature and culture. However, the challenge facing MSMEs is how to package this uniqueness to compete in an increasingly competitive market (Zayyana et al., 2022). Strong branding, extensive business relationships, and academic support are crucial factors in increasing the competitiveness of hand-drawn batik MSMEs in Malang.

Malang City itself has an ecosystem that supports the development of MSMEs, ranging from tourism potential, creative communities, and local government support. This opens up significant opportunities for hand-drawn batik MSMEs to expand their markets, both domestically and internationally. However, without the right branding strategy, hand-drawn batik products risk remaining locally known and struggling to penetrate the global market. Therefore, a focus on international branding is crucial for strengthening the position of Malang's hand-drawn batik MSMEs.

Vivi Nur Wijayaningrum et al. (2024) stated that Blimbing Batik is a representation of local cultural richness that has great potential to penetrate the international market. Batik, as an Indonesian cultural heritage, is not only aesthetically pleasing but also contains profound philosophies that can be globally appealing. However, the main challenge faced by MSMEs is the limited branding strategies capable of elevating products to the international level (Ratnawati et al., 2026). Therefore, a systematic approach is needed that connects cultural identity with modern marketing strategies (Hidayat & Prasetyo, 2022).

The terms branding and marketing are not unfamiliar, especially for those involved in business. Branding and marketing have become common terms, especially when discussing product marketing strategies. A brand includes names, terms, signs, symbols, and designs that identify, add value, and differentiate a product from similar products (Kotler & Keller, 2016). By building a brand image, businesses can differentiate themselves from other companies, whether they are similar companies selling the same product or not. Meanwhile, marketing is an effort to satisfy consumer needs through the products offered by the company by identifying their needs (Rokhman MTN & Ratnawati., 2024). International branding is key to expanding the market reach of Batik Blimbing MSMEs. By building a strong image, batik products are not only seen as commodities, but also as cultural symbols relevant to global trends (Vidya Damayanti, 2025). Kotler & Keller (2016) This branding process requires the integration of local

narratives, product quality, and communication strategies that suit the preferences of international consumers. This opens up opportunities for MSMEs to compete in the global market while maintaining cultural authenticity.

(Kadi et al, 2022) Business relations are a crucial aspect in supporting the sustainability of international branding. Batik Blimbing MSMEs need to build networks with business partners, both nationally and internationally, to strengthen distribution and expand market access. Alamsyah Agit (2025) Collaboration with creative industry players, exporters, and digital platforms can increase the competitiveness of batik products. Healthy business relations also enable the transfer of knowledge and technology, enabling MSMEs to adapt to global market dynamics.

Academic collaboration serves as a bridge between theory and practice in supporting the development of Batik Blimbing MSMEs. Universities can play a role in providing research assistance, training, and the development of data-driven business models. Through collaboration, MSMEs can gain access to the latest knowledge on branding strategies, business management, and product innovation. Synergy between academics and MSMEs will produce more contextual and sustainable solutions (Zalzulifa et al., 2026).

The collaboration between Wisnuwardhana University of Malang (UNIDHA) and Universiti Malaya plays a strategic role in building cross-border academic and business relationships that Blimbing Batik MSMEs can utilize to strengthen their international marketing branding. This collaboration opens access to research, publications, partner networks, and cultural activities relevant to the development of batik as a global product. The community service focused on international branding, business relations, Blimbing Batik MSMEs, and academic collaboration is expected to create an ecosystem that supports the increased competitiveness of MSMEs. With an integrated strategy, Blimbing Batik will not only become a proud local product but will also be able to penetrate the global market as a representation of Indonesian culture. This approach also strengthens the position of MSMEs as a driving force of the creative economy that contributes to national development.

METHOD

Zunaidi Arif (2024) The method used in this community service activity is a participatory approach, in which community partners are actively involved in every stage of the program, from planning to evaluation. The community service method used includes two stages, namely:

1 Preparation and provisioning stage

This involves socialization and recruitment of community service participants. During the socialization, permission is obtained from local authorities, followed by recruitment of relevant MSMEs. The Community Service Team conducts socialization activities with MSMEs. The Community Service Team conducts socialization, introductions, and explains the program activities to be implemented.

2. Implementation Stage

Preparation for the implementation of community service activities. This preparation activity began with the PKM Team and MSMEs discussing to create a packaging label design. Once completed, the community service team showed it to the MSMEs and revised it if there were things that needed to be improved so that the design was in accordance with the MSME's wishes. The PKM Team also introduced marketable packaging available in the market, and explained the advantages and disadvantages of each type of packaging. The PKM Team also introduced the containers that will be used for product packaging, not only in the form of ordinary plastic but also standing pouches and jars of various sizes.

3. Implementation of the introduction includes the introduction of labels and packaging that have been agreed upon and will be used by MSMEs.

4. Branding strategy training, which includes how to run a business so that it can continue to exist, by making packaging more attractive, product photos and how to make sales online. Mentoring and monitoring for one week regarding the progress of creating a logo, tagline and packaging. To measure the success indicators of the counseling, the implementation team provides a pre-test before the counseling and a post-test after the counseling.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This community service activity begins with mapping the potential of Batik Blimbing MSMEs in Malang City. This stage includes identifying product strengths, unique batik motifs, and existing production capacity. The mapping is carried out to determine the MSMEs' readiness to face the international market, while also developing a branding profile that highlights Malang's local cultural values as its main attraction. The next stage is capacity building through international branding training. Batik Blimbing MSMEs will be given a workshop on global marketing strategies, including cultural storytelling, packaging design that meets export standards, and the use of international e-commerce platforms. This training also covers digital marketing skills, such as social media management and multilingual content creation, so that MSMEs can reach consumers across countries.

Community service activities focus on building business relationships with strategic partners. The community service team will bridge MSMEs with local governments, the Ministry of Trade, and the Indonesian Trade Promotion Center (ITPC) abroad. Furthermore, networks with Indonesian diaspora communities and export associations will be strengthened to open up collaboration opportunities in promoting Blimbing batik in the international market. Implementation also includes the development of digital branding and global promotion. Blimbing Batik MSMEs will be facilitated in creating an official website with a product catalog, cultural stories, and an international ordering system. Social media optimization is carried out with high-quality visual content, involving influencers and cultural communities to strengthen the image of Blimbing batik as a premium product that represents Malang's identity.

The sustainability of this activity is expected through regular monitoring and evaluation. Indicators of success include increasing the number of international partners, export sales growth, digital engagement, and customer satisfaction. The evaluation was conducted in collaboration with academic and government partners, so that the results can serve as a model for international branding development for other MSMEs in Malang. This activity is expected to create a sustainable international branding ecosystem for Batik Blimbing MSMEs. With the support of academics, the government, and the global community, Blimbing batik will not only become a local product but also a symbol of Malang culture recognized in the global market. This implementation also strengthens the position of MSMEs as a driving force for Indonesia's creative economy and cultural diplomacy.

The table of implementation of activities and documentation of international community service activities carried out by Wisnuwardhana University Malang and Universiti Malaya at the Batik Blimbing MSME in Malang City is described below:

Table 1.
Operational Implementation of Community Service Activities

Activity Stage	Implementation Form	Expected Output
Partner Identification	Mapping of MSMEs & international networks	MSME branding profile
Capacity Building	Branding & digital marketing workshop	Capacity building
Business Relations	Cooperation	Export market access
Digital Branding	Website, social media, multilingual content	Global promotion
Monitoring & Evaluation	Success indicators & service reports	Sustainability Model

Meanwhile, documentation of activities can be presented as follows:



Figure 1.
Community Service Activities

Whereas social media, which they have from the results of international service, including those that will be modified to be multi-lingual as follows:

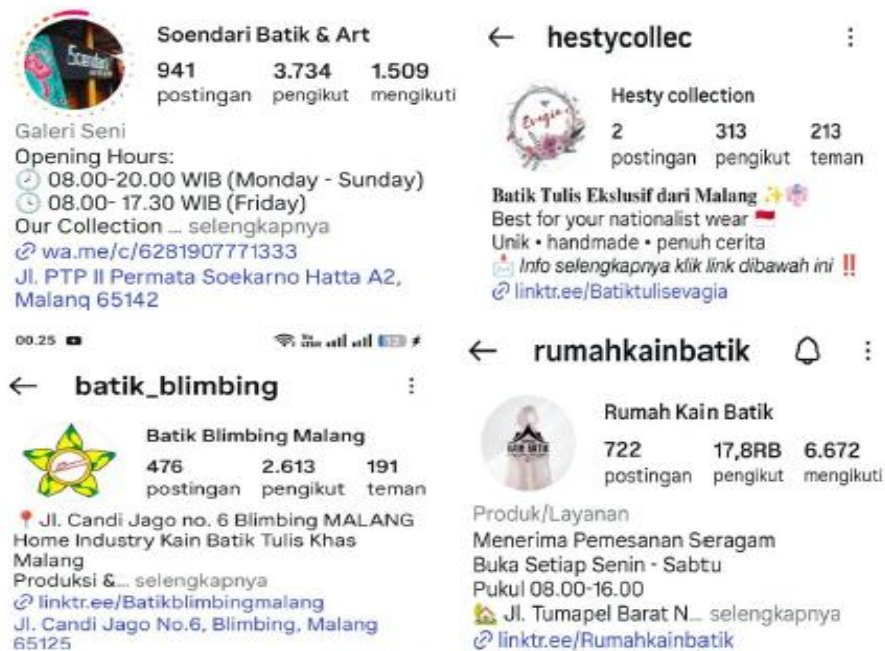


Figure 2.
Social Media for Batik MSMEs

The final results of the community service activity themed Building Relationships to Improve International Marketing Branding for Blimbing Batik MSMEs in Malang City showed an increase in the capacity and readiness of MSMEs to face the global market. Through branding training, digital marketing, and assistance in using international e-commerce platforms, MSMEs were able to develop more adaptive promotional strategies in accordance with international standards. In addition, the involvement of strategic partners such as local governments, academics, and diaspora communities helped strengthen the business relationship network that opened up export opportunities and expanded the marketing reach of Blimbing batik.

Overall, this activity has had a significant impact in the form of a sustainable international branding ecosystem. Batik Blimbing MSMEs not only gained technical knowledge but also gained access to a network of international partners that support business sustainability. With an official website, multilingual promotional content, and collaboration with global cultural communities, Blimbing batik now has a stronger position as a leading Malang cultural product in the international market. This implementation also serves as a model of community service that can be replicated by other MSMEs in developing branding and global marketing relationships.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion from the results of community service activities provides the conclusion that:

- (1) *Batik Starfruit, Malang City*. This program demonstrates that it has successfully enhanced the capacity of MSMEs to understand global branding strategies. Through training and mentoring, MSMEs are able to develop skills in digital marketing, cultural storytelling, and the use of international e-commerce platforms. This provides a strong foundation for MSMEs to be better prepared to compete in the global market with a more professional and adaptive product image.
- (2) Furthermore, this activity expands the Blimbing Batik MSME's business network with strategic partners, both locally and internationally. Support from local governments, academics, and Indonesian diaspora communities abroad opens up opportunities for broader collaboration. These relationships not only strengthen export market access but also position Blimbing batik as a superior cultural product that can become a symbol of Malang's identity on the international stage.

- (3) This community service initiative has had a tangible impact in the form of a sustainable international branding ecosystem. Batik Blimbing MSMEs now have strategies, networks, and digital tools that support business sustainability while strengthening their position in Indonesia's cultural diplomacy and creative economy. This implementation model can be replicated for other MSMEs, so that its contribution is not limited to one community but also supports the broader development of the MSME sector at the national level.

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