Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat
Volume 5 Issue 1 Year 2026 | Pages 274–286
ykgm.org

E-ISSN 2962-8091
DOI: https://doi.org/10.46843/jpm.v5i1.606

Optimizing Branding and E-Commerce Strategies to Strengthen Women's Entrepreneurship in the Melayu Jambi Creative Industry

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs within the creative sector of the Melayu Jambi community possess substantial potential to boost the local economy through culturally inspired products. Nonetheless, initial field observations and foundational data reveal that 68% of these business owners lack a distinct brand identity, 72% experience restricted access to digital marketing channels, and merely 35% engage actively with e-commerce platforms, leading to diminished market presence and diluted product competitiveness. A gap analysis based on these initial insights and a review of earlier studies shows that most empowerment programs concentrate on general entrepreneurial skills, while integrated branding and e-commerce support rooted in local cultural principles is scarce. Consequently, this initiative seeks to enhance women entrepreneurs' capabilities through culturally infused branding and e-commerce enhancement. The program used a collaborative approach and was implemented in five phases: needs assessment, social outreach, skill development, guidance, and evaluation. The outcomes indicate remarkable advancement in participants' branding acumen and digital proficiency, with average pre-test and post-test scores rising from 47.7% to 77.9%, bolstered by deliverables such as logos, product packaging designs, digital catalogs, and operational e-commerce accounts. In summary, this initiative promotes women's financial autonomy and contributes a culture-centric digital empowerment framework to studies on community-based creative industries.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Keywords:
higher education; local wisdom; reading comprehension; problem-based learning

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Article info: Submitted: 2025-10-05 | Revised: 2026-01-09 | Accepted: 2026-02-06 | Published: 2026-03-24
Recommended citation: Muazza., Mayasari., Asra, R., Putra, I., & Simaremare, T. P. (2026). Optimizing Branding and E-Commerce Strategies to Strengthen Women's Entrepreneurship in the Melayu Jambi Creative Industry. *Jurnal Pemberdayaan Masyarakat, 5*(1), 274-286.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of the creative economy has emerged as an essential factor in the economic development of nations and regions, aiding not only job creation but also the preservation of culture, the generation of added value, and the expansion of markets. In Indonesia, various areas are home to unique creative sectors that draw from local traditions, such as the creative industry of the Melayu Jambi community. Initial observations and baseline information gathered in the Melayu Jambi area indicate that, while women are involved as entrepreneurs in crafts, food services, and traditional clothing, their business outcomes are not satisfactory. Research shows that over half of these business owners lack a distinct brand identity, face challenges accessing digital marketing tools, and mainly rely on traditional marketing approaches. This situation limits their market access and diminishes the competitiveness of their products. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions informed by preliminary research. Women entrepreneurs in the creative sector of the Melayu Jambi community hold considerable promise for boosting the local economy through culturally inspired

products. Nonetheless, initial field studies and baseline data indicate that 68% of these entrepreneurs lack a clear brand identity, 72% struggle with access to digital marketing, and only 35% use e-commerce platforms, leading to limited market reach and poor product competitiveness.

Moreover, a gap analysis based on the initial results and an examination of earlier research underscores that, while current studies stress overall creative economy growth and women's entrepreneurship, there has been scant focus on cohesive branding tactics and on the application of e-commerce that draws on local cultural identity. This disparity highlights the necessity for a targeted intervention framework that merges culture-centric branding with digital empowerment, specifically designed for the socio-cultural fabric of the Melayu Jambi community. Empirical research indicates that the creative economy, not only cultural, fosters economic resilience and serves as a vehicle for preserving local identity in the face of global market integration (Sternberg, 2017; Vickery, 2015). In Indonesia, numerous areas host unique creative industries founded on local wisdom, among them the Melayu Jambi community's creative industry.

The socio-cultural landscape of the Malay Jambi community is rich in tradition, artistic expression, and gastronomic heritage, offering substantial opportunities for the creation of innovative products. These cultural treasures have considerable economic potential when reimagined as creative goods with robust market appeal (Ali et al., 2020; Manioudis & Angelakis, 2023). Nevertheless, previous studies have predominantly focused on macro-level developments in the creative economy, creating a research gap regarding micro-level cultural industries run by women in peripheral areas such as Jambi (Miguel & Herrero, 2020; Fernandez et al., 2017).

Women play a crucial role not only as engines of household finances but also as guardians of cultural heritage through the creations they produce. Therefore, empowering women in the creative arts sector carries a twofold significance: bolstering household economies while safeguarding local cultural identities. Nevertheless, the currents of economic rivalry in today's globalized and digitalizing world require swift flexibility. Numerous women in the Malay Jambi community are actively involved as entrepreneurs in handicrafts, food services, and traditional fashion. The creative sector is one of the industries that significantly influences local economic development, particularly in Jambi Province. Women from the Malay Jambi community play a vital role in cultural small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including batik, traditional food products, and handmade crafts. However, these enterprises encounter obstacles, primarily due to ineffective branding strategies and limited engagement with digital technologies, particularly e-commerce, for promotion.

Robust branding is crucial to establishing a distinctive identity for products, enabling them to thrive in contemporary markets (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Concurrently, online commerce has emerged as a vital tool for broadening market access and boosting sales revenue (Laudon & Traver, 2020). Nevertheless, research indicates that culture-centric MSMEs frequently struggle to seamlessly blend branding with e-commerce, leading to disjointed brand identities and underexploited digital platforms (Bhardwaj & Goundar, 2020; Sari & Nugroho, 2021). The ethno-economic framework underscores the significance of weaving cultural values into economic endeavors, ensuring that products embody not just economic worth but also cultural significance (Gudeman, 2016). However, the existing literature has inadequately explored how ethno-economic concepts can be implemented through tangible initiatives, such as branding strategies and e-commerce applications, within women-led cultural MSMEs (Wahidin et al., 2019; Widyanti et al., 2022). This deficiency points to the need for hands-on community service programs that translate theory into measurable outcomes.

Women entrepreneurs are crucial in fostering local economic development, especially within creative industries rooted in culture (Mayasari et al., 2024; Muazza et al., 2025), such as batik. Despite their significant role, research shows that women-led MSMEs often face systemic hurdles, including limited access to technology, insufficient branding capabilities, and limited participation in digital

marketplaces (Kally & McAdam, 2022; Rampaul, 2025). Within the creative industry cluster of the Malay Jambi community, Batik Istiqomah is one of the ventures run by women entrepreneurs committed to preserving and advancing batik as part of the local cultural legacy. Batik Istiqomah stands out as an MSME led by a women's collective dedicated to safeguarding local cultural heritage through unique Malay Jambi creations. However, amid market rivalry and the rise of the digital age, these exquisite batik offerings, steeped in cultural significance, face various challenges. Research shows that many entrepreneurs at Batik Istiqomah lack a profound understanding of the importance of establishing robust branding strategies and have not fully leveraged e-commerce as a marketing and sales vehicle. The absence of a coherent brand identity, coupled with limited access to and proficiency with digital platforms, presents a substantial hurdle to broadening their market presence both regionally and nationally. In contrast, advancements in information technology and the increasing popularity of online shopping offer considerable opportunities for MSMEs to evolve more inclusively and competitively (Muazza et al., 2024). By employing effective branding strategies and making optimal use of e-commerce, Malay Jambi batik products possess significant potential to attain greater visibility and enhance their competitive edge in digital marketplaces (Rahayu, 2019).

In this community service program, the team aims to provide practical solutions through training and mentoring in branding strategies and e-commerce for women entrepreneurs at *Batik Istiqomah*. The program is not only aimed at enhancing business capacity but also at supporting the preservation of local culture and the sustainable empowerment of women. The lack of a well-integrated branding strategy and the underutilization of digital e-commerce have hindered market expansion and reduced the competitiveness of Batik Istiqomah products within the Malay Jambi culture-based creative industry. This priority issue becomes the focus of the community service activities, with solutions implemented through branding training, digital marketing support, and the integration of e-commerce platforms tailored to partners' needs and capacities. The problem analysis matrix (problem tree) for this activity is shown in Figure 1.

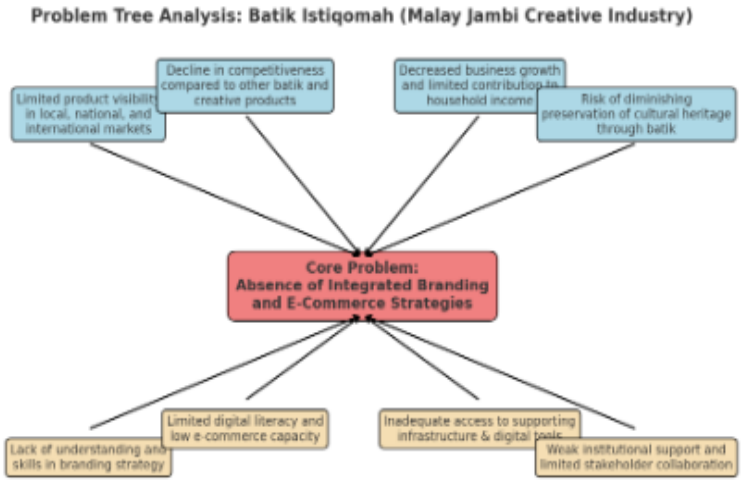

Figure 1. Problem Tree Analysis Matrix

Considering these circumstances, this community service initiative offers a solution-focused approach to help partners craft and enhance branding strategies that embody the cultural essence of the Malay Jambi community. The initiative is also intended to boost digital literacy and e-commerce capabilities among women entrepreneurs, facilitate the transition to digital marketing and online selling frameworks, and promote the self-sufficiency and longevity of community-centered batik enterprises. With contributions from scholars, students, and technological advancements, this effort aims to accelerate the evolution of Batik Istiqomah into adaptable, competitive MSMEs in the digital

landscape. In response to these challenges, the community service projects are structured to maximize branding techniques and leverage e-commerce for women entrepreneurs within the creative sector of the Malay Jambi community, aiming to enhance competitiveness, self-reliance, and business viability.

This program is relevant to the focus of community service around Community Economic Empowerment through MSMEs, which aims to enhance women's economic competitiveness through branding strategies and business digitalization (Amalia et al., 2024; Bhardwaj & Goundar, 2020; Chatterjee & Mishra, 2020; Kelly & McAdam, 2022; Setiadi et al., 2023; Veranita et al., 2023). It is also aligned with the area of Digital Transformation of Local Culture-Based MSMEs, which accelerates the adoption of digital technology by local MSMEs oriented toward the preservation of Malay Jambi culture (Lubis et al., 2024; Sari & Nugroho, 2021) as well as the field of Development of Creative Industries Based on Local Wisdom, which strengthens the role of batik as a cultural product within the value chain of the digital creative industry (Harwiki et al., 2018; Mahrinasari et al., 2024; Mukaffi, 2019; Wahidin et al., 2019; Widyanti et al., 2022).

METHOD

This community engagement initiative utilized the Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, which highlights the essential participation of the target community throughout every phase of the endeavor. PAR was chosen for its success in recognizing genuine community demands, collaboratively developing solutions, and ensuring the sustainability of outcomes (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; McTaggart & Nixon, 2018). The Implementation of PAR in this initiative featured several key principles: it was inclusive, as women entrepreneurs at Batik Istiqomah played roles not just as recipients but as proactive collaborators in decision-making; relevant, since the issues tackled stemmed from authentic challenges such as insufficient branding strategies and restricted e-commerce usage; corporative, engaging in close partnership between scholars, students, and community members; introspective, with each phase accompanied by collective reflection to evaluate effectiveness and strategize enhancements; and focused on action, as the initiative sought not only to expand knowledge but also to encourage behavioral and systemic transformation for sustainability. The program implementation followed five stages, illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. The Five Main Stages of Community Service

The main aim of this initiative was to enhance the branding capabilities and e-commerce proficiencies of women entrepreneurs at Batik Istiqomah to boost product competitiveness and ensure business longevity. In particular, the initiative sought to (1) pinpoint critical challenges

associated with brand identity and digital market accessibility, (2) elevate participants' understanding and expertise in branding techniques and e-commerce administration, and (3) promote enduring behavioral and systemic shifts in business operations. To realize these aims, the initiative was executed through five key phases: needs assessment, program promotion, training, mentoring, and implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation. These phases embody a cohesive empowerment procedure that merges knowledge sharing, hands-on execution, and ongoing reflection. This phase aligns with Wheeler's (2017) Participatory Rural Appraisal, which underscores the importance of the community's perspective in problem identification. This resonated with Frei-Landau et al.'s (2022) diffusion of innovations theory, which emphasizes the importance of face-to-face communication in the adoption of innovations. This corresponded with Knowles et al. (2020) principle of adult education, which highlights that learning for adults is most effective when it addresses practical needs. This reflected Bandura and Cevrone's (2023) social learning theory, which indicates that skills are optimally developed through experiential practice enhanced by guidance.

The tools and information employed in this initiative were tailored to each phase of execution. Data-gathering instruments included observation forms, semi-structured interview outlines, focus group discussion (FGD) frameworks, educational materials, and assessments conducted before and after the intervention. The data gathered encompassed qualitative insights, such as participants' viewpoints, experiences, and obstacles related to e-commerce branding, as well as quantitative data from tests that tracked shifts in knowledge and proficiency pre- and post-intervention. Throughout the training guidance phases, documentation consisting of photographs, training outcomes (logos, packaging designs, and digital catalogs), and field notes was also used to enhance data triangulation.

The method of data analysis utilized a fusion of qualitative and quantitative descriptive techniques. Insights gathered from observation, interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and personal reflection were processed through data reduction, classification, and thematic interpretation to uncover shifting patterns and participant reactions to the initiative. Quantitative data derived from pre- and post-assessments were descriptively analyzed by comparing average scores to gauge improvements in participants' knowledge and skills. The findings from both analyses were subsequently amalgamated to assess the initiative's effectiveness, aligned with Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2016) Four-Level Training Evaluation Model, which examines participants' reactions, learning outcomes, behavioral changes, and overall results.

Table 1. Indicators of Success, Evaluation Instruments, and Measurable Outputs

Aspect	Success Indicators	Evaluation Instruments	Measurable Outputs
Branding Capacity	Increased understanding of branding concepts and strategies	Pre-test and post-test; observation checklist	Standardized logos; culturally based packaging designs
Digital Skills	Improved ability to operate e-commerce platforms	Skill assessment rubric; platform usage logs	Active e-commerce accounts; digital product catalogs
Behavioral Change	Participants independently apply branding and digital marketing practices	Mentoring records; documentation review	Regular product uploads and online promotions
Economic Potential	Expanded market reach and visibility	Sales records (baseline vs. post-program); interview data	Increased number of online product listings
Cultural Preservation	Integration of Malay Jambi values into branding	Content analysis of branding materials	Brand narratives reflecting local wisdom

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of this community service program demonstrates a high level of motivation and active participation among women entrepreneurs in the Malay Jambi creative industry, particularly Batik Istiqomah. From the needs identification stage, it was evident that most participants lacked a strong brand identity and had limited engagement with digital marketing. Products such as batik and traditional crafts were marketed with simple packaging, devoid of logos or cultural narratives, which reduced their perceived value. These findings are consistent with Kotler and Keller's (2016) assertion that branding functions not merely as a visual attribute but as a strategic tool for shaping consumer perception and generating added value.

The execution of this community service initiative showcases a remarkable level of enthusiasm and active involvement among women entrepreneurs within the Malay Jambi creative sector, especially Batik Istiqomah. From the identification of needs, it was clear that most participants lacked a robust brand identity and had minimal engagement with digital marketing strategies. Products like batik and traditional crafts were presented with basic packaging that lacked logos or cultural narratives, consequently diminishing their perceived worth. These observations align with Kotler and Keller's (2016) claim that branding serves not only as a visual element but also as a strategic instrument for shaping consumer perceptions and creating additional value.

The phases of identification, preparation, and social engagement were carried out through surveys, on-site visits, and interactive discussions with collaborators, allowing the team to develop a contextual understanding of the entrepreneurs' hurdles and opportunities. Rather than merely linearly transmitting information, these phases encouraged participatory discussions, enabling participants to express their requirements and limitations directly. This collaborative method was effective because it fostered trust, strengthened a sense of ownership, and ensured that program interventions aligned with local realities. The substantial level of engagement during social interaction sessions, reflected in participants' inquiries and shared narratives, indicates that learning acquired greater significance when rooted in their real-world business experiences. Following the identification and preparation phases, the community service endeavors continued with social interaction and an educational workshop for women entrepreneurs in the creative sector of the Malay

Jambi Tribe. These initiatives aimed to deliver essential insights into the significance of branding strategies and the role of e-commerce in boosting product competitiveness.

The phases of identification, preparation, and social engagement were realized through surveys, on-site visits, and interactive discussions with partners, allowing the team to develop a situational awareness of the entrepreneurs' challenges and opportunities. Instead of merely serving as a conduit for information, these phases encouraged a two-way conversation, empowering participants to voice their needs and limitations directly. This collaborative approach was effective as it nurtured trust, enhanced a sense of ownership, and confirmed that program intervention matched local circumstances. The extensive interaction during social engagement sessions, highlighted by participants' inquiries and shared narratives, illustrates that the learning experience gained significance when rooted in their actual business practices.

During this initiative, attendees demonstrated a strong eagerness to engage in the social interaction sessions. This was evident from the plethora of inquiries about crafting a logo, choosing impactful digital marketing channels, and formulating strategies to enhance online consumer confidence. Moreover, the team embraced an inclusive approach by inviting participants to share their experiences with the hurdles they faced as they grew their enterprises. The discussion fostered a spirit of unity and underscored the realization that branding and e-commerce transcend mere theoretical ideas and can be practically implemented considering each enterprise's unique circumstances. Additionally, the initiative adopted a practical, experiential learning approach by engaging women entrepreneurs in immersive training and guidance to help them apply the insights they gained, especially in branding and online commerce strategies.

Training and mentoring initiatives were crafted using a hands-on learning methodology, weaving branding and e-commerce skills into tangible applications. Participants adeptly created logos, packaging designs, digital catalogs, and online shops that embody the cultural essence of the Malay Jambi community. This achievement bolsters brand equity theory, which asserts that a powerful and unique brand identity improves consumer loyalty and differentiates in the market (Aaker, 2025; Kurnianingsih & Riorini, 2021; Pangestika et al., 2023; Roofandi & Balqiah, 2023). Notably, the infusion of cultural stories into branding amplified emotional ties with consumers, demonstrating that cultural principles can serve as a distinct competitive edge rather than an obstruction to modernization

Regarding the evolution of product branding, the approach focused on creating unique Batik Istiqomah items by revamping its brand image to appear more appealing and contemporary while preserving the cultural essence of Malay Jambi heritage. The involved creating sleek, functional, and visually pleasing packaging to improve consumer perception, as well as developing engaging product storytelling that emphasizes the distinctiveness of batik design and the cultural philosophy of the Malay Jambi community to enhance emotional branding (Hermawan, 2021; Lestari & Suharyanti, 2022; Odoom et al., 2017; Sari & Wahyuni, 2021; Syah & Hamidah, 2020). Conversely, the e-commerce component emerged as a vital focus within the activities. Before the initiative, a significant number of participants relied primarily on word of mouth or transactions in local marketplaces. Following the training, participants successfully established online storefronts on prominent platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia and leveraged social media for promotional efforts. This is consistent with the theory posited by Laudon and Traver (2020), which highlights that e-commerce broadens market access, reduces geographic limitations, and improves sales productivity.

The digital marketing training and mentoring initiative empowered the Batik Istiqomah women entrepreneurs to navigate digital-centric marketing. During this training, participants were furnished with insights and expertise to leverage well-known e-commerce platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee, and BukaLapak, ranging from establishing online shops, managing products, and handling orders to

optimizing available promotional tools. Furthermore, the training focused on developing and administering imaginative, relevant promotional content across social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to capture interest and foster strong consumer engagement. Collaborators were also familiarized with advanced digital marketing techniques, including paid advertising and customer community management, to enhance loyalty. The mentoring provided partners with insights into digital data analytics, empowering them to decipher consumer behavior, track sales metrics, and regularly assess marketing tactics. Consequently, the training and guidance in digital marketing sought to enable Batik Istiqomah women entrepreneurs to effectively, professionally, and sustainably run their tech-driven enterprises in the current digital landscape (Chatterjee, 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021; Fauzi & Wibowo, 2021; Muazza et al., 2024; Odoom & Mensah, 2019; Saputro & Lestari, 2022; Sari & Kurniawan, 2020; Yuliana & Handayani, 2023).



Figure 3. Independent Mentoring in Branding and E-commerce Strategy Development

Guidance about the adoption of a Digital Business Management Framework (Figure 3), which acts to enhance effectiveness and professionalism in overseeing Batik Istiqomah operations through the application of digital technologies. This framework enables real-time, integrated handling of sales documentation, inventory oversight, and order processing, significantly reducing errors and speeding responses to market needs. Additionally, the digital framework promotes a more organized and transparent approach to business management, encompassing financial reporting and evaluation of business performance. The integration also includes training in online customer support, empowering partners to respond swiftly, precisely, and professionally, thereby boosting customer satisfaction and loyalty. By employing a digital business management framework, Batik Istiqomah is anticipated to bolster production capabilities, ensure enduring business functionality, and adapt more efficiently to the fluctuation of the advancing digital market (Al-Omoush et al., 2020; Matarazzo et al., 2021; Rahayu & Putra, 2022; Raimo et al., 2023; Sari & Gunawan, 2023; Yuliana & Nugroho, 2020).

Moreover, the importance of network growth and collaboration was highlighted as tactics to enhance market entry and fortify Batik Istiqomah's role within the creative industry framework of the Malay Jambi community. By broadening alliances with fellow business owners, cultural organizations, governmental bodies, and support agencies, Batik Istiqomah can capitalize on expanded resources, insights, and market opportunities. Such partnerships also foster the development of more inventive products and marketing strategies, while facilitating joint promotional efforts that boost brand visibility and reputation. Additionally, robust networks and collaborations can provide access to funding, training, and improved production facilities, thereby strengthening business capacity and competitiveness at both the local and national levels. Thus, network growth and collaboration act as vital tactics to ensure the sustainability and optimal expansion of Batik Istiqomah's enterprise (Astuti

& Purwanto, 2021; Brunetto et al., 2020; Cunningham & O'Reilly, 2018; Fitrani & Rahman, 2022; Yuniarti & Hidayat, 2020).

Sustainability and product enhancement serve as strategies to ensure that Batik IStiqomah not only thrives in the long run but also fosters positive, enduring effects across environmental, social, and economic domains. By integrating sustainability principles into its production methods, including the use of eco-friendly materials and natural dyeing practices, Batik Istiqomah can mitigate adverse environmental impacts while catering to consumers who prioritize sustainable products. Moreover, enhancing products through innovative design, appealing packaging, and the integration of cultural stories from the Malay Jambi community boosts product attractiveness and market value. This augmentation also strengthens brand identity and sets Batik Istiqomah apart from its rivals. By prioritizing sustainability and product enhancement, this business can responsibly expand while improving the livelihoods of its partners and the local community (Anggraeni & Hapsari, 2022; Handayani & Lestari, 2020; Sharma & Kushwaha, 2022; Tantalo & Priem, 2016). To achieve these objectives, assessment activities were undertaken to enhance branding and e-commerce strategies for women entrepreneurs in the creative sector. The assessment was performed through preliminary and subsequent tests, direct observations, and evaluations of the participants' branding deliverables and digital content creation. The outcomes of the preliminary and subsequent tests are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Participants' Evaluation Results (Pre-test and Post-test)

Participant's Name	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Improvement (%)	Remarks
MWD	45	80	77,8%	Significantly improved
FTI	50	85	70,0%	Significantly improved
ISQ	40	70	75,0%	Significantly improved
SSN	55	82	49,1%	Moderately improved
NRH	48	76	58,3%	Moderately improved
EJT	42	73	73,8%	Significantly improved
UMR	60	88	46,7%	Moderately improved
SRN	38	65	71,1%	Significantly improved
NHW	52	81	55,8%	Moderately improved
TRA	47	79	68,1%	Significantly improved
Average	47,7	77,9	64,6%	-

Assessment outcomes from initial tests and final evaluations reveal a significant enhancement in participants' expertise and capabilities, with an average increase of 64,6%. Certain entrepreneurs also noted a rise in sales and an expanded customer base, including orders from beyond the local area. These results validate the efficacy of the participatory methodology, reinforcing Keller and Swaminathan's (2020) assertion that empowerment initiatives thrive when beneficiaries actively engage in both educational and practical experiences. The introspective insights further indicate that capacity enhancement programs should emphasize flexibility, cultural awareness, and sustained support. Moreover, this initiative embodies the tenets of ethno-economics (Gudeman, 2016), where the economic actions of Malay Jambi women are intricately linked to the cultural values they uphold. Branding products that showcase unique batik designs and traditional stories illustrates that economic endeavors are not exclusively focused on financial gain but also on preserving cultural heritage. Consequently, this community engagement seamlessly integrates economic and cultural elements, thereby boosting competitiveness while upholding local wisdom.

CONCLUSION

This community engagement initiative, backed by the Institute for Research and Community Service at the University of Jambi, demonstrates that a cohesive participatory strategy combining culture-oriented branding development with effective e-commerce applications significantly enhances the capacity and competitiveness of Malay Jambi women entrepreneurs. Executed through five interconnected phases: needs assessment, awareness raising, skill development, coaching, and evaluation, the program effectively tackled critical structural challenges, as demonstrated by a notable surge in participants' branding and digital skills, with average knowledge metrics climbing from 47.7% to 77.9%. Additionally, it resulted in tangible outputs such as standardized logos, culturally significant packaging, digital catalogs, and actively maintained e-commerce profiles. Beyond financial gains, incorporating local wisdom into branding strategies reinforced cultural identity and product uniqueness in the digital marketplace. Nonetheless, the program encountered several obstacles, including a relatively short implementation timeframe, varying levels of pre-existing digital literacy among participants, and limited evaluation of long-term economic effects, such as ongoing sales growth. To ensure sustainability, future efforts should institutionalize ongoing mentorship through local business networks, strengthen collaborations with government bodies and digital marketplaces, and implement regular assessments of digital platform use to foster business scaling, market growth, and the enduring resilience of culture-driven women-led MSMEs in the digital age.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

FUNDING INFORMATION STATEMENT

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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