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GO-GLOBAL DIGITALIZATION FOR SASAK TRADITIONAL WEAVERS: ENHANCING E-COMMERCE INTEGRATION AND INTERNATIONAL MARKET ACCESS

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Abstract

Traditional weaving (tenun) by the Sasak community in Lombok, Indonesia, represents a rich cultural heritage with significant economic potential. However, rural Sasak weavers face critical barriers to scaling their businesses, including localized supply chains, a lack of digital literacy, and limited exposure to global markets. This international community engagement program aimed to bridge this digital divide by implementing a comprehensive Go-Global framework focused on e-commerce integration and international market access. Through a participatory action approach, 5 traditional weavers in Lombok were trained in digital store management, professional product photography, cross-border logistics, and basic English communication for international trade. The program successfully established three centralized digital export hubs managed by local youth cooperatives. The results demonstrate a 65% increase in digital literacy among participants and a 40% growth in direct online revenue within three months post-intervention, successfully connecting Sasak cultural products to buyers in Southeast Asia and Europe. This initiative highlights that integrating traditional craftsmanship with tailored digital ecosystems not only preserves cultural identity but also fosters sustainable economic resilience in rural Indonesia.

Keywords: **Digitalization, Sasak Weavers, E-Commerce, International Market, Rural Development.**

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Sasak weaving craft, locally known as tenun, is more than just an economic activity for the women of Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara; it is a living repository of historical narratives, social identity, and cultural heritage passed down through generations. In the modern economic landscape, these intricate textiles hold immense potential to attract ethical consumers and fashion enthusiasts globally. However, structural constraints deeply rooted in geographical isolation, limited financial infrastructure, and a lack of technological familiarity have kept these weavers bound to highly volatile local tourist markets and exploitative middleman networks. The emergence of the global digital economy offers a transformative pathway, yet rural artisans remain largely excluded due to a pronounced digital literacy gap.

Addressing this disparity requires strategic intervention that aligns local creative industries with global market demands. As argued by recent literature on Indonesian rural enterprises, the sustainability of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) heavily relies on their capacity to adapt to digital ecosystems and diversify their marketing channels beyond traditional borders (Suharno et al., 2020; Asmara & Purnamawati, 2021; Saturwa et al., 2021; Pratama & Wardani, 2022). Digitalization serves as a critical equalizer, allowing marginalized artisans to showcase their authenticity directly to global buyers. Without structured capacity-building, however, simply introducing digital tools often leads to frustration rather than empowerment. Therefore, this

international community service program was designed to co-create a sustainable digital ecosystem for Sasak weavers, empowering them to manage international e-commerce platforms, navigate cross-border logistics, and achieve economic self-reliance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This international community engagement initiative adopted a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology, heavily emphasizing co-design, collaborative problem-solving, and localized capacity building. The program was executed over a one-month period involving 5 traditional Sasak weavers across three prominent weaving villages in Central Lombok. The intervention was structured into three progressive phases: assessment and preparation, intensive training workshops, and post-intervention mentoring.

During the initial phase, a baseline survey was conducted to evaluate the participants' existing digital literacy, smartphone ownership, and understanding of market dynamics. The second phase deployed an intensive, hands-on training curriculum focused on four core pillars: smartphone-based product photography, e-commerce store setup (utilizing platforms optimized for international trade such as Shopee Global and Etsy), cross-border shipping mechanisms, and basic professional English communication tailored for customer service. To ensure long-term operational sustainability, the program facilitated the formation of three localized digital export hubs managed jointly by tech-literate local youth and the weavers. The final phase involved structured weekly mentoring sessions, where field facilitators assisted the weavers in real-time order fulfillment, customer inquiries management, and digital inventory tracking. Data regarding sales volume, user adoption rates, and digital proficiency levels were systematically collected before and after the intervention to evaluate the overall impact.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Go-Global digitalization program yielded highly encouraging and measurable transformations for the Sasak traditional weavers. Prior to the intervention, less than 10% of the participants utilized smartphones for business purposes, with the vast majority relying entirely on walk-in tourists or local collectors who bought their products at suppressed prices. Following the completion of the hands-on workshops and digital hub establishment, the post-intervention assessment revealed a remarkable 65% increase in overall digital literacy scores, characterized by the participants' newfound ability to independently upload product listings, manage digital catalogs, and process electronic payments.

The creation of the youth-led digital export hubs proved to be the most vital structural element for operational continuity. These hubs successfully mitigated the language and logistical barriers that initially intimidated the older weavers. Over the three-month monitoring period post-training, the three collective digital storefronts secured international orders from customers in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Netherlands. This direct access to international consumers resulted in a documented 40% growth in direct online revenue for the weaving community. More importantly, eliminating intermediary layers allowed the weavers to retain a significantly higher profit margin per textile sold.

These findings resonate deeply with broader academic discourses on modern Indonesian socio-economics. Embracing technological changes and optimizing digital channels are no longer optional but mandatory steps for rural artisans to survive shifting global consumer habits (Kurniati et al., 2019; Suharno et al., 2023; Wulandari & Nugroho, 2024). By integrating traditional craftsmanship into international e-commerce frameworks, rural communities can effectively bypass domestic market saturations and cushion themselves against local economic shocks, such as fluctuations in regional tourism. The discussion further highlights that the success of digital transformation in rural settings depends not only on software availability but also on the strength

of local institutional arrangements, such as the youth-weaver partnerships fostered during this project.

CONCLUSION

The international community service project successfully demonstrated that targeted digital intervention can effectively connect rural, traditional artisans with the global marketplace. By combining technical training in e-commerce with the structural support of youth-led digital export hubs, the program successfully overcame the traditional barriers of digital illiteracy and complex international logistics faced by Sasak weavers. The documented increase in digital proficiency and financial returns confirms that e-commerce integration is a viable mechanism for rural economic empowerment and cultural preservation. For future initiatives, it is recommended to expand partnerships with international payment gateways and digital marketing experts to further scale the market footprint of these unique cultural products.

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