



IMPROVING BRANDING THROUGH PRODUCT PACKAGING

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ABSTRAK

UMKM Desa Kalisalak, Kabupaten Batang, memiliki potensi besar pada produk lokal seperti gethuk, jenang, dodol, jamu, dan teh herbal, namun menghadapi kendala dalam aspek branding dan kemasan yang masih sederhana, belum memiliki label, barcode, serta legalitas produk. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan meningkatkan pemahaman dan keterampilan pelaku UMKM dalam mengembangkan branding melalui pengemasan produk yang menarik, informatif, dan sesuai standar industri. Objek kegiatan adalah 30 pelaku UMKM yang mengikuti rangkaian program dengan metode seminar, pelatihan praktik, diskusi, pendampingan, dan gamifikasi. Proses kegiatan dilaksanakan melalui tiga tahap, yaitu persiapan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi dengan instrumen pretest dan posttest. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan signifikan pengetahuan dan keterampilan peserta, di mana mayoritas mampu menghasilkan rancangan kemasan yang lebih menarik serta berkomitmen menerapkannya pada produk. Dengan demikian, kegiatan pengabdian ini terbukti efektif menjawab kebutuhan mitra dan berkontribusi pada peningkatan daya saing UMKM Desa Kalisalak di pasar yang lebih luas.

ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kalisalak Village, Batang Regency, have great potential in producing local products such as gethuk, jenang, dodol, herbal drinks, and tea. However, most products still face challenges in branding and packaging, including the absence of labels, barcodes, and legal certification, as well as simple and unattractive packaging that reduces market competitiveness. This community service program aimed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and awareness of MSME actors regarding the importance of branding through product packaging that is appealing, informative, and meets industrial standards. The program involved 30 participants, including MSME owners and residents interested in starting new businesses. The team designed the activities using participatory methods, conducting seminars, practical training, group discussions, mentoring, and gamification to strengthen participants' engagement and understanding. The team implemented the process in three stages: preparation, execution, and evaluation, and used pretest and posttest instruments to support the evaluation. The results indicated a significant improvement in participants' knowledge and skills, with most participants producing improved packaging designs and showing commitment to applying them to their products. Overall, the program effectively addressed partners' needs and strengthened the competitiveness of local MSME products in broader markets.

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in economic development, contributing significantly to employment, industrial production, and exports. However, globalization has presented both opportunities and challenges for these businesses. Some of the challenges faced by MSMEs include increased market competition. (Bala Subrahmanya M.H., 2011; Nagayya D. & Tirumala Rao P., 2013; Singh, 2019), technological challenges (Prasanna et al., 2019; Singh, 2019; Singh et al., 2014), efficient operations (Atristain & Rajagopal, 2010; Garg & Agarwal, 2017), and information security (Elyta et al., 2024). Globalization has increased competition, forcing SMEs to adopt strategies aligned with global trends to survive and grow (Bala Subrahmanya M.H., 2011; Nagayya D. & Tirumala Rao P., 2013; Singh, 2019). The entry of new competitors, especially from countries with low labor costs such as China, has pressured SMEs to reduce production costs and increase productivity (Naradda Gamage et al., 2020; Wang, 2009).

Market competition in the era of globalization requires businesses to maintain the existence of their products or services through various strategies. One aspect that determines the success of a product in the market is strong branding. Branding is an important component for the success of a product in the market. Branding has many functions that collectively improve market performance and customer perception of a product. The main functions of branding include product identification (Dace, 2004; Mullin, 2006; Telpner, 2004), building consumer trust (Bandara Wanninayake W.M.C. & Chovancová, 2011; Dace, 2004; Tashji, 2007), competitive strategy

(Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Keating, 2005; Lowther, 2009; Marren, 2011), as a form of emotional connection with customers (Tashji, 2007; Waart & Mulder, 2009), and as a marketing strategy (Tashji, 2007; Zarei & Bahadorinezhad, 2024).

Considering the many functions of branding, MSMEs need to strengthen their product image to retain existing customers and attract potential customers. There are various ways to strengthen product image, such as creating an eye-catching company logo, a memorable brand name, and product packaging that meets standards. Selling can employ the following strategies to utilize branding effectively through attractive product packaging.

First, increased visual appeal. Packaging that is visually appealing and not too complicated tends to attract more consumer attention and be processed more smoothly, thereby increasing its appeal (Orth & Crouch, 2014). Simple designs are often associated with modernity, reliability, and authenticity, while complex designs convey excitement, imagination, and sophistication (Favier et al., 2019). Attractive packaging significantly influences consumer perception and purchasing decisions. For example, aesthetically appealing packaging in the beauty product category can lead consumers to conclude that the product is more effective (Sundar et al., 2020).

Second, customer behavior and perception. Packaging design influences consumers' emotional and cognitive responses. Attractive packaging can stimulate positive emotional responses and higher cognitive processing, improving brand perception and purchase intent (B. Pradhan, 2020; Suhendro et al., 2023). Effective packaging attracts consumers and helps develop brand recognition and loyalty. Packaging consistent with the brand

image can significantly influence purchase intent (Fretty, 2005; Yuwono, 2016).

Third, enhancing practical elements. Elements such as color, material, shape, and image play an important role in influencing consumer decisions. For example, symmetry in packaging design is often associated with a premium impression and quality (Doshi et al., 2023; Romeo-Arroyo et al., 2023). Multisensory packaging that engages the senses of sight, smell, hearing, and touch can create a more engaging brand experience and drive consumer behavior. (Dalglish, 2006; Langner et al., 2018).

Kalisalak Village is a village located within the Batang District, Batang Regency. The village consists of 5 hamlets. The population of Kalisalak Village is 3,277 people. Kalisalak Village has developed a Medium-Term Village Development Plan (RPJMDes) for 2019-2025, to outline the vision and mission of the elected village head. Additionally, the village has Village Regulation No. 2 of 2019, which governs the village's authority based on customary rights and local authority at the village level. Kalisalak Village has characteristics and regional conditions with potential for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) such as livestock and fisheries, culinary and processed foods, crafts and creative products, and agriculture.

Prior to the community service activities, the team observed 10 MSMEs in Kalisalak Village. The majority of MSMEs still package their products in plain, clear plastic without any brand identification. Eight out of 10 products (80%) lacked labels containing the product name, composition, net weight, and expiration date. Only three products (30%) included distribution permit information, and even then, it was written on the

packaging. None of the products had a barcode. Most MSMEs also used thin, easily torn packaging, which did not maintain product quality during storage and distribution. This condition made gethuk, jenang, dodol, jamu, and herbal tea products from Kalisalak Village appear unprofessional and unable to compete with similar products that already had modern and informative packaging. These initial findings suggest that packaging improvements are a pressing need as a gateway to enhancing branding for MSMEs in Kalisalak Village.

Culinary products and processed foods in Kalisalak Village include gethuk, jenang, dodol, corn and cassava, herbal medicine, herbal tea, and others. These products have the potential to be distributed nationally. One important note for SME actors in Kalisalak Village is the need for safe, attractive, and environmentally friendly product packaging that meets standards. Many local products have good quality but lack appeal in terms of packaging. The challenges include: 1) the absence of barcodes, labels, brands, and legal information on the products, 2) simple packaging designs that fail to attract consumers to purchase the products, and 3) the use of packaging materials that do not meet industry standards. Based on the importance of packaging and the challenges faced by MSMEs in Kalisalak Village, the community service team carried out an activity entitled "Improving Branding through Packaging."

METHOD

The community service team conducted community service activities in Kalisalak Village using a participatory method. This method was chosen because it actively involved the community throughout the community service process.

(Ratnaningsih et al., 2020). The service team designed activities through seminars, training, mentoring, discussions, and gamification. Seminars can help participants understand the importance of product branding through packaging. The service team designed training activities so participants could design products using Canva. Mentoring activities are chosen so participants can consult individually, online, or in person. Online consultations are conducted via Zoom during the service period. In-person consultations are conducted after the seminar. The service team uses gamification to test participants' understanding.

The team measured the success of the gamification using two indicators. First, the team assessed understanding of the material through a gamification quiz score. The quiz consisted of several questions regarding packaging functions, label completeness, and barcodes. The team assigned a score of 1 for each correct answer and a score of 0 for each incorrect answer, then calculated the percentage of correct answers for each participant. The team deemed the gamification successful if at least 70% of participants achieved a score of 70% or higher. Second, the team assessed participant engagement during the quiz. The team recorded the number of participants who answered questions, asked

questions, and responded to the presenter's statements in each round. The team declared the gamification session successful if the majority of participants actively engaged in the question-and-answer and discussion activities.

The target of this community service activity is MSME actors in Kalisalak Village who are engaged in culinary businesses, processed agricultural products, and other local products based on the village's potential. The target number of participants is 30. The community service team divided the activity into three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. In the preparation stage, the community service team coordinated with partners through online communication and face-to-face meetings. The service team identified the activity requirements based on the partners' issues, including the absence of labels, barcodes, product legality, simple packaging design, and packaging materials that do not meet standards. **Table 1** shows the identified issues and partner requirements. The service team prepared training materials in modules on branding, product packaging, and marketing strategies. Additionally, the service team developed assessment tools in the form of pretests and posttests to measure participants' understanding.

Tabel 1. Activity Requirements Matrix Based on Partner Issues

No	Issues	Requirement
1	The product does not yet have a barcode, label, brand, or legal information.	Participants need to understand and be able to create labels, brands, and legalities.
2	The packaging design is still simple and not very appealing to consumers.	Participants need packaging design skills that are in line with market trends.
3	The packaging materials used do not meet industry standards and are not environmentally friendly.	Participants need information on packaging materials that are safe, compliant with standards, and sustainable.
4	Knowledge of branding through packaging is still limited	Participants need packaging-based branding education to increase sales value.

Source: Community service team analysis (2025)

During the implementation phase, the team delivered the material through interactive seminars. The team divided the seminar into three topics: the importance of branding in MSMEs, strategies for creating attractive packaging designs, and selecting packaging materials that meet standards. The team presented the material in approximately 20 minutes. Seminars were chosen because they effectively improve public understanding through direct delivery and discussion (Pangondian Gultom, 2021). After presenting the material, the team used gamification by asking questions related to the material that had been presented for 10 minutes. Gamification created a fun atmosphere, increased learning motivation, and helped participants absorb information better (Alzahrani & Alhalafawy, 2022; Santos et al., 2021).

The community service team conducted practical training on creating simple packaging designs, adding labels, and simulating barcode creation. Participants were divided into groups to design packaging ideas for their products. In this session, the volunteer team acted as facilitators who provided direct assistance so participants

could produce attractive packaging designs. This practical approach is important because people find it easier to understand the material when it is accompanied by hands-on practice (Hastini et al., 2020).

The service team emphasizes continuous assistance. Assistance is provided in the form of consultation after the activity is completed. Participants can consult on packaging production, legal matters, or marketing strategies. The volunteer team provides support to participants online via text messages. Volunteers share their phone numbers during the seminar session. This support is crucial to ensure that the outcomes of the volunteer work do not end with the seminar alone but continue into the implementation phase by SMEs.

During the evaluation stage, the community service team measured participants' understanding by comparing pretest and posttest results. The team also evaluated participation through attendance, level of activity in discussions, and the results of the packaging design work produced. The service team compiled a final report as a form of accountability for the activity to the Faculty of Economics and

Business (FEB) of Semarang State University. The report's results are expected to serve as input for future service activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The community service team conducted activities in Kalisalak Village, Batang Regency, with 30 participants. The participants included MSME actors, housewives who developed culinary businesses, and village youths interested in starting new businesses. The community service carried out one-day activities with three main sessions: a branding and packaging seminar, practical packaging design training, and a gamification session to strengthen the participants' understanding.

The team began the activity by conducting a pretest. The pretest results showed that most participants did not understand the importance of branding through packaging. As many as 70% of participants scored low, 20% scored moderate, and only 10% had sufficient knowledge. Participants tended to be unaware of the function of barcodes, how to make product labels, and the appropriate packaging material standards.

In the first session, the team presented the seminar material. Participants listened to presentations on branding, the importance of packaging, and the role of labels and barcodes in product marketing. The team used presentation media, examples of packaged products, and simple illustrations. During the seminar, participants were enthusiastic and asked many questions, particularly about creating labels and business legality.



Picture 1. Seminar session



Picture 2. Documentation session with participants

In the second session, the volunteer team conducted practical training. Participants were divided into five groups. Each group practiced creating simple packaging designs using the materials provided. The volunteer team guided each group to ensure participants could apply the theories they had learned. The training results showed that participants could produce packaging designs that were more attractive than their initial products. Some participants could add simple logos and nutritional information to the packaging.

In the third session, the team implemented gamification. Participants took part in an interactive quiz by answering questions posed by the speaker. The quiz results showed an increased understanding of the material presented by the participants. A total of 80% of participants were able to answer more than 70% of the questions correctly. The gamification atmosphere made participants more enthusiastic, making the material easier to understand. **Table 2** shows that 24 of the 30 participants (80%) achieved a

minimum score of 70. This result means that the gamification session met the success criteria that the team set.

Table 2. Gamification quiz results

Range Score	Number Of Participants	Percentage	Category
85-100	10	33.3%	Primely
70-84	14	46.7%	Good
<70	6	20%	Weak

Source: data from community service activities (2025)

After completing the entire series of activities, the service team conducted a posttest. The posttest results showed an increase in participants' understanding. A total of 75% of participants achieved a high score, 20% achieved a moderate score, and only 5% achieved a low score. This shows a significant improvement compared to the pretest results. Table 3 displays the pretest and posttest results during the activity.

Table 3. Pretest and posttest results

Title Of Material	Pretest	Posttest
Product branding	Low	High
Packaging design	Low	Medium
Legality and Labelling	Low	High

Source: data from community service activities (2025)

The team also recorded tangible results from the training activities. Some participants committed to improving their product packaging by adding labels and logos. Participants working in the food processing sector, such as gethuk, jenang, and jamu, stated they would immediately

implement new, more attractive designs. Participants also said they would try using more environmentally friendly packaging materials.

The community service activity improved the participants' knowledge, skills, and motivation to strengthen branding through product packaging. The community service team documented the activity through photos, videos, and discussion notes. This documentation will be used for reports and publications in print media and community service journals.

The results of the activities show that the community service program successfully addressed most of the partners' problems. The partners' initial problems, namely the absence of labels, barcodes, and product legality, were overcome through training sessions. Participants gained a basic understanding of how to create labels and logos. This aligns with Mullin (2006) opinion, which emphasizes that branding is important in creating consumer perceptions of products. Simple branding through labels and logos can increase consumer trust (Bandara Wanninayake W.M.C. & Chovancová, 2011).

The second problem, simple packaging design, can be overcome through practical training. The group's work shows the participants' creativity in adding more attractive visual elements. This is in line with the findings of Orth & Crouch (2014), who state that visual packaging design significantly affects consumer appeal. Participants realized that simple but aesthetic designs can increase the selling value of their products.

The third issue, namely the use of packaging materials that do not meet standards, has also begun to be addressed. Through seminars, participants understand the importance of safe and

environmentally friendly materials. This understanding supports the achievement of SDG 12 on responsible consumption and production. Romeo-Arroyo et al. (2023) found that selecting packaging materials influences product quality and sustainability perceptions. Therefore, this knowledge is important for raising participants' awareness and helping them to be more selective in choosing packaging materials.

The fourth problem, namely, low learning motivation among participants, can be addressed through gamification. Participants appear more active and enthusiastic during interactive quizzes. This aligns with the research by Santos et al. (2021), which demonstrates that gamification enhances the effectiveness of learning in training and development. Alzahrani & Alhalafawy (2022) also emphasize that gamification can increase participant engagement in distance learning processes, and these findings are also relevant in the context of community service activities.

From a sustainability perspective, post-activity assistance is an important strategy. Participants need a platform to consult about ongoing challenges. The service team provides online communication through a messaging group. This strategy is important because service does not end with the seminar; it must create a long-term impact. Hastini et al. (2020) emphasize that using technology in learning can improve community literacy, so online support can help the community continue to develop after the activity is completed.

When compared to previous studies, the results of this activity show consistency. Pangondian Gultom (2021) emphasizes that seminars can develop entrepreneurial spirit, while this activity proves that seminars can also improve branding and packaging skills. This shows that the

seminar approach can create a more effective learning process when combined with practice and gamification.

Although the results of the activity showed improvement, there were several obstacles. Some participants still had difficulty operating digital devices to create packaging designs. Therefore, follow-up activities must focus on training using simple design applications. In addition, participants also need further support regarding product licensing, particularly in the administration of PIRT or BPOM. This is a note for the community service team to involve relevant agencies in the following community service program.

Overall, this discussion confirms that the community service activities successfully solved the partners' problems. The program's success can be seen from the increase in participants' knowledge, creativity in packaging, and a new enthusiasm for developing their businesses. With ongoing assistance, this program is expected to have a long-term impact on improving the competitiveness of MSME products in Kalisalak Village.

CONCLUSION

The community service activities in Kalisalak Village, Batang Regency, have been successfully implemented through several stages, including preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, the service team identified the issues faced by the partners and developed materials relevant to the needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). During the implementation phase, the team applied seminars, practical training, group discussions, and gamification to enhance participants' understanding and skills in branding

and product packaging. The activity results demonstrated a significant improvement in participants' knowledge and skills, as evidenced by comparisons between pretest and posttest scores, as well as the emergence of new packaging designs that are more attractive, informative, and compliant with standards. During the evaluation phase, the service team assessed that the program increased participants' enthusiasm, creativity, and awareness of the importance of branding and environmentally friendly packaging materials.

This community service activity enhanced MSMEs' understanding of the functions of packaging and branding, and encouraged them to apply more informative and attractive packaging principles to their products. Several MSMEs began printing and using new label designs on the products they sell. The village government expressed its commitment to continuing the mentoring through advanced training on packaging and licensing. The community service team and MSMEs also formed an online communication group for consultations on design, barcoding, and preparation of distribution permits after the activity concluded. Furthermore, the team developed a short module on packaging and branding as a self-help guide that can be reused in subsequent mentoring programs.

Based on the entire process, it can be concluded that this service activity provided real solutions to the partners' problems, particularly regarding the absence of product labels and legal compliance, simple packaging designs, and a lack of knowledge about standard-compliant packaging materials. For sustainability, the community service team recommends ongoing support through training on using simple design applications, facilitation of legal procedures such

as PIRT or BPOM, and collaboration with local government agencies or relevant institutions. With these follow-up actions, it is hoped that the products of the Kalisalak Village SMEs can achieve higher competitiveness in both local and national markets, while also contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs).

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