

Strengthening MSME Communication Networks Through Student Work Practices in the Kediri City Government

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of students in strengthening the communication network of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kediri City through Student Work Practice (PKM) in the Protocol and Leadership Communication Section. This research identifies the challenges faced by MSMEs in marketing local products, especially batik and ikat weaving, as well as the importance of effective communication. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection through interviews, direct observation, and document analysis for 45 days. The results of the study show that student involvement in public relations activities can improve the marketing strategy of MSMEs and strengthen government support. The importance of collaboration between students and MSME actors to overcome marketing challenges and strengthen the image of local products, especially batik and ikat weaving in Kediri City. The participation of students contributes to creating synergy between MSME actors and the government in facing the challenges of the global market. Thus, PKM not only functions as a learning forum for students, but also as a real contribution to local economic development.

Keywords: *Student Work Practice (PKM) Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Public Communication, Local Product Development*

INTRODUCTION

Strengthening the communication network of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is one of the important strategies in increasing the competitiveness of local products, especially in Kediri City which is known for its batik products and ikat weaving. In this context, students who undergo Student Work Practice (PKM) in the Kediri City Government act as a liaison between MSME business actors and the government. Through this activity, students not only gain practical experience but also contribute to building synergy between various stakeholders involved in the development of MSMEs. According to (Novitasari, 2022) The role of the government is urgently needed to foster and assist MSMEs so that they can survive and develop in facing various problems.

Kediri City has great potential in the MSME sector, especially in batik handicraft products and ikat weaving. However, according to (Andayani et al., 2021) Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kediri City face challenges in marketing their products effectively, and an empowerment strategy that focuses on online marketing and product innovation is urgently needed. Many business actors face challenges in marketing their products effectively. This is where the role of students becomes crucial, they can help identify problems faced by MSMEs and offer relevant solutions. With the knowledge gained from higher education, students can provide new insights into marketing strategies and product development.

The work practice of students in the Protocol and Communication Section of the Leadership not only focuses on the technical aspects of communication, but also on the development of interpersonal relationships between MSME actors and the government. This activity creates a space for constructive dialogue, where business actors can convey their

needs and expectations to the government. This is important to ensure that the policies taken can support the growth of MSMEs effectively.



Figure 1. Group photo of the Field Supervisor and Honorary Lecturer of PKM KPI 2024

One of the main activities during PKM is the implementation of digital product branding by creating video content, catalogs and press releases involving MSME actors. In the event, students played the role of facilitators who connected business actors with the Kediri City government. Thus, MSME players get access to the latest information on market trends, digital marketing techniques, and how to maintain the quality of their products to stay competitive (Napatipulu et al., 2020).

Through this approach, students not only help increase the knowledge of MSME actors but also strengthen the communication network between them. This network is very important to create collaboration between business actors (Yuda et al., 2021), so they can support each other and share resources. With this collaboration, it is hoped that Kediri batik and ikat weaving products can be more widely known and have better competitiveness in the national and international markets.

In addition, students also play a role in advocating the importance of product certification for MSMEs. Halal certification or other quality standards are one of the keys to opening a wider market (Surjandari et al., 2021). Through the mentoring program carried out during PKM, students help MSME actors understand the certification process and its benefits for their businesses. This is a strategic step to increase consumer confidence in local products.

In the context of social change, the existence of students as a liaison between the government and MSME actors is expected to encourage community participation in local economic development. With increasing awareness of the importance of supporting local products, people will be more motivated to buy Kediri batik and ikat weaving products (Haro et al., 2020). This not only has an impact on increasing the income of business actors but also on the creation of new jobs in the area.

Overall, PKM in the Kediri City Government has made a significant contribution to strengthening the communication network for MSMEs. Through collaboration between students, the government, and business actors, it is hoped that an ecosystem will be created

that supports local economic growth. This activity is a clear example of how higher education can contribute directly to community development through community service.

Thus, this journal aims to comprehensively describe the role of students in strengthening the MSME communication network in Kediri City and its impact on the sustainability of batik products and ikat weaving as regional icons. Through the analysis of various activities carried out during PKM, it is hoped that effective models can be found to increase student involvement in local economic development in the future.

METHOD

This research method is designed to explore the role of students in strengthening the communication network of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kediri City, with a focus on batik products and ikat weaving. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that allows researchers to understand social phenomena in depth (Fadli, 2021). The data collection process is carried out through several techniques, namely in-depth interviews, direct observations, and documentation studies. Using this method, researchers can dig up relevant information from various sources to get a comprehensive picture of the situation of MSMEs in Kediri.

Data collection was carried out using two main techniques: primary data and secondary data (Sugiyono, 2016). For primary data, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with MSME actors, students undergoing PKM, and related government parties. This interview aims to get a first-hand perspective on the challenges and strategies faced in strengthening communication networks. In addition, observations were made at MSME business locations to observe communication practices that take place between business actors and consumers. Secondary data was obtained through literature studies that included government policy documents and reports related to the development of MSMEs in Kediri City.

The sample design in this study uses purposive sampling, where informants are selected based on certain criteria that are relevant to the focus of the research. The informants consisted of MSME actors who produce batik and ikat weaving, students involved in PKM, and government officials from the Protocol and Leadership Communication Section. The selection of informants is carried out to ensure that the data obtained is accurate and trustworthy. This also helps researchers in obtaining in-depth information about the experiences and challenges faced by MSMEs.

Once the data is collected, the analysis is carried out by following the following steps: first, data reduction, where the researcher filters relevant information from the results of interviews and observations. Second, data presentation, where data is arranged in the form of tables and narratives to facilitate understanding. Third, conclusion drawn, where the researcher analyzes the information that has been presented to find patterns or themes that emerge from the data. This method of analysis refers to the Miles and Huberman approach which emphasizes the importance of data validity through source triangulation.

The following is a summary table of data obtained during the study:

Data Type	Resources	Collection Method
Interview	MSME Actors, PKM Students, Government Officials	In-Depth Interviews

Data Type	Resources	Collection Method
Observation	Location of MSME Business	Live Observation
Policy Documents	MSME Development Report, Government Policy	Documentation Studies

Through this research method, it is hoped that effective strategies can be identified in strengthening the communication network between MSME actors and the government. This research not only provides an academic contribution but also practical for the development of MSMEs in Kediri City. Thus, the results of the research can be used as a basis to formulate policies and supporting programs for MSME actors so that Kediri batik and ikat weaving products are increasingly widely known and have high competitiveness in the market.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study focus on the role of students in strengthening the communication network of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Kediri City through Student Work Practice (PKM) in the Protocol and Leadership Communication Section. This research revealed several key findings related to strengthening communication networks, challenges faced by MSME actors, and student contributions in supporting the development of local products, especially batik and ikat weaving.

Key Findings

1. **The Role of Students as Liaison:** Students function as a bridge between MSME actors and the government, helping to convey important information related to policies that have an impact on the development of MSMEs. Through activities such as workshops and seminars, students succeeded in educating MSME actors about marketing strategies and branding of their products.
2. **Challenges Faced by MSME Actors:** The results of interviews with MSME actors show that many of them have difficulty in marketing their products effectively. Lack of understanding of digital marketing and branding is a major obstacle. Students help address these issues by providing training and mentorship.
3. **The Importance of Documentation and Publication:** During PKM, students are also involved in creating content for social media that aims to promote MSME products. This includes the creation of videos and catalogs featuring Kediri ikat crafts and ikat weaving. This activity not only increases product visibility but also helps build a positive image of Kediri City as a center for crafts.
4. **Community Engagement:** Research shows that community involvement in supporting local products increases after promotional activities carried out by students. The public has become more aware of the existence of batik and ikat weaving products, thereby encouraging increased sales for MSME actors.
5. **Suggestions for Further Development:** To increase the effectiveness of the PKM program in the future, it is recommended that there be more collaboration between

students, MSME actors, and the government. This study recommends the implementation of a sustainable program that involves advanced training for MSME actors regarding digital marketing and business management.

Research Findings Data Table

Research Aspects	Findings
The Role of Students	Students become a liaison between MSMEs and the government, providing education and support.
Challenges of MSME Actors	Difficulties in digital marketing and product branding are the main obstacles.
Documentation and Publications	The creation of social media content increases the visibility of batik and ikat weaving products.
Community Involvement	Public awareness of local products increased after the promotion was carried out.
Suggestions for Development	The need for further collaboration between all parties for sustainable programs.

The results of this study show that Student Work Practice in the Kediri City Government not only provides benefits for students in terms of practical experience but also makes a real contribution to strengthening the MSME communication network and the development of local products that have become icons of the region. Through synergy between students, the government, and MSME actors, it is hoped that the sustainability of this program can continue to support local economic growth in Kediri City.

Discussion

An analysis of the relationship between the Student Work Practice (PKM) program and the strengthening of expertise shows that students play an important role in building a communication network between Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) actors in Kediri City and the government. Audiences, which are made up of various individuals and groups, interact with the organization internally as well as externally. Frank (Jefkins, 1992) defines public relations as any type of planned communication, both inside and outside the organization.

In this context, students as part of the public relations team have the responsibility to establish effective communication with the internal public such as employees and the external public including suppliers, investors, and the general public. Therefore, public relations activities carried out by students not only aim to convey information but also to build a positive public opinion of MSMEs and local products such as batik and ikat weaving. Protocol and leadership communication activities are the main focus in the Islamic broadcasting communication study program.

Through this PKM, students learn about the importance of creating video content that contains relevant messages. This activity not only involves shooting and video editing techniques, but also emphasizes on delivering messages that appeal to the audience (Klug et al., 2021). In this case, students are taught to not only record the moment but also consider the impact of the content shared on social media. Thus, they can create attractive and informative catalogs and promotional materials to support MSMEs in Kediri City.

During PKM at the Protocol and Communication Section of the Kediri City Government Leadership, students were involved in various practical tasks such as research on MSME crafts, taking photos and videos, and making catalogs. This experience provides students with the opportunity to hone their communication skills and increase their confidence in public speaking. Through direct interaction with MSME actors, they learn how to communicate well and effectively, as well as understand the needs of the existing market. This shows that PKM activities not only improve theoretical knowledge but also provide very valuable practical experience for students.

Indicators of the success of this program can be seen from several activities that have been carried out.

- First, observation of batik and ikat weaving MSME businesses in Kediri City allows students to understand the characteristics of local products.

- Second, content idea research in the form of creative catalogs and videos helps students pay attention to the quality of the content and the target audience to ensure a positive impact on related stakeholders.

- Third, shooting in the field is carried out in accordance with the results of previous observations, so as to produce relevant and quality promotional materials.

- Fourth, field observation provides insight into various situations that occur in MSME business locations.

The effect of field experience on students' self-competence is also very significant. The practical experience gained during PKM increases their confidence in communicating and interacting with various parties. According to Saputro and Suseno's research, field work experience is closely related to individual job readiness. By going directly into the field, students not only gain new knowledge but also expand relationships and skills in the field of public relations such as text dubbing and video content creation. This experience is the foundation for them to be ready to face challenges in the world of work after completing higher education.

Overall, the PKM program in the Kediri City Government has made a significant contribution to strengthening the MSME communication network and the development of local products. Through collaboration between students, the government, and MSME actors, it is hoped that an ecosystem will be created that supports local economic growth. The results of this activity show that higher education can play an active role in community development through real service to the local community.



Figure 2. Observation and Interview of Numansa Batik. September 2024



Figure 3. Observation of Ikat Weaving (Non-Machine Loom/ATBM) Bandar Kidul, Kediri City



Figure 4. Video Recording Process for MSME Product Branding

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the Student Work Practice (PKM) in the Protocol and Communication Section of the Kediri City Government Leadership shows that this program has a significant impact on strengthening the communication network between Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the government. During the 45 days of implementation from September 2 to October 15, 2024, students play the role of effective liaisons, helping to create a positive image for the city government through planned communication. The tasks carried out, such as taking pictures, making videos, and compiling MSME product catalogs, show students' ability to apply the knowledge gained in college into real practice.

Through this field experience, students not only learn about the importance of good communication but also face challenges in adjusting to the world of work. They realize that to be able to compete in the professional world, strong communication skills and a deep understanding of current issues relevant to MSMEs are required. The program also provides opportunities for students to develop their confidence in public speaking and interacting with various parties, including business actors and the general public.

Overall, the results of this PKM show that collaboration between students, the government, and MSME actors can create synergies that are beneficial for local economic development. The strengthening of the communication network carried out during this program is expected to continue and provide long-term benefits for MSMEs in Kediri City, especially in promoting batik products and ikat weaving as regional icons. Thus, PKM not only functions as a learning forum for students but also as a means to support local economic growth through effective public relations activities.

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