

From Local to Global: Strengthening SMEs through Internasional Collaboration to Upscale Yussy Akmal's Global Branding

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ABSTRACT

The program “From Local to Global: Strengthening SMEs through International Collaboration to Upscale Yussy Akmal's Global Branding” was designed to enhance the global competitiveness of local creative industries, particularly focusing on Yussy Akmal—an SME specializing in culture-based crafts and fashion. Through collaborative training, mentoring, and digital branding initiatives, the program successfully bridged local identity with international market standards. Evaluation results revealed that 91% of participants improved their international marketing capacity, 84% gained confidence in engaging foreign markets, and 78% were motivated to innovate products aligned with global trends. The main outputs included a bilingual training module, a brand book, a digital lookbook, and active global social media platforms. This initiative proved effective in strengthening entrepreneurial skills, fostering global perspectives, and promoting sustainable cultural branding for Indonesian SMEs.

Keywords: *SMEs, global branding, creative industry, digital marketing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and digital transformation, the concept of branding has become one of the most crucial determinants of business competitiveness, especially for enterprises aiming to penetrate international markets. The global marketplace is no longer dominated by large multinational corporations alone, but is increasingly accessible to emerging businesses and creative entrepreneurs capable of offering distinctive values through branding. In this context, Yussy Akmal stands as a strategic case illustrating how a local brand can evolve into a global entity through the systematic development of brand identity, international collaboration, and cross-cultural communication. The study of Yussy Akmal's branding journey provides significant insights into how local creativity can be positioned to achieve global recognition and sustainability in international markets.

Branding is more than a visual identity or marketing slogan—it represents the overall perception of value that connects a product or service with its target audience (Kotler & Keller, 2016). For small and medium enterprises, particularly those rooted in local culture and creativity, the process of brand internationalization involves not only product adaptation but also the ability to communicate meaning and authenticity that resonate globally. Yussy Akmal's experience demonstrates how cultural capital and local narratives can be transformed into unique selling propositions that attract international audiences. Through a blend of design innovation, cultural storytelling, and international partnership, the brand exemplifies the idea that globalization does not necessarily erase local identity but can, instead, amplify it through creative adaptation.

The global market demands a comprehensive understanding of international branding theory. According to Hollensen (2017), the success of a brand in international markets depends on its ability to balance standardization and adaptation strategies. Standardization ensures consistent brand identity, while adaptation allows flexibility to meet local consumer expectations and cultural nuances. Yussy Akmal applies this principle through product design that retains Indonesian cultural aesthetics while aligning with modern international trends. The result is a form of glocalization—the integration of global appeal with local authenticity—which enables the brand to remain competitive in diverse markets.

Furthermore, the development of international collaboration plays a key role in strengthening brand positioning. Perry, Carson, and Gilmore (2003) highlight that networking and partnerships are essential in international marketing because they facilitate access to new markets, knowledge sharing, and resource optimization. In the case of Yussy Akmal, collaborations with foreign designers, educational institutions, and international exhibitions serve as a gateway for brand exposure and knowledge exchange. These partnerships not only expand market reach but also elevate brand

credibility through cross-border recognition. The experience underscores that international collaboration is not merely a marketing tool but also a mechanism for creative learning, innovation, and cultural diplomacy.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) emphasize that applied research in branding must focus on the relationship between planning and implementation in achieving real-world outcomes. From this perspective, the study of Yussy Akmal's branding process involves identifying both the internal and external factors that influence the brand's growth in the international arena. Internally, the brand's success is driven by strong leadership, creative direction, and consistent visual identity. Externally, global exposure, digital media presence, and collaborative projects contribute significantly to its brand equity. This dual framework helps explain how a creative enterprise can strategically build and sustain its presence in the global market.

Moreover, HKT Consultant JSC (2021) in the Network Theory of Internationalization highlights the importance of inter-organizational relationships as a means to enhance market learning and reduce the risks of foreign expansion. In Yussy Akmal's context, international networks provide opportunities for mutual learning and shared innovation, allowing the brand to navigate cultural differences and consumer expectations more effectively. Such networking contributes to the creation of a dynamic ecosystem in which local creativity is supported by global collaboration.

The case of Yussy Akmal also sheds light on how branding can function as a bridge between local identity and global opportunity. The interplay between creativity, entrepreneurship, and cultural diplomacy enables the brand to redefine its role not only as a commercial entity but also as an ambassador of Indonesian culture. Through the strategic use of storytelling, visual identity, and sustainable practices, the brand positions itself as part of the global creative economy while maintaining its cultural integrity. This aligns with the growing discourse on the need for ethical branding and sustainable design in the global market—values increasingly appreciated by international consumers who seek authenticity and responsibility in the brands they support.

In conclusion, the development of Yussy Akmal's branding for global market opportunities demonstrates that international success requires more than product excellence; it demands cultural sensitivity, innovation, and collaborative engagement. The combination of strong brand identity, network-based internationalization, and creative adaptation forms the foundation of its global competitiveness. The brand's journey exemplifies how a well-conceptualized and well-executed branding strategy can transform local potential into global relevance, serving as a model for other creative industries aspiring to compete on the international stage.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This international community service program employed a participatory approach, emphasizing collaboration between the implementing team and the partner enterprise, Yussy Akmal. This approach ensured active involvement at each stage, from planning to evaluation, to achieve sustainable outcomes in global branding and international collaboration.

The implementation consisted of five stages. The preparation stage involved coordination with the partner to set the schedule, prepare materials on global branding and international marketing, and determine relevant international partners. The training and workshop stage provided knowledge and practice on global branding, glocalization, and digital marketing. Participants learned to design international strategies and create promotional content suited for global audiences.

In the mentoring and product adjustment stage, the team guided the partner in improving product design, materials, and packaging to meet international standards. Prototype testing and limited market trials were conducted to evaluate consumer responses. The business networking stage connected Yussy Akmal with international partners through business matching and exhibitions, both online and offline, followed by monitoring and partnership development.

The evaluation and sustainability stage assessed achievements and built a network of MSMEs for continued collaboration. Evaluation was conducted using both formative and summative methods to measure attendance, engagement, improved content quality, and the number of established partnerships. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation analysis.

Key participants included the implementation team, partner MSME (Yussy Akmal), international experts, foreign business partners, and technical support staff. The partner played an active role in every stage, providing products, joining training sessions, managing global media accounts, and participating in exhibitions.

To ensure sustainability, the program established an MSME network, maintained collaboration with international partners, optimized digital platforms, and planned ongoing capacity-building and periodic monitoring. This structured

participatory method not only enhanced Yussy Akmal's global competitiveness but also created a long-term framework for international collaboration among Indonesian creative enterprises.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results of the Program

This section presents the outcomes of the international branding empowerment program, covering three major stages: (1) Global Branding Training, (2) Digital Marketing and Content Workshop, and (3) Product Development and Mentorship. Each stage demonstrates significant progress in participants' knowledge, digital competence, and market readiness.

3.2 Global Branding Training

The global branding training focused on building conceptual and practical understanding of global branding strategy, market positioning, and cross-cultural marketing communication. Pre-assessment results revealed that participants had limited understanding of international branding strategies, with an average pre-test score of 42 out of 100. After the training, the post-test average increased to 75, representing a 78% improvement in participants' comprehension. This improvement was achieved through case-based learning featuring success stories of Southeast Asian brands such as Batik Keris, Naelofar Hijab, and Pomelo Fashion—brands that successfully penetrated the global market.

A key outcome of this stage was a shift in participants' mindset. Initially, branding was perceived merely as visual promotion (logos, packaging, and slogans). However, participants began to understand branding as a cross-cultural communication strategy that conveys values, identity, and culture. This transformation inspired Yussy Akmal to redefine its brand vision to "Representing Local Elegance to the World," emphasizing the integration of Lampung's cultural values into a global framework. The findings of this stage support Dwianto (2021), who emphasizes that the success of an organization in the global arena depends not only on internal resources but also on its ability to form strategic collaborations with external partners. Through international collaboration, Yussy Akmal strengthened brand legitimacy and extended its global market access.

3.3 Digital Marketing and Content Workshop

The second stage aimed to enhance participants' digital literacy and global marketing skills. Participants were trained to manage professional international social media accounts, write English captions, apply hashtag targeting, perform SEO optimization for global marketplaces, and create visual content using Canva Pro and CapCut Premium.

The digital impact of this training was remarkable. According to the analytics, Yussy Akmal's Instagram engagement rate increased from 1.9% to 6.3% within three months, and audience reach rose by over 250%, with the highest international traffic coming from Malaysia (27%), Singapore (14%), and the United Kingdom (10%). Moreover, 82% of participants successfully managed their own affiliate accounts or online stores, and 65% produced independent promotional content. This progress marked a significant transition from traditional MSME owners to digital entrepreneurs capable of managing integrated online businesses.

These results align with Irawan (2025), who found that the growth of small enterprises in the global digital era relies heavily on technological integration to expand networks and markets. The omni-channel marketing strategy—combining social media, global marketplaces, and digital catalogs—proved effective in reinforcing Yussy Akmal's brand presence internationally. Based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1984, in Amaliah, 2016), participants' learning outcomes improved through direct practice and simulation, enhancing their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains simultaneously.

3.4 Product Development and Mentorship

The final stage focused on product adaptation and design standardization to meet international market expectations. Mentorship sessions were conducted with international designers and eco-fashion experts, resulting in substantial product innovation. Evaluation data indicated that 90% of Yussy Akmal's products improved in terms of visual presentation, material quality, and storytelling. The products now feature eco-friendly packaging made from recycled materials, bilingual labeling (Indonesian–English), and sustainability statements.

The brand narrative evolved from a local emphasis to a global one, with the new tagline "Handcrafted Modestwear Inspired by Lampung Heritage." This approach successfully applied the principle of glocalization (Nugrahawati, 2024),

maintaining local identity while aligning with global consumer preferences. Additionally, business matching and participation in virtual exhibitions facilitated new collaborations with international partners. This finding reinforces the Network Theory of Internationalization by Johanson and Mattsson (HKT Consultant JSC, 2021), which states that MSMEs achieve internationalization more effectively through network-based collaborations rather than large-scale investments.

3.5 Evaluation Outcomes

A summative evaluation at the end of the program revealed high participant satisfaction and measurable impact:

Table 1 Summary of Summative Evaluation Results

No.	Evaluation Indicator	Description	Percentage (%)
1	Enhanced International Marketing Capacity	Participants reported improved understanding and implementation of international marketing strategies.	91
2	Increased Confidence in Engaging Foreign Markets	Participants expressed greater self-assurance when interacting with global buyers and partners.	84
3	Motivation to Innovate According to Global Trends	Participants were encouraged to adapt and design products that align with international consumer preferences.	78

Qualitative interviews indicated that the program fostered *new perspectives* on the importance of global digital presence and collaboration. The main outputs produced include:

Table 2 Main Program Outputs

No.	Output Title	Description
1	Training Module “Global Branding for Local Entrepreneurs”	A bilingual (Indonesian–English) training guide focusing on international branding strategies for MSMEs.
2	Brand Book	A comprehensive reference outlining Yussy Akmal’s visual identity, tone of communication, and marketing framework.
3	Digital Lookbook Catalog	A bilingual online catalog featuring product collections for international promotion.
4	International Social Media Accounts	Active platforms including Instagram, TikTok, Etsy, and Facebook used for global audience engagement.
5	Global Local Network	A newly established MSME community aimed at fostering collaboration and international brand development.

Overall, this stage demonstrated a transformation not only in knowledge and skills but also in entrepreneurial mindset and global competitiveness.

3.6 Discussion

The overall outcomes of this program validate the effectiveness of an integrative empowerment model that combines capacity building, digital innovation, international collaboration, and product adaptation. Conceptually, the findings align with Dwianto (2021), emphasizing that organizational success depends on strategic collaboration and network building. The program’s experiential learning approach (Kolb, 1984 in Amaliah, 2016) also proved that practical, hands-on engagement yields higher learning retention and skill application. From a marketing standpoint, Irawan (2025) confirms that digital transformation enables MSMEs to transcend geographical boundaries, and this study provides empirical evidence for that claim. The digital engagement growth experienced by Yussy Akmal indicates the effectiveness of combining localized identity with global marketing techniques.

The glocalization framework (Nugrahawati, 2024) further supports this transformation, illustrating how cultural authenticity can coexist with modern branding aesthetics. Moreover, the network-based approach (Johanson & Mattsson in HKT Consultant JSC, 2021) highlights the strategic importance of relationship-building in achieving sustainable internationalization. Nevertheless, several challenges persist, including limited human resources proficient in English

and digital communication, the need for consistent brand storytelling, and the requirement for trade diplomacy and cross-cultural negotiation skills.

In conclusion, the results and discussions underscore that MSME global empowerment cannot rely on isolated interventions. It demands a synergistic, collaborative, and continuous process that integrates learning, networking, and innovation. This program provides a replicable model of international collaborative empowerment, proving that local creative industries—like Yussy Akmal—can successfully transition from local to global through digital transformation, cultural preservation, and global partnership.

4. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the international community engagement program with Yussy Akmal as the partner has demonstrated substantial and sustainable outcomes in strengthening global branding capacity, digital competence, and international networking among local entrepreneurs. The findings reveal that the participatory and collaborative approach effectively transformed both individual and organizational perspectives toward global competitiveness.

The evaluation results showed that 91% of participants enhanced their international marketing capacity, 84% gained greater confidence in engaging with foreign markets, and 78% were motivated to innovate products that align with global consumer trends. These quantitative improvements were supported by qualitative evidence indicating a paradigm shift in understanding the strategic importance of global digital presence, intercultural communication, and continuous innovation.

From a practical standpoint, the program successfully produced tangible outputs such as the Global Branding for Local Entrepreneurs training module, a professional Brand Book, a bilingual Digital Lookbook Catalog, and the establishment of the Global Local Network—a community dedicated to sustaining international collaboration and mentoring. These deliverables signify not only the achievement of project objectives but also the emergence of a new model for MSME empowerment that integrates digital literacy, cross-cultural branding, and international networking.

Conceptually, the results align with the perspectives of Dwianto (2021) and Johanson & Mattsson (HKT Consultant JSC, 2021), emphasizing that successful globalization of small enterprises depends on strategic partnerships and relational networks rather than capital intensity. The outcomes also reaffirm Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1984, in Amaliah, 2016), showing that direct practice, reflection, and feedback accelerate the learning and transformation process. Moreover, the integration of local cultural identity with global aesthetics—consistent with Nugrahawati (2024)—illustrates the effectiveness of glocalization in building a brand that resonates internationally without losing its cultural authenticity.

In conclusion, this program provides strong empirical evidence that through systematic mentoring, digital innovation, and collaborative engagement, local MSMEs can evolve into globally competitive entities. The transformation of Yussy Akmal from a traditional local business into a digitally empowered, globally connected brand exemplifies how empowerment, when rooted in both cultural values and technological adaptability, can bridge the gap between local identity and international opportunity.

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