



From Local Heritage to Global Market: Reframing Digital Halal Branding through Storytelling in Batik Pesisir SMEs Pekalongan

Alya Rahma Falasifah*

STAI Ki Ageng Pekalongan

aljarahmafalasifah@staikap.ac.id

Aditya Agung Nugraha

K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid State Islamic University, Pekalongan

aditya.agung.nugraha@uingusdur.ac.id

*Corresponding Author:

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Abstract

In Indonesia, the halal creative industry has experienced significant growth; however, SMEs in this sector face unique challenges in adopting digital marketing, particularly for products rooted in cultural heritage with deep philosophical significance. This study aims to analyze the digital marketing strategies employed by Batik Pesisir Pekalongan SMEs in building their brands amidst the dominance of mass e-commerce. The phenomenon of rising Muslim consumer awareness regarding the halal status of creative products has not been matched by optimal digital branding efforts by the majority of halal SMEs. This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method; data was collected through in-depth interviews with the owners and managers of Batik Pesisir Pekalongan, participatory observation of social media activities, and analysis of relevant documents. The research findings indicate that Batik Pesisir employs a selective, storytelling-based digital marketing strategy. Unlike other SMEs that rely on direct transactions via e-commerce, Batik Pesisir utilizes social media as a means to build brand awareness, convey the philosophy of batik, and foster an emotional connection with consumers. This study contributes to the development of digital marketing theory for heritage-based halal products and provides practical implications for halal creative SMEs in designing digital strategies tailored to the characteristics of their respective products. The research findings indicate that strengthening a halal brand does not solely depend on formal certification but is shaped through the consistent communication of Islamic values, trust, and transparency on social media.

[Di Indonesia, industri kreatif halal telah mengalami pertumbuhan yang signifikan; namun, UMKM di sektor ini menghadapi tantangan unik dalam mengadopsi pemasaran digital, terutama untuk produk-produk yang berakar pada warisan budaya dengan makna filosofis yang mendalam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi pemasaran digital yang diterapkan oleh UMKM Batik Pesisir Pekalongan dalam membangun merek mereka di tengah dominasi e-commerce skala besar. Fenomena meningkatnya kesadaran konsumen Muslim mengenai status halal produk-produk kreatif belum diimbangi dengan upaya branding digital yang



optimal oleh sebagian besar UMKM halal. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus; data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan pemilik dan manajer Batik Pesisir Pekalongan, observasi partisipatif terhadap aktivitas media sosial, serta analisis dokumen-dokumen yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Batik Pesisir menerapkan strategi pemasaran digital yang selektif dan berbasis narasi. Berbeda dengan UMKM lain yang mengandalkan transaksi langsung melalui e-commerce, Batik Pesisir memanfaatkan media sosial sebagai sarana untuk membangun kesadaran merek, menyampaikan filosofi batik, dan menumbuhkan ikatan emosional dengan konsumen. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan teori pemasaran digital untuk produk halal berbasis warisan budaya dan memberikan implikasi praktis bagi UMKM kreatif halal dalam merancang strategi digital yang disesuaikan dengan karakteristik produk masing-masing. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penguatan merek halal tidak hanya bergantung pada sertifikasi formal, tetapi juga dibentuk melalui komunikasi yang konsisten mengenai nilai-nilai Islam, kepercayaan, dan transparansi di media sosial.]

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Halal Creative Industry, Halal Brands, Batik SMEs.

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INTRODUCTION

The increasing selectivity of Muslim consumers toward Sharia-compliant products has positioned Indonesia's halal creative industry as a sector with substantial economic potential. However, a critical gap persists: while mass e-commerce platforms dominate digital marketing practices, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) producing heritage-based halal products such as hand-drawn batik face unique challenges in adopting digital strategies that simultaneously preserve cultural authenticity and communicate halal values (Khairuddin dkk., 2026). Unlike generic halal products in food or cosmetics, batik carries deep philosophical and spiritual significance that cannot be effectively conveyed through transactional e-commerce models alone. This study addresses the question of how halal creative SMEs, specifically Batik Pesisir in Pekalongan, can design digital marketing strategies that bridge Islamic branding principles with the preservation of cultural heritage (Mirzam, 2020).

As one of Indonesia's batik cities, Pekalongan has great potential for developing micro-enterprises rooted in local and religious values, as well as a strategic position in the development of the halal creative industry (Nurkhasanah & Effendi, 2025). The city of Pekalongan is known not only as a center for batik production but also as a city that incorporates Islamic values into the economic life of its community. In this context, batik SMEs in Pekalongan face a dual challenge: preserving the traditional and philosophical values of batik while adapting to digital transformation.

The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed marketing for SMEs, yet halal-based creative industries like batik exhibit a critical disconnect (Safitri & Afandi, 2023). While Muslim consumer awareness of halal certification is increasing, most SMEs lack the capability to build halal brands through digital channels (Alkausar dkk., 2024). This gap is not merely technical but conceptual: halal branding requires more than displaying a certificate on social media. It demands a sustained narrative of Islamic values, trust, and spiritual identity communicated consistently across digital platforms. However, formal regulatory frameworks for halal certification in Indonesia (Purwaningsih & Lawal, 2026) have not been matched by guidance on how SMEs can translate these certifications into compelling digital brand stories.

Batik Pesisir presents a unique case because, from its inception, it has incorporated Islamic spiritual values and philosophy into its products alongside aesthetic considerations. This study focuses on the critical tension faced by Batik Pesisir: how to translate these deeply embedded halal values into digital marketing content that remains authentic without reducing the essence of halal to mere visual labels or logos. As a premium hand-drawn batik with prices reaching tens of millions of rupiah, Batik Pesisir distinguishes itself from mass-produced stamped or printed batik sold on e-commerce platforms (Anwar, 2024).

Existing research on digital marketing for SMEs remains general and rarely addresses the specific needs of the halal creative industry (Bakhtiar, 2026). Studies on batik branding have largely focused on conventional strategies without integrating digital aspects or halal values. Furthermore, most Pekalongan batik SMEs are active on Instagram and TikTok, yet no systematic efforts to communicate halal values have been observed. Three specific research gaps motivate this study: *First*, there is limited understanding of how heritage-based halal products like hand-drawn batik can build halal brands through digital channels. *Second*, existing studies treat halal branding primarily as formal certification rather than as a digital communication strategy. *Third*, the unique characteristics of Batik Pesisir premium positioning, philosophical depth, and resistance to mass e-commerce make it an underexplored yet critical case for theory development. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the digital marketing strategies employed by Batik Pesisir Pekalongan SMEs in building a halal brand, contributing theoretically to digital marketing for halal heritage products and practically to Sharia-based creative economy development.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a single-case study design (Asmawi & Lutfiadi, 2026). This design was selected for two reasons. *First*, the research aims to gain an in-depth, contextualized understanding of how Batik Pesisir Pekalongan implements digital marketing strategies to build a halal brand a phenomenon that cannot be quantified or separated from its socio-cultural and religious context. *Second*, the unique characteristics of Batik Pesisir as a premium hand-drawn batik that deliberately resists mass e-commerce models make it a *revelatory case* (Yin, 2018) that can provide theoretical insights for other heritage-based halal creative SMEs.

The research was conducted at Batik Pesisir production center located at Kemplong Village No. 231, Wiradesa Subdistrict, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java, 51152. Pekalongan was purposively selected as it is nationally recognized as a center of the batik industry with an active SME ecosystem transitioning into the digital economy. Batik Pesisir itself was selected based on three criteria: (a) it produces premium hand-drawn batik deeply rooted in local philosophical values; (b) it holds halal certification and actively communicates Islamic values; and (c) it demonstrates a distinctive strategic choice by prioritizing brand narrative over transactional e-commerce.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with purposively selected informants. The key informant was the owner and founder of Batik Pesisir, Mr. H. Failasuf, who has managed the business since its establishment in 1999. Additional informants included two batik artisans and one social media manager, selected to capture multiple perspectives on digital marketing practices and halal value communication. The selection criteria for informants were: (a) direct involvement in Batik Pesisir's marketing decision-making; (b) minimum of two years of experience with the business; and (c) willingness to participate in recorded interviews.

Data collection was conducted using three techniques: (a) interviews with informants; (b) participatory observation of Batik Pesisir's social media activities (Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook); and (c) documentation, including halal certificates, social media archives, and related journals and reports. Data analysis was conducted using the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation, member checking with the owners of Batik Pesisir, an audit trail through the documentation of the entire analysis process, and a reflexivity journal to limit the researcher's personal assumptions. This study adhered to qualitative research ethics protocols by obtaining informed consent from all informants, ensuring the confidentiality of their identities, and being conducted without any conflicts of interest.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile and Characteristics of Coastal Batik

Batik Pesisir is a hand-drawn batik brand established in 1999. The brand was founded by Mr. H. Failasuf and is located at No. 231, Kemplong Village, Wiradesa Subdistrict, Pekalongan Regency, Central Java 51152. H. Failasuf has played a significant role in revitalizing the Pekalongan batik industry, particularly in his hometown of Kemplong Village. The name Batik Pesisir was chosen to make the shop's name easy for customers to remember, and also to introduce Pekalongan batik, which is renowned for its distinctive coastal motifs. This business was established during the 1998 financial crisis, prompting the owner of Batik Pesisir to think hard about how to survive and grow the business. He never gave up on building and developing this business, which is why Batik Pesisir has survived and thrived to this day. Pekalongan batik features coastal motifs rich in flora and fauna and vibrant colors (Rosyada & Wigiawati, 2020).



Figure 1. Location of Batik Pesisir Pekalongan

Batik Pesisir is a home-based batik enterprise specializing in distinctive Pekalongan and coastal designs that blend classic and modern styles. Each piece is crafted by skilled artisans with high creativity and artistic spirit. The brand targets the premium silk batik market, positioning itself as a supplier of high-quality, exclusive products, as reflected in its slogan: "Exclusive Batik Image." Its vision is to become a leading batik supplier, while its mission integrates employee well-being as part of its marketing strategy to advance hand-drawn batik amidst intense competition. Batik Pesisir produces high-quality, fashionable products that preserve authentic patterns using both traditional and modern methods. Its product line includes hand-drawn batik for men and women made from various silk fabrics.

These characteristics premium positioning, hand-drawn authenticity, and cultural embeddedness make Batik Pesisir an ideal case for examining how halal branding operates in heritage-based creative industries, where value is derived not from mass production but from symbolic and spiritual meaning.

The Significance of the Halal Brand for Batik Pesisir Pekalongan

The understanding of the halal brand among Batik SMEs cannot be equated with that in the food, cosmetics, or pharmaceutical industries (Saharani, 2025). For most batik artisans and entrepreneurs in the Pekalongan region, the halal brand holds multiple layers of meaning, ranging from spiritual aspects and business ethics to market differentiation strategies.

a. The Halal Certification as a Symbol of Trust

Batik Pesisir demonstrates that the core value of a halal brand is a guarantee of trust. SME operators believe that the halal label or image on their brands provides Muslim consumers with a sense of security, particularly regarding the purity of dyes and wax (malam) as well as production processes that are compliant with Islamic law. Batik Pesisir holds Halal Certificate No. ID33110021072541024. Additionally, Batik Pesisir products are certified under OVOP No. C3318202453, Batik Mark No. 001/T/IX/2020, and are registered as part of Indonesia's intangible cultural heritage. From the perspective of signaling theory (Spence, 1973), halal certification functions as a quality

signal that reduces information asymmetry between producers and consumers. However, unlike food products where certification alone often suffices, Batik Pesisir's case suggests that for creative goods, certification is necessary but not sufficient; it must be complemented by narrative transparency delivered through digital channels.

b. Halal Branding as a Principle of Digital Marketing

In the context of digital marketing, halal branding extends to how a brand promotes itself and conducts transactions. Batik Pesisir, which uses Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, understands that promotional content must be honest and non-deceptive, and that customer interactions must be courteous. Thus, a halal brand is defined by its digital integrity, setting it apart from competitors who pursue profit without regard for ethics (Alkausar dkk., 2024). We don't just sell fabric; we sell an identity." Lalu analisis: "This statement operationalizes the Islamic marketing principle of amanah (honesty), where digital content becomes a medium for value communication rather than mere product promotion.

c. Halal Branding as a Differentiation Strategy in the Global Market

Differentiation in marketing is the effort to create meaningful distinctions to attract consumers. Halal branding has great potential to serve as a powerful differentiation strategy for Pekalongan batik SMEs in the global market (Damayanti & Latifah, 2017). This strength stems from the alignment between global market demand for ethical and sustainable products, the intrinsic values of coastal batik which embody spirituality and the principles of Sharia marketing, which emphasize honesty and humanity.

Batik Pesisir, which is beginning to penetrate export markets, views the halal brand as an international certification. The business seeks halal certification from MUI or foreign institutions because some importing countries require proof of halal compliance for textile products that contact the skin. Interview results indicate that the halal brand is understood not merely as a certificate but as a moral and spiritual mandate. Digital media (Instagram, TikTok, marketplaces) are not merely promotional tools but spaces to preserve cultural identity amidst industrial competition.

Digital Marketing Strategies for Batik Pesisir in Building a Halal Brand

Digitalization empowers MSMEs in the halal industry and has significant impact on economic growth and community well-being, given that the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim (Muh. Ahsan Kamil & Muhammad Rasyid Ridlo, 2024). Batik Pesisir uses social media platforms like Instagram and e-commerce platforms as its primary marketing channels. E-commerce is a digital technology that has become a basic necessity for any organization involved in marketing and sales (John Friadi dkk., 2023). Batik Pesisir integrates halal values and local wisdom into its social media content. The content presented is not merely product promotion, but also education about the clean, ethical, and environmentally friendly batik production process and its philosophical values. In this context, halal values extend beyond formal certification to encompass the aspect of *thayyib* (good and ethical). The use of digital media plays a crucial role in supporting Batik's marketing efforts as it competes with other SMEs. (Apriliza dkk., 2026).

The results of the interview conducted by the researcher with the owner of the coastal batik business are as follows:

“We use two marketing channels: offline and online. The offline approach is aimed at expanding our customer base and network, while for online marketing we use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.”

The statement above illustrates that in today’s era, marketing strategies require both direct and indirect promotional approaches to reach consumers. Online marketing makes it much easier for companies or individuals to market the products they produce.

Table 1. Social media platforms used by Batik Pesisir

No.	Social Media	Username
1.	Facebook	Batik Pesisir
2.	Instagram	batikpesisir_id
3.	TikTok	batikpesisirofficial

As shown in Table 1 above, in their efforts to market Pekalongan Coastal Batik products, MSME operators utilize three main social media platforms with distinct account naming strategies while maintaining a unified brand identity. These three social media accounts are managed separately but are integrated into a single digital marketing ecosystem. With this strategy, Pekalongan Coastal Batik is able to reach various market segments simultaneously, ranging from wholesale agents to end consumers in the global market.

Building a halal narrative through digital marketing is not just about including a “halal” label or the MUI logo in social media posts (Arifin, 2021). For Batik Pesisir, the halal narrative must be constructed gradually, authentically, and contextually, in line with the characteristics of batik products and an inclusive culture. Based on observations and case studies of Batik Pesisir Pekalongan, several key strategies are employed:

Educational Content Strategy Regarding the Production Process

Batik Pesisir produces short videos that transparently showcase the batik production process on Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. The halal narrative is built through demonstrations of raw materials, visualizations of workplace hygiene, and verbal explanations by artisans. This strategy aims to build consumer trust through information transparency.



Figure 2. Educational Content on the Batik Pesisir Production Process

Figure 2 above shows content posted on Batik Pesisir's social media regarding the production process. It illustrates the stages of batik-making, from dyeing the fabric and applying the wax to the final rinsing. The camera captures a clean and well-organized production environment. This is important because modern consumers place a high priority on hygiene standards.

Customer Interaction and Service Strategy Based on Halal Ethics

Digital marketing is not only about content but also about how to communicate with customers (Adinugraha dkk., 2021). Batik Pesisir adopts a holistic approach to halal by adhering to ethical principles such as responsiveness and honesty, refraining from psychological pressure, and offering interest-free payment options. In Islamic economics, this strategy aligns with *Amanah* (honesty in promotion) and *Tabligh* (conveying goodness to consumers) (Fitriyaningrum & Rohman, 2024). In the halal industry context, social media content strategies are not solely focused on increasing sales, but also serve as a medium for communicating the Islamic values inherent in the products (Azizah, 2024).

This study found that batik SMEs in Pekalongan are gradually incorporating halal narratives into their digital marketing content. The owner of Batik Pesisir shared the following view:

“We don't just sell fabric; we sell an identity. When customers buy our batik, they're buying a piece of history and the values we hold dear. On social media, we try to show how our batik is made through a fair and ethical process, free from any form of exploitation.” (Interview with a batik shop owner, 2026)

This statement demonstrates that the concept of halal extends beyond material compliance to include ethical production processes and Sharia values in clothing. Thus, the concept of halal in the creative industry has expanded from mere formal certification to values integrated throughout the entire value chain.

Digital Marketing Challenges at Batik Pesisir

Despite the enormous potential of digital marketing, its implementation faces various structural and capacity-related challenges. The main challenges faced by Batik Pesisir include technical capacity constraints, human resource challenges, and digital competition.

Technical capacity constraints stem from a lack of knowledge regarding the optimization of digital platforms. Based on interviews with SME owners, many of them still struggle to take appealing product photos, write effective descriptions, and utilize the paid advertising features offered by the platforms.

Human resource challenges arise from the limited number of professionals with expertise in digital marketing. The main challenges in digital marketing are price competition and the need for consistent content. Achieving consistency is difficult when social media management is handled sporadically by business owners who have many other responsibilities (Khafsoh, 2021).

Digital competition manifests in intense price competition and the pressure to constantly produce engaging content. Unlike mass-produced batik sellers on e-commerce platforms,

Batik Pesisir must balance authenticity with algorithmic demands, which often favor high-frequency, low-effort content over thoughtful, value-driven narratives.

From the perspective of resource-based view (RBV) theory (Barney, 1991), these challenges reflect a gap in strategic resources. Unlike financial or technological capital, digital marketing capability is a socially complex resource that requires sustained investment in human capital development. For heritage-based halal SMEs like Batik Pesisir, the absence of dedicated digital marketing personnel represents a structural vulnerability that cannot be resolved through simple training interventions alone, as it also involves the alignment of organizational culture (slow, tradition-bound) with platform demands (fast, trend-driven).

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that the digital marketing strategies employed by Pekalongan Coastal Batik SMEs in building a halal brand are based on three main pillars: spiritual narratives, transparency in the production process, and digital ethics. Coastal Batik uses social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook as storytelling tools to convey the philosophy of batik, Islamic values, and an emotional connection with consumers. This study also found that strengthening a halal brand requires more than just formal certification; it must be supported by consistent narratives of Islamic values, trust, and transparency in the digital space. The key finding a model of digital spiritual narratives serves as a theoretical contribution to the development of digital marketing for halal products rooted in cultural heritage. The main challenges faced by Batik Pesisir in digital marketing include technical capacity constraints, human resource challenges, and hyper-competitive digital competition. This study has limitations, including limited generalizability because it only uses a case study of one SME, a short research period that does not capture long-term dynamics, and a perspective that focuses more on SME owners without exploring consumer perceptions in a balanced manner. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct quantitative studies, comparative analyses among halal batik centers, and involve consumer perspectives more proportionally to enrich understanding.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

AR, Original manuscript writing and compilation, conceptualization, data accuracy; YS, & AA, Visualization, methodology;. Emmanuel Taiwo Agoi: Language enhancement, investigation.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

The author(s) declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or generative AI models were used in any part of this research, including data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing, or revision. The entire work is the sole product of the author(s)' intellectual effort.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this study. The study was conducted independently without interference from any party that could influence the results, data interpretation, or publication process.

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