

The Efforts of Sawahlunto MSMEs in Preserving Batik as A Symbol of Beauty, Philosophy, And National Identity

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the strategic role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Sawahlunto City in preserving Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik, a cultural product born from the innovation and mining history of this ancient city. Charcoal Batik is positioned not merely as a creative economic commodity, but as a medium for cultural inheritance rich in symbols of beauty, local philosophy, and national identity. Using descriptive qualitative methods, this study outlines the role of MSMEs as producers of identity, guardians of philosophy, and agents of skills regeneration. Key findings indicate that MSMEs, supported by government intervention and empowerment programs such as the Community Service Program (KKN), have successfully transformed the dark history of mining into a proud cultural heritage. The success of MSMEs in preserving motifs inspired by the Ombilin Sawahlunto Coal Mining Heritage (WTBOS) emphasizes their crucial role as pillars of cultural-economic preservation, significantly improving welfare while maintaining local identity.

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1. PENDAHULUAN

Bahasa merupakan salah satu cara seseorang untuk berkomunikasi dengan lingkungan sosialnya. Bahasa bukan saja sebagai alat untuk menyampaikan pendapat dan pandangan, tetapi juga sebagai instrumen utama untuk mengungkap apa yang dilihat, dirasakan, dan ingin disampaikan oleh seseorang (Sambikala et al., 2023). Dalam konteks industri perhotelan, kemampuan berbahasa asing sudah menjadi bagian esensial dari pelayanan. Melalui penguasaan bahasa asing, seorang karyawan hotel dapat berinteraksi dengan tamu internasional, memenuhi kebutuhan mereka, serta membangun pengalaman yang positif. Penguasaan bahasa asing juga memberikan keunggulan kompetitif bagi

karyawan dan institusi perhotelan, karena bahasa menjadi kunci utama dalam membangun kesan profesional dan keramahan yang berorientasi pada kepuasan tamu.

Batik, which has been recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is not merely a textile product but a visual manifestation of Indonesia's long history, local wisdom, and noble values preserved across generations. Batik has grown into a symbol of the collective identity of Indonesian society, not only because of the beauty of its motifs but also due to the philosophical values and cultural narratives embedded in every stroke, dot, and ornament. This international recognition reinforces batik's position as a strategic cultural asset while simultaneously placing it as a representation of national identity in the eyes of the world. Each region in Indonesia possesses its own distinctive batik characteristics, developed through processes of cultural internalization shaped by the environment, history, and social systems of the community. The patterns and philosophies embedded in batik across regions illustrate the richness of Indonesian culture and how its people express identity through the medium of textile art.

This context is also reflected in the City of Sawahlunto, a city with a long history as a coal mining town and currently designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site through the inscription of the Ombilin Coal Mining Heritage of Sawahlunto (WTBOS). This status has driven a major transformation of the city, which was once known as an extractive industrial area, into one that is oriented toward historical and cultural tourism. In this transitional process toward a new identity, Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik emerged as a cultural icon that bridges the past and the present. The term "Charcoal Batik" symbolically connects this artwork with the coal mining history that forms the foundation of Sawahlunto—either through the use of dark color tones resembling charcoal or through pigments derived from coal waste as an environmentally friendly textile innovation. This uniqueness becomes the main strength that differentiates Sawahlunto Batik from batik produced in other regions, as it does not merely emphasize visual aesthetics but also reflects the historical narrative and identity of its community.

Furthermore, Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik contains symbols of beauty and the philosophy of life of the local community, reflected through the adoption of cultural heritage motifs such as mining tunnel entrances, the "Mak Itam" steam locomotive, and colonial buildings that serve as historical landmarks, combined with Minangkabau traditional ornaments as expressions of local wisdom. The fusion of mining history and Minangkabau cultural values does not only create visually aesthetic motifs but also illustrates the civilization journey of Sawahlunto society—from the era of colonialism and mining exploitation to its modern transformation as a heritage city.

The preservation of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik would not be possible without the active role of local economic actors, particularly Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). MSMEs serve as the driving force behind batik production, the preservation of traditional techniques, the safeguarding of philosophical values embedded in motifs, and the development of innovations to ensure that batik remains relevant in an increasingly competitive modern market. Groups such as "Batik Arang Puncer" exemplify how MSMEs can remain flexible and adaptive while maintaining deep cultural roots that industrial-scale producers do not possess. Their ability to sustain production, provide employment opportunities, and serve as a platform for the regeneration of young artisans positions them at the forefront of community-based batik preservation.

Considering the urgency of preserving local culture amid globalization, this research aims to identify, analyze, and document the strategic role of Sawahlunto Batik MSMEs in maintaining the existence and continuity of the philosophical values of Charcoal Batik as a regional cultural asset. This study also emphasizes that batik preservation does not only contribute to cultural resilience but also has great potential to strengthen the people's economy, improve community welfare, and position Sawahlunto as a city capable of integrating cultural heritage values with the growth of the creative economy.

2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, selected for its ability to generate an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik preservation carried out by MSME actors as part of local cultural heritage. This approach focuses on exploring meanings, practices, and philosophical values embedded in batik production activities, as well as the socio-cultural dynamics that accompany them. Thus, this research does not merely emphasize the final output in the form of batik products but also examines the creative process, social relations, and cultural transmission patterns that occur within the artisan community.




To ensure that the data obtained are comprehensive and valid, this study applies a technique triangulation strategy by combining multiple data-collection methods to complement and reinforce one another. The first method is Participatory Observation, where the KKN team directly engaged in batik production activities within the MSMEs. Observations were conducted from the initial stage of motif design, the waxing (*mencanting*) process, manual coloring, and drying, to the final stages of packaging and marketing planning. Through this observation, the researchers sought to understand the batik techniques applied (both hand-drawn and stamped batik), the use of pigments derived from coal waste, and the consistency in developing Batik Arang motifs inspired by the WT BOS World Heritage designation and Minangkabau traditional ornaments. Observation was also directed to identify generational transfer of batik-making skills within the MSMEs.


The second method applied is In-Depth Interviews with key informants who are directly involved in the Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik ecosystem. Informants include owners and artisans of batik MSMEs, such as charcoal batik groups in Saringan Village; representatives of the Department of Cooperatives, MSMEs, Industry and Trade (KOPERINDAG) responsible for training and facilitation programs; members of Dekranasda Sawahlunto as supporters of regional craft development; and cultural figures or local scholars who possess a profound understanding of the philosophy and historicity of Minangkabau batik motifs. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to provide broad narrative space, allowing informants to naturally explain their experiences, challenges, innovations, and cultural preservation strategies through batik.

The third method used is Document Analysis, conducted to strengthen primary data and enrich the research's historical, administrative, and academic context. The documents collected include scientific literature, books, official government publications, catalogues of Sawahlunto batik motifs, documentation of batik exhibitions or festivals, and digital media archives featuring Batik Arang MSME activities. Document analysis is essential for verifying field findings and identifying the development of motifs, changes in marketing strategies, and the evolution of cultural values embedded in batik over time.

All collected data were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis model, which consists of three key stages: (1) data reduction, the process of selecting, grouping, and simplifying data focused on the core issues of the research, such as the role of MSMEs, motif philosophy, regeneration strategies, and sustainability of cultural preservation; (2) data display, carried out in the form of narrative descriptions, tables, and visualizations to facilitate interpretation and understanding of relationships among categories; and (3) conclusion drawing or verification, which formulates inferences based on consistent patterns of findings and triangulates them with relevant theories and supporting documents. Through these procedures, the study is expected to produce a comprehensive, systematic, and holistic portrayal of the position of MSMEs as key agents in preserving Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik amid the dynamics of cultural development and the creative economy.

3. HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

		This figure shows several students participating in a batik-making activity.
		This figure shows students cutting the wax into small pieces, which will later be melted
		This figure illustrates the process of melting wax that has been cut into small pieces, which is then used for printing batik motifs on pre-measured fabric

	<p>The melted wax is then applied to the printing tool and stamped onto the fabric</p>
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Pembahasan

MSMEs as Producers and Heirs of the City's Visual Identity

MSMEs in Sawahlunto have proven to be key actors in maintaining the sustainability of charcoal batik production and preserving local culture. MSMEs function not only as creative economic actors but also as inheritors of traditional batik-making knowledge passed down through generations. Their ability to maintain batik techniques—both hand-drawn and stamped—demonstrates a commitment to preserving local wisdom amidst the rapid flow of modernization and textile industrialization. In the context of the Sawahlunto community, MSMEs play a dual role: as producers of economic value and guardians of the region's cultural identity.

One important contribution of MSMEs is seen through their continuous innovation in motif development. The motifs they create are not only intended to enhance the aesthetic value of batik but also serve as visual narratives that tell the story of the city's history. This innovation remains firmly grounded in local elements, namely the mining heritage and Minangkabau culture. The Mine Hole or Tunnel Gate motif, for example, is not merely a visual element but is also rich in symbols of the hard work, resilience, courage, and struggle of the miners and migrant communities that constitute Sawahlunto's historical identity. The "Mak Itam" train motif and its tracks reinforce the city's connectivity and modernization, shaped by the mining industry, marking the dynamics of social and economic change over time. Even colonial architecture, such as the Cultural Center building, is immortalized as a motif to illustrate respect for the city's history and the orderly colonial layout that is part of Sawahlunto's identity as a world heritage city.

The MSME's decision to incorporate local history and philosophy as the foundation of its design adds significant added value to its batik products. The resulting batik is not merely treated as a fashion item but as a cultural object that embodies the collective identity of the Sawahlunto community. Every pattern, line, and color visualizes the community's social memory, thus strengthening batik's historiographical value as a medium for cultural preservation. Therefore, from a cultural marketing perspective, MSMEs are not merely selling batik cloth but also selling stories, meanings, and national identity. This makes Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik more than just a commodity, but a representative symbol of local identity that can foster cultural appreciation among the wider community, both nationally and internationally.

The success of MSMEs in utilizing batik as an educational and cultural medium has a broader impact on the community and region. Socially, MSMEs are able to unite residents in the creative process and cultural preservation, while also creating a space for regeneration through training for the younger generation and housewives. Economically, batik, with its local identity, provides high competitiveness in the market because its uniqueness and authenticity cannot be replaced by mass-produced textile

products. Culturally, Batik Arang contributes to strengthening Sawahlunto's image as a world heritage city, successfully transforming the narrative of its dark mining history into a new source of pride in the form of creative cultural heritage.

Thus, the Batik Arang Sawahlunto MSMEs can be seen as important pillars in cultural preservation and strengthening the regional economy based on local wisdom. Their steadfastness in upholding the historical and philosophical values of batik motifs demonstrates that cultural preservation focuses not only on protecting physical heritage but also on living cultural heritage practices that continue to evolve from generation to generation.

1. Batik as a Medium for Preserving Local Philosophy and Values

In addition to their role as batik producers, MSMEs in Sawahlunto also play a crucial role as guardians of local philosophy through the creation and development of motifs. The motifs they create are not merely aesthetic ornaments that beautify the fabric, but also contain philosophical values that reflect the perspectives, life experiences, and wisdom of the local community. Each pattern depicted in Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik has a symbolic meaning relevant to the social and cultural identity of the Minangkabau people. This demonstrates that batik functions not only as a visual medium but also as a means of cultural communication, conveying messages and narratives from generation to generation.

Motifs that adopt traditional Minangkabau ornamentation are the most prominent examples of this philosophical depth. One widely used motif is Pucuak Rabuang (bamboo shoot), which depicts growth, hope, and the continuation of goodness. Bamboo shoots growing into large bamboo are believed to represent the process of human maturity and self-transformation toward a better future, making this motif a symbol of a dynamic and progressive life. The Pucuak Rabuang motif is often paired with the charcoal motif, not merely as a contrast, but to create harmony between the dark historical memories of mining and the optimism for the future. This juxtaposition also represents the journey of the city of Sawahlunto—from the dark days of mining exploitation to an era of cultural renaissance and the creative economy.

The role of MSME artisans is vital in maintaining the consistency of these philosophical values. They not only produce batik but also internalize the meaning of the motifs to consumers through direct explanations during transactions, whether at exhibitions, in stores, or through narratives included in catalogs and digital marketing media. These actions demonstrate that MSMEs prioritize not only sales but also the preservation of cultural knowledge and values. These efforts also anticipate the risk of losing the symbolic meaning of motifs due to the pressures of commercialization in the fashion industry, which often emphasizes only aesthetic elements without considering their history and philosophical meaning. The symbolic beauty of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik lies not solely in its simple primary colors—black, brown, gold, or other dark hues—but in the philosophy hidden behind the curved lines, dots, and textures that form the motifs. Every detail of the pattern is the result of a harmonious blend of Minangkabau traditional values, rich in the meaning of life, and the historical experiences of the mining community. These two elements combine to create a moral message about cultural sustainability, respect for history, and hope for a better future. Thus, batik is not only a medium for displaying visual aesthetics but also an instrument for reflecting the collective identity of the Sawahlunto community.

The success of MSMEs in upholding the philosophy of batik has significant social and cultural implications. By preserving the symbolic values in the motifs they produce, MSMEs play a role in raising public awareness of the importance of preserving local culture. They strengthen national identity through local wisdom, demonstrating that cultural preservation is not only achieved through the protection of physical objects of historical heritage, but also through the continuity of cultural values that live in the daily lives of the community. In this way, Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik is concrete evidence that textile art can be a medium for cultural strategy to maintain the existence of national identity amidst globalization.

2. Regeneration Efforts, Innovative Marketing, and the Synergistic Role of KKN

The preservation efforts of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik by MSMEs are not only carried out through production processes and motif innovation, but also through a planned regeneration mechanism for artisans. This regeneration is a crucial step to ensure the sustainability of batik skills, ensuring that they do not stop at just one generation. MSMEs provide batik skills training opportunities for the community, especially housewives, as a strategy to expand the artisan base while providing opportunities for family economic development. This training is not only technical but also instills an understanding of the historical and philosophical values behind each batik motif, so that the inherited skills are not merely batik skills but also cultural awareness. These training programs are often made possible through the support of government agencies, particularly the Department of Cooperatives, MSMEs, Industry, and Trade (KOPERINDAG), which provides guidance, facilitation, and even production equipment assistance to ensure the regeneration process is effective and sustainable.

In addition to focusing on skills regeneration, Sawahlunto Batik MSMEs are also beginning to adapt to market demands through transforming their marketing strategies. While batik marketing previously relied primarily on direct sales and local relationships, MSMEs are now shifting to value-based marketing, namely promotions that not only offer the aesthetic aspects of the product but also highlight the unique world heritage motifs, philosophical meanings, and authenticity of the production process. This strategy has proven effective in strengthening the image of Charcoal Batik as an authentic and valuable cultural product. One implementation is MSME participation in various regional and national festivals, such as the West Sumatra Batik Festival, as an effort to expand marketing networks, build business relationships between MSMEs, and increase brand awareness of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik as an icon of superior regional craftsmanship.

In developing modern marketing, the role of KKN (Community Service Program) students plays a crucial role as catalysts, accelerating the digital adaptation of MSMEs. KKN's contribution is realized through several interventions. First, digital marketing training helps MSMEs utilize e-commerce platforms, digital catalogs, and social media to overcome the limitations of conventional marketing that relies on physical locations. The presence of digital marketing enables broader market penetration, both nationally and internationally. Second, strengthening storytelling in product promotion, by helping MSMEs design marketing content that highlights the historical, philosophical, and cultural values of batik. Storytelling transforms products into more than just commodities, embodying emotional and cultural meaning that can increase their selling value. Third, educating the younger generation through mini-workshops on batik for students serves as a long-term strategy for artisan regeneration and fosters a love of local culture from an early age, thus fostering the emergence of future artisans and batik enthusiasts.

The synergy between MSMEs as cultural actors, the government as a provider of facilities and empowerment policies, and the Community Service Program (KKN) as a supporter of digital innovation and education is a crucial element in establishing a sustainable cultural preservation ecosystem. This ecosystem ensures that Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik not only survives as an economic product but also develops as a living cultural heritage, actively passed down to future generations. Therefore, regeneration strategies, values-based marketing, and multistakeholder collaboration are key to strengthening the existence of Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik amidst the competition in the modern creative industry.

4. CONCLUSION

MSMEs in Sawahlunto play an essential and multifaceted role in the preservation of Charcoal Batik, not only as creative economic actors, but also as cultural agents that maintain the continuity of local history, values, and philosophy. Through production innovations that remain grounded in WTBO World Heritage motifs and Minangkabau cultural ornaments, Charcoal Batik has succeeded in becoming an authentic representation of Sawahlunto's identity, combining aesthetic beauty with

symbolic meaning in community life. The success of this preservation rests not only on the ability of MSMEs to create and maintain motifs, but also on the ongoing synergy between government support, community collaboration, and empowerment interventions such as the KKN program in digitalizing marketing, educating new artisans, and strengthening cultural narratives. Thus, Sawahlunto Charcoal Batik has proven to be more than just a textile product, but a living cultural heritage that contributes to strengthening the people's economy while maintaining local identity so that it remains relevant amidst the changing times.

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