

## **Optimizing the Use of Digital Branding to Increase Exports of Green Plants in International Markets**

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### **Article Information**

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|                 | 23              |
| Submission date | December 2024   |
| Revised date    | 4 January 2025  |
| Accepted date   | 4 February 2025 |

### **Abstract**

**Research aim :** identify the digital branding elements that are most influential in increasing product competitiveness in international markets. As well as providing practical recommendations for other MSMEs to optimize digital branding in the context of green plant exports.

**Design/Methode/Approach :** This study employs a qualitative method with a case study approach, using CV Kokonat Indonesia as the main subject. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with the business owner to explore information related to digital branding strategies, challenges, and their impact on exports, as well as through documentation that analyzed the company's vision, mission, digital marketing strategies, and customer reviews. The research subject was selected using purposive sampling due to their direct experience in implementing digital branding for the export of tropical ornamental plants, while the research object is the digital branding strategy itself. Data were analyzed using triangulation and thematic analysis by identifying patterns based on key terms such as digital branding, customer trust, and exports, and the results are presented in narrative and table formats to clarify the relationship between the data and the main findings.

**Research Finding :** This study found that the implementation of digital branding at CV Kokonat Indonesia plays a crucial role in increasing the export of tropical ornamental plants. The use of digital platforms such as Instagram, the official website, and international marketplaces (such as Etsy) has enhanced brand visibility and built customer trust through transparency in cultivation, packaging, and shipping processes. This strategy has helped the company boost export demand to more than 10 countries, despite facing challenges related to cultural differences and logistical constraints. Additionally, innovations such as the planned use of AR technology on the website have been identified as potential steps to strengthen customer interaction and create differentiation in the global market.

**Theoretical contribution/Originality :** contributes to a deeper understanding of digital branding in the context of green plant exports.

**Practitioner/Policy implication :** providing information for business actors in designing digital branding that can increase international or export competitiveness.

**Research limitation :** the focus is only on one MSMEs, so the results cannot be fully generalized to MSMEs in other sectors.

**Keywords :** digital branding, MSMEs, exports, green plants

International trade provides great opportunities for MSMEs in Indonesia, especially in the green plant sector, to increase the scale of their business. Green plants are increasingly in demand on the global market as decorative elements that are environmentally friendly and contribute to sustainability. According to data from the International Trade Center (ITC), global demand for green plants is growing by 8% per year, especially in developed countries such as the United States, Germany and Japan. However, many MSMEs face challenges in penetrating international markets, such as limited resources, complex export regulations, and competition with countries such as the Netherlands and Thailand which already have strong market shares in this sector. Digital branding is the process of building a brand identity and image through digital platforms to reach a wider audience. Digital marketing is defined by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as the organizations, practices, and processes that employ digital technology to generate, convey, and offer value to consumers and other stakeholders. Digital marketing is one of the most common media used by businesses because of consumers' new ability to go with the flow digitalization, some companies little by little are starting to abandon the model conventional marketing and moving to modern marketing research by Made Dara (2025). [14]. Digital branding can be used as an alternative to face challenges in penetrating international markets. By expanding the audience, the business will become increasingly known to the general public, not only in Indonesia but also in other countries. [13]

Digital branding has become an important component in modern marketing strategies, along with the increasing use of the internet and social media as the main platforms for interacting with consumers [1]. Naturally, the internet, the digital world, and the quick advancement of technology all have an effect on the marketing industry. Marketing trends in The world is switching from conventional (offline) to digital (online) [12]. Companies must now be able to create a consistent brand image across various digital channels in order to compete in an increasingly competitive global market [2]. This is important because today's consumers are more likely to search for information about products and services via the internet before making a purchasing decision [3]. according to Kaplan., Haenlein (2010), social media offers opportunities for companies to communicate directly with consumers, which can strengthen the emotional bond between brands and customers [4]. Additionally, the use of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to build a digital brand image allows companies can less expensively reach a larger audience than with conventional promotional techniques [5]. Erdogan., cicek (2012) emphasized that consumers' involvement in social media greatly influences their perceptions of brands. A successful digital campaign not only creates brand awareness, but also increases customer loyalty by interacting directly with consumers through relevant and interesting content [6]. Social media has become a very popular marketing platform in recent years last year. Many people now use social media on a regular basis.[15].

An earlier study titled "Utilization of Digital Marketing as a Marketing Media in Efforts to Increase the Export Contribution of MSMEs in Era 4.0" was conducted by Lenti S. S., et al 2024 shows that MSMEs may boost their sales turnover and get beyond a number of challenges when implementing digital marketing strategies by using digital marketing effectively. Therefore, MSMEs need to implement digital marketing as a key tactic to boost their competitiveness in the global market and accomplish long-term growth. [7]. Next, research by Ayutyas S., et al (2023) with the title non-financial aspects and financial aspects have increased. And the marketing strategy implemented by utilizing digital marketing can absorb the market and have an impact on

maximizing marketing, and reducing the accumulation of unsold vegetables and increasing income for the company. The study "Marketing Strategy Using Social Media at the Ikifarm Hydroponics Company, Bogor Regency" demonstrates the rise in both financial and non-financial elements. Additionally, the use of digital marketing in the marketing plan can absorb the market and have an impact on optimizing marketing, decreasing the amount of unsold veggies, and raising revenue for the business. [8].

Even though a lot of research has been carried out on digital branding, there are still minimal studies discussing its application in the context of MSMEs in the green plant sector. This research explores how digital branding elements such as social media and e-commerce can help MSMEs increase their exports. In accordance with one of Kokonat Indonesia's missions, namely continuing to innovate in cultivation techniques, export processes and business management to achieve competitiveness. In its business, Kokonat Indonesia sells offline and online, using digital marketing in the form of Etsy, Instagram, websites, Google ads, looking for potential buyers and direct messages via email. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting research that focuses on digital branding which is used to increase exports of green plants in international markets by Indonesian Coconut business actors. Meanwhile, This study's goal is to ascertain the digital branding elements that are most influential in increasing product competitiveness in international markets. As well as providing practical recommendations for other MSMEs to optimize digital branding in the context of green plant exports.

### **Problem Statement**

Even though digital branding has been widely used by MSMEs to expand their market reach, research regarding its application in increasing exports of tropical green plants is still very limited. MSMEs in this sector face challenges in terms of global market competition, cultural differences, and logistical constraints that affect efficiency and international customer trust. Therefore, an in-depth exploration of the most influential digital branding elements and strategies that can help MSMEs, such as Kokonat Indonesia, strengthen their position in the international market is needed.

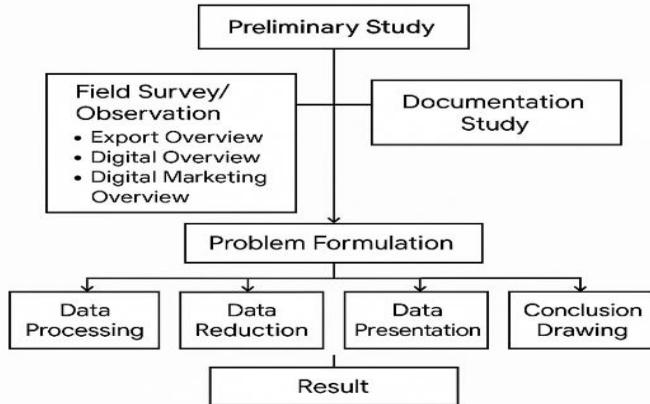
### **Goals of the Research**

This study's goal is to ascertain the digital branding elements that are most influential in increasing exports of tropical green plants by MSMEs, especially Indonesian Coconuts. This research also aims to analyze digital branding strategies implemented in facing international market challenges, such as cultural differences and logistical constraints. In addition, It is believed that this study will offer practical recommendations for other MSMEs in optimizing digital branding as a tool to increase competitiveness and expand export markets in the era of globalization.

### **Method**

This study employs a case study approach and qualitative methodologies. Through extensive data collecting, case studies—a sort of qualitative approach—investigate the actual lives of a case or cases. Because case study research is in-depth and applies to businesses with current operations, it was selected. The use of digital branding to boost exports of tropical decorative plants by Kokonat Indonesia, a company founded in 2017 in Kediri, East Java, was investigated using a qualitative method and a case study approach.

The following is the research flow used by CV Coconut



Structure 1.Reseach Flow

The subject of this research is Ms. Made Dara, the CEO of CV Kokonat Indonesia, a small and medium enterprise (SME) based in Kediri that focuses on selling tropical ornamental plants to international markets. The selection of informants was carried out purposively, by choosing individuals deemed to have direct insight and experience related to the research topic. The key informants consisted of the head of CV Kokonat Indonesia, the digital marketing staff, and the field exporter responsible for shipping products abroad. In addition, several buyer partners from export destination countries such as Singapore and Japan were also involved to gain external perspectives regarding their trust in the Kokonat Indonesia brand. This selection aimed to obtain rich, relevant, and scientifically accountable data. Data collection was conducted through interviews and documentation. Interviews were carried out with the business owner to explore information about digital branding strategies, challenges faced, and the impact on exports. Meanwhile, documentation included an analysis of the business's vision and mission, digital marketing materials, and customer reviews. Data analysis was carried out using data triangulation by combining interview results, documentation, and literature to ensure the validity of the findings. The data analysis used a phenomenological approach, consisting of four main stages: data reduction, categorization, interpretation of meaning, and conclusion drawing. First, the researcher reduced the data by selecting important information from interviews and documentation. Then, the data were categorized based on specific themes such as branding strategies, cultural adaptation, logistical barriers, and consumer trust. Next, the interpretation phase involved uncovering the meaning behind the informants' experiences to understand the extent to which digital branding influences export success. Data triangulation in this study was carried out in three ways: data triangulation, source triangulation, and method triangulation. Data triangulation involved comparing interview results with export documentation such as invoices, digital catalogs, and shipment tracking. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing data from internal company sources with buyer partners. Meanwhile, method triangulation combined direct observation with digital data such as social media insights, e-commerce statistics, and written documents. Finally, the analysis results were formulated into in-depth thematic findings. Thematic analysis was conducted by identifying key terms such as digital branding, customer trust, and exports. The research results were presented in the form of narratives and tables to clarify the relationship

between interview data and the main findings.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### Results

The results of this research were interview conversations between the subject and the researcher. Below, the results of the interview will be presented.

Researcher : Can you briefly tell us the name and background of your business?

Subject : Our business is called Kokonat Indonesia which was founded in 2019. We focus on selling tropical ornamental plants from Indonesia to various countries around the world. Previously, we had experience in managing ornamental plants in 2017 and we also have certification from the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture.

Researcher : So what is the vision and mission of this business?

Subject : Our vision is to become a major entrepreneur in the ornamental plant and export industry, providing high customer satisfaction so that it has a positive impact on the environment. Then our mission is to provide high quality ornamental plants with a variety of choices, maintain environmental sustainability through environmentally friendly cultivation practices and expand sales in Indonesia and other countries.

Researcher : What products are being offered and do these products have any major advantages over competitors?

Subject : We offer a variety of tropical ornamental plants such as Anthurium, Monstera, Philodendron, and Aglonema. Our advantage lies in the guaranteed quality of the plants and the diversity of products that can meet the needs of the international market.

Researcher : When did your business start utilizing digital branding?

Subject : Around 2020, in line with the development of the digital market and the need to reach wider international consumers.

Researcher : What was the main reason you decided to use a digital branding strategy?

Subject : To increase the visibility of our products in the global market. Digital branding allows us to reach a wider range of buyers and build trust in international markets.

Researcher : What digital platforms are you currently using for product promotion (example: social media, website, marketplace)?

Subject : Platforms used include Instagram, our own website. Apart from that, we also utilize marketplaces such as Etsy and direct messages to expand market reach.

Researcher : In your opinion, what is the most significant result of using digital branding on your product exports?

Subject : The most significant result is the increase in the number of requests and exports of our plants to more than 10 countries. Digital branding also helps us to build trust in international markets, which is very important for export businesses.

Researcher : What is the biggest challenge you face in carrying out digital branding, especially for international markets?

Subject : The biggest challenge is understanding market preferences in different countries and ensuring that our branding message fits the local culture. Apart from that, logistics and delivery of ornamental plants are also challenges that cannot be avoided.

- Researcher : How do you overcome obstacles such as cultural differences or preferences in export destination countries?
- Subject : By conducting regular market research and adapting our digital content to be relevant to audiences in each country. We also collaborate with local distributors to better understand their market preferences
- Researcher : How does your digital branding strategy contribute to increasing green plant exports?
- Subject : Our digital branding strategy is very effective in increasing brand visibility and attracting international customers. We can introduce various products through social media and marketplaces, which ultimately increases export demand.
- Researcher : Do you feel digital branding helps build international consumer trust? If yes, how?
- Subject : Yes, digital branding is very helpful in building trust. We provide transparent information about the process of cultivating, packaging and shipping plants. Positive reviews from international customers also strengthen our image.
- Researcher : What innovation do you want to develop to strengthen your business's digital branding in the future?
- Subject : We plan to develop interactive features on our website, such as AR (augmented reality), to allow customers to see plants in the real context of their homes. Apart from that, we also want to increase the use of video tutorials and livestreams for introducing our products more directly.
- Researcher : What advice do you have for other business actors who want to utilize digital branding for international markets?
- Subject : My advice is to be consistent and continue to innovate. Use the right platform according to the target audience and always interact with customers. Don't be afraid to try new things and take advantage of developing digital technology.
- Researcher : In your opinion, how will the role of digital branding change in the future, especially for the green industry?
- Subject : I believe digital branding will become increasingly important, with more and more customers buying products online. Innovations in digital technology will make the shopping experience more interactive and engaging. Therefore, we must be ready to continue to adapt.

From the interview above, several keywords were found that are very relevant to the application of digital branding in CV Kokonat Indonesia's business in increasing exports of tropical ornamental plants. In finding these keywords, a data triangulation stage has been carried out which involves confirmation through various sources and methods to ensure validity and reliability of findings. The key words found are (1) Digital Branding, (2) Export, (3) Customer Trust:

1. Digital branding: this strategy involves the use of Instagram, official websites, international marketplaces such as Etsy.
2. Customer trust: built through transparency of information about the cultivation, packaging and shipping processes.
3. Export: this strategy helps the company increase demand to more than 10 countries.

## Discussion

This research reveals that digital branding plays a strategic role in increasing the competitiveness and market expansion of Indonesian Coconuts at the international level. By utilizing platforms such as Instagram, official websites, and the Etsy marketplace, companies are able to reach global customers more effectively. Instagram is used to display high-quality visuals that emphasize aesthetics and product uniqueness, while the official website provides transparent information about the cultivation, packaging and shipping processes. This supports the findings of Saragih, L. S., et al (2024), which shows that digital marketing can overcome geographical barriers and provide wider access for MSMEs to international markets [7].

This digital branding strategy not only increases brand visibility but also contributes to building customer trust. Transparency of information about products and delivery processes is key in building strong relationships with international customers. Positive reviews from customers further strengthen a company's brand image and create ongoing loyalty. Research by Ayutyas S., et al (2023), shows that transparency in digital marketing can increase customer loyalty, especially in the export context and positive reviews in international marketplaces can influence new customers' purchasing decisions [8].

The digital branding carried out by Kokonat Indonesia has had a significant impact on increasing exports. The company succeeded in increasing demand to more than 10 countries, including the United States, Germany and Japan. The cross-cultural branding approach allows Kokonat Indonesia to adjust marketing strategies based on local cultural preferences, such as highlighting environmental sustainability for Germany, product aesthetics for the United States, and traditional harmony for Japan. This is in line with research by Suharto, T., et al (2022), which found that a marketing approach based on local culture can increase product acceptance in the global market [9].

This success also reflects how Kokonat Indonesia utilizes digital branding to build customer trust in different markets. By combining information transparency, engaging visual content, and local cultural adaptation, companies are able to create relevant and satisfying experiences for international customers. Research by M. Agung and Hendra (2023), supports these findings, stating that the implementation of international marketing requires deep awareness of cultural differences, market regulations and consumer needs in various countries. Flexibility in changing strategies according to global market dynamics is very important in achieving international marketing goals [10].

Apart from that, innovation is one of Kokonat Indonesia's focuses in strengthening their digital branding strategy. The plan to use Augmented Reality (AR) technology on the company website aims to provide a more interactive experience to customers. This technology allows customers to visualize plants in real space before purchasing, thereby increasing customer confidence and comfort. Research by Arista F. B., et al (2023), found that the use of interactive technology such as AR can increase sales and can be used as a practical marketing campaign for companies [11].

Overall, this research confirms that digital branding which is integrated with transparency, customer trust, and adaptation to local culture is able to support significant export growth. The success of Kokonat Indonesia is clear proof that an effective digital branding strategy not only increases export volumes but also strengthens relationships with international customers, creating a sustainable competitive advantage. This research supports previous findings, as well as providing new insights into how MSMEs can optimize digital branding in the face of global competition.

Kokonat Indonesia has successfully overcome cultural differences by segmenting its digital content according to the characteristics of each target country. For example, in Germany, they emphasize sustainability and use formal English with a minimalist visual style. In contrast, for the Japanese market, they prioritize aesthetics and visual harmony, promoting content that reflects traditional values and simplicity.

The logistical challenges of exporting live ornamental plants—which are highly susceptible to damage during shipping—are addressed through partnerships with specialized plant export logistics providers who understand international quarantine regulations. They also use custom packaging, such as breathable boxes with temperature and humidity control, to maintain plant quality.

Compared to other SMEs, such as "Taman Tropis Nusantara" (Andriani, 2022), Kokonat Indonesia is significantly more advanced. Taman Tropis Nusantara failed to expand its export market due to the lack of an English-language website, inactivity on global platforms like Etsy, and a lack of content adaptation for foreign audiences. They also struggled to build trust because of limited transparency in the shipping process and the absence of customer testimonials.

In contrast, Kokonat Indonesia actively displays customer reviews, real-time packaging photos, and provides detailed cultivation information through social media. These efforts have built customer trust, increased loyalty, and expanded demand to over 10 countries.

The following is a table of interview results and analysis:

Table 1. Interview Results and Analysis

| Keywords           | Interview results   | Analysis  |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Digital Branding   | "We use Instagram, website, and Etsy to promote our products."  | Digital platforms increase brand visibility and allows the company to reach a wider international market.                           |
| Customer trust     | "We are transparent in the process delivery and received positive reviews from international customers."  | Information transparency and customer reviews strengthen trust, which is an important component in global branding.                 |
| Export             | "Digital branding improves Our export requests are to more than 10 countries."  | Digital branding strategy proven to be effective in increase the scale of exports, with attraction to key markets.                  |
| Difference culture | "Tailoring our digital content to be relevant to audiences in each country. We also collaborate with local distributors to better understand their market preferences." | The principles of cross cultural branding help Kokonat Indonesia understand local market needs and create relevant messages.        |
| Digital Innovation | "We plan to use AR on the website to visualize plants in customers' rooms."   | Technological innovation provides an interactive experience for customers at once create differentiation competitive global market. |

## Conclusion

Based on the results and data analysis, it can be said that Indonesian Coconuts' digital branding approach significantly contributes to the growth of their exports of tropical green plants to foreign markets. Using online resources like Instagram, websites and international marketplaces such as Etsy has proven effective in increasing brand visibility, building consumer trust through information transparency and overcoming geographical barriers in global marketing. This strategy has also been successful in adapting Cross-Cultural Branding principles to meet local market needs in various countries, resulting in better relationships with international customers and significantly increasing export market demand.

This research highlights several key points, including digital branding as a crucial factor in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the global market through the optimal use of digital platforms. The key to Kokonat Indonesia's success lies in the strategic use of appropriate digital platforms, the establishment of consumer trust through transparent information, and the ability to consistently export while adapting to local cultures. The digital branding strategy employed effectively reaches global markets, overcomes logistical and cultural barriers, and strengthens sustainable competitive advantages. The approach taken by Kokonat can serve as a practical reference for other SMEs in optimizing digital branding as a powerful tool to boost competitive exports. Moreover, transparency and customer interaction play an essential role in building brand reputation and loyalty in international markets. Technological innovations, such as the planned use of Augmented Reality (AR), demonstrate the potential of digital technology to provide sustainable added value and create competitive differentiation.

However, this research also has limitations because the focus is only on one MSME, so the results cannot be fully generalized to MSMEs in other sectors. Development opportunities are open for further studies that explore the influence of digital branding on other sectors. Practically, this research provides strategic recommendations for other MSMEs in utilizing digital branding to increase competitiveness in the export market. Therefore, this research is an important reference for MSMEs who want to develop digital-based marketing strategies to increase the scale of their business in the era of globalization.

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