

Strategic Initiatives of The Batik Women's Association (IWATIK) Balikpapan

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a vital role in the Indonesian economy, but their sustainability highly depends on the implementation of effective management strategies. This research analyzes the strategic and business management practices of Iwatik Batik Balikpapan MSMEs, a group fostered by the Balikpapan City Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Industry Office and established by Sri Sunarti since 2015. Using a qualitative descriptive analysis approach, this article examines how Iwatik applies differentiation strategies through typical Kalimantan batik motifs such as squid arches, karamunting fruits, marsh bags, tiwai onions, and mangroves. The SWOT analysis identified Iwatik's competitive advantages in the quality of hand-painted batik and the uniqueness of local motifs, as well as great opportunities from the momentum of relocating the National Capital City (IKN) of the archipelago to East Kalimantan. The results of the analysis show that Iwatik's success lies in the implementation of product differentiation strategies, market development, sustainable innovation, and the integration of the social mission of women's empowerment with cultural preservation. Iwatik also leverages digital marketing and strategic partnerships with governments and corporations to expand its market reach. These findings provide important lessons for other MSMEs: that differentiation based on local excellence, sensitivity to external opportunities, strong branding, and commitment to quality are the keys to sustainability and business growth. This article concludes that, with the right strategic management, culture-based MSMEs like Iwatik can compete in a competitive market while preserving cultural heritage and having a positive socio-economic impact on society.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of the Indonesian economy, contributing significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and labor absorption (Finley, 2022; Rio Ferdinan Suryadi, 2024; Soetjipto et al., 2023; Tambunan, 2019; Tumiwa & Nagy, 2021). However, the sustainability and growth of MSMEs highly depend on business actors' ability to implement effective strategic management. In the context of global competition and increasingly complex market dynamics, MSMEs must not only focus on production but also formulate comprehensive business strategies to maintain competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth (Aminullah et al., 2024; E. R. Lestari, 2019; S. Lestari, 2022; Salwa & Hubbansyah, 2024; Shlapak et al., 2023; Tallman et al., 2018).

Previous research has extensively examined MSME strategies and batik industry dynamics. Studies such as those by Widodo (2020) and Yuliana (2021) highlight the importance of differentiation strategies and social mission integration in enhancing MSME competitiveness. Research on batik MSMEs has largely focused on Java-based producers, such as the works of Hermawan (2019) and Kemenperin (2021), which analyze traditional batik

clusters in Solo, Yogyakarta, and Pekalongan. These studies emphasize product quality, branding, and government support as key success factors. However, limited research exists on non-Javanese batik enterprises, particularly those in Kalimantan that leverage unique local motifs and operate within distinct socio-economic contexts. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how cultural differentiation and regional identity contribute to competitive advantage in underrepresented batik markets.

Iwatik Batik Balikpapan offers an interesting example of how local *MSMEs* can survive and thrive through effective management strategies, as seen in the *Strategic Initiatives of the Batik Women's Association (IWATIK) Balikpapan*. *Iwatik*, which stands for *Batik Women's Association*, was founded by Sri Sunarti in 2015 as a group fostered by the Balikpapan City Cooperatives, *MSMEs*, and Industry Office (*DKUMKMP*). More than just a batik craft business, *Iwatik* has transformed into an agent of Kalimantan cultural preservation and a vehicle for women's economic empowerment in Balikpapan.

The urgency of this research lies in two critical contexts. First, Indonesia's high *MSME* failure rate—where only about 30% survive beyond five years—underscores the need to analyze successful models as benchmarks. Second, the recent relocation of the National Capital City (*IKN*) to East Kalimantan presents a unique opportunity for local *MSMEs* like *Iwatik* to scale their impact, enhance regional branding, and contribute to the creative economy amid national strategic transformation. Understanding how *Iwatik* navigates opportunities and challenges in this shifting landscape is both timely and policy-relevant.

This study offers novelty by integrating strategic management analysis with a socio-cultural lens, focusing on how a non-Javanese batik enterprise leverages local motifs—such as squid arches, karamunting fruit, and mangroves—to build competitive differentiation. Unlike most batik studies centered on Java, this research highlights the underexplored potential of Kalimantan's batik heritage and examines how cultural authenticity, combined with adaptive business strategies, drives sustainability. Additionally, it provides a longitudinal perspective on *Iwatik's* journey from a small community group to a growing enterprise, offering empirical insights into strategic decision-making, partnership leveraging, and digital adaptation in a rapidly evolving market.

This study aims to analyze the strategic management practices of *Iwatik* Batik Balikpapan and identify key success factors enabling its sustainability and growth. Furthermore, it seeks to provide empirical insights into how cultural differentiation and social mission integration contribute to competitive advantage in the context of East Kalimantan's evolving economic landscape.

The findings of this research are expected to offer practical contributions for *MSME* practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers. For *MSMEs*, this study provides a replicable strategic framework emphasizing local cultural assets, adaptive marketing, and strategic partnerships. For policymakers, it offers evidence-based insights to design targeted support programs for cultural and creative *MSMEs*, particularly in the context of *IKN* development. Academically, this research enriches the literature on strategic management and cultural entrepreneurship by presenting a non-Javanese batik case study that demonstrates how tradition and innovation synergize to build sustainable business models.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of the strategic management practices of *Iwatik* Batik Balikpapan. The research design was descriptive-exploratory, aiming to systematically describe business phenomena, identify strategic patterns, and explore underlying success factors. Data collection was conducted through multiple techniques to ensure comprehensiveness and triangulation. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with key informants, including the founder Sri Sunarti, second-generation leader Yuni Rachmawaty, and senior artisans, to gain insights into strategic decision-making, business development history, and operational challenges. Direct observation was conducted at the *Iwatik* workshop and gallery to document production processes, product variations, and customer interactions. Additionally, document analysis was performed on business records, financial reports (where accessible), promotional materials, and media coverage to supplement and validate interview data. Secondary data from government publications and industry reports were also utilized to contextualize the findings within the broader *MSME* and batik industry landscape.

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis framework, beginning with data transcription, coding, and categorization. Interview transcripts and field notes were systematically coded to identify recurring themes related to strategy formulation, implementation, and adaptation. The SWOT analysis framework was then applied to organize findings into internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats. This was complemented by a comparative analysis against existing strategic management theories, particularly Porter's generic strategies and the resource-based view, to interpret how *Iwatik* achieved and sustained competitive advantage. Data triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents was conducted to enhance validity and reliability, while member checking with key informants was performed to ensure the accuracy and contextual relevance of the interpreted findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Strategic Management Analysis of IKATAN WANITA BATIK Balikpapan

1. Internal Environmental Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)

Strengths:

a. Product Uniqueness and Differentiation

Iwatik has a competitive advantage through batik motifs inspired by the natural and cultural riches of Kalimantan. The motif of squid arches, karamunting fruits, and mangroves is a strong identity that competitors from other regions do not have. This uniqueness creates product differentiation that is difficult to replicate.

b. Craftsmanship Quality and Skills

The commitment to maintain the technique of manual painting batik with canting and night shows dedication to quality. Each canting stroke produces a handmade work that has high artistic value and cannot be replicated by a machine. The manufacturing process that takes up to 2 days per motif guarantees product exclusivity.

c. Institutional Support

As a fostered partner of the Balikpapan City Cooperatives, MSMEs, and Industry Office and Pertamina, *Iwatik* has access to coaching, training, and business assistance programs. This support helps with the development of production capacity and business management.

d. Leadership and Regeneration

The involvement of the second generation (Yuni Rachmawaty) shows the sustainability of leadership and knowledge transfer between generations. This regeneration brings a new perspective in product innovation and marketing strategies, especially in the use of digital media.

e. Social Mission and Women's Empowerment

Iwatic is not only profit-oriented, but also has a mission to empower women and preserve culture. This social dimension creates a positive brand image and loyalty from the local community.

Kelemahan (Weaknesses):

a. Production Capacity Limitations

Manual techniques are an advantage as well as a barrier. The long production process makes it difficult for Iwatic to meet large quantities of demand in a short period of time, especially if there is a sudden mass order.

b. Reliance on Craftsman's Skills

The quality of the product is highly dependent on the expertise and precision of the batik maker. If there is turnover or difficulty recruiting skilled craftsmen, this can affect production consistency.

c. Limited Capital and Access to Financing

As an MSME, Iwatic faces capital challenges for business expansion, investment in modern equipment, or the development of wider distribution channels.

d. Limited Market Reach

Although it has been known at the local and regional levels, Iwatic's brand awareness at the national level still needs to be improved, especially to compete with batik from Java which is more established.

e. Management System and Digitalization

As a business that grows from a craft group, the business management system (finance, inventory, customer relationship) may still need further professionalization and digitalization.

2. External Environment Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Peluang (Opportunities):

a. Relocation of the National Capital City (IKN) of the archipelago

This is the biggest game changer for Iwatic. Balikpapan as a buffer city for the IKN will experience an increase in economic activity, visits from officials, tourists, and investors. Sri Sunarti optimistically stated that the presence of the IKN will introduce Balikpapan batik to the national and even international levels. The opportunity to become an official souvenir or batik supplier for state events is very open.

b. Increased Interest in Local and Cultural Products

The trend of economic nationalism and the "proud made in Indonesia" movement has created a market that is increasingly appreciative of authentic local products. Millennial and Gen Z consumers are starting to appreciate the craftsmanship and storytelling behind the products they buy.

c. Growth of E-commerce and Digital Marketing

Digital platforms provide wider market access without geographical limitations. Instagram, marketplaces, and websites can be effective channels to reach consumers throughout Indonesia.

d. Government Support for MSMEs and Creative Economy

Various government programs such as special financing schemes for MSMEs, training, free halal certification, and exhibition facilitation provide a support system for business development.

e. Collaboration with the Tourism Industry

Cooperation with hotels, travel agents, and tourist destinations in Kalimantan can open new distribution channels. Batik can be part of a cultural tour package or sold in premium souvenir shops.

f. Tren Sustainable Fashion dan Slow Fashion

Global awareness of the fashion industry's impact on the environment encourages consumers to choose handmade products, natural dye, and sustainable production processes. Traditional batik fits this trend.

Threats:

a. Competition with Batik from Other Regions

Javanese batik (Solo, Yogyakarta, Pekalongan) has a very strong brand equity and is widely known. They also have a more mature production and distribution infrastructure. Competing with these established brands requires a strong marketing strategy.

b. Imitation Products and Mass Printing Batik

Batik printing at a low price can be a substitute for price-sensitive consumers. Although the quality and value of the art are different, the layman consumer may not be differentiating, thus depressing the market price.

c. Fashion Trend Shifts

Fashion and fashion trends are changing fast. If batik is considered "outdated" by the younger generation, demand can decrease. Design innovations are needed that remain relevant to contemporary tastes.

d. Difficulties in Intellectual Property Rights Protection

Although Iwatik plans to register IPR for its motives, enforcement against copyright infringement is still weak in Indonesia. The risk of plagiarism by competitors remains.

e. Fluctuations in Raw Material Prices

Rising prices of fabrics, dyes, and other supporting materials can affect profit margins, especially if it is difficult to raise the selling price in the market.

f. Changes in Consumer Behavior Post-Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed people's consumption patterns, with preferences for online shopping and products at more affordable prices. Iwatik needs to adapt to these changes.

3. Business Strategy of Iwatik Batik Balikpapan

Based on the SWOT analysis above, Iwatik's business strategy can be mapped as follows:

a. Differentiation Strategy

Iwatic applies a differentiation strategy by highlighting the uniqueness of Kalimantan motifs and the quality of hand-painted batik. This strategy puts Iwatic in a premium market segment that values authenticity, craftsmanship, and cultural values. With the positioning of "Remember Batik, Remember Iwatic", the brand seeks to build a strong association between Balikpapan batik and the name Iwatic.

Implementation:

- 1) Maintain consistency of product quality
- 2) Strong storytelling about the origins of the motives and the manufacturing process
- 3) Consumer education about the difference between written and printing batik
- 4) Developing signature motifs that are characteristic of Iwatic

b. Market Development Strategy

With the momentum of the IKN, Iwatic identified opportunities to expand the market from the local Balikpapan to the national and even international levels. This strategy involves penetrating into new consumer segments and wider geographic areas.

Implementation:

- 1) Leverage websites and social media for national reach
- 2) Actively participate in batik exhibitions and festivals in various cities
- 3) Partnering with retailers in major cities
- 4) Targeting government officials, corporations, and foreign tourists as a new segment

c. Product Development Strategy

Iwatic not only produces batik fabrics, but also develops derivative products such as apparel, masks, and accessories. It expands the product line and reaches a wide range of consumer needs.

Implementation:

- 1) Design innovations that follow contemporary fashion trends
- 2) Collaborate with fashion designers to create limited edition collections
- 3) Developing premium corporate gift and souvenir products
- 4) Combining batik with modern materials to create fusion products

d. Integration Strategy

Iwatic implements vertical integration in the future by not only selling fabrics, but also producing ready-to-wear products. This increases the value chain and profit margins.

e. Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy

The mission of cultural preservation and women's empowerment is an integral part of Iwatic's business strategy. This creates value-based differentiation that is increasingly important for modern consumers.

Implementation:

- 1) Batik training program for the younger generation and housewives
- 2) Using natural dyes to support sustainability
- 3) Collaboration with local communities for the development of new motifs
- 4) Transparency in the production process (behind the scenes content)

4. Marketing Strategy

a. Market Segmentation

- 1) **Premium Segment:** Consumers who value art, authenticity, and are willing to pay premium prices
- 2) **Corporate Segment:** Companies that need batik uniforms, corporate gifts, or merchandise
- 3) **Tourism Segment:** Domestic and foreign tourists looking for authentic souvenirs
- 4) **Government Segment:** Government agencies for official events and official gifts

b. Positioning

"Premium Quality Painted Batik with Typical Kalimantan Motifs that Preserve Local Culture"

c. Marketing Mix (4P)

Product:

- 1) Batik lukis manual (flagship product)
- 2) Batik printing and stamping (mass market)
- 3) Ready-to-wear fashion
- 4) Custom design services
- 5) Souvenir dan craft items

Price:

- 1) Premium pricing for hand-painted batik (IDR 1-1.2 million)
- 2) Competitive pricing for batik printing (IDR 500,000-800,000)
- 3) Value pricing for accessories and souvenirs

Square:

- 1) Iwatik Gallery in Balikpapan (direct selling)
- 2) Instagram and website (online channel)
- 3) Marketplace (Tokopedia, Shopee)
- 4) Exhibitions and festivals (temporary channel)
- 5) Reseller and boutique (indirect channel)

Promotion:

- 1) Digital marketing (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok)
- 2) Content marketing (the process of creation, story behind motifs)
- 3) Public relations (media coverage, endorsement of public figures)
- 4) Word of mouth dan community building
- 5) Participation in trade shows dan cultural events

d. Branding Tagline "Remember Batik, Remember Iwatik" is an effective top-of-mind awareness strategy. Branding also emphasizes on:

- 1) Local pride and identity of Balikpapan
- 2) Heritage dan craftsmanship
- 3) Women empowerment
- 4) Cultural preservation

5. Operational Strategy

a. Production Management

- 1) Maintaining manual painting batik as a core competence
- 2) Integrate technology (printing, cap) for scalability
- 3) Strict quality control for product consistency
- 4) Documentation of each motive for IPR and standardization

b. Human Resource Management

- 1) Continuous training to improve batik skills
- 2) Regeneration and knowledge transfer to the younger generation
- 3) Incentive system to retain skilled workforce
- 4) Division of work based on skills (designer, batik, finishing)

c. Financial Management

- 1) Orderly and separate financial recording (personal vs business)
- 2) Cash flow management for production continuity
- 3) Access to MSME financing for expansion
- 4) Reinvestment of profits for business development

d. Supply Chain Management

- 1) Diversification of raw material suppliers to reduce risk
- 2) Negotiate price and quality with suppliers
- 3) Inventory management yang efisien
- 4) Reliable logistics and distribution

6. Strategy to Face the Competition

a. Continuous Innovation

Iwatic continues to develop new motifs inspired by Kalimantan's natural wealth. Innovation is not only in the motifs, but also in the application of batik to various fashion products and accessories that are relevant to modern needs.

b. Building Emotional Connection

Through storytelling and involvement in the cultural preservation movement, Iwatic builds emotional bonds with consumers who care about heritage and sustainability.

c. Strategic Partnership

Partnerships with governments, corporations, and educational institutions open up market access and increase brand credibility.

d. Leveraging Local Advantage

Balikpapan's position as a buffer city for the IKN is a competitive advantage that competitors from other regions do not have. Iwatic can become the "official batik of IKN" with the right strategy.

Learning and Recommendations for Other MSMEs

1. The Importance of Product Differentiation

MSMEs must find a unique selling proposition (USP) that differentiates their products from competitors. Iwatic succeeds by highlighting local Kalimantan motifs and the quality of hand-painted batik. Other MSMEs can identify the uniqueness of their products based on local excellence, innovation, or a specific value proposition.

2. Taking Advantage of External Momentum and Opportunities

Sensitivity to changes in the external environment is essential. Iwatik quickly identified IKN opportunities and formulated a strategy to take advantage of them. MSMEs must proactively follow government policy developments, market trends, and economic changes to capture business opportunities.

3. Building a Strong Brand Identity

"Remember Batik, Remember Iwatik" shows the power of simple but effective branding. MSMEs need to build a consistent and memorable brand identity to create consumer loyalty and facilitate recalls.

4. The Importance of Social Mission and Sustainability

Modern consumers, especially the younger generation, are increasingly concerned about the social and environmental impact of the products they buy. The mission of cultural preservation and women's empowerment is an added value for Iwatik. MSMEs can integrate social and environmental dimensions in their business model to create shared value.

5. Regeneration and Sustainability of Leadership

The second-generation involvement in Iwatik ensures business continuity and brings new perspectives. Family MSMEs need to plan succession and involve the younger generation in the business to ensure continuity.

6. Technology Adaptation

While retaining traditional techniques, Iwatik also adopted technology (batik printing) and digital marketing to expand its reach. MSMEs must balance maintaining core competencies with the adoption of technology that increases efficiency and market reach.

7. Networking and Strategic Partnerships

Support from the government and corporations such as Pertamina provides access to resources and a wider market. MSMEs should actively build networks with relevant stakeholders and not be reluctant to collaborate.

8. Focus on Quality and Consistency

Iwatik's commitment to the quality of hand-painted batik has created a solid reputation. MSMEs must consistently maintain product quality standards to build consumer trust and loyalty.

9. Customer Education

Consumer education about the manufacturing process, the uniqueness of the motif, and the value behind the product can increase the perceived value and justification of the premium price. Iwatik does this through gallery tours and social media content.

10. Professionalization Management

As businesses grow, MSMEs need to improve professionalism in financial, operational, and human resource management. This includes neat bookkeeping, production SOPs, and a structured HR system.

Challenges and Overcoming Strategies

1. Scalability Challenges

Problem: Manual painting batik takes a long time and is difficult for mass production

Solution:

- 1) Hybrid approach: batik painting for premium line, printing for mass market
- 2) Recruit and train more skilled batik

- 3) Standardization of motifs for production efficiency
- 4) Outsourcing for non-core activities

2. Capital Challenges

Problem: Limited capital for expansion and investment of equipment

Solution:

- 1) Access MSME financing programs from the government or banks
- 2) Looking for investors or venture capital that is aligned with the social mission
- 3) Crowdfunding for specific projects
- 4) Corporate partnerships (CSR programs)

3. Marketing and Brand Awareness Challenges

Problem: Brand awareness is still limited compared to Javanese batik

Solution:

- 1) Aggressive digital marketing with consistent content creation
- 2) Influencer marketing and collaboration with public figures
- 3) Active participation in every event and exhibition
- 4) PR strategy for media coverage
- 5) Leveraging IKN momentum for national exposure

4. Competition Challenge

Problem: Fierce competition with other regional batik and imitation products

Solution:

- 1) Strengthening differentiation through exclusive motives and IPR
- 2) Focus pada niche market yang appreciate authenticity
- 3) Building community dan customer loyalty program
- 4) Continuous innovation dalam design dan product development

5. Craftsmen's Regeneration Challenge

Problem: The interest of the younger generation to learn batik is still low

Solution:

- 1) Interesting and structured batik training program
- 2) Provide clear incentives and career paths for batik makers
- 3) Collaboration with schools and universities for workshops
- 4) Promotion of the batik profession as a valuable and prestigious skill

CONCLUSION

Iwatik Batik Balikpapan exemplifies how *MSMEs* can achieve growth through effective strategic management by leveraging competitive advantages like unique Kalimantan motifs and high-quality painted batik, pursuing differentiation strategies, and capitalizing on opportunities such as the *IKN* Nusantara momentum. Its success stems from visionary leadership, quality commitment, adaptability, strategic networking, and a social mission of cultural preservation and women's empowerment, which enhances brand value and ensures sustainability. Key lessons for other *MSMEs* include prioritizing differentiation via local resources, maintaining adaptability, building strong brand identity with social integration, investing in human resources and technology, and professionalizing management for long-term viability. With consistent execution, *Iwatik* demonstrates that *MSMEs* can thrive competitively while preserving cultural values and driving socio-economic impact, positioning itself as a

potential "icon of *IKN* batik" and embodying the slogan "Remember Batik, Remember *Iwatik*" to rival Javanese batik's national prominence. For future research, scholars could conduct comparative case studies of *MSMEs* across Indonesia's regions to evaluate how varying socio-economic contexts and government policies influence the scalability of culture-based differentiation strategies.

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