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Woven Product Differentiation for Enhancing the Economic Welfare of a Women's Weaving Community in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

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Abstract
Traditional ikat weaving in Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, is a cultural heritage with considerable economic value. However, women weavers continue to face challenges related to production technology, product diversification, marketing, and financial recordkeeping. This community service program aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Mama Penenun Kasih Tolong Community in Malaka Regency through product differentiation and improved business management. The program involved twenty participants and was implemented over eight months through socialization, training, technology application, mentoring, and evaluation. The activities included the provision of one non-machine loom, two electric sewing machines, and one overlock machine, accompanied by training in product development, digital marketing, and the separation of personal and business financial records. The results demonstrated an improvement of approximately fifteen percent in participants' knowledge, with average scores increasing from sixty-six in the pre-test to seventy-five in the post-test. The community successfully developed three differentiated woven products, namely woven-combination clothing, hats, and bags. Furthermore, the production time required to complete one woven fabric decreased from approximately four weeks to three weeks, indicating a twenty-five percent improvement in production efficiency. In digital marketing, the community established one online store and developed five promotional content materials. Participants also demonstrated an improved understanding of financial management, particularly in separating personal and business financial records. Overall, these findings suggest that integrating appropriate production technology, product innovation, digital marketing, and financial literacy can enhance the business capacity and economic sustainability of women-led weaving communities while preserving local cultural heritage.

Keywords: differentiation; digital marketing; weaving; women

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INTRODUCTION

Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, is located on Timor Island and possesses strong cultural potential, one of which is traditional ikat weaving. Ikat weaving serves not only as a cultural heritage but also holds economic value, as its production requires skill, precision, and considerable time. Weaving in this region is predominantly carried out by women and constitutes part of household livelihoods. The role of women in weaving is associated not only with cultural preservation but also with meeting household economic needs. Women weavers contribute substantially to increasing household income, fulfilling daily needs, and sustaining family welfare (Tuwu et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study conducted in East Nusa Tenggara showed that the weaving activities of Sumba women serve both as an alternative source of family income and as an effort to preserve the cultural heritage of ikat weaving (Krisnadi, 2025).

The Kasih Tolong women weavers' community is one of the groups that maintains traditional weaving practices while also having the opportunity to develop products based on local wisdom. Local

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wisdom can serve as a branding strategy for product differentiation (Nurdin & Himpi, 2026). The partner of this program was the Mama Penenun Kasih Tolong Community, which consists of 20 members. Prior to the program, the partner's main product was woven fabric sheets, which were generally sold to collectors. Consequently, value creation stopped at the fabric production stage, while opportunities to process the fabric into products with more diverse functions and higher selling value had not been optimally utilized. In fact, the development of weaving businesses can be achieved not only by increasing production volume but also through product innovation and development. A study on weaving micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bima City showed that their development is associated with product innovation, creativity, expansion of marketing networks, and government support (Ernawati, 2021). Structured product innovation management, grounded in local creativity and supported by digital marketing strategies, can serve as a model for enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs (Nasrullah, 2026).

Innovation and creativity can be developed by weavers who produce fabric sheets, as these fabrics can be processed into clothing or bags. However, the added value generated through such downstream processing has not yet been fully captured by the weaving community. Interviews conducted by the community service team with the community revealed that a woven fabric sheet measuring approximately 40 × 160 cm was sold for IDR 200,000–500,000 per sheet, with a production time of approximately four weeks. This baseline condition indicates that the relatively long production time needs to be balanced by efforts to increase product value. One possible strategy is product diversification or differentiation, namely processing the fabric into various derivative products with different functions and market segments. A woven fabric sheet measuring 40 × 160 cm can be developed into three to four combined derivative products with an estimated selling value of approximately IDR 750,000. This diversification strategy is consistent with a community service program in which the Donggala woven fabric craft business was developed through diversification to increase income in Salubomba Village (Sabariyah et al., 2024).

Product differentiation is important because traditional woven fabrics have characteristics that distinguish them from other textile products, particularly their motifs, production techniques, cultural identity, and inherent symbolic values. Woven motifs in various regions of Indonesia serve not only aesthetic functions but also represent the knowledge and cultural identity of local communities. An ethnomathematical study of West Sumba woven fabric motifs revealed specific motif characteristics associated with the cultural knowledge of the community (Ledi, 2020). Similarly, the distinctive motifs of Troso ikat weaving possess visual characteristics that can be developed as part of learning and the preservation of cultural arts (Maulidiyah & Syafii, 2023). Thus, motif characteristics and cultural identity can serve as distinguishing elements in the development of woven products.

The development of woven-based products is directed not only at increasing product variety but also at ensuring that the cultural character and uniqueness of the weaving are preserved when developed into more functional products. Differentiation can be achieved by processing fabric sheets into clothing, hats, bags, and other products that combine woven fabric with supporting materials. Such development is expected to broaden the functional use of woven fabrics while increasing market opportunities. Business development requires interventions encompassing improvements in production technology, product innovation, digital marketing, and more structured financial management (Hasbullah & Hermanto, 2026).

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Interviews conducted by the team with the weaving community revealed several problems faced by the partner, encompassing four main aspects. First, the simple production equipment resulted in relatively long production times; therefore, technology training through hands-on practice with production equipment was required. Second, the products were not yet differentiated, as most were still sold as fabric sheets; hence, the program focused on developing products such as clothing or shirts and bags made from woven fabric. Third, business management was not yet supported by adequate business governance and recordkeeping. This condition formed the basis for providing financial recordkeeping assistance to help the partner manage business transactions more systematically. Fourth, marketing still relied on customer referrals and had not optimally utilized digital marketing; therefore, mentoring in online store management was provided to expand market reach. In addition, personal money and business sales revenue had not previously been separated, making it difficult for the partner to clearly determine business performance. Accordingly, the program also encouraged the separation of personal and business financial records.

These problems resemble the challenges faced by craft businesses in Indonesia, where craft SMEs encounter various challenges related to skills, innovation, technology, marketing, and stakeholder engagement (Raya et al., 2021). That study also highlighted the importance of open innovation and multi-stakeholder engagement in supporting the development of craft businesses. Although its object was batik-based craft SMEs rather than a weaving community in Malaka Regency, its findings suggest that the development of craft businesses requires both the strengthening of internal capacity and external support.

Product innovation is one of the strategies that can enhance the growth of micro and small enterprises. A relationship between product innovation and business development has been identified among culinary MSMEs in Tabalong Regency (Avriyanti, 2021). Although the research object differs from a weaving community, this finding provides a basis for considering product innovation as an important aspect of business development. In the context of traditional weaving, innovation should be directed toward developing product form, function, and selling value without eliminating the cultural identity that constitutes the core character of the weaving.

In addition to product innovation, marketing is an essential aspect in ensuring that the developed products reach consumers. Product innovation provides MSMEs with opportunities to enhance their competitiveness more broadly (Lambe & Halik, 2024). Digital marketing can support business visibility, customer interaction, and the improvement of MSME performance (Paransa, 2021). Therefore, the use of digital media is relevant for weaving communities that have thus far relied on customer referrals and limited markets.

Research in East Nusa Tenggara provides more specific support for the importance of digital marketing for products based on local wisdom. A study demonstrated the role of MSME marketing strategies through digital marketing in enhancing the competitiveness of local wisdom-based products on Adonara Island, East Flores Regency (Kurniawati et al., 2024). The study specifically addressed weaving artisans and positioned digital marketing as a strategy to improve product competitiveness while preserving the identity of local wisdom. The similarity in product characteristics and region makes these findings relevant as a basis for developing the digital marketing of woven products in Malaka Regency.

The use of digital marketing also requires capacity building of business actors through mentoring. Previous research has shown that training in digital marketing can expand the market reach

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of MSME products (Widyakto et al., 2021). This finding indicates that developing digital marketing requires not only providing promotional media but also improving the knowledge and skills of business actors in using them. In the partner's context, mentoring was directed toward enabling the community to introduce woven derivative products through digital channels in a more structured manner.

Beyond marketing, financial management is an important component of business strengthening. Separating personal and business money is necessary for business actors to clearly understand their revenues, expenditures, and business results. This aspect becomes increasingly important because increased production and marketing do not automatically lead to improved welfare if business income cannot be identified and properly managed. Sumba women weavers face challenges in the form of limited access to capital, training, and broader markets (Krisnadi, 2025). That study also emphasized the importance of improving business management capabilities, access to productive resources, and the development of marketing networks as part of the economic empowerment of women weavers.

A previous empowerment program for women weavers was conducted by Kolimon et al. (2025) in Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, involving training and mentoring to strengthen individual weavers' capacity, group organization, the quality of woven production, and marketing management. In contrast, the distinctive advantage of the present approach lies in the downstream processing of woven fabric carried out by the community itself through the differentiation of derivative products, namely woven-combination clothing, hats, and bags. Based on the above description, this program aimed to: (1) produce three derivative products, (2) shorten production time, (3) establish separate financial records, and (4) implement digital marketing.

METHODS

The program was implemented with the Mama Penenun Kasih Tolong Community in Biudukfoho Village, Rinhat District, Malaka Regency, East Nusa Tenggara. The partner is an economically productive artisan group consisting of 20 members aged 36–59 years. The program was conducted over eight months, from May to December 2026. It involved three lecturers (one team leader serving as coordinator, one responsible for financial training, and one responsible for Business Model Canvas socialization) and four students serving as field implementers.

The activities were organized in stages, comprising preparation and socialization, training, technology application, mentoring, and evaluation and sustainability. In the initial stage, a general socialization meeting and group discussions were held to identify the partner's needs. The initial materials covered production conditions as well as product differentiation and diversification, delivered by Mr. M. Dian Aryono, S.T., M.M., a practitioner and MSME mentor. This was followed by a session on the Business Model Canvas, in which the partner mapped the nine key elements of their business. The materials also covered the application of digital marketing and financial recordkeeping, during which the partner actively practiced financial recording and tried an e-commerce application. Figure 1 presents documentation of the socialization activity.

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Figure 1. Resource Person Delivering the Material

The next implementation stage included operational training on the non-machine loom (*Alat Tenun Bukan Mesin*, ATBM). The use of the sewing and overlock machines and product making were assisted by Mrs. Ariance Balok, a local tailor. The partner participated through hands-on practice in using the sewing and overlock machines and cutting fabric. Figure 2 shows the partner practicing fabric cutting, which was followed by sewing, as documented in Figure 3.



Figure 2. Fabric Cutting Practice



Figure 3. Sewing and Overlocking Practice

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Technology Application and Product Diversification

The technology applied consisted of one unit of a 4-shaft, 80 cm ATBM weaving loom. This non-machine loom was selected to preserve the traditional motifs that are closely attached to local culture. In addition, two electric sewing machines and one overlock machine were provided. The equipment was used to improve the efficiency of the weaving process while enabling the fabric to be processed into derivative products. Training was conducted through hands-on practice, ranging from equipment operation and maintenance to pattern making and product finishing. The initial program design targeted a reduction in production time from four weeks to three weeks for one fabric measuring 40 × 160 cm. Figure 4 presents documentation of the team with the partner.



Figure 4. Documentation of the Team with the Partner

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Analysis

The evaluation employed descriptive quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative evaluation compared pre-test and post-test results on the materials delivered, using a test consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions. The pre-test was administered to all 20 partner members, yielding a mean score of 66, while the mean post-test score was 75.

Production time was evaluated by examining the partner's production records before and after the provision of the ATBM; the average production time was four weeks before and three weeks after the ATBM was provided. The number of product types initially consisted of only one, namely woven fabric sheets, which increased to three types of derivative products after the program. The number of online marketing channels was one Shopee store, and the number of promotional content pieces was five. The qualitative evaluation was conducted through observation, discussions, and the partner's feedback on the mentoring process. Data on program outcomes are presented as percentages, comparisons between baseline and endline conditions, and descriptions of changes in the partner's capabilities.

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The overall flow of the community service program is illustrated in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Flow of the Community Service Program Implementation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Program Implementation

The program was attended by 20 members of the Mama Penenun Kasih Tolong Community, the community service team, and the local neighborhood head. It was implemented through a series of socialization, practical training, technology application, mentoring, and evaluation activities. Participants were involved not only in the material delivery sessions but also in practicing the use of equipment and making products. A practice-based approach was chosen because the partner's problems were technical and managerial in nature; thus, changes in capacity needed to be demonstrated through the ability to perform tasks directly.

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Improvement in Knowledge and Skills

The evaluation results showed a 15% improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores. This improvement indicates that the training materials enhanced participants' understanding of the aspects covered in the program. Knowledge improvement is important because the activities were directed not only at the use of equipment but also at understanding product development, marketing, and financial management.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Results

No	Name	Pre-test	Post-test	Improvement
1	Arlince Seran	60	80	33%
2	Blandina	80	80	0%
3	Joanita R H T	50	80	60%
4	Ester Luhuk	60	70	17%
5	Yosefina Seran	80	80	0%
6	Aplomia Seik	70	80	14%
7	Olivia Balok	80	80	0%
8	Kamila Hoar	70	80	14%
9	Florentina Aek	60	70	17%
10	Olivia Bria	70	70	0%
11	Selestina jurek	70	80	14%
12	Aplonia Bria	70	80	14%
13	Stelamaris osi seu nahak	60	70	17%
14	Oktaviana berek	70	80	14%
15	Agnes ona nahak	60	60	0%
16	Margaretha seli klau	60	70	17%
17	Maria amanda seran	60	70	17%
18	Agustina klau bira	50	60	20%
19	Blandina bui nahak	70	80	14%
20	Yanuaria seran	70	80	14%
	Average	**66**	**75**	**15%**

Improvement in Production Efficiency

The application of the ATBM changed the production time. Measurements were conducted through observation and a review of production time records for one fabric measuring approximately 40 × 160 cm, woven by two weavers. Kamila Hoar wove from 24 May to 20 June, and Olivia Balok from 23 May to 19 June, each taking approximately four weeks. After the technology application and mentoring, production time was observed only for Olivia Balok, as only one loom was available; weaving a fabric of the same size took from 18 July to 4 August, or approximately three weeks. The motifs and quality produced remained unchanged from those at the beginning of the program. Thus, production time was reduced by one week, or approximately 25%, compared with the baseline condition. This achievement is consistent with the production efficiency target set in the program. The use of appropriate technology in weaving is also in line with studies on the development of ATBM-based weaving industries, which position production technology as an essential element in the sustainability of weaving businesses (Hidayati et al., 2025).

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Changes in Woven Products

Another important change was observed in product diversification. Whereas the fabric had previously been sold mostly in sheet form (one sheet measuring 40 × 160 cm), after the mentoring the partner was able to produce three products, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Derivative Products and Selling Values

No	Product	Quantity Produced	Estimated Production Cost per Unit	Selling Price per Unit
1	Clothing	2	IDR 80,000	IDR 200,000
2	Hat	2	IDR 50,000	IDR 100,000
3	Bag	2	IDR 40,000	IDR 75,000

These results broaden the function of woven fabric beyond mere fabric sheets: woven fabric with a selling value of IDR 200,000 can be processed into various value-added fashion products that can be sold for approximately IDR 750,000, with more diverse market opportunities. Product innovation is one of the MSME development strategies because it enables business actors to create product variations and adapt them to consumer needs (Nasrullah, 2026). The resulting derivative products are presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Products Resulting from Woven Fabric Diversification

Strengthening Digital Marketing

In terms of marketing, the partner successfully established one Shopee online store and produced five pieces of promotional content, whereas previously the partner had no online store. The content was created to introduce the products and the production process to potential consumers. This change reflects a shift from marketing that was previously dominated by customer referrals toward the use of digital channels, as shown in Figure 7. Experiences from community service programs for MSMEs in various regions show that digital marketing training can help business actors expand their market reach and improve their ability to manage digital media (Kurniawati et al., 2024).

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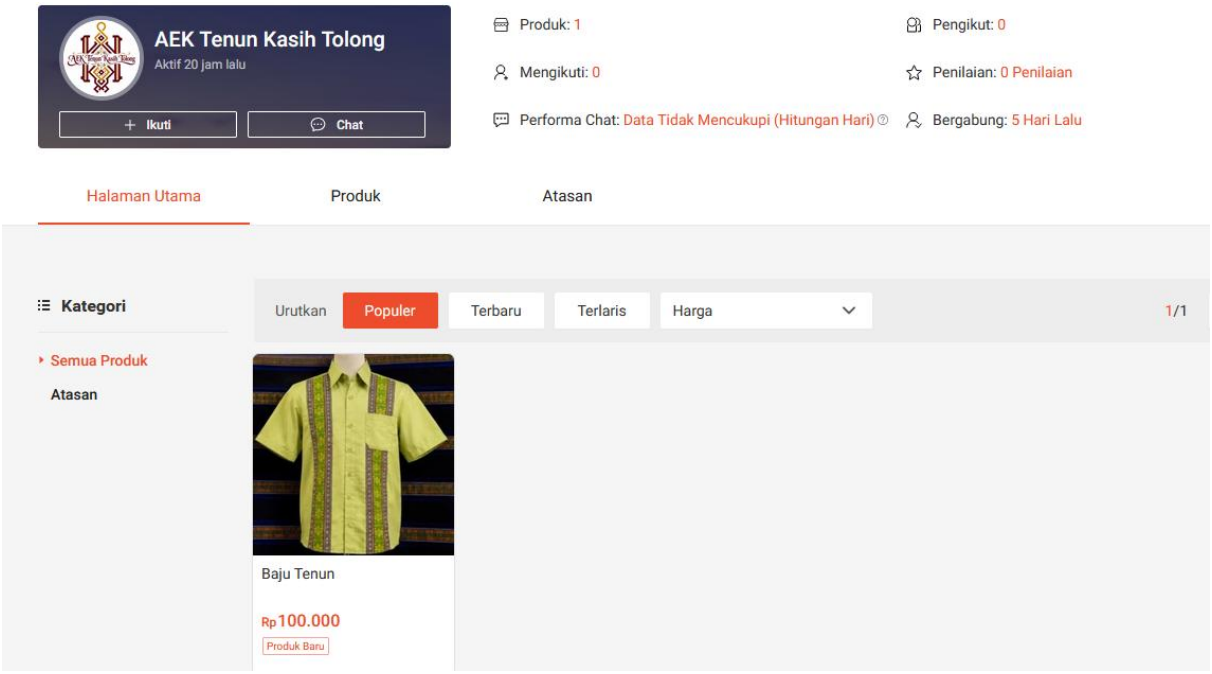


Figure 7. Utilization of Digital Marketing Channels

Improvement in Financial Recordkeeping Skills

In terms of finance, participants gained a better understanding of the importance of separating personal and business finances. Before the program, personal funds and revenue from woven product sales were commingled, making it difficult to clearly determine business profits. After the mentoring, participants began to understand this concept, and six participants had routinely implemented separate recordkeeping. This change provides an important foundation for business management because separating transactions helps business actors track cash inflows, expenditures, and business results more transparently. The achievements of the program are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Achievement of Program Success Indicators

Aspect	Baseline Condition	Program Result	Achievement
Knowledge	Pre-test score: 66	Post-test score: 75	15% increase
Production	±4 weeks/fabric	±3 weeks/fabric	±25% efficiency gain
Diversification	Fabric sheets	Woven-combination clothing, hats, and bags	From 1 to 3 product types
Marketing	No online store	1 online store	1 Shopee online store
Promotional content	Not yet structured	5 pieces of content	5 pieces of content
Finance	Personal and business finances commingled	Separate recordkeeping	Improved understanding

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Impact of the Program on the Partner

Overall, the program produced changes in knowledge, production, products, marketing, and finance. The 15% increase in knowledge indicates that the materials were well received by participants. The reduction in production time from four weeks to three weeks represents an efficiency improvement of approximately 25%. In terms of products, the partner no longer produces only fabric sheets but has been able to develop woven-combination clothing, hats, and bags. In terms of marketing, the establishment of one online store and five pieces of content provides new means of introducing the products. Meanwhile, the derivative products have improved welfare: a 40 × 160 cm fabric that sells for approximately IDR 200,000 as a sheet can generate approximately IDR 750,000 when processed into derivative products.

Partner Testimonials

Mrs. Olivia Aek Bria, the leader of the community, stated that the group was grateful to be a partner in the community service (PKM) program because its members gained extensive knowledge and succeeded in making woven-combination products. This was also expressed by Mrs. Arlince, a member: "*We are very grateful and thank you once again, because the positive ideas and the extraordinary care given to us have enabled us to become more competitive*." These testimonials indicate that the program not only produced physical outputs but also provided learning experiences directly perceived by the partner.

Challenges, Outputs, and Program Sustainability

A challenge encountered during the program was the partner's remote location from shopping centers, which limited the availability of thread colors matching the fabric during the sewing sessions. This was resolved by collaborating with a local tailor who was willing to provide thread in matching colors, to be replaced at a later date. The program outputs include articles on social media, a journal article, a video on the institution's YouTube channel, intellectual property rights (IPR), and a pocket book on separating personal and business finances. The online store and equipment are sustained under the management of the community leader. The program still has room for development, particularly in expanding marketing channels and increasing the quantity and variety of content. Further mentoring for program sustainability should focus on consistent production of derivative products, design development, and financial monitoring. In this way, the equipment provided will not merely remain technological assistance but will become part of a sustainable business process.

CONCLUSION

The community service program with the Mama Penenun Kasih Tolong Community demonstrates that strengthening production technology, product diversification, digital marketing, and financial recordkeeping are complementary efforts in supporting the development of traditional weaving businesses. The application of the ATBM and production mentoring shortened fabric production time, while the development of derivative products opened opportunities to utilize woven fabric in more diverse product forms. The increase in the selling value of a fabric sheet from IDR 200,000 to IDR 750,000 represents a step toward creating a competitive community. The establishment of an online store and promotional content, together with the implementation of separate financial recordkeeping, constitutes an initial step in strengthening marketing and business

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governance. Program sustainability needs to be supported by consistent production, development of product design and quality, regular management of digital marketing, and monitoring of financial records. These efforts are expected to help the partner develop traditional weaving-based businesses sustainably while preserving local cultural values.

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Author Contributions

Lia Nur Fadhilah and Darwin Zebua; contributed to review, editing, and supervision. Hasmarini Ariestin Waruwu and Muhamad Dian Aryono; contributed to conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data analysis, writing, and review. Josepha Vionia Hoar Lebo, Jufran Paulus Loasana, and Yudika Putra Koten; contributed to writing the original draft.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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