



Cultural Branding of Serang Batik Ambassadors Amidst Modernization Challenges

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors in building the cultural brand of traditional textiles amid the growing tide of modernization. The phenomena of globalization and the development of information technology have brought significant changes to local culture, including traditional batik as a symbol of regional cultural identity. In this context, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors serve as cultural agents who play a role in strengthening the image of batik, introducing it to the public, and preserving its cultural values, particularly among the younger generation. This study employs a qualitative approach using the case study method. Data collection techniques included interviews, observations, and documentation of the activities of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors. The results indicate that the Serang City Batik Ambassadors play a strategic role in building cultural branding through promotional activities, educational initiatives, and participation in various cultural and social events. Furthermore, the Batik Ambassadors contribute to raising public awareness of the importance of preserving batik as a local cultural heritage amid the rapid pace of modernization. Thus, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors serve not only as cultural symbols but also as key actors in strengthening a regional cultural identity that is adaptable to the changing times.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, one example of which is batik, an intangible cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). Batik is not only understood as patterned fabric but also as a representation of the identity, philosophy, and cultural values of the Indonesian people, passed down from generation to generation (Sasmita & Zam, 2026). In a global context, batik has undergone a transformation in meaning from merely traditional clothing to a cultural product with economic value, a symbol of national identity, and a competitive creative industry commodity in the global market (Anggorojati et al., 2025). This development indicates that batik has entered a new realm within the dynamics of cultural modernization and globalization.

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However, the tide of modernization poses its own challenges to the sustainability of local culture, including regional batik. Modernization marked by technological advancements, the development of digital media, and changes in people's lifestyles has led to a shift in the values and preferences of the younger generation toward traditional cultural products (Saputri et al., 2024). Batik is often considered impractical, out of step with modern fashion trends, and unable to compete with cheaper and more accessible fast fashion products (Prameswari & Meliana, 2025). This situation raises concerns about the erosion of local cultural identity if preservation efforts are not adapted to keep pace with the times.

A number of studies indicate that batik, as a cultural identity, is undergoing complex dynamics in the context of modernization. Isra & Muktiali, (2022) explain that batik not only functions as a cultural heritage but has also become part of a lifestyle and a commercialized commodity in the modern era, thereby potentially undergoing a shift in cultural meaning if not managed properly (Saputra & Ningsih, 2025). Meanwhile, Rofianto et al., (2021) emphasize that batik, as a cultural product, possesses a strong symbolic dimension in shaping the image and identity of society, thus requiring a branding strategy capable of preserving authentic cultural values amid global market competition (Rofianto et al., 2021).

At the regional level, the city of Serang as part of Banten Province possesses significant cultural potential, including distinctive local batik that reflects the region's identity (Rustamana et al., 2025). Serang batik serves not only as a creative economy product but also as a symbol of the cultural identity of the people of Banten (Syah et al., 2026). One effort to strengthen this identity is carried out through the Serang City Batik Ambassador program, which serves as a representation of the younger generation in introducing, preserving, and promoting batik to the wider community. Batik Ambassadors act as cultural agents who are responsible not only for promotion but also for building collective awareness among the community regarding the importance of preserving local culture (Wulandari, 2025).

The role of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors is crucial in the context of cultural branding. Cultural branding can be understood as the process of shaping the image, identity, and public perception of a cultural product so that it possesses strong value, is widely recognized, and is competitive (Sutarmin et al., 2026). In this regard, Batik Ambassadors serve as cultural communicators who bridge traditional values with the demands of modernization (Kapeanis et al., 2025). They not only participate in ceremonial events but are also involved in education, digital promotion, and engagement in cultural events and the creative industries.

Research on cultural branding indicates that community-based communication strategies have a significant impact on strengthening the identity of cultural products (Sarina et al., 2025). In the context of batik, branding is not only related to visual or aesthetic aspects but also encompasses the historical value, the philosophy behind the motifs, and the cultural narratives inherent in the fabric (Rahmanita, 2025). Therefore, the role of Batik Ambassadors is crucial in building cultural storytelling that can enhance the appeal of batik among the younger generation.

In today's digital age, the role of Batik Ambassadors has also evolved alongside the use of social media as a tool for cultural promotion. Social media has become a strategic space for building a broader and more interactive cultural image. Through digital platforms, the Batik Ambassadors of Serang

City can introduce local batik to national and even international audiences (Saputra & Ningsih, 2025). This aligns with the development of the creative industry, which demands innovation in cultural promotion strategies to remain relevant in the modern era.

Furthermore, Wulandari, (2025) research indicates that the survival of batik as a local culture heavily depends on the ability of cultural actors to preserve traditional values while adapting to technological advancements and modern market trends (Sukmawati et al., 2023). This indicates that the preservation of batik cannot be achieved through conventional means alone but requires a more dynamic, creative, and youth-centered approach.

However, the challenges in developing batik's cultural branding remain significant. One of these is the younger generation's low awareness of local cultural values. Young people are more exposed to global culture through digital media, leading to a decline in their preference for local cultural products (Sari et al., 2024). Additionally, a lack of innovation in cultural promotion is another factor contributing to batik's diminished appeal among some young people. In this context, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors play a strategic role in bridging this gap through educational and creative approaches.

Furthermore, studies indicate that strengthening cultural identity through batik has an impact not only on cultural aspects but also on the economy (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). Batik can be part of the creative industry capable of improving the well-being of local communities through the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector and cultural tourism (Rosidah et al., 2024). The study explains that rebranding regional batik can enhance the product's appeal and expand the market through promotional strategies that are more modern and adaptable to digital developments (Rosidah et al., 2024). Thus, the role of Batik Ambassadors also contributes to strengthening the creative economy based on local culture.

From a theoretical perspective, cultural branding can be linked to the concepts of cultural identity and cultural preservation, in which cultural identity is shaped through a process of symbolic representation carried out by cultural actors. In this context, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors serve as a symbolic representation that connects traditional values with a modern context. They not only promote the identity of batik as a product but also as a living and evolving cultural narrative.

As globalization increases, local cultures often find themselves vulnerable to global cultural homogenization. Therefore, cultural preservation strategies are needed that are not only conservative but also adaptable to the changing times. The Serang City Batik Ambassadors represent an innovative approach to cultural preservation rooted in the participation of the younger generation. Through their role, batik is not only preserved as a heritage but also developed as part of the community's modern identity.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that the Serang City Batik Ambassadors play a vital role in building the cultural brand of traditional textiles amid the tide of modernization. This role encompasses cultural preservation, public education, digital promotion, and the strengthening of the creative economy. Therefore, this study is important for examining in greater depth how the Serang City Batik Ambassadors contribute to building the cultural branding of batik as a local identity capable of competing in the global era.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study methodology, aiming to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors in building the cultural brand of traditional textiles amid the tide of modernization. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study emphasizes meaning, processes, and social experiences that cannot be measured quantitatively (Creswell, 2014; Engkizar et al., 2018, 2025; Masoud & Almajri, 2025; Wekke et al., 2024). The research was conducted in Serang City, Banten Province, with a focus on the activities of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors. The research subjects consisted of the Batik Ambassadors, program advisors, operators of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the batik sector, and members of the community involved in batik promotion activities. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their level of involvement and knowledge regarding the research focus.

Data collection techniques included observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Maputra et al., 2020; Rahawarin et al., 2024; Sandra et al., 2024). Observations were conducted to directly observe the activities of the Batik Ambassadors in promoting and preserving culture. Interviews were used to gather in-depth information regarding the roles, strategies, and challenges faced by the Batik Ambassadors. Documentation was used to supplement the data, including photographs of activities, program archives, and social media content. Data analysis employed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles et al., 2019). Data validity was tested through triangulation of sources, techniques, and time to ensure the reliability of the information obtained. The focus of this study includes the role of Batik Ambassadors, cultural branding strategies, youth engagement, and their impact on local cultural identity (Prameswari & Meliana, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors in the Context of Local Cultural Preservation

The research findings indicate that the Serang City Batik Ambassadors play a significant role as representatives of the younger generation in efforts to preserve and develop the local batik culture. This role is demonstrated not only through ceremonial events but also through active participation in various cultural promotion programs, community education initiatives, and digital activities on social media.

Based on interviews with key informants, the Batik Ambassadors are viewed as a “cultural bridge” connecting traditional values with modern developments. As illustrated by the following interview excerpt:

For us, the Batik Ambassador program is not merely a platform for achievement, but rather a cultural bridge. It connects the traditional, philosophy-rich values of batik with modern developments, so that the younger generation can continue to take pride in wearing batik as part of their contemporary lifestyle (informant 1)

This role is important given that batik is no longer viewed merely as traditional clothing but has evolved into a symbol of cultural identity that must be able to compete in the era of globalization.

Empirically, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors are involved in various activities such as cultural festivals, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) exhibitions, batik outreach programs in schools, and campaigns promoting batik use among the younger generation. These activities

demonstrate that their existence is not merely symbolic but also functional in the context of cultural preservation, as conveyed by an informant in the following interview.

Serang City's Batik Ambassadors actively serve as cultural bridges through various activities, ranging from cultural festivals and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) exhibitions to batik outreach programs in schools and campaigns promoting batik use among the younger generation. In this way, batik is viewed not only as a tradition but also as part of a modern lifestyle (informant 2)

This finding aligns with the concept of cultural preservation, which emphasizes the importance of cultural actors in maintaining the sustainability of local identity amid social change (Prameswari & Meliana, 2025). In this context, the Batik Ambassadors function as agents of change who not only preserve culture but also adapt to the changing times.

The Role of Batik Ambassadors in Building the Cultural Branding of Traditional Textiles

One of the key findings of this study is that the Batik Ambassadors of Serang City play a strategic role in building the cultural branding of regional batik. Cultural branding in this context is not only related to visual promotion but also encompasses the shaping of batik's image, narrative, and identity as a cultural heritage.

Observations show that Batik Ambassadors actively promote batik through various platforms, both in person (offline) and digitally (online). In offline activities, they participate in cultural events, batik parades, and educational programs in schools. Meanwhile, in the digital realm, they use social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to showcase Serang City's distinctive batik motifs, as seen in the following image.

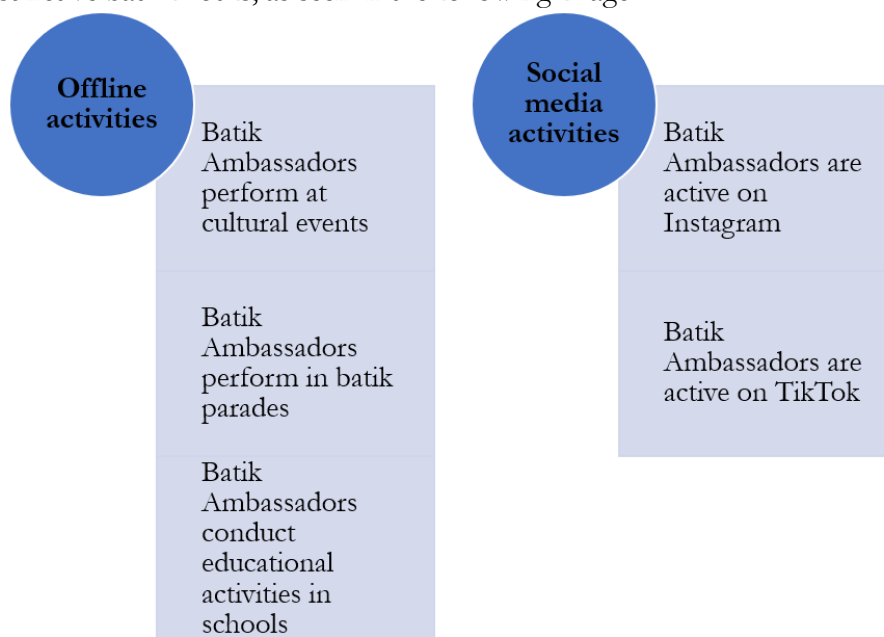


Fig 1. The Role of Batik Ambassadors in Building the Cultural Brand of Traditional Textiles

This strategy reflects a shift in cultural promotion approaches from conventional to digital. This aligns with developments in the creative industry, which demand adaptation to information technology. The cultural branding carried out by Batik Ambassadors focuses not only on the aesthetics of the fabric but also on cultural storytelling such as the history of motifs, the philosophy of batik, and the local values embedded within it.

From a branding theory perspective, Kotler & Keller, (2021) states that a

brand is formed not only by the product but also by the public's perceptions, experiences, and emotional associations with a particular identity. In this context, Batik Ambassadors serve as "cultural brand ambassadors" who foster positive perceptions of Serang City's batik.

Digitalization Strategies in Serang City's Batik Branding

The development of digital technology has become a key factor in strengthening the branding of batik culture. Research findings indicate that Serang City's Batik Ambassadors have utilized digital media as the primary means of promoting culture.

Social media is used as a broader and more interactive space for cultural communication. The content created includes not only photos of batik products but also educational material on the batik-making process, the meanings of motifs, and cultural preservation activities. This strategy has proven effective in attracting the interest of the younger generation, who increasingly access information through digital platforms. This phenomenon aligns with research by [Suyanto, \(2021\)](#), which states that the digitization of culture can increase the younger generation's engagement with local cultural heritage through visual and interactive approaches. Thus, the Serang City Batik Ambassadors serve not only as cultural preservers but also as cultural content creators.

However, the research findings also reveal challenges in optimizing digital branding, such as limited resources, content consistency, and a lack of training in culturally-sensitive digital marketing. These points are important considerations for the future development of the Batik Ambassador program.

The Role of Duta Batik in Raising Awareness Among the Younger Generation

The research findings indicate that one of the significant impacts of Duta Batik is the increased awareness among the younger generation regarding the importance of batik as a cultural identity. Educational activities conducted in schools and youth communities have had a positive influence on students' understanding of local cultural values.

Young people, who previously tended to view batik as formal and old-fashioned clothing, began to show a shift in perception after participating in activities organized by the Batik Ambassadors. They began to understand that batik holds great historical, philosophical, and aesthetic value.

Table 1. Frequency of Activities by the Serang City Batik Ambassadors

No	Activity Type	Frequency	Description
1	School Socialization	8	Batik education for elementary, junior high, and senior high school students
2	Cultural Events	6	Parades and regional cultural festivals
3	Social Media	12	Educational content & digital batik promotion
4	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Training	5	Assistance for local batik artisans
5	Batik Exhibition	7	Expo activities and batik product promotion

The data shows that the most dominant activity is social media (12 activities), indicating that cultural branding is currently stronger through digital approaches than through conventional activities. Table 1 presents the results of the qualitative data analysis from observations and documentation regarding the activities of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors in building cultural branding.

The data reveals five main types of activities: school outreach, cultural events, social media, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) training, and batik exhibitions.

The most dominant activity was social media, with a frequency of 12 activities. This indicates that the Serang City Batik Ambassadors rely more heavily on digital approaches for cultural promotion. This trend reflects a strategic shift from conventional methods toward the digitalization of culture, which is considered more effective in reaching the younger generation.

Furthermore, school outreach activities (8 events) and batik exhibitions (7 events) indicate that educational approaches and direct promotion continue to be carried out consistently. This is important because direct interaction with the community particularly students can foster a deeper understanding of cultural values.

Cultural events (6 events) show that Batik Ambassadors are also involved in formal regional cultural activities such as festivals and cultural parades. Meanwhile, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) training (5 activities) was the least frequent activity, indicating that economic empowerment has not yet become a primary focus compared to cultural promotion. Overall, this table shows that the main strategy of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors emphasizes digital-based cultural branding and public education, rather than just production or the creative economy.

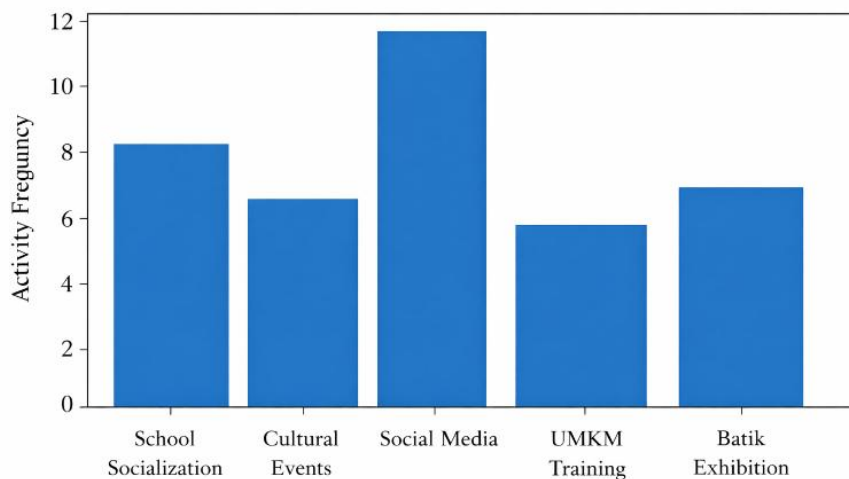


Fig 2. Frequency of Batik Ambassadors' Activities to Raise Awareness Among the Younger Generation

Figure 2 shows a visualization of the data in table 1. The graph indicates that social media has the highest value compared to other activities. This suggests that digital media serves as the primary tool in building the cultural branding of Serang City's batik. The use of social media enables the rapid, widespread, and interactive dissemination of information, making it highly effective for reaching the younger generation the primary target audience for cultural preservation.

Meanwhile, activities such as Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) training and cultural events rank lower, indicating that offline activities are still taking place but are not as intensive as digital activities. This situation reflects a transformation in cultural communication patterns from traditional to digital. Thus, this graph reinforces the finding that batik cultural branding is currently heavily influenced by the ability to adapt to information technology.

The Impact of the Batik Ambassadors on the Cultural Identity of Serang City

The presence of Serang City's Batik Ambassadors has had a significant impact on strengthening the region's cultural identity. A cultural identity that was

previously underrepresented is now gaining wider recognition through various promotional and branding activities.

In addition, the Batik Ambassadors also contribute to strengthening the local creative economy. Batik Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operators have benefited from increased demand and market expansion. This demonstrates the interconnection between cultural preservation and community economic development. However, the main challenges faced are the sustainability of the program and the succession of Batik Ambassadors. Without a robust succession system, the sustainability of cultural branding may be hindered.

Table 2. The Impact of the Batik Ambassadors on Cultural Branding

No	Impact Indicator	Impact Level	Perception Percentage
1	Increase in Cultural Awareness	High	85%
2	Regional Batik Branding	High	80%
3	Youth Interest	Medium-High	75%
4	Increase in Digital Promotion	High	88%
5	Economic Impact on Batik MSMEs	Medium	65%

Table 2 shows the impact of the Serang City Batik Ambassadors on various aspects of cultural branding based on interview results and observations. The first indicator increased cultural awareness (85%) shows that the Batik Ambassadors have successfully enhanced the public's understanding of the importance of batik as a local identity. This was achieved through educational and promotional activities conducted both in person and digitally.

The indicator for regional batik branding (80%) shows that the image of Serang City batik is becoming increasingly recognized and has a stronger identity. This indicates that the Batik Ambassadors have successfully served as "brand ambassadors" for the region's culture. Regarding the indicator of youth interest (75%), there has been an increase in young people's interest in batik, although it has not yet reached its full potential. This suggests that branding efforts are beginning to succeed but still require the strengthening of creative strategies to make batik more appealing to young people.

Digital promotion (88%) was the highest indicator, showing that digital media is highly effective in strengthening cultural branding. This aligns with the trend of digital globalization, which makes cultural information more accessible. Meanwhile, the economic impact on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (65%) was the lowest, indicating that the Batik Ambassadors' contribution to the economic sector remains indirect and requires further strengthening through collaboration with batik business operators.

Batik Ambassadors as Agents of Cultural Branding in the Era of Modernization

Overall, the research findings show that the Batik Ambassadors of Serang City serve as agents of cultural branding who integrate traditional values with a modern approach. In the context of modernization, culture is no longer static but dynamic and adaptive to change. Duta Batik has successfully positioned batik as part of a modern lifestyle without losing its traditional values. This demonstrates a process of cultural hybridization, in which elements of tradition and modernity interact with one another.

These findings are relevant to the concept of glocalization [Saihu & Aziz, \(2020\)](#), which explains that local culture can survive amid globalization through

adaptation and reinterpretation of values. In this context, the Batik Ambassadors play a crucial role in the process of glocalizing Serang City's batik culture. This study has significant implications, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study reinforces the concept of community-based cultural branding. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a basis for developing cultural preservation policies centered on the younger generation in Serang City. The existence of Serang City's Batik Ambassadors has proven to play a strategic role in building the cultural branding of traditional textiles through educational initiatives, digital promotion, and the preservation of cultural values amid the tide of modernization.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, the Serang City Batik Ambassador plays a strategic role as a cultural agent in preserving and strengthening the identity of regional batik amid modernization. Its role is not merely symbolic but also functional, through various activities such as outreach programs in schools, participation in cultural events and exhibitions, training for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and the use of social media as a primary promotional tool. This indicates a strategic shift from conventional approaches toward a more adaptive digitalization of culture. In the context of cultural branding, the Batik Ambassador serves as a brand ambassador who builds a positive image of batik through education, storytelling, and digital promotion capable of reaching a broad audience of young people. The impact is evident in the increased public awareness of the cultural value of batik and the strengthening of Serang City's batik image as a local identity. However, the economic impact on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) still needs to be enhanced through collaboration and empowerment. Overall, the Batik Ambassadors serve as a vital bridge between traditional values and digital technology, ensuring that batik remains relevant and competitive in the era of globalization while simultaneously strengthening regional cultural branding in a sustainable manner.

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