

Community Empowerment Based On Branding Strengthening To Improve Rojolele's Competitiveness Towards International Market

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Abstract.

Klaten Regency is dominated by the agricultural sector, with paddy as its top commodity as much as 51,4% of the total area of 65,556 ha. Delanggu rice, namely Rojolele, has become the identity of Klaten as a local pride commodity from Klaten, Indonesia. Rojolele has special characteristics such as sticky, savory, and distinctive scent (aromatic). In addition, Rojolele has a unique value as part of national identity, culture, and local wisdom which has a huge opportunity to go global in the international market. Although it has been widely known worldwide, there are some challenges in its marketing development, especially in branding awareness. Many Rojolele riced produced by local SMEs in Klaten do not have business licenses yet, thus it hampers the marketing to the wider range area. The aim of the program is to strengthen the branding strategy to improve its competitiveness in the international market. The program will engage Sanggar Rojolele, a farming community in Delanggu Village that has replanted Rojolele Srinuk since 2016 as well as initiated many cultural events based on agriculture as one of local wisdom preservation in Klaten. Universitas Sebelas Maret engaged a close collaboration with the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (NPUST) Taiwan through International Community Partnership (PKMI-UNS) to implement the community partnership program using the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) method. The activity is divided into 5 steps, namely: 1) training of the business licenses and the importance of product diversification, which will be conducted using instructional and dialog methods; 2) a seminar of strategy to develop Rojolele towards the international market; 3) registration of business licenses of Rojolele and its derivative product; 4) developing an online market strategy of Rojolele; 5) monitoring, evaluation and program output dissemination. The program is expected to increase Rojolele's market share globally as well as to improve Rojolele Srinuk brand awareness, thus raising its competitiveness in the global market.

Keywords: Rojolele, branding strengthening, product diversification, community partnership and Indonesia – Taiwan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector plays a crucial role in Indonesia's economy, with rice (paddy) as one prominent agricultural commodity. In 2020, the total agricultural land in Indonesia was approximately 10,657,274.96 hectares, with productivity of 51.28 quintals per hectare, resulting in a total rice production of 54,649,202.24 tons [1]. Central Java province is one of the national rice-producing provinces, and thus, increasing rice productivity is prioritized. In 2020, the rice productivity in Central Java reached 56.90 quintals per hectare, with a harvested area of 1.68 million hectares and a total production of 9.48 million tons [2]. Klaten Regency, which mostly comprises agricultural land, has 33,670 hectares or 51.4% of its area as rice fields, making it highly potential for rice cultivation. The superiority of rice cultivation in Klaten can be seen from its abundant harvest and high productivity. Delanggu rice has become a symbol of Klaten due to its distinct characteristics and superior quality. Delanggu rice is known for its smooth, savory taste, and fragrant aroma compared to other types of rice. Rice is a primary staple for Indonesian society that has various types, such as *IR 64*, *ciherang*, *pandan wangi*, *rojolele*, *mentik wangi*, *mentik susu*, etc. In order to create a better price, the grocery business owners such as rice sellers, need to add value propositions to their products. Although rice types may have similar shapes and tastes, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UMKM) can differentiate it from competitors by adding branding aspects. Branding is a product identifier that can take the form of letters, images, or symbols. The application of branding is expected to add some value to a product. The importance of branding and implementing marketing strategies through social media requires guidance in utilizing current information technology [3].

Currently, Rojolele rice is becoming scarce in the market. Rojolele rice, which was once the pride of Delanggu, is now only a mere nameplate. The rice sold by traders in Delanggu labeled as Rojolele is no longer genuine Rojolele rice. The rice labeled as Rojolele Delanggu originates from Sragen and Boyolali [4]. The original Rojolele rice variety has become rare and difficult to find in the entire Klaten region [5]. The Rojolele Srinuk rice variety, as a local and authentic variety that has been recorded as part of the national genetic heritage of Delanggu [4], has been officially recognized by the government through the Minister of Agriculture Decree No: 126/Kpts/TP.240/2/2003. It is well-known for its superiority, and delicacy, which is favored by farmers and consumers in Indonesia. The price is higher than most of regular rice varieties, which is nearly twice that of the IR64 type. Despite it has been officially released in 2003, farmers in Delanggu have been cultivating it for generations. Rojolele rice has been present in Delanggu Village since before Indonesia's independence. In 1971, 60% of Delanggu's population worked as farmers and farm laborers [4], which welfare has always been a major issue. Currently, 90% of farmers in Delanggu are agricultural laborers. However, they are exacerbated by the system monopolized by middlemen and rice harvesters. Farmers lack of bargaining power in determining the selling price of their harvests, leading to a lack of proportional increase in their income despite higher production. This phenomenon has motivated some Delanggu residents to improve the agricultural conditions in their area. In 2016, together with several Delanggu youths, Eksan Hartanto founded a community called "*Sanggar Rojolele*." The community's name is intended to evoke nostalgia among farmers about Delanggu's glory in the past as a producer of premium-quality rice, Rojolele.

Beginning from simple dance training for children, Sanggar Rojolele has now developed into a space for learning, discussion, and community action, focusing on agricultural issues as their main concern. Sanggar Rojolele has a mission to create empowered farmer groups through cooperative formation, propose and oversee village agricultural regulations, and develop agricultural innovations. Apart from cultivating Rojolele Srinuk rice, a newly derived variety of Rojolele with a shorter grain maturity time (± 120 days after seedling), the community's regular programs include "*Jagongan Tani*" gatherings every month (on Monday nights during the Kliwon week) and the "*Festival Mbok Sri Mulih*" held annually since 2017, celebrating the agricultural culture and involving the Delanggu Village farmers. Currently, Sanggar Rojolele is capable of producing 14 tons of Rojolele rice per week, of which 12 tons of those has been marketed weekly through SS Resto, a local restaurant nearby. Therefore, there is still a business niche that can be utilized to increase the value of Rojolele rice by introducing attractive diversification and packaging. Based on interviews with the community partners, an agreement has been reached to create an empowerment program called "Rojolele Go Global" to strengthen Rojolele's brand for potential international marketing. Rojolele is not merely rice but also carries "value" as part of Indonesia's national identity, culture, and local wisdom, with great potential to penetrate the international market.

This community service partnership engaged the Department of Agribusiness Management, National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (NPUST), Taiwan. Considering the expertise and experience of the international partner in strengthening rice marketing, the program is aimed to pioneer the international marketing of this exceptional local product. The team has conducted surveys and analysis, leading to the following needs:

1. SME's legalization: particularly for branding and to differentiate Sanggar Rojolele products from competitors.
2. Strengthening the Rojolele branding through online marketing.
3. Product diversification of Rojolele rice.
4. Establishing an international forum to introduce Rojolele globally

In accordance with that, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was used to conduct the International Community Partnership (PKMI-UNS). PRA is an approach to the empowerment process and increasing community participation that emphasizes involving the community in overall development. Through the PRA method, the community is no longer a passive recipient of top-down programs but becomes planners and subjects of development, designing development programs from the bottom-up. Conceptually, the PRA method is defined as a set of approaches and methods that encourage communities to participate in

improving and analyzing their knowledge of life in their specific context, enabling them to make plans and take action [6]. The International Community Partnership Program (PKMI-UNS) is exploratory qualitative in nature, with stages including program socialization, implementation, and evaluation. PRA is a highly reliable method for community empowerment, and various studies have shown its effectiveness. For instance, a study [7] mentioned that using the PRA method, they successfully implemented a community-based forest conservation program that encouraged participatory forest management, leading to sustainable livelihoods in rural areas. Another study [8] used PRA to facilitate residents in learning and utilizing participatory methods to develop a Community Action Plan (CAP) for rural tourism development. In one of Indonesia's regions, the PRA method was used in addressing waste management issues [9].

The main activities of the PKMI-UNS program were divided into five stages, which were followed by all members of the farmer group in Delanggu Village:

1. The first stage involved instructional methods and dialogues through the socialization of business legality.
2. The second stage was the registration of the brand with the Directorate General of Intellectual Property Rights, Ministry of Law and Human Rights of Indonesia.
3. The third stage involved the packaging of rice hamper products and the online and offline marketing of Rojolele.
4. The fourth stage involved the socialization of Rojolele development strategies in the international market, which will be attended by all farmer groups in Delanggu.
5. The fifth stage involved monitoring, evaluation, and the preparation and dissemination of program results.

II. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

2.1 Workshop of Innovative Product Development and Business Legalization for Social Medium Enterprise(s) (SMEs)

The workshop on Rojolele product development and business legalization for SMEs was conducted on June 24th, 2023 at Joglo Potrowongso, RT. 02 /RW 08 Delanggu Village, Klaten Regency. Business legalization enhances the balance between business practice and legal obligations among SMEs, which can lead to increased trust and dependability among business partners in the SME environment [10]. This highlights the positive impact of a supportive legal system on SME operations and their interactions with stakeholders, ultimately contributing to their growth and sustainability.

The 25 representatives of SMEs in Klaten Regency, 10 students of D3 Agribusiness Vocational School Universitas Sebelas Maret attended the events. There were three main activities during the workshop, namely:

(1) Training of Rojolele Product Diversification Development

The training was carried out by Dian Rachmawanti Affandi, S.TP., M.P., an expert of Food Science and Technology at Vocational School, Universitas Sebelas Maret. Rojolele, which has also been known as one of the aromatic rice in Indonesia, is diversified into two products, that is Rojolele Yellow Rice Flavor and Rojolele Mixed Grain. The ingredients of yellow rice flavors contain Rojolele rice (500 grams), coconut milk powder (30 grams), turmeric powder (1 gram), salt (13 grams), dried *Eugenia polyantha* leaf (5 pcs), and 900 ml water. Meanwhile, the Rojolele mixed grain is made from Rojolele rice (430 grams), green bean (10 grams), black rice (10 grams), red rice (25 grams), and yellow corn grain (25 grams). The trainer also demonstrated the cooking process of those two products and the vacuum sealer machine operation procedure to the workshop participants.



(a)

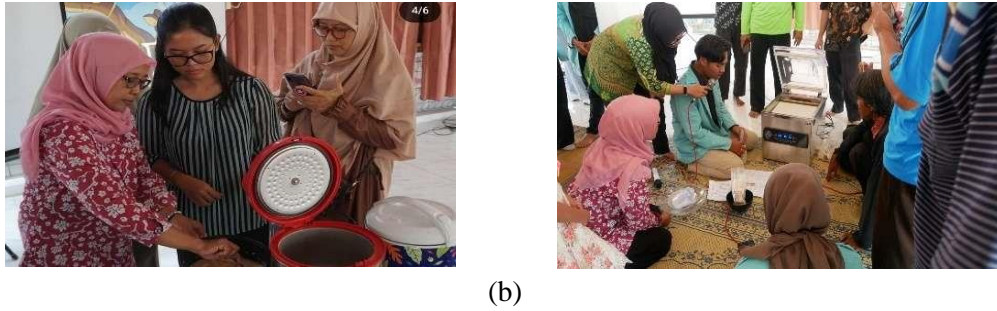


Fig 1. Training Activity (a) Product Diversification (b) Demonstration of Derived Product Cooking and Vacuum Sealer Machine Procedure Usage

(2) Handover of Vacuum Sealer from PKM-I team to Sanggar Rojolele Coordinator

The vacuuming process is aimed to longer the shelf life of the rice product. The widespread use of vacuum packaging to extend food shelf life and improve the quality of minimally processed products [11]. Furthermore, vacuum packaging increases the shelf life of fresh produce by reducing quality deterioration through preventing aerobic spoilage [12].



Fig 2. The handover of Vacuum Sealer Machine

Moreover, vacuuming also stabilizes the ready-to-eat shelf-stable brown rice in pouches and maintains product quality and stability throughout its shelf life [13]. Following the evidence, the Sanggar Rojolele management team will be trained separately to operate and maintain the vacuum sealer machine, thus they can utilize the machine to increase the product quality.

(3) Socialization on Business Legalization for Small Medium Enterprise(s)

The socialization was delivered by Rysca Indreswari, a lecturer of D3 Agribusiness, Vocational School, Universitas Sebelas Maret. It is aimed at disseminating knowledge and understanding to the farmers' groups in Delanggu Village regarding the protection and legal certainty of their business to encourage local economic development. Business permits are given to regulate and supervise activities in Klaten Regency.



Fig 3. Socialization of Business Legalization Registration for SMEs

The socialization of business legality involves farmer groups and the Integrated Investment and One-Stop Service Agency (DPMPSTP) of Klaten Regency. The participants were guided on how to register the Business Identification Number (NIB), Micro and Small Business License (IUMK), Halal MUI certification, P-IRT, and brand as part of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Further, the PKM-I team also assisted the Sanggar Rojolele in registering the Rojolele rice trademark/brand “Sanggar Rojolele” to the Directorate General of Intellectual Property, which is classified under class 30.

FORMULIR PERMOHONAN PENDAFTARAN MEREK INDONESIA
APPLICATION FORM OF INDOONESIAN TRADEMARK REGISTRATION


Data Permohonan (Application)			
Nomor Transaksi Number of Transaction	: IPT2023216084	Asal Permohonan Office of Origin	: Online Filing
Nomor Permohonan Number of Application	: DID2023102977	Tipe Permohonan Type of Application	: Merek Dagang
Tanggal Penerimaan Receipt Date	: 2023-11-07 10:36:17	Jenis Permohonan Sub Type of Application	: Usaha Mikro dan Usaha Kecil
Data Merek (Description of Mark)			
Tipe Merek Type of Mark	: Merek Kata dan Lukisan		Etiket Gambar/Label Merek Image of Mark
Nama Merek Name of Mark	: Sanggar Rojolele		
Deskripsi Description			
Warna Colors	: Merah, krem, coklat, hijau, hitam		
Terjemahan Translation	: Tidak Ada Terjemahan		
Transliterasi/Pengucapan Transliteration			
Disclaimers Disclaimers			

Fig 4. Application Form of Indonesian Trademark Registration

2.2 Branding Strengthening: Video Content Development, Online Promotion, and Reference Group Promotion

In order to promote Rojolele Srinuk rice wider, the PKM-I team assisted the Sanggar Rojolele to develop branding content through videos and product photoshoots which will be uploaded to their website and social media (Instagram). The promotional activities, including videos and photoshoots uploaded to digital platforms, can positively impact sales performance [14].



Fig 5. Product Photoshoot

The product is repacked as a hamper with the “lurik” packaging of 250 grams and 500 grams, a traditional sarong from Klaten, and equipped with a label and a logo on the package as seen on Picture 5.

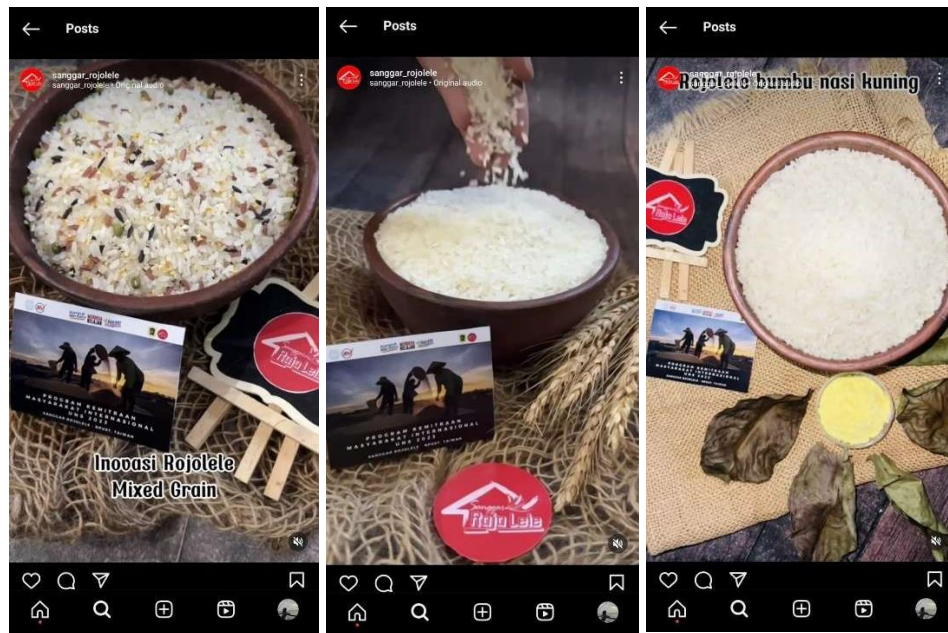


Fig 6. Product Video Promotion on Sanggar Rojolele Instagram @sanggar_rojolele

Source: IG @sanggar_rojolele

Beside online promotion, the PKM-I team also engaged the “Darma Wanita” of Universitas Sebelas Maret as a group influencer/reference to promote the Rojolele Srinuk products. Influencer marketing can be an effective strategy in marketing communications because it is cost-effective and has a positive impact on increasing sales [15].



Fig 7. Marketing through Darma Wanita UNS Activities

2.3 Meeting and Discussion with International Partners

In regards to the partnership initiation, a meeting was conducted on July 20th, 2023 at the Department of Agribusiness Management, NPUST Taiwan. The meeting was attended by the Vice Dean of Planning, Cooperation, Business and Information of Vocational School, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Dr. Eng. Herman Saputro, M.Pd., M.T. to discuss the potential networking opportunities between the institutions. As a result of the meeting, Prof. Wen-Chi Huang, Ph.D. has confirmed to present in person as one of the keynote speakers at the international workshop at Universitas Sebelas Maret.



Fig 1. 8. Initiating Meeting with National Pingtung University of Science and Technology (NPUST), Taiwan.

2.4 International Workshop on Advancing Entrepreneurship and SMEs Innovation

Finally, the international workshop of partnership collaboration and export initiation with National Pingtung University and Technology (NPUST), Taiwan was conducted on 28 and 29 September 2023 at Universitas Sebelas Maret. The workshop was aimed to promote the Rojolele Srinuk premium-rice globally as well as to socialize the export initiative to the farmers group of Delanggu Village. The workshop was attended by 50 rice farmers from Delanggu Village and facilitated by two resource persons, namely Prof. Wen-Chi Huang, Ph.D., a professor in marketing management from NPUST Taiwan, and Byp. Mukhsen Asegaf, the Chief of Indonesian Direct Community. During her speech, Prof. Wen-Chi Huang, Ph.D. brought up some success stories of how Taiwanese farmers market their local organic rice which gained full support from the government through the extension worker and the local communities. She also gave recommendations to Delanggu farmers to put the information of their product's traceability on the package as this strategy has resulted in positive impacts on some Asia's countries' local product sales such as grains and horticulture fresh products in Japan and Korea.



Fig 8. The Publication of International Workshop at official instagram of Vocational School of Universitas Sebelas Maret

Source: IG @vokasiuns

Meanwhile, Byp. Mukhsen Asegaf delivered his experience in facilitating the SMEs in Central Java province to prepare and initiate exports of local products. He led the discussion about the critical success factors for the internationalization of small-medium enterprises in Indonesia, highlighting that export performance is determined by SMEs' involvement with institutional networks, such as trading houses and central governmental agencies which can positively impact SMEs' internationalization efforts and export performance.

III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the comprehensive approach taken in the the International Community Partnership (PKM-I) "Rojolele Go Global", covering legal aspects, product development, branding, and international collaboration, positions Rojolele and other SMEs in Klaten Regency for sustainable growth and success in the competitive business landscape. The integration of knowledge, practical skills, and strategic partnerships sets a positive trajectory for the future of the participating SMEs in Klaten Regency, especially Delanggu Village.

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