

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION IN BRANDING STRATEGIES OF LOCAL MSME PRODUCTS IN REJANG LEBONG REGENCY: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

Globalization presents new challenges for MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency in maintaining the competitiveness of local products, particularly in relation to Intellectual Property (IP) protection. Limited understanding and utilization of IP often weakens branding strategies that could strengthen the market position of local products at both the national and global levels. This study aims to analyze the level of MSME understanding of IP, identify the impact of IP protection on branding strategies, and examine the opportunities and challenges faced by MSMEs in utilizing IP in the era of globalization. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with MSME actors and relevant government agencies. The object of this research consists of MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency that have the potential to develop local products with protected trademarks. The findings indicate that optimal IP protection contributes significantly to more effective branding strategies and reveals various opportunities and challenges in implementing IP to compete in the global market.

Keywords: Intellectual Property Rights, Branding Strategy, MSMEs, Globalization, Rejang Lebong.

Abstrak

Globalisasi membawa tantangan baru bagi UMKM di Kabupaten Rejang Lebong dalam mempertahankan daya saing produk lokal, khususnya terkait perlindungan Hak Kekayaan Intelektual (HKI). Kurangnya pemahaman dan pemanfaatan HKI sering kali melemahkan strategi branding yang dapat memperkuat posisi produk lokal di pasar nasional bahkan global. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tingkat pemahaman UMKM terhadap HKI, mengidentifikasi dampak perlindungan HKI terhadap strategi branding, serta mengkaji peluang dan tantangan yang dihadapi UMKM dalam memanfaatkan HKI di era globalisasi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap pelaku UMKM serta Dinas terkait. Objek penelitian ini adalah UMKM Kabupaten Rejang Lebong yang berpotensi mengembangkan produk lokal dengan merek dagang yang terlindungi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perlindungan HKI yang optimal berkontribusi signifikan terhadap strategi branding yang lebih efektif, serta mengungkapkan berbagai peluang dan tantangan dalam penerapan HKI untuk menghadapi persaingan global.

Kata kunci: Hak Kekayaan Intelektual, Strategi Branding, UMKM, Globalisasi, Rejang Lebong

Introduction

Globalization has brought about major changes to the pattern of business competition around the world. Competition is no longer limited to local or domestic markets, but has expanded to international markets that require businesses to have a sustainable competitive advantage. For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), this development presents a great opportunity to expand their market, but also poses serious challenges, especially in maintaining the identity of local products. In Rejang Lebong Regency, MSMEs are an important sector that contributes to regional economic growth and the preservation of local culture. Wasiq et al. (2023) and Maziliauske (2024) emphasize that MSMEs have a strategic role in preserving cultural heritage through creative products that are born from local values and identities.

Despite their great potential, many MSMEs in Indonesia, including Rejang Lebong, still face obstacles in developing product competitiveness, especially regarding the understanding and application of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Research by Baporikar & Deshpande (2017) and Khawand et al. (2024) found that most MSMEs do not yet understand the strategic function of IPR in protecting innovation and preventing plagiarism. This condition makes MSMEs vulnerable to economic losses and loss of product identity. This is ironic considering that IPR is one of the key elements that can strengthen the position of MSMEs amid global competition.

IPR includes patents, trademarks, industrial designs, and copyrights, all of which serve to provide legal protection for the ideas, creativity, and innovations of MSMEs. According to WIPO (2020), IPR protection is an important foundation in the modern business ecosystem because it can increase product added value and create strong differentiation in the market. Verico & Pangestu (2020) and Abdin et al. (2024) also argue that the proper application of IPR can strengthen branding strategies and have a significant impact on the success of MSME market expansion at both the national and global levels. Thus, IPR is not only a matter of legality, but also an integral part of marketing and brand development strategies.

However, the low level of IPR utilization is a common problem among MSMEs. Based on research by Suominen et al. (2023), there are three main obstacles that cause MSMEs to be reluctant to utilize IPR, namely lack of knowledge, limited access to information, and the perception that IPR registration requires high costs and complicated processes. The OECD (2021) also found that MSMEs in various developing countries have difficulty maximizing IPR due to a lack of guidance and legal literacy. This shows that IPR is not only an administrative issue, but also a structural and educational one.

Similar conditions were also found in MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency, which has great potential, especially in local handicrafts and creative industries. However, the lack of IPR application in branding strategies makes it difficult for local products to compete with national and international products. Research by Ardhanariswari et al. (2020) and Jaman (2024) shows that the majority of MSMEs in Indonesia have not made IPR a core part of their brand development, resulting in their products being less able to penetrate the global market. According to Kotler & Keller's (2016) branding theory, protecting brand identity is a fundamental aspect of building strong and sustainable brand equity.

The integration of IPR and branding strategies actually provides great benefits for MSMEs. Ryan & Deci (2000) and Fernandes et al. (2023) state that the application of IPR in branding can increase consumer trust, strengthen product image, and create a higher perception of value. In addition, studies by Baporikar & Deshpande (2017) and Infanta (2024) show that MSMEs that utilize IPR tend to have greater opportunities to enter the international market because they are considered

to be more professional, innovative, and legally protected business entities. Thus, the use of IPR is not only a means of protection but also a strategy to increase competitiveness.

Another issue that has arisen is the increasingly fierce competition in the global market due to the influx of imported products and changes in consumer preferences towards products with authentic value and clear legality (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Therefore, MSMEs are required to improve product quality while strengthening brand identity through IPR protection (Masrifah & Apriani, 2025). Rejang Lebong Regency, which is rich in products based on local culture, has a great opportunity to increase the bargaining position of its products if its branding strategy is accompanied by optimal IPR protection. With a good understanding and application of IPR, MSMEs can utilize local uniqueness as a competitive advantage in global competition (WIPO, 2020).

Based on these issues, this study focuses on analyzing the level of understanding of MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency regarding IPR protection, evaluating the influence of IPR on local product branding strategies, and identifying opportunities and challenges in implementing IPR in the context of global competition (Budiman, 2024). Academically, this study is expected to contribute to strengthening interdisciplinary literature between marketing management and intellectual property law (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Practically, this study provides strategic recommendations for MSMEs, local governments, supporting institutions, and other stakeholders to improve IPR literacy towards stronger MSME competitiveness in national and global markets.

Research Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore in depth the understanding of MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency regarding intellectual property rights (IPR) protection and its influence on local product branding strategies (A. F. Nasution, 2023). This approach was chosen because it is able to capture phenomena holistically through the experiences, perceptions, and practices of MSME actors (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Research informants were determined using purposive sampling, which is considered effective in qualitative research for selecting informants with the most relevant information (Patton, 2014). The informants consisted of 30 MSME actors in the creative product sector and representatives from the Rejang Lebong Regency Cooperative and MSME Office.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, field observations, and documentation studies. In-depth interviews were used to explore obstacles, IPR literacy levels, and MSME branding strategies, as interview techniques are considered effective for exploring the experiences and understanding of research subjects (Hannes et al., 2022). Field observations were conducted to directly observe the use of brands, designs, and branding practices, in accordance with Yin's (2018) recommendation that field observations strengthen the validity of data in qualitative studies. Documentary studies were used to examine IPR regulations, brand registration documents, and agency reports, as document analysis is an important technique in qualitative research (Bowen, 2009).

The combination of these three techniques formed a triangulation of methods to obtain comprehensive data related to the integration of IPR in branding. Data analysis was performed using the model from Miles et al. (2014), which included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction is used to filter relevant information regarding the understanding of IPR and the application of branding, while data presentation is carried out in the form of thematic narratives to facilitate the interpretation process. The validity of the data is strengthened through source and technique triangulation, which is recommended by Denzin & Lincoln (2017) to increase the

credibility of the research. In addition, member checking was carried out, as suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), to ensure the conformity of the researcher's interpretation with the informants' views. This analytical approach provides a strong picture of how IPR can be used as a competitive advantage in MSME branding strategies.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study show that the understanding of MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency regarding Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) is still low and partial. The majority of business actors only understand IPR in terms of trademarks, while other aspects such as copyright, patents, industrial designs, trade secrets, and geographical indications are not yet deeply understood. This lack of literacy prevents MSMEs from recognizing the economic potential of their works and products. These findings are in line with a study by Wasipiah et al. (2020), which confirms that a low level of understanding of IPR is a structural barrier for MSMEs in extracting commercial value from their intellectual assets. Other research on the effectiveness of IPR during the pandemic also found that MSME actors in developing countries tend to view IPR only as legal protection, not as a strategic instrument for competitive advantage (L. Nasution, 2020). Thus, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that low understanding of IPR among MSMEs is a global phenomenon that requires systematic intervention.

In addition, this study reveals that most MSMEs perceive the IPR registration process as complicated, lengthy, and costly, making them reluctant to register. This hesitation is exacerbated by a lack of technical assistance, access to information, and adequate government facilities. Studies by Panayotova & Nikolova-Minkova (2021) and Tarigan et al. (2023) also confirm that bureaucratic barriers, a lack of consultation services, and low awareness of long-term benefits are the main factors slowing down the adoption of IPR in the MSME sector. Similar conditions were found in research on IPR protection for batik and culinary artisans, which showed that the majority of MSMEs do not consider IPR a strategic necessity (Anggraen et al., 2021). Thus, the findings of this study show that administrative barriers and perceived costs are factors that reinforce the reluctance of MSMEs to access IPR protection.

In terms of branding, this study found that most MSMEs do not yet have a systematic, focused branding strategy that is in line with the dynamics of modern market competition. Local product branding is still carried out in a simple, traditional manner, without considering value differentiation that could increase competitiveness. This causes many local products to lose their identity and makes it difficult for them to compete with similar products from other regions or countries. These findings support the research by Ferrell et al. (2022), which emphasizes the importance of positioning, differentiation, and brand narrative as the foundation for building competitive advantage. A branding study of traditional Indian crafts also shows that the success of local products is highly dependent on the ability of business actors to create a brand identity that is unique, authentic, and relevant to the global market (Infanta, 2024).

In the context of Rejang Lebong, weak branding strategies pose a serious challenge that limits the market expansion of MSMEs. The use of digital media in branding activities is also identified as still very limited. Although some MSMEs have access to social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the use of these platforms has not been optimized as a tool to build brand equity, create engagement, or expand market reach.

Research by Jeswani (2023) consistently shows that content management skills, digital storytelling, and posting frequency are important factors in the success of MSME digital branding. In

addition, research findings on the role of local wisdom and government support also explain that local culture-based creative products have a great opportunity to penetrate the global market if they are supported by a strong and sustainability-oriented branding strategy (Mahrinasari et al., 2024). The findings of this field research confirm that mastery of digital media is still a significant challenge for MSMEs in Rejang Lebong.

In the context of globalization, this study shows that MSME players are beginning to realize the increasing intensity of competition, changes in consumer preferences, and demands for higher product quality. However, this awareness is not fully accompanied by internal readiness to adapt. Many MSMEs still rely on conventional production patterns, simple distribution processes, and minimal innovation. This is in line with the results of studies by Pelletier & Cloutier (2019) and Nnenna et al. (2024), which confirm that technology adoption and digital transformation in MSMEs require strong internal capacity, such as digital literacy, financial support, and access to training. Longitudinal studies on technology adaptation in developing countries also confirm that MSMEs tend to lag behind in digital transformation due to limited resources and low adaptive capacity (Das et al., 2020). Therefore, globalization is both a challenge and an opportunity that has not been optimally utilized by MSMEs in Rejang Lebong.

The findings of this study also show that the integration of MSMEs into modern supply chains is still very low. Limitations in production capacity, raw material quality, quality consistency, and logistical unpreparedness are the main obstacles for MSMEs to enter broader business networks. These results are in line with Smith's (2024) research, which states that MSMEs in developing countries are often hampered at the supply chain integration stage because the technology used is still low and access to business connectivity is limited. In addition, research by Efekan Aktas (2020) on MSME development policies also emphasizes that support for supply chains, innovation, and financing are crucial factors in accelerating MSME growth. The conditions in Rejang Lebong show that supply chain issues are structural problems that require holistic solutions.

In terms of government support, this study found that training on intellectual property rights, digital marketing, and branding assistance has been provided, but its coverage is still limited and unsustainable. Many MSMEs do not receive continuous advanced training, so the impact on business behavior change is insignificant. Studies by Pingali (2020) and Masrifah & Apriani (2025) state that non-integrated and non-sustainable coaching programs tend to fail in increasing the capacity of MSME players in the long term. This shows that the role of the government through more focused, intensive, and sustainability-oriented policies is very important so that MSMEs can gradually increase their competitiveness.

Overall, the results of this study show that understanding IPR, strengthening branding, utilizing digital media, readiness for globalization, and supply chain integration are key factors that determine the competitiveness of MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency. Although previous studies have highlighted these challenges separately, this study makes a new contribution by integrating the three into a comprehensive and interrelated framework. By placing IPR as the foundation of value protection, branding as an image-building instrument, and globalization as the context of competition, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of strategies for increasing the capacity of regional MSMEs. These findings can serve as a basis for the government and stakeholders in designing more targeted policies to strengthen the MSME ecosystem in a sustainable manner.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the utilization of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) plays a strategic role in shaping and strengthening the branding of MSME products in Rejang Lebong Regency, while also answering the research objective that IPR can be an important instrument in increasing business competitiveness in the global era. The low level of IPR literacy among MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency has proven to be a fundamental factor that hinders the optimization of brand identity and innovation protection, so that branding efforts often lack legal force and market clarity. The findings also confirm that trademark registration has a real impact on MSMEs, particularly in boosting business confidence, building a professional image, strengthening brand authenticity in the eyes of consumers, and opening up wider market access. Thus, IPR protection is not only administrative in nature, but also an integral part of a branding strategy oriented towards business sustainability. However, the utilization of IPR is not yet optimal because MSMEs in Rejang Lebong Regency still face challenges in the form of a lack of technical understanding, high cost perceptions, the complexity of the registration process, and limited ongoing assistance from the local government. Based on these findings, the study recommends the need to strengthen a more structured IPR assistance system, integrate IPR education into MSME development programs, and implement local policies that encourage IPR registration as a standard for local product branding. In addition, further research can be directed at developing a more adaptive IPR assistance intervention model, while measuring its impact on the long-term growth of MSMEs.

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