

DEVELOPING THE UMKM COMPETENCE AS AN EFFORT TO EMPOWER UMKM GARMENT POLUKIDS

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ABSTRACT

Empowering UMKM (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) is a crucial endeavor to support local economic growth and industrial development. Binus University has successfully implemented an empowerment program for the UMKM garment brand, Polu Kids, focusing on children's and teenagers' clothing. This program was conducted from May to September 2023 and involved a team of faculty members from Binus University's School of Computing & Creative Art and Business. The program comprised several stages, including the introduction to fabrics and materials, understanding industry trends, sewing training, creating simple children's fashion designs, and collaborative children's clothing design between the faculty team and Polu Kids. Through observations and interviews with the owner of Polu Kids, Ms. Okta, and her team, positive outcomes were identified. The results of this program include an improvement in knowledge about textiles and the garment industry, a better understanding of trends, enhanced sewing skills, improved abilities in designing children's clothing, and the creation of innovative design products. This empowerment program has created opportunities for Polu Kids to enhance the quality of their products and compete in an increasingly competitive market. In conclusion, this empowerment program provides significant benefits to the UMKM garment Polu Kids and supports the overall growth of the children's and teenagers' garment industry. This program also underscores the importance of collaboration between higher education institutions and the business sector in enhancing the capabilities of local UMKMs.

Keywords: Empowerment of UMKM, Garment Industry, Children's Clothing Design, Training, University-Industry Collaboration.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The garment industry has made a significant contribution to Indonesia's exports, enabling it to compete not only domestically but also in international markets. Additionally, it has played a crucial role in supporting the growth of the textile industry in Indonesia, ranking as the country's third-largest foreign exchange earner. However, the demand for clothing experienced a decline during the pandemic due to the closure of shopping centers and textile hubs (Prasetyawati et al., 2022).

In contrast to the fashion industry, the textile and garment sectors are predicted to face a decline. Towards the end of the previous year, there was a notable decrease in income in this sector due to diminishing

export market demand. Furthermore, layoffs have been prevalent among publicly listed companies in the textile industry for several years. According to data from the Ministry of Industry (Kemenperin), challenges in the textile and garment industry are expected to persist. As reported by CNBC Indonesia, textile industry associations have sought government assistance due to the slowing economies of export destinations such as the United States (US) and Europe. Consequently, demand from these countries has drastically decreased, with a projected 50% decline in 2023.

Hendjico Production is a convection business that has been operating since 2014, catering to thousands of customer orders with unique characteristics and designs each month, reflecting the diversity of consumer preferences. Inspired by this diversity, the company embarked on a journey to create its own products under its own brand. Among the options explored were batik and children's fashion. During the 2020 pandemic, the focus shifted towards researching products that could gain market acceptance and boost revenue. An attempt was made to incorporate local wisdom into designs using the batik cap method. However, the geographical limitations of batik production in the company's area, which necessitated collaboration with other regions, led to high initial production costs that hindered competitiveness in the batik market. Subsequently, a reevaluation of product offerings led to a shift towards children's fashion.

Drawing from extensive experience in handling several brands for children, teenagers, and adults, it was evident that children's fashion offered readily available main and supporting raw materials. This realization inspired innovation in children's fashion development. The hallmark of the products is the use of denim as the primary material, transforming denim from its conventional usage in adult jackets and pants to children's fashion. The children's fashion brand was aptly named "POLU Kids," drawing inspiration from the Hawaiian word "POLU," meaning blue. The choice of name is rooted in denim's characteristic blue hue, which is synonymous with denim and was deemed suitable for children's clothing. Several designs were developed for both boys and girls, proving to be highly appealing and competitive in the market.

The primary reason for adopting denim as the primary material is its easy availability, relative affordability, and the opportunity to change the conventional image of denim, which has primarily been associated with adult pants and jackets. The distinct charm that denim brings to individuals and its inherently casual nature make it an ideal choice for children's clothing. This strategic shift in utilizing denim as the main material has broadened the scope of denim application, allowing children to appear casual, attractive, and age-appropriate in denim-based clothing. The competitive landscape of the garment industry in Jabodetabek (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) is characterized by intense competition and dynamism. This region serves as one of Indonesia's largest economic centers and hosts a significant concentration of garment companies. The garment industry in Jabodetabek encompasses various segments, ranging from UMKM (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) garment businesses to well-established brands, catering to both the local and export markets. In this article, we will explore the factors influencing the competitive dynamics of the garment industry in Jabodetabek.

1.2 Problem Formulation

The primary function of the product is to enhance the appearance of children, allowing them to stand out while remaining age-appropriate. The target audience comprises children under the age of 10, both boys and girls. Marketing strategies are implemented through both online and offline channels. Online marketing utilizes social media, online marketplaces, WhatsApp catalogs, and endorsements through social media influencers and child actors. Offline strategies include engaging with local communities, such as mothers' groups, through activities like communal savings (arisan) and religious gatherings (pengajian). Additionally, exploring reseller opportunities is part of the offline approach. These strategies aim to maximize sales revenue.

Considering the identified issues above, it is evident that there is a need to develop solutions to broaden the marketing reach to the target consumers and enhance the appeal and trendiness of the product designs. Therefore, guidance and support for creating trendy children's clothing designs are essential.

Entering the Industry 4.0 revolution as part of the transformation towards Indonesia Maju 2030, the Indonesian government continues to support five priority sectors, one of which is the textile and garment industry. With significant opportunities at hand, this industry is expected to harness the potential of technology from upstream to downstream processes, including the implementation of multi-material processing, sensor-driven solutions, and other digitalization processes (Indonusa, 2023).

However, despite these advancements, the demand for ready-made garments and textiles from Indonesia has been on the rise. This has mitigated the contractions experienced by the textile and garment industry in 2021, which were not as severe as in previous years. For context, Indonesia's textile and ready-made garment exports grew by 17.74% to reach \$6.9 billion in 2021 compared to the previous year's \$5.85 billion. The United States remains the primary market for national textile and ready-made garment exports, accounting for approximately 56.13% of the total exports (Kusnandar, 2022).

1.3 Characteristics of Garment SMEs

Garment SMEs are a common type of small business operated by entrepreneurs in the fashion and textile sector. These businesses encompass various aspects of clothing production, including design, fabric cutting, sewing, finishing, and distribution. The characteristics of garment SMEs include:

1. **Scale of Operations:** Garment SMEs typically operate on a smaller scale compared to larger companies in the same industry.
2. **Workforce:** These businesses often rely on limited manpower, sometimes even run as family enterprises.
3. **Creativity and Design:** Garment SMEs can showcase creativity in their clothing designs, providing unique styles and touches that differentiate their products from larger competitors.
4. **Limited Production:** Production capacity tends to be limited compared to larger garment companies, resulting in smaller quantities produced per collection.
5. **Local and Global Markets:** Garment SMEs can operate in their local markets or even export their products to international markets.

Garment SMEs make significant contributions to a country's economic growth by providing employment opportunities for the local population and offering a diverse range of clothing products to meet consumer needs. While many garment SMEs succeed, they also face several challenges, such as access to capital and equipment, competition from larger brands, and rapid changes in fashion trends. To enhance their chances of success, garment SME entrepreneurs need to develop effective marketing strategies, maintain product quality, and adapt to market changes.

1.4 Children's Clothing Design

Children's clothing design is the process of creating and designing clothing specifically for children, ranging from infants to teenagers. It involves creative thinking, innovation, and adjustments to the unique needs and characteristics of the children's market. Designing children's clothing requires special attention to style, comfort, safety, and functionality to align with children's developmental stages and activities.

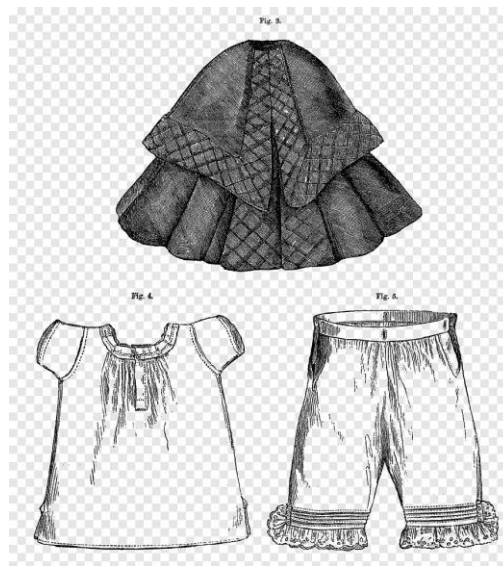


Figure 1. Example of Kids Fashion Design



Figure 2. Example of Kids Fashion Design

1. Consideration of Children's Style and Trends
The primary consideration in designing children's clothing is the relevant style and trends for children. Children have their own fashion preferences, which can be significantly different from adults. Bright colors, cute patterns, cartoon characters, and adorable shapes are often appealing elements for children.
2. Safety and Comfort Factors
Comfort and safety are paramount factors to consider in designing children's clothing. Soft, lightweight, and easy-to-wear materials are essential for active children.
3. Functionality and Practicality Considerations
Children's clothing should be designed with functionality and practicality in mind. Additionally, consider whether the clothing is easy to put on and take off, as children may require assistance from their parents.
4. Appropriate Sizing for Child Development
An essential aspect of designing children's clothing is considering the changes in a child's body size during their growth. Children's clothing should be designed to remain comfortable and fit for several months or years.
5. Use of Environmentally-Friendly Materials
When designing children's clothing, it is important to choose environmentally-friendly and sustainable materials. Organic or recycled materials are becoming increasingly popular choices in environmentally responsible children's clothing design. This reflects awareness of the need to preserve the environment for future generations, including our children.

These considerations are crucial in ensuring that children's clothing not only meets the fashion preferences of young consumers but also prioritizes their safety, comfort, and the sustainability of the environment.

2. METHOD

The first step was to conduct a needs analysis to assess the requirements of our partner. We proposed community engagement activities at Bina Nusantara University's Angrek Campus and the SME's location. Our approach focused on providing training in digital marketing and mentoring in the creation of trendy children's clothing designs.

Tabel 1. Planned Output Achievement Targets

No.	Output Type	Indikator Capaian
1	Materials and fabrics and sewing tools (design and production)	Provided

2	Trendy children's fashion design	Provided
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Tabel 2. Planned Output Achievement Targets

No.	Activity	Month									
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Training on garment and garment business										
2	Assistance in design creation										
3	Sewing tools purchase										

The production process in UMKM garment involves a series of steps, starting from market research and design, material selection, fabric cutting, sewing, all the way to finishing and distribution. Each step in this process requires precision, skill, and effective management to produce high-quality clothing products. Furthermore, marketing and innovation are also crucial to help UMKM garment businesses remain competitive in the competitive industry. By executing this production process effectively, UMKM garment businesses can achieve success and growth in their brand.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From May to September 2023, Binus University conducted an empowerment program for the UMKM garment brand Polu Kids, which focuses on children's and teenage clothing. This program was designed to provide training and mentoring to Polu Kids to enhance their knowledge, skills, and capabilities in the garment industry. The program involved faculty members from Binus University's School of Computing & Creative Art and Business.

The empowerment program for Polu Kids consisted of several stages, including:

1. Introduction to Fabrics and Materials: In the initial stage, the faculty members provided training to Polu Kids about various types of fabrics and materials used in the garment industry. This included explanations of the characteristics, advantages, and disadvantages of each type of fabric.
2. Introduction to Industry Trends: The faculty members introduced Polu Kids to the latest trends in the garment industry, including popular colors, patterns, and styles. This helped them in developing collections that aligned with market preferences.
3. Training in Sewing Techniques: Practical training was provided to Polu Kids team members on proper and efficient sewing techniques. This included an understanding of sewing tools and basic sewing skills.
4. Creation of Simple Children's Fashion Designs: The faculty members also provided training on how to create simple designs for children's clothing. This included the use of design software, understanding children's body proportions, and the ability to create attractive designs.
5. Collaboration on Children's Clothing Designs: In this stage, the faculty members collaborated with the Polu Kids team to create innovative and attractive children's clothing designs. This collaboration allowed the Polu Kids team to gain a deeper understanding of the design process.

Overall, this empowerment program aimed to equip Polu Kids with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in the garment industry, from understanding materials to creating appealing designs. It also highlighted the importance of collaboration between academia and businesses in fostering the growth of local UMKM.

The results of this empowerment program have been very positive, as observed through interviews with Mrs. Okta, the owner of Polu Kids, and her team.

1. Increased Knowledge: Mrs. Okta and her team have experienced a significant increase in their knowledge of textiles, various types of fabrics, and the garment business processes. They are now better equipped to make informed decisions when selecting materials for their collections.
2. Understanding of Trends: With the introduction to industry trends in the garment industry, Polu Kids can now keep up with the latest developments in children's fashion. This allows them to create products that align with consumer preferences.

3. Improved Sewing Skills: Through training on how to sew garments, Polu Kids has acquired better skills in producing high-quality clothing. This has the potential to enhance customer satisfaction.
 4. Ability to Design Children's Clothing: The training program has also provided Polu Kids with the ability to create attractive and unique designs for children's clothing. This enables them to compete more effectively in the market.
 5. Successful Design Collaborations: The collaboration between faculty members and Polu Kids in creating children's clothing designs has resulted in innovative and appealing products. This has enriched Polu Kids' portfolio.
- Overall, the impact of this empowerment program has been highly beneficial for Polu Kids, as it has enhanced their knowledge, skills, and ability to create competitive and high-quality children's clothing products.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the empowerment program that has been implemented, it can be concluded that Polu Kids has experienced significant positive benefits. They have increased their knowledge of the garment industry, gained a better understanding of trends, and improved their skills in the production process. Furthermore, the collaboration with the faculty members has resulted in attractive children's clothing designs.

For the future, there are several recommendations that can be considered:

1. Continued Training: Polu Kids should continue to receive training and mentoring in the garment industry. This may include further training on business management, marketing, and finance.
2. Trend Research Development: Polu Kids can enhance their trend research capabilities in the garment industry. This can help them consistently present collections that align with customer preferences.
3. Market Expansion: With improved product quality and design, Polu Kids can consider market expansion, both locally and internationally.
4. Ongoing Collaboration: Collaboration with universities or other educational institutions can be a good avenue for continuously developing products and skills.

This empowerment program serves as a tangible example of how higher education can play a role in developing SMEs and the local industry. With a strong commitment, Polu Kids can continue to grow and contribute to the growth of the children's and teenage garment industry.

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