

EXPANDING THE VISIBILITY OF WEST KALIMANTAN MSMEs THROUGH MARKET INTRODUCTION IN KUCHING, SARAWAK

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Abstract

Limited product visibility in cross border markets constitutes a primary barrier to optimizing the economic potential of local MSMEs specializing in West Kalimantan handicrafts. This Community Service activity was designed as a strategic intervention to facilitate the visibility expansion of partner products through participation in the 24th Borneo Island International Big Bike Festival (BIIBBF) 2026 in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Employing a qualitative approach based on the POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating, Controlling) management framework, primary data were gathered through observation, interviews, and questionnaire administration. The results demonstrate that the integration of structured operational governance and the implementation of an interactive exhibition method effectively fostered cross cultural interaction and stimulated a commercial response from the global audience. A measurable evaluation under the controlling function involving 68 respondents confirmed significant product acceptability in international markets, achieving an accumulated average satisfaction score of 96.34%. These empirical findings serve as strategic feedback to continually refine the partners' product quality standards in support of export orientation.

Keywords: *Visibility Expansion; Market Introduction; West Kalimantan MSMEs*

INTRODUCTION

Post-pandemic national economic acceleration has shown a positive trend, with growth reaching 5.39% year-on-year (yoy) at the end of 2025 (BPS, 2026). This momentum presents a strategic opportunity for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which serve as a pillar of the economy, contributing 61% to national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and absorbing 97% of the workforce (Hoesada, 2025; Limanseto, 2025). At the regional level, West Kalimantan Province recorded a substantial increase in the number of MSMEs, rising from 164,364 units in 2024 to 338,258 units by the end of 2025 (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Kalbar, 2025). This sector has proven to be a driving force of the local economy, contributing approximately 60% to 70% of the regional Gross Domestic Product (GRDP) and absorbing 596,264 local workers (Antaranews Kalbar, 2025; BPS, 2025).

Based on the foregoing data, the region possesses substantial economic potential and a large number of MSMEs. However, the MSME ecosystem in West Kalimantan continues to face serious structural challenges. The MSME structure in the region is overwhelmingly dominated by micro-scale enterprises (99.3%), most of which remain limited to local and conventional operations. The main barriers faced by business actors are limited marketing capacity and low product visibility outside the region (Andharini, 2012; Brilliani, 2020). This limited visibility is often exacerbated by inadequate basic promotional instruments, such as the absence of standardized product databases, representative catalogs, and weaknesses in the aesthetic aspects of handicraft product packaging (Resnawaty et al., 2020; Widiyanti et al., 2022). Consequently, many leading regional products, particularly handicrafts and creative-industry products, have low visibility in broader markets, resulting in stagnant business scalability (Rifai et al., 2024). To break this cycle of stagnation and prepare MSMEs to enter more competitive international markets, structured training and mentoring programs are required to enhance their capacity and product-standard readiness (Rivani et al., 2025).

West Kalimantan Province has a specific geoeconomic advantage, namely its geographical proximity and direct border with Sarawak, Malaysia. This cross-border position represents a highly strategic international gateway. However, the potential of the regional market has not been optimally utilized by local MSMEs due to limited access, networks, and international promotional facilitation. The gap between abundant geographical potential and low international market penetration constitutes the primary rationale for intervention through community service activities. Strengthening visibility expansion into regional markets is an urgent and concrete step to support the government's "MSMEs Go Global" program, considering that the current contribution of MSME exports to national exports remains relatively low at only 15.7% (Rep, 2025).

The partnership with the Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda) of West Kalimantan Province in this community service program is based on the institution's strategic position as a primary incubator for handicraft products rooted in local wisdom. Dekranasda supports artisans producing leading regional commodities, including woven textiles, handicrafts, and distinctive local creative products that conceptually possess a high value proposition for international markets. However, the effectiveness of previous development efforts has often been constrained by the downstream commercialization process. Administrative and ceremonial development programs at the local level have not yet been able to convert the potential of partner products into actual export transactions. Through rigorous product curation and the provision of direct access to international markets, this partnership is intended to overcome the marketing bottlenecks experienced by supported MSMEs.

The urgency of this activity extends beyond short-term increases in turnover to the establishment of a sustainable cross-border trade ecosystem for West Kalimantan. In response to the dynamics of a competitive regional market, this community service activity serves as a medium for transferring both macro- and micro-level knowledge. Through the program, business actors are encouraged to understand international consumer preferences, the product quality standards of neighboring countries, and trade regulations in Kuching, Sarawak. This measurable intervention is expected to generate a multiplier effect for the local economy. If product visibility at the regional level is successfully improved, production demand will increase, which in turn will encourage greater absorption of local labor in the region of origin. Without concrete market-facilitation measures, West Kalimantan's geographical potential as the country's front porch will remain merely a narrative without significant economic impacts on the welfare of small business actors.

To address these challenges, MSMEs require structured facilitation that directly connects them with potential buyers in international markets (Tempo, 2025). Based on this empirical urgency, the Community Service Team implemented a tactical intervention focused on potential MSMEs supported by the Regional National Crafts Council of West Kalimantan Province. The community service program was realized through an activity entitled "Expanding the Visibility of West Kalimantan MSMEs through Market Introduction in Kuching, Sarawak." Through this cross-border exhibition and market-introduction activity, the program was expected to overcome the marketing bottlenecks faced by partners, enhance the international competitiveness of local products, and establish sustainable regional trade channels.

METHOD

The community service activity (PKM), entitled "Expanding the Visibility of West Kalimantan MSMEs through Market Introduction in Kuching, Sarawak," employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The study focused on evaluating the achievement of cross-border market expansion objectives through active participation in the 24th Borneo Island International Big Bike Festival (BIIBBF) 2026 at Waterfront Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. The data sources consisted of primary data collected through participatory observation, interviews, and questionnaires administered to exhibition visitors and the management of the Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda) of West Kalimantan Province as the partner institution. Secondary data were obtained through documentary studies of regional statistical reports, partner promotional product profiles, and relevant regulations. The entire market-introduction process was supported by visual documentation in the form of photographs and videos to strengthen the authenticity of the community service data.

As an operational analytical framework, all data were systematically analyzed using the POAC management model (planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling) based on Terry's theory (2019). The planning stage included initial team coordination and appointment, determination of the exhibition theme and concept, selection of the target location, and preparation and submission of the PKM proposal. The organizing stage covered the distribution of team responsibilities, exhibition-booth layout design, product coordination with the Regional National Crafts Council of West Kalimantan Province, procurement of activity equipment, and cross-border logistics mobilization and booth decoration. The actuating stage was implemented on 22–24 May 2026 through face-to-face product introductions, visitor-book and questionnaire completion, distribution of informational brochures and souvenirs, direct two-way

communication, and limited sales of partner MSME products. Finally, the controlling stage was implemented through the compilation of visitor data, analysis of feedback questionnaires together with partners, and publication of an output article in the mass media on 13 June 2026.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the operational foundation of the program, the planning stage was comprehensively directed toward developing the managerial and conceptual framework of the activity. The importance of this phase was realized through the first coordination meeting, which focused on four main strategic agendas (Robbins & Coulter, 2021). The agenda began with the appointment of Community Service Team (PKM) personnel to ensure effectiveness, formal role allocation, and performance accountability. In parallel, the team formulated a PKM theme and title relevant to the partners' needs in order to align the program direction with actual problems in the field. Consistent with this strategic direction, the activity location was selectively determined with an orientation toward strategic border areas to optimize the intervention's impact.

As a concrete problem-solving measure, the coordination meeting established an activity concept centered on an exhibition scheme, an intervention method considered effective as a medium for direct product promotion and visibility expansion. At the conclusion of the planning phase, all agreed strategic decisions were synthesized and formalized in the PKM proposal document. The preparation and submission of the proposal served not only as a formal legal instrument but also as a blueprint and standard operating procedure for the subsequent stages of the community service activity.



Figure 1. First Coordination Meeting of the PKM Team
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

The activity continued with the organization of resources and preparation of all operational requirements. This stage began with an internal coordination meeting to determine the distribution of duties and responsibilities among team members according to their respective competencies. The division of tasks included exhibition-booth coordinators, foreign-language communication facilitators to support interaction with international visitors, and a team responsible for observation and data collection throughout the activity. In addition, the team developed the exhibition-booth layout by considering product visualization, visitor comfort, and efficient use of exhibition space. The exhibition-booth layout is presented in Figure 2.

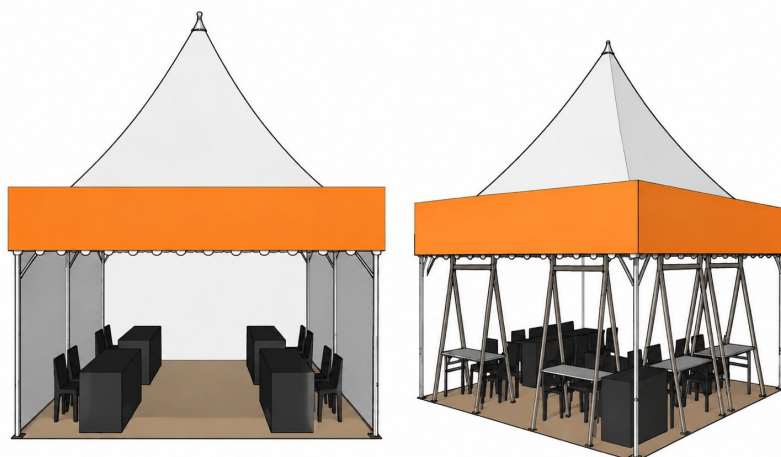


Figure 2. Design of the PKM Team's International Exhibition Booth Layout
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

The next stage of organizing was carried out through coordination with the Regional National Crafts Council of West Kalimantan Province as the activity partner. This coordination aimed to agree on the curation of products to be exhibited, the activity implementation mechanism, and the administrative and institutional aspects supporting the international exhibition. In addition, the coordination served as a means of aligning promotional strategies so that leading West Kalimantan MSME products could be optimally presented to prospective consumers in Malaysia. Documentation of the coordination activity with the partner is presented in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Coordination between the PKM Team and the Regional National Crafts Council of West Kalimantan Province
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

After the coordination process was completed, the team procured supporting facilities and infrastructure, including display racks, lighting equipment, cleaning supplies, and promotional media. At the same time, the MSME products to be exhibited were inventoried, quality-checked, and packaged. These products included woven fabrics, handicrafts, and ethnic accessories developed under the guidance of the Regional National Crafts Council of West Kalimantan Province. The packaging process was carried out systematically by considering the characteristics of each product to minimize the risk of damage during transportation and facilitate logistics identification and distribution. Documentation of the MSME product packaging process is presented in Figure 4.



Figure 4. MSME Product Packaging Process for the International Exhibition
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

All logistics and packaged products were then transported from Pontianak to Waterfront Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, in accordance with customs requirements and the activity schedule. Upon arrival at the exhibition venue, the team arranged and decorated the booth according to the prepared design so that it was ready to serve as a promotional and marketing medium for West Kalimantan MSME products to international visitors.

The actuating phase represents the empirical implementation of all managerial plans formulated during the planning and organizing stages. In this program, the intervention site was strategically located in the Waterfront Kuching area, Sarawak, Malaysia, a commercial and tourism hub for cross-border activities with high exposure to international audiences. The primary emphasis of this phase was to execute a global market penetration strategy to increase the visibility and economic value of West Kalimantan's distinctive handicraft MSME products through an interactive exhibition methodology.

The operation of the exhibition booth was initiated through a formal audience-tracking mechanism using a visitor book. This instrument served not merely as an administrative attendance record but also as a demographic analysis parameter for mapping the diversity of potential consumers' countries of origin. Simultaneously, the implementation team conducted a direct survey by distributing structured questionnaires based on global market preference indicators. Primary data collected through the questionnaires were intended to obtain objective feedback from international visitors regarding material quality, design aesthetics, product variety, and the price competitiveness of partner commodities. The involvement of exhibition visitors in completing the market-evaluation instrument is presented in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Participation of International Visitors in Completing the Questionnaire
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

The activity then continued with the implementation of an integrated marketing communication strategy. The implementation team acted as cultural facilitators and marketing agents by presenting products persuasively through two-way cross-cultural communication. This interactive communication focused on disseminating information about product uniqueness, the philosophical values of ethnic ornaments, production techniques based on local wisdom, and the environmental sustainability dimensions of the raw materials used. This educational approach was able to transform visitors' visual interest into deeper cultural appreciation.

To maintain brand recall and build post-exhibition business networks, the team actively distributed tangible promotional materials, including informative brochures and official business cards of the MSME operators. In addition, as a public relations tool, the team provided souvenirs featuring distinctive regional ornaments to visitors who demonstrated strong interest in the partner products. Documentation of the distribution of promotional materials and souvenirs is presented in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Presentation of West Kalimantan Souvenirs to Exhibition Booth Visitors
(Source: Community Service Team Documentation, 2026)

The distribution of promotional materials and MSME business cards was strategically designed as an initial stimulus to generate opportunities for long-term international business matching. The series of intensive communicative and product-education interventions throughout the exhibition ultimately stimulated buying behavior among the global audience. The direct economic impact of this strategic convergence was demonstrated by sales transactions involving several leading handicraft product lines on display, simultaneously confirming positive international market validation of West Kalimantan MSME commodities.

The controlling phase was implemented as a scientific accountability instrument to measure, evaluate, and validate the alignment between actual field achievements and the planned targets. In this Community Service Program (PKM), controlling activities focused on processing and analyzing primary data collected during the exhibition in Kuching, Sarawak. The operational performance of the booth and international market responses were systematically evaluated through two stages: compilation of the visitor list and compilation and analysis of questionnaire results.

The initial controlling step was carried out through the compilation of the visitor list to measure the retention and attractiveness of the exhibition booth among the international public. Based on the post-exhibition tabulation data, a total of 68 primary respondents were officially recorded as having engaged in in-depth interactions at the PKM booth. A unique sociological phenomenon was identified in the field: most domestic and international visitors attended the exhibition in pairs or groups. This condition affected the process of completing the instruments in the field. Consequently, visitor-book registration and questionnaire completion were conducted representatively, with one representative recorded per pair or group. Nevertheless, the records were still able to map broad demographic diversity in terms of the countries of origin of potential consumers, including visitors from Malaysia (including Kuching, Sarawak, Sabah, and Pahang), Brunei Darussalam, and domestic visitors from Indonesia. Furthermore, program effectiveness and product acceptance were measured quantitatively and qualitatively through the compilation and analysis of questionnaire results. This process served as a quality-control indicator for the

promoted MSME commodities. A total of 68 questionnaires were successfully collected and comprehensively analyzed. The market-perception parameters showed highly positive results across all instrument indicators (P1 to P11). Satisfaction percentages for each question item ranged from 94.71% to 97.94%, resulting in an overall accumulated average score of 96.34%. Overall, the analysis of the control data indicates that West Kalimantan handicraft MSME products have a very high level of acceptability in the global market. The questionnaire recap data not only serve as a benchmark for the current program's success but also function as strategic feedback for Dekranasda and partner MSMEs to undertake corrective actions and improve product quality in the future to support the sustainability of cross-border market expansion.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Community Service Program (PKM) aimed at increasing the visibility of West Kalimantan's distinctive handicraft products among micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in cross-border regional markets was analyzed through the application of four main management functions: planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. During the planning and organizing stages, the development of an operational framework, specialization of team responsibilities, spatial design of the exhibition booth, and consolidation of the partnership with the Regional National Crafts Council (Dekranasda) of West Kalimantan Province were successfully articulated as the activity blueprint. This preparation was followed by the actuating phase through the implementation of an interactive exhibition method and a two-way marketing communication strategy in the Waterfront Kuching area, Sarawak, Malaysia. The educational approach concerning product uniqueness, the philosophical value of ethnic ornaments, and local wisdom contributed positively to generating international public interest, as indicated by the distribution of promotional materials, the provision of souvenirs, and sales transactions involving several handicraft product lines.

The effectiveness and acceptability of this program were quantitatively evaluated through the controlling function by analyzing post-exhibition primary data. Although visitors in the field were predominantly present in pairs or groups, requiring instrument completion through a representative recording system, data from 68 primary respondents were still able to map broad demographic diversity across Malaysia (Kuching, Sarawak, Sibul, Pahang, and Sabah), Brunei Darussalam, and domestic Indonesian consumers. Quantitative analysis of the questionnaires indicated a high level of market satisfaction, with percentages for each question item ranging from 94.71% to 97.94% and an overall accumulated average score of 96.34%. These empirical data indicate that the promoted handicraft MSME commodities have considerable potential for acceptance in international markets and simultaneously serve as strategic feedback for partners to continuously improve product quality in support of future export orientation.

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