

## CHALLENGES THAT IMPACT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH BATIK INDUSTRIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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### Abstract

Batik, a traditional textile art form originating from Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia and Indonesia, holds significant historical and cultural value. However, it is currently struggling to engage younger generations, especially on popular social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. This study explores the socio-economic and digital barriers that limit youth participation and interaction with batik content online. One major challenge is the digital divide among youth from rural or low-income backgrounds, many of whom lack access to smartphones and stable internet connections. Even when digital tools are available, a lack of digital literacy often prevents effective use of social media for engaging with batik content. These factors significantly hinder youth from discovering, appreciating, or promoting batik in the digital realm. The industry also faces issues in portraying batik as relevant and versatile for modern fashion and daily wear. Without targeted efforts to bridge digital and social gaps, batik risks being viewed as outdated or relegated solely to ceremonial use. To ensure batik remains a vibrant part of Southeast Asian heritage, the industry must adopt inclusive strategies. These include improving digital literacy, enhancing access to technology, and creating youth-oriented, relatable content that highlights batik's modern appeal. By addressing these barriers, batik can remain both a symbol of cultural identity and a fashionable, contemporary choice embraced by future generations.

**Keywords:** batik, youth engagement, social media, cultural heritage, digital literacy

### INTRODUCTION

The existence of batik is rooted in history and culture throughout Southeast Asia, especially in Malaysia and Indonesia. Renowned for its detailed and intricate process, batik has now grown into a symbol of culture (Ahmad, 2021). Despite its historical and artistic significance, batik is currently failing to attract younger audiences in today's globally connected and digital-first society (Ahmad et al., 2024). As people become more interested in fast fashion and online activities, the batik industry is facing difficulties and has not done enough to connect with this segment on social networking sites.

On Instagram and TikTok, batik can be showcased as a versatile, contemporary product with the potential to reach a younger audience in a more visually driven, interactive way. However, batik's traditional and ceremonial image, combined with the lack of digital strategies, causes it to lose its appeal to young people. Batik is viewed as old-fashioned and outdated by the younger demographic, who are known for product personalization, individuality, and being trend-driven. This disconnect is not merely a marketing issue but also

a cultural challenge that risks diminishing the relevance of batik in contemporary society (Haniah & Belgiawan, 2023).

Additionally, socio-economic differences and a lack of digital literacy can affect the development of the batik industry. Given that many youths from lower-income or rural areas do not own smartphones or have access to high-speed internet, batik is less likely to be popularized in these areas through digital methods. Even among batik fans who can buy the products, the imaginative and cultural messages offered by producers are limited by a lack of digital knowledge (Shaharuddin, 2021). Such barriers make it difficult for batik to be understood or shared, resulting in a significant gap between its traditional culture and how it is perceived online.

Thus, this research examines the socio-economic and digital barriers facing the batik industry. This study adopts a qualitative approach to revitalize batik's digital presence and to build a closer relationship with the younger generation.

This study's findings are crucial for safeguarding the batik industry's cultural significance and integrating it into the creation of modern lifestyles. A youth-oriented approach in batik promotion will enable batik to have a place in both cultural heritage and contemporary fashion choices, by addressing these challenges and aligning promotion with the preferences and expectations of the youth segment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Scientific studies have focused on how cultural identity, various economic problems, and current marketing efforts affect young people working in the batik industries. Still, it is not yet clear how these aspects function within the context of digital platforms such as social media. In this literature review, the authors discussed and analyzed the key topics of this study, including youth perspectives on traditional attire, the impact of social media on culture, possible socio-economic and digital obstacles, and gaps in batik marketing.

### *Role of Social Media in Promoting Cultural Products*

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for promoting cultural industries, offering new ways to engage with audiences and showcase traditional crafts due to its wide user base and accessibility, enabling it to appeal to individuals globally. Visually driven industries like batik leverage social platforms like Instagram and TikTok to bring designs, production processes, and stories to life. According to Zhou et al. (2021), to be successful with cultural marketing through social media, it is necessary to understand audience preferences and apply innovative content strategies.

Although batik offers many opportunities, its marketing strategies have failed to attract young consumers. Most current efforts are centered on batik's traditions, even though this appeals to few young people who follow trends. According to a study by Podara et al. (2021), combining the old and the new in the story makes content more appealing to young audiences. For example, adding batik to everyday streetwear outfits can highlight its versatility, helping bring together new and ancient fashion.

In other commercial endeavors, social media campaigns have already demonstrated their effectiveness in promoting cultural products. An example is the revitalization of traditional Mexican textiles through Instagram campaigns that have used storytelling and influencer partnerships to reach global audiences (Mohyeddin, 2024). This points to the need for the batik industry to adopt more dynamic and youth-oriented marketing.

## ***Barriers to Youth Engagement in Batik***

### *Socio-Economic Barriers*

Socio-economic factors play an important role in influencing how youth engage with batik industries on social networks. In many cases, people in rural areas and those with low incomes are unable to access digital content due to lack of technology and internet access. Around 35% of people in rural Malaysia do not have reliable internet, making it harder for them to use or find batik-related content online (Fang et al., 2022). This disparity prevents many people from learning about batik and continues to marginalize economically disadvantaged groups.

Financial constraints also prevent many youths from getting involved in batik. Because traditional batik clothes are time-consuming to produce by hand, they are regarded as luxury products that young people cannot afford. Gunawan (2023) showed that due to the high cost of genuine batik, young buyers are more likely to opt for cheaper fashion alternatives (Gunawan, 2023).

### *Digital Literacy Challenges*

Even among those with access to digital platforms, limited digital literacy poses a significant barrier. While most individuals are well versed in navigating through the basic functions of social media, creating and engaging with high-quality content requires advanced skills. Participation in online cultural exchanges is meaningful only when digital literacy is present. A major contributing factor to the impact of the social media campaign has been the lack of digital literacy within the cultural industry, both among producers and consumers.

### *Cultural Disconnect*

The alienation of youths from batik persists because it is considered traditional and ceremonial attire (Abdillah, 2018). Batik does not align with young people's lifestyles, who prefer casual and versatile fashion. Traditional garments need to be rebranded in the sense that they must be modernized to remain relevant in contemporary society (Sobandi, 2021). Without innovative designs and modern marketing plans, batik will remain confined to a niche market, disconnected from current hype and fashion trends.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### ***Materials and Methods***

#### *Research Design*

A qualitative study was adopted in this research with the objective to explore the challenges impacting youth engagement with batik industries on social media. Given the complex social, cultural, and economic aspects of perceptions and behaviors, the qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for gaining a sense of the interplay between these factors (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The research sought to uncover the underlying reasons for limited youth engagement with batik and provide strategic recommendations for bridging the gap between traditional heritage and current digital platforms through a qualitative study. This approach was driven by an exploratory framework, which facilitated a flexible, in-depth examination of participants' perspectives and experiences.

### *Sampling and Participants*

Ten participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the sample was diverse and representative. Participants were youths aged 18 to 30 years old and active users of social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook, along with 10 stakeholders from the batik industry, comprising designers, social media marketers, and cultural advocates. A mix of urban and rural demographics reflecting different experiences and challenges was recruited among the youth participants to capture the differences in socio-economic demographics of the country. Finally, industry stakeholders were chosen for their expertise and involvement in efforts to promote batik through digital platforms. Recruitment of participants was carried out through social media advertisements, direct invitations to industry professionals, and outreach to community organizations in both urban and rural areas.

### *Data Collection Methods*

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data for this study due to their flexibility and their ability to elicit in-depth comments on participants' perspectives, experience and ideas. The research used semi structured interviews to explore predetermined themes and allowed the researcher to respond to unanticipated responses during the discussion. This was a good approach for fulfilling the study's purposes as participants had the ability to speak freely on their ideas without losing focus.

Interviews were conducted with 10 participants seeking to understand their understanding of batik consisting of a mixture of youths aged between 18 and 30 who use social media as well as batik industry stakeholders, namely designers, marketers and cultural advocates. The purposive sampling technique ensured that the participants represented diverse perspectives and experiences, including urban and rural youth demographics and professionals with varying roles in the batik industry.

The interviews took approximately 45–60 minutes and were conducted one-on-one to allow privacy and for the interviewee to be freely communicative. Participants were interviewed either in person or online platforms such as Zoom based on participants' location and convenience. To ensure consistency, but remain flexible in probing elements of specific responses, a semi-structured interview guide was developed based on the study's research objectives. Participants granted consent to have all interviews recorded and the verbatim transcripts made. This method generated a rich dataset about participants' attitudes about batik as well as their engagement with batik-related content on social media.

### *Data Analysis*

The data from semi-structured interviews were studied through thematic analysis, a qualitative method that looks for common topics and arranges them into categories, with support from NVivo software. The main reason for choosing NVivo was to help manage and analyze qualitative data to better spot different patterns and themes. This method was chosen for its adaptability and for delivering detailed information about the participants' batik experiences. A methodical approach was used to ensure the report's accuracy and to reduce the risk of bias.

The first step involved familiarization with the data. The data was studied multiple times, and the interview audio was listened to help understand the responses in detail. Afterwards, the transcripts were loaded into NVivo, which made it easy to handle the data and start the coding process. Important sentences, frequently repeated terms, and key topics were marked in the transcripts, and thorough notes were written to pick out first thoughts and any possible similarities. Reviewing the literature permitted the researcher to discover more about the context and subcontext within the data (Christou, 2022).

Using NVivo's auto-coding feature and subsequent manual refinement, preliminary themes were identified quickly, and the codes were correctly and relevantly tied to the research questions. Word frequency analysis queries were also run to show the most used terms and their surrounding context for

added contextualization of the participants' perspectives. Further comparison and contrast of responses to matrix coding queries also aided in comparing responses across demographic groups, including urban and rural participants. These codes were written on the side of the transcripts or compiled into a sheet for easier reference. The coding process was iterative, with codes refined as new ideas emerged during subsequent reviews of the transcripts (Dawadi, 2020).

Then, similar codes were grouped into sets of themes that captured the emergent patterns in the data. For example, codes such 'unfashionable,' 'too formal,' and 'old fashioned' were grouped into a theme named Cultural Disconnect. In the same way, "costs", "availability", and "digital gap" were categorized under the Social-Economic Constraints. NVivo's visualization tools, such as thematic maps and word clouds, were used to illustrate key findings, enhancing the clarity and depth of the analysis.

Through NVivo, the data analysis process was enhanced such that a deeper inquiry into the socio-economic and digital barriers inhibiting youth engagement with batik was possible. This ensured that the results were grounded in a thorough and methodical examination of the data.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical practices were an important part of this study to guard the rights of the participants and guarantee the quality of the research. Consent was asked from each participant to perform the interviews, and all of them signed an informed consent. All participants were informed about the reasons for the research and what would happen, and they all consented to play the roles they were assigned by choice. The investigators made it clear to the participants that joining in the study was optional and that they could back out anytime and face no issues.

To ensure that the identity of the participants is not revealed the information gathered in the interviews was anonymised. All the personal information was stripped off, and the participants were given code numbers for them to maintain their anonymity. To maintain privacy, data was kept in password protected digital files and only the researcher had access to it.

As is the case with any research, the study observed the cultural sensitivity for instance, during the interview process on the subject of batik which is a traditional craft. Misrepresentation or stereotyping of the participants' response was not encouraged or allowed in the analysis and presentation of the data collected. The subject was then made known to the participants that the information collected in this study will be used for academic purposes only, and any publication or presentation of the findings will not disclose their identity.

Thus, the adherence to these ethical standards provided a reference to ensure that the research environment was considerate and safe and that the participants would be willing to trust and be involved in the project.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### *Results*

The analysis of responses from 10 participants was conducted using a systematic thematic analysis aligned with the study's research objective which was to identify socio-economic and digital barriers to youth engagement with batik.

### *Socio-Economic and Digital Barriers*

The study explored socio-economic and digital challenges that limit youth engagement with batik. Three key themes emerged: affordability, ease of access, and reluctance to create content.

#### *Affordability*

Many participants pointed out that batik is often too expensive for most buyers, with almost half considering it overpriced. While many participants agreed that batik is affordable in some contexts, the price of batik textiles for big occasions and everyday use was still a problem for most. Some participants said that budget-friendly batik designs would increase their interest in purchasing. For example, participant 1 stated, “No, most batik products are expensive.” Participants 3 and 5 also emphasized this point by saying, “Batik is too expensive for me.” Yet, they would be willing to buy batik if the cost were lowered. Participant 8 said that having cost-effective clothes would encourage them; participant 9 confirmed the same, and participant 10 expressed that they would wear batik more often if it were affordable. Apparently, batik is seen by many as a luxury product, which is why youth do not consider it a usual element of their fashion. Participants suggested that if brands offered cheaper and everyday clothing, more young people would buy it.

### *Ease of Access*

All the participants claimed they are social media users with high digital literacy and reported using social media platforms as part of their daily lives. More than half of the participants are active on social media applications, and several participants also stated that they look for fashion trends on TikTok and Instagram. Seven out of 10 participants stated they use Instagram regularly, making Instagram one of the more popular and widely adopted social media applications, followed by TikTok and Facebook. Among the sample population, there are also participants who use social media frequently. For example, participants 1 and 6 stated, “Yes, I use Instagram and TikTok daily,” and participant 5 said, “Yes, I use Instagram daily.” These responses show that digital accessibility is not a challenge but rather an essential tool for involving youth with batik. These social media platforms—Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook—were identified as the main channels used to search for fashion content in batik marketing strategies.

### *Reluctance to Create Content*

While everyone in this study is an active user of social networking sites, all 10 people mentioned they have no interest in posting or making content about batik. The usual feedback was “I’ve never created content about batik” and “No, I do not share cultural content.” This could be due to having few materials that highlight batik in a way that participants wish to share on the internet. Using campaigns or contests where fans post their own content might lead to more people engaging with the brand.

### *Discussion*

The results of the study offer important implications regarding the determinants of youth engagement with batik. The findings highlight the paradoxical nature of batik as both a cultural product and a fashion item, as well as the factors that hinder batik from gaining popularity among young people. The primary reason is that the cost of batik remains high due to various social and economic factors (Tan et al., 2024). The research indicates that batik tends to be expensive, making it unattractive to young shoppers who prioritize value. Similar findings have been observed with luxury fashion items, which also struggle to attract youth shoppers. One way to address this barrier is for batik producers and distributors to make it more affordable by designing casual clothing.

On the other hand, the finding regarding Ease of Access emphasizes that technology does not pose a barrier in this research. Many individuals are knowledgeable about technology and active on social media, mostly on Instagram and TikTok, which is why these networks are excellent channels for marketing batik products. Still, a lack of engaging and useful batik content limits its promotion, so campaigns involving user-generated content should be encouraged to boost engagement (Raya et al., 2021).

The digital preservation of batik aligns with several essential Islamic principles that uphold ethical and responsible behaviour. First, *ihsan*, which refers to excellence and perfection in the creation of a work, encourages artisans to maintain the highest quality and fine artistry of batik, preserving its complex patterns and rich cultural heritage (Al-Faruqi, 2017). Excellent works at all levels, including online presentations, can be highlighted to a wide audience, fostering recognition and the continued cultivation of the art. Second, *wasatiyyah*, the principle of moderation and balance, calls for avoiding extravagance and promoting equal opportunities for all. This concept also forms the basis for the aim of making batik products affordable and accessible to society through contemporary marketing strategies that respect cultural sensitivities (Hassan, 2018).

A well-constructed digital marketing plan should be culturally sensitive, avoiding over-commercialization. The concept of *Khilafah* underscores humanity's role as stewards of cultural and natural heritage and advocates responsible preservation alongside innovation (Nasr, 2015). Communities are leveraging digital technology to fulfill their stewardship duties by preserving traditions and providing a legacy for future generations within a responsive paradigm that adapts to changing times. Taken together, these Islamic values provide a fundamental basis for preserving and promoting batik culture in a globalized world.

Overall, the author discusses how batik exists as a fusion between culture and modern fashion. By bridging the cultural gap, offering products at more affordable prices, and adopting creative approaches to batik, it will be possible to engage more youth (Ariffin et al., 2023). For this reason, these findings suggest that blending tradition with modernity is necessary for batik to remain relevant in the current fashion industry.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the complex interplay between cultural heritage and modernity in shaping youth engagement with batik. Batik is a cultural and artistic practice that has not fully embraced the fashion and style preferences of young people. Additionally, affordability—a key socio-economic factor—poses a challenge to its wider usability, reinforcing the perception of batik as a high-end or formal wear. However, research shows that batik can become a contemporary fashion through innovative designs and strategic outreach to influencers and social media platforms. Many participants express interest in wearing batik if it is marketed creatively and captivatingly to attract both young and mature audiences. Addressing these challenges with affordable, trendy designs and innovative promotional strategies can make batik a relevant and appealing choice for young consumers, ensuring its cultural legacy thrives in the modern era.

The results of this study are valuable for batik producers and cultural stakeholders, encouraging a focus on affordable batik products that are accessible for everyday wear and possess broad youth appeal and product-market fit—without compromising quality. Digital engagement strategies should prioritize creating authentic and attractive batik content that resonates with youth, who respond positively to social media and are motivated to participate. Furthermore, batik cultivation can be aligned with Islamic ethical principles and guidelines—promoting cultural authenticity and creativity while embracing innovation and cultural identity. Advocacy for institutional mechanisms, such as policy frameworks and cultural associations, can help develop educational programs and digital channels grounded in these values, fostering a balanced and sustainable revival of batik culture within today's fashion landscape.

Linking batik preservation and digital engagement to Islamic principles further enriches this approach. The principle of *ihsan* (excellence in craftsmanship) calls for dedication to high-quality, skillful batik production, ensuring each piece reflects artistry and care. *Wasatiyyah* (moderation and balance) encourages creating designs and marketing strategies that harmonize tradition with modernity, avoiding extremes and appealing to diverse audiences in an inclusive manner. The concept of *khilafah* (human stewardship over culture)

inspires custodians of batik to responsibly preserve and innovate the cultural heritage, ensuring it is sustained and nurtured for future generations. Integrating these values supports a thoughtful, ethical, and dynamic renewal of batik culture in the contemporary era.

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