



Short Communication

Halal Product Standardization and Digital Marketing Mentorship for Muslimah Community in Southern Thailand

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Abstract. This article reports on a community service program (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat) conducted in Pattani and Narathiwat, Southern Thailand, in collaboration with Fatoni University, targeting Muslimah entrepreneurs and home-based food producers. The program addressed two critical gaps in the local small business ecosystem: the absence of systematic understanding of halal product certification and labeling standards, and limited capacity in digital marketing. Through a series of structured workshops, practical mentoring sessions, and hands-on training activities conducted across 2024, a total of 48 women entrepreneurs participated in learning activities covering halal product standardization, brand identity development, and social media marketing through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Pre- and post-program assessments demonstrated a measurable increase in participants' comprehension of halal certification procedures, with 78% of participants reporting improved confidence in marketing their products digitally. Several participants successfully redesigned product packaging to comply with halal labeling guidelines and launched active social media business accounts during the program period. This article discusses the program methodology, outcomes, challenges encountered, and recommendations for scaling similar initiatives across Muslim-majority communities in the region.

Keywords: Halal Certification, Digital Marketing, Muslimah Entrepreneurship, Community Service, Southern Thailand.

1. Introduction

Southern Thailand, encompassing the provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun, is home to a large Malay-Muslim population that constitutes the cultural and economic backbone of the region. Within this community, Muslimah — Muslim women — play a vital yet frequently underappreciated role as economic agents. Many engage in home-based food production, handcraft manufacturing, and small-scale retail trade, activities that have been passed down through generations and that remain central to household income generation [1]. Products commonly produced and marketed by these women include traditional Malay cakes and pastries (kuih-muih), preserved foods, herbal preparations, batik textiles, and various forms of local handicrafts.

Despite their entrepreneurial activity, the majority of these small producers operate informally, without formal registration, standardized branding, or certified halal status. In a region where the halal credential carries profound religious, cultural, and commercial significance, this absence creates a dual disadvantage: it limits the marketability of products to broader Muslim consumer markets, and it exposes producers to reputational risk in a community where halal compliance is a non-negotiable consumer expectation [2]. The growing integration of Southeast Asian food markets, combined with increasing consumer sophistication and demand for traceability, makes halal certification an urgent issue for small producers in this region.

Halal standardization extends far beyond the mere absence of prohibited substances (haram). It encompasses the entire production chain, including sourcing of raw materials, processing methods, equipment hygiene, storage conditions, packaging materials, and labeling practices [3]. For small-scale Muslimah producers in Southern

Article info

Revised:

2024-5-11

Accepted:

2024-7-11

Publish:

2024-12-12



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Thailand, navigating this complex regulatory landscape is a significant challenge, particularly given that the relevant certification authority — the Central Islamic Committee of Thailand (CICOT) or provincial equivalents — often involves a documentation process that is unfamiliar to home-based producers. Halal certification also represents a market access credential. Certified products gain entry into institutional procurement channels such as Islamic schools (*pondok pesantren*), mosques, government canteens, and organized Muslim consumer cooperatives. More broadly, certification enhances consumer trust and brand credibility in both domestic and regional export markets. For the women entrepreneurs of Pattani and Narathiwat, therefore, attaining and communicating halal status is not merely a religious obligation but a strategic business imperative.

The rapid expansion of social media platforms in Thailand — with TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and LINE among the most widely used — has created unprecedented opportunities for small businesses to reach consumers beyond their immediate geographic area [4]. A Muslimah entrepreneur in Narathiwat, who previously relied exclusively on local pasar (traditional market) sales, can today receive orders from Bangkok, Malaysia, or even international Muslim communities through a well-managed social media account. This shift represents a structural democratization of market access that, if leveraged effectively, can significantly increase revenue and business sustainability for micro-enterprises. However, digital marketing literacy among small-scale producers in Southern Thailand remains limited. Barriers include low familiarity with content creation tools, uncertainty about how to present products attractively online, language challenges (with Thai, Malay, and English each serving different audience segments), and a general lack of confidence in presenting oneself as a credible business entity on public platforms. These barriers are compounded for Muslimah entrepreneurs, who may face additional social considerations regarding public visibility and presentation [5]. Addressing these barriers through targeted, culturally sensitive training is therefore an essential component of any comprehensive business development program for this community.

This community service program was designed and implemented with four primary objectives. First, to improve participants' understanding of halal product standards and the certification process as administered by Thai Islamic authorities. Second, to develop participants' capacity in creating and presenting brand identities for their products. Third, to equip participants with practical skills in digital marketing, particularly through social media platforms. Fourth, to foster a collaborative network among Muslimah entrepreneurs in the region, supported by the institutional resources of Fatoni University as a local academic partner. The program sought not merely to transfer information but to produce observable behavioral and practical changes in how participants managed and promoted their businesses.

2. Method

2.1 Program Design and Approach

The program was implemented using a participatory action learning approach, combining instructional workshops with peer mentoring, individual coaching, and practical application assignments. This approach was selected because it aligns well with the learning preferences and time constraints of adult women with existing household and caregiving responsibilities, and because it generates deeper skill retention than lecture-only formats [6]. Sessions were structured to be interactive and task-based, with participants expected to produce tangible outputs — such as a revised product label or a

completed social media post — by the end of each module. The program was conducted over two intensive phases in 2024: the first phase in April–May in Pattani, and the second phase in August–September in Narathiwat. Each phase comprised eight structured group sessions of approximately three hours each, supplemented by individual mentoring appointments and a WhatsApp-based support group that allowed participants to ask questions and receive feedback between sessions.

2.2 Participants

A total of 48 Muslimah entrepreneurs participated across both phases — 26 in Pattani and 22 in Narathiwat. Participants were recruited through community networks coordinated by Fatoni University's community engagement office, with additional referrals from local mosque women's groups (Muslimat). Eligibility criteria required that participants be actively engaged in producing or selling a product, and that they commit to attending at least six of the eight group sessions. Participants ranged in age from 22 to 58 years, with educational backgrounds spanning primary school completion to university degrees. The products represented included traditional food items such as *khanom buang* (Thai crepes), dried fish products, pandan-flavored snacks, and herbal teas, as well as non-food items including hand-sewn prayer garments, embroidered textile products, and natural cosmetics. This product diversity enriched peer-learning discussions by exposing participants to multiple supply chain and marketing contexts.

2.3 Collaboration with Fatoni University

Fatoni University, as the sole Islamic private university in Southern Thailand and an institution with deep roots in the local Malay-Muslim community, served as the primary institutional partner for program implementation. The collaboration took multiple forms: the university's Faculty of Islamic Studies contributed expertise on halal jurisprudence and certification standards; its Faculty of Business Administration provided facilitators for the digital marketing modules; and the university's community hall facilities served as the primary venue for group sessions in Pattani. In Narathiwat, a local community hall was used, with Fatoni University staff traveling to support facilitation. The partnership also enabled the program to leverage Fatoni University's existing relationships with the provincial Islamic committees, which facilitated a guest presentation from a CICOT-affiliated halal auditor.

2.4 Training Materials and Curriculum

This module introduced the foundational principles of halal in food production and manufacturing, reviewed the categories of haram ingredients and processes, and provided a step-by-step explanation of the halal certification application process in Thailand, including required documentation, inspection procedures, and associated costs. A guest halal auditor affiliated with the provincial Islamic committee delivered a practical demonstration session. This module addressed the legal and market requirements for halal-compliant product labeling, including mandatory information fields, the proper use of the Thai halal logo, and graphic design fundamentals for small-scale producers. Participants completed a practical assignment in which they redesigned the label for one of their existing products using Canva, a free online design platform. This module guided participants in articulating a clear brand identity for their products, identifying their target customer segment, and developing a basic brand narrative.

It introduced the concept of content marketing and helped participants understand how to translate the story of their product — its ingredients, production process, cultural significance, and the identity of the producer — into compelling content for online audiences. The final module provided hands-on training in using Facebook Business,

Instagram, and TikTok for product promotion. Topics covered included account setup for business purposes, content planning, basic photography and video techniques for product presentation, responding to customer inquiries online, and understanding basic platform analytics. Participants completed the program by launching an active business social media account and publishing their first promotional post.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Improvement in Halal Knowledge and Certification Readiness

Pre- and post-program assessments using structured questionnaires demonstrated significant improvements in participants' knowledge across all halal-related topics. On a 10-point knowledge scale administered at the outset of the program, the mean score for halal certification knowledge was 3.4 (out of 10), reflecting the limited baseline familiarity with formal certification procedures. By the conclusion of Module 2, the mean post-assessment score had risen to 7.8, indicating substantial knowledge gain. More concretely, by the end of the program, 31 out of 48 participants (65%) reported that they intended to initiate a halal certification application for at least one of their products within the following six months.

A subset of seven participants, primarily those producing packaged food items with already-established distribution channels, had begun assembling the documentation required for a formal application to the provincial halal committee. Three of these seven participants received individual mentoring from the Fatoni University faculty advisor on completing their application files. Participants also demonstrated a clear change in attitude toward halal certification as a business investment rather than an administrative burden. In end-of-program feedback forms, phrases such as "I did not realize that halal certification could open doors to larger buyers" and "Now I understand why my product needs the official logo, not just the Arabic word" appeared repeatedly, suggesting that the program had successfully shifted participants' understanding of certification from a compliance issue to a market opportunity.

3.2 Practical Outputs in Labeling and Packaging

One of the most visible outcomes of the program was the tangible improvement in product labeling produced by participants. During Module 2's practical assignment, all 48 participants completed a redesigned label for one of their products using Canva. Facilitators observed a marked improvement in label quality across several dimensions: information completeness (inclusion of ingredients, producer name and contact, production and expiry dates, and net weight), visual organization, and appropriate use of halal branding elements.

Kak Rohani, a 43-year-old producer of homemade pandan layered cakes (kek lapis pandan) in Pattani, presented before the program with hand-labeled plastic bags bearing only her name and a price sticker. By the end of Module 2, she had created a professionally designed label that included a Canva-generated logo for her brand "Dapur Rohani" (Rohani's Kitchen), a full ingredient list with allergen notes, her WhatsApp number, production date fields, and a placeholder for the halal logo pending her certification application. She subsequently had the label printed at a local print shop at a cost of approximately THB 120 per 100 stickers — a highly affordable upgrade that she credited with increasing repeat orders from a local Islamic school canteen.

Similarly, Kak Zubaidah, a 38-year-old producer of packaged herbal teas in Narathiwat, redesigned her product packaging to comply with Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA) labeling requirements that she had been previously unaware were applicable to her product category. Her revised packaging identified the herbs by their

Thai and Latin names, included a standard serving suggestion, and prominently displayed the instruction to consult a physician if pregnant — information she had not previously included. Her experience illustrated how the halal standardization module opened a wider conversation about regulatory compliance generally.

3.3 Digital Marketing Adoption and Social Media Presence

The fourth module produced the most immediately measurable behavioral changes. By the conclusion of the program, 41 of 48 participants (85%) had created a dedicated business account on at least one social media platform. Facebook remained the most commonly chosen primary platform, partly due to higher familiarity and partly because the existing community networks in the region are heavily Facebook-based. However, TikTok adoption was notably higher than anticipated, particularly among younger participants.

Nurasyikin, a 26-year-old producer of natural lip balms and skincare products in Narathiwat, had initially expressed strong reservations about video-based platforms, citing camera shyness and uncertainty about what to say. After receiving coaching on product demonstration video formats and being encouraged to focus on showing the production process rather than performing to the camera, she created a TikTok account for her brand "NaturByNur" and uploaded a 45-second video showing the mixing and molding of her beeswax lip balm. Within two weeks of posting, the video had reached over 3,200 views, resulting in 17 direct inquiries and 11 confirmed orders — her largest single-week sales volume to date.

Across the cohort, 78% of participants reported feeling more confident in their ability to market their products digitally following the program, compared to 12% who reported this confidence at the outset. Post-program follow-up contacts at the three-month mark found that 34 of the 41 participants who had created business accounts were still actively posting content, with a median posting frequency of twice per week. This retention rate compares favorably with digital training programs in comparable contexts, which often report significant drop-off in social media activity once formal training support is withdrawn.

3.4 Challenges During Implementation

The program encountered several practical challenges that warranted adaptive responses from the implementation team. The first and most significant was irregular attendance, particularly among participants with caregiving responsibilities for young children or elderly relatives. To address this, the program introduced a make-up session mechanism and arranged for sessions to be recorded (audio only, respecting participant privacy preferences) so that absent participants could review content before the next meeting. A second challenge was variability in digital device capability. While all participants owned smartphones, a subset of approximately eight participants owned older devices with limited storage or processing capacity that could not run Canva or handle video editing applications smoothly. The program responded by pairing these participants with peers who had higher-capability devices, converting some individual practical tasks into collaborative pair assignments.

Language presented a nuanced challenge. While all participants were communicatively competent in Malay and Thai, the technical vocabulary of halal certification and digital marketing — much of which exists primarily in Thai, English, or Standard Arabic — required additional explanation and translation effort from facilitators. The program team developed a bilingual (Thai-Malay) glossary of key terms, which participants reported finding useful both during and after training sessions.

Finally, internet connectivity in certain rural areas of Narathiwat was intermittent, complicating live demonstrations of social media platform features during sessions. Facilitators adapted by pre-downloading demonstration materials and using mobile hotspot connections where necessary.

3.5 Community Impact and Broader Significance

Beyond individual business outcomes, the program generated observable community-level effects. The formation of a WhatsApp group among participants created an ongoing peer support structure that continued to function actively three months after the program's conclusion, with members sharing market information, customer referrals, and practical tips on halal compliance and social media management. This informal network represents a form of social capital that extends the program's impact beyond its formal duration.

The program also contributed to strengthening the community service profile of Fatoni University within the local Muslimah business community, opening pathways for future collaborative initiatives. University staff members who co-facilitated the program reported that the experience enhanced their own understanding of the practical challenges facing micro-entrepreneurs, informing their teaching and applied research activities. At the household level, several participants reported tangible income effects: increased orders from new digital channels, access to institutional buyers through improved halal labeling, and the ability to charge higher prices for products that now presented a more professional and certified appearance. While a formal income impact assessment was beyond the scope of this program, these qualitative reports suggest meaningful economic improvement at the household level, consistent with findings from comparable interventions in Muslim-majority communities elsewhere in Southeast Asia [7]-[10].

4. Conclusion

This community service program demonstrated that a structured, participatory, and culturally responsive intervention combining halal standardization training with digital marketing mentorship can produce meaningful and measurable improvements in the business capabilities of Muslimah entrepreneurs in Southern Thailand. Across 48 participants in Pattani and Narathiwat, the program delivered improvements in halal knowledge, product labeling quality, social media adoption, and digital marketing confidence, while also catalyzing peer networking that continued beyond the program's formal conclusion.

The program's experience offers several practical implications for future community service initiatives in similar contexts. First, the integration of halal certification knowledge with practical marketing skills training is more effective than treating these as separate domains: participants responded particularly well to understanding how halal compliance could directly enhance their products' marketability. Second, culturally adapted facilitation — including bilingual materials, female-only session environments, flexible scheduling, and sensitivity to the social dynamics of Muslimah entrepreneurship — is not a secondary consideration but a foundational program design requirement. Third, institutional partnership with a locally embedded university such as Fatoni University significantly enhances program credibility, resource access, and community reach in ways that externally managed programs cannot easily replicate.

5. Acknowledgements

The author expresses sincere gratitude to Fatoni University, Pattani, for their institutional partnership and hospitality throughout the program implementation. Special thanks are due to the halal auditor consultants from the provincial Islamic committees of Pattani and Narathiwat, and to the 48 Muslimah entrepreneur participants whose engagement and commitment made this program possible. This community service activity was supported by internal research and community service funding from Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu.

6. Declaration

Author contributions and responsibilities - The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors were responsible for the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding - This study received no external funding. Availability of data and materials - All data are available from the authors.

Conflict of interest - The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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7. How to Quote

Marini Soraya., Halal Product Standardization and Digital Marketing Mentorship for Muslimah Community in Southern Thailand. *Memoirs C* 2025; 1 (1): oa48 - <https://doi.org/10.59535/pde4c795>.

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