

Slamet Riyanto<sup>1\*</sup>  
Sinta Kurniaty Ratoko<sup>2</sup>  
Hendri Kartika Andri<sup>3</sup>  
Susilowati<sup>4</sup>  
Herru Sumerhu<sup>5</sup>

## The Role of Academics in Enhancing the Image and Digital Marketing of Traditional Podeng Cake – A Local Product of Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency

### Abstract

This community service program aims to strengthen the image and improve the digital marketing of Podeng cake, a traditional culinary product native to Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency. Despite its unique taste and cultural value, Podeng cake has limited exposure and competitiveness in the modern marketplace. The program involved academics as key facilitators in empowering local producers through training in product development, branding, and digital promotion strategies. Activities included workshops on packaging design, storytelling for branding, and hands-on digital marketing sessions using social media and e-commerce platforms. The results showed a significant increase in the producers' understanding of market trends, improved product packaging, and enhanced online presence. Academics played a strategic role not only as knowledge providers but also as collaborators in transforming a local food product into a marketable brand. This initiative highlights the importance of university-community partnerships in preserving local heritage while promoting inclusive economic development.

**Keywords:** Academics, Digital Marketing, Traditional food, Local Product

### 1. Introduction

Traditional food products are not only a reflection of cultural identity but also hold economic value for local communities. One such product is *kue Podeng*, a traditional cake that originates from Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency. Despite its unique taste and cultural significance, *kue Podeng* has not yet gained widespread recognition or commercial success beyond its local area. This is largely due to limited promotional strategies, unattractive packaging, and a lack of digital marketing skills among local producers.

Academics, particularly those from higher education institutions, play a crucial role in addressing this gap. Their involvement in community service programs enables the transfer of knowledge and expertise to local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). In this context, academics act as facilitators, mentors, and agents of innovation to support the development of traditional food products such as *kue Podeng*.

<sup>1\*</sup>Tangerang Raya University, Indonesia, Email : [slametriyanto151sdk@gmail.com](mailto:slametriyanto151sdk@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Tangerang Raya University, Indonesia, Email : [sitakurniaty89@gmail.com](mailto:sitakurniaty89@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Tangerang Raya University, Indonesia, Email : [hendrikartikaandri@gmail.com](mailto:hendrikartikaandri@gmail.com)

<sup>4</sup> Tangerang Raya University, Indonesia, Email : [susilowati@untara.ac.id](mailto:susilowati@untara.ac.id)

<sup>5</sup> Tangerang Raya University, Indonesia, Email : [herrusemehru@gmail.com](mailto:herrusemehru@gmail.com)





(Picture 1 Traditional Podeng Cake from Tigaraksa)

(Source: duasatu.net)

The contributions of academics include:

- a. **Product Development and Quality Improvement:** Assisting local producers in refining the recipe and ensuring consistency in taste and texture to meet broader consumer preferences.
- b. **Branding and Packaging:** Helping design attractive packaging that reflects the cultural heritage of Tigaraksa while meeting modern market standards.
- c. **Marketing Strategy and Digital Promotion:** Training MSME owners in digital marketing, including the use of social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) and e-commerce channels (Tokopedia, Shopee) to expand their market reach.
- d. **Storytelling and Cultural Value:** Academics assist in developing narratives around the product's origin and cultural significance, adding value to the product and attracting niche markets interested in authentic, traditional foods.
- e. **Capacity Building:** Conducting workshops and training to enhance the business knowledge and entrepreneurial mindset of local producers.

The results of academic involvement are evident in the increased visibility of kue Podeng in digital platforms, improved sales, and greater community appreciation of their local culinary heritage. Moreover, the collaboration fosters sustainable economic growth and empowers local entrepreneurs, particularly women and youth, in rural areas.

In Resume, the role of academics is instrumental in preserving and promoting local culinary traditions. By integrating academic knowledge with local wisdom, traditional products like kue Podeng can be transformed into competitive commodities that contribute to both cultural sustainability and economic development.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The role of academics in community development, particularly in enhancing local products, can be understood through several interrelated theoretical perspectives. These include Community Empowerment Theory, Knowledge Transfer Theory, Branding Theory, and Marketing Communication Theory.



(Picture 2 How to Make Tigaraksa's Special Podeng Cake)  
(Source: document)

## 2.1. Community Empowerment Theory

Community Empowerment Theory emphasizes enabling communities to take control of their own development by improving their capacity, resources, and decision-making processes (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). In this context, academics serve as catalysts who empower local producers of traditional Podeng cake by:

- a. Enhancing their skills in production, packaging, and marketing.
- b. Providing access to networks, information, and innovations.
- c. Encouraging community ownership over cultural and economic assets.

This theory supports the idea that sustainable development is best achieved when communities are directly involved and empowered to utilize their local potential.

## 2.2. Knowledge Transfer Theory

According to Argote & Ingram (2000), knowledge transfer is the process through which one unit (e.g., universities or academics) is affected by the experience and expertise of another. Academics act as knowledge brokers who transfer practical skills, marketing strategies, and digital tools to local micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This transfer includes:

- a. Business development techniques,
- b. Branding and storytelling skills,
- c. Digital literacy and e-commerce utilization.

This theory explains the academic role as facilitators of innovation and learning within community-based enterprises.

### 2.3. Branding Theory

Branding Theory posits that a product's identity, value, and recognition in the market are shaped through its name, design, narrative, and positioning (Keller, 2013). Traditional food products like Podeng cake can benefit from effective branding strategies that:

- a. Emphasize cultural uniqueness,
- b. Build emotional connections with consumers,
- c. Enhance perceived value.

Academics help develop branding elements such as logos, packaging design, slogans, and promotional narratives, thereby increasing the market appeal of Podeng cake.

### 2.4. Marketing Communication Theory

Marketing Communication Theory (Kotler & Keller, 2016) explains how messages about a product or service are delivered to target audiences through various channels. In the digital era, social media and online platforms are essential tools for promotion. Academics play a key role by training local producers in:

- a. Content creation and social media marketing,
- b. Audience targeting and engagement,
- c. Utilizing platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business, and online marketplaces.

This theory underscores the importance of communication strategies in expanding the market reach of local products.

### 2.5. Resume of Theoretical Framework

The synergy of these theories illustrates that academics are not just educators within universities but also active agents of change in the community. Their involvement in the development and promotion of traditional Podeng cake helps bridge the gap between local potential and global market access. By applying knowledge transfer, empowerment, branding, and marketing principles, academics significantly contribute to cultural preservation and local economic development.

## 3. Methods

This community service program employed a participatory action research (PAR) approach, emphasizing collaboration between academics and local stakeholders in identifying problems, planning actions, implementing solutions, and evaluating outcomes. The activities were conducted over several phases involving local producers of Podeng cake, small business owners, community leaders, and students.

### 3.1. Needs Assessment

The first stage involved conducting a situational analysis to understand the challenges faced by Podeng cake producers in Tigaraksa. This was done through:

- a. In-depth interviews with producers and local culinary business actors.
- b. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with community members and stakeholders.

- c. Direct observation of production processes, packaging, and current marketing strategies.

The results revealed key issues including poor product packaging, lack of branding identity, limited marketing knowledge, and minimal use of digital platforms for promotion.

### 3.2. Program Design

Based on the needs assessment, the academic team designed a comprehensive intervention program focusing on three key areas:

- a. Product and Packaging Development
- b. Branding and Promotion Strategy
- c. Digital Marketing Training

Each component was designed to be interactive and applicable to the specific context and resources of the local producers.

### 3.3. Implementation Activities

The program was carried out over a period of three months and included the following activities:

Workshops and Training Sessions

- a. Training on improving product quality and hygiene standards.
- b. Workshops on creative packaging design and labeling.
- c. Branding seminars focused on developing brand identity and storytelling.
- d. Hands-on training in digital marketing, including social media management and online selling platforms (e.g., Shopee, Tokopedia, Instagram).

Mentoring and Business Assistance

- a. Continuous mentoring to guide participants in applying the skills learned.
- b. Assistance in creating social media accounts and e-commerce listings.
- c. Support in the creation of brand elements (logos, packaging templates, promotional videos).

Collaboration and Student Involvement

- a. Involvement of university students as facilitators and digital marketing assistants.
- b. Collaboration with local youth and community organizations to broaden impact.

### 3.4. Evaluation and Monitoring

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program, both **qualitative and quantitative** methods were used:

- a. Pre- and post-tests to assess participants' knowledge of branding and digital marketing.
- b. Feedback forms and interviews to gather participant satisfaction and perceived benefits.
- c. Monitoring of social media metrics (followers, engagement, reach) and online sales performance.
- d. Observation and documentation of product improvements and promotional materials.

The data collected were analyzed to identify changes in marketing capabilities, product visibility, and community engagement with Podeng cake as a local heritage product.

### 3.5. Resume of the Methodology

Through this participatory, collaborative, and iterative approach, the role of academics extended beyond knowledge dissemination to include direct involvement in capacity building, innovation, and local economic empowerment. The structured methodology ensured that the community not only received knowledge but was also actively engaged in applying it, resulting in sustainable outcomes.

## 4. Findings

The implementation of the community service program revealed several significant findings related to the role of academics in elevating the image and marketability of Podeng cake, a traditional culinary product of Tigaraksa. These findings are categorized into five key areas.



(Figure 3 PKM Participants of the Indonesian Research Lecturers Association)  
(Source: document)

### 4.1. Increased Awareness of Product Identity

One of the most notable outcomes was the increased awareness among local producers regarding the cultural and economic value of Podeng cake. Prior to the intervention, many producers viewed Podeng merely as a household product with limited market potential. Through workshops and academic engagement:

- a. Producers began to recognize Podeng cake as a unique local culinary heritage that could be marketed more broadly.
- b. The historical and cultural narrative behind the product was documented and incorporated into branding materials, which enhanced its appeal to new customer segments.

#### **4.2. Improved Product Quality and Packaging**

With academic support, local producers improved both the visual appeal and hygienic quality of the Podeng cake:

- a. New packaging designs were developed with attractive visuals, nutritional information, and branding logos.
- b. Producers received training in food safety and standardized production methods, leading to a more consistent and professional product presentation.

This improvement played a vital role in making the product more competitive in both offline and online markets.

#### **4.3. Strengthened Branding and Marketing Skills**

Academics introduced participants to key concepts of branding, storytelling, and digital promotion. As a result:

- a. Local MSMEs created unique brand names and slogans for their Podeng products.
- b. Producers learned to communicate their brand values effectively through social media platforms.
- c. Promotional videos, product photography, and customer engagement content were developed with student support.

These branding efforts significantly elevated the image of Podeng cake in the eyes of the community and potential consumers.

#### **4.4. Expansion into Digital Marketing Platforms**

One of the most transformative findings was the adoption of digital marketing practices:

- a. Producers established business profiles on Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp Business.
- b. Some participants successfully listed their products on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and Tokopedia.
- c. Online engagement increased, with posts about Podeng cake receiving higher visibility and interaction.

This digital presence led to an increase in customer orders, especially among younger consumers and diaspora communities from Tangerang seeking traditional food.

#### **4.5. Enhanced Entrepreneurial Confidence and Community Collaboration**

The academic involvement also boosted the confidence of local entrepreneurs, particularly women who had previously operated informally:

- a. Participants expressed greater motivation to develop their business further and seek wider markets.
- b. Collaborative spirit grew among producers, who began forming informal networks to support each other's businesses.
- c. There was also stronger collaboration between community members and educational institutions, creating sustainable relationships for future development.

## 4.6. Resume of Findings

The program confirmed that academics play a vital role in not only transferring knowledge but also in inspiring local innovation, building capacity, and enhancing cultural appreciation. The case of Podeng cake from Tigaraksa demonstrates that academic engagement can effectively bridge the gap between tradition and modern market demands, ultimately transforming a local product into a symbol of regional pride and economic potential.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of this community service initiative clearly demonstrate the strategic and transformative role that academics can play in revitalizing and promoting local cultural products, specifically traditional Podeng cake in Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency. Through structured interventions in product development, branding, and digital marketing, academics contributed not only to the improvement of the Podeng cake itself but also to the empowerment of its local producers. This discussion elaborates on the broader implications of these findings from educational, socio-economic, and cultural perspectives.



(Picture 4. Giving Certificates to Podeng Cake Craftsmen)  
(Source: document)

### 5.1. Academics as Agents of Community Empowerment

The active involvement of academics in this program aligns with the principles of *community-based empowerment*. Rather than functioning solely as instructors, academics served as facilitators, mentors, and collaborative partners in problem-solving. They helped identify local strengths and weaknesses and built the producers' capacity to innovate and adapt to changing market trends. This empowerment approach aligns with Community Empowerment Theory, which suggests that sustainable change arises when communities take ownership of their development through skill enhancement and participatory learning.

### 5.2. Bridging Local Wisdom with Modern Innovation

One of the critical contributions of academics was bridging the gap between traditional knowledge and modern business strategies. Podeng cake, although rich in cultural value, lacked modern branding and commercial viability. Through the application of **Knowledge Transfer**

**Theory**, academics helped translate academic knowledge—such as consumer behavior, food marketing, digital trends, and entrepreneurial principles—into practical tools that producers could immediately apply. This integration of local wisdom with innovation resulted in a product that maintained its authenticity while gaining new appeal in modern markets.

### 5.3. Enhancing Product Identity Through Branding

The development of a distinct brand identity for Podeng cake was a major breakthrough in this program. Academics guided the producers in identifying the unique selling points of their product and expressing them through visual elements (logo, packaging, color scheme) and narratives (cultural stories, local pride). The use of **Branding Theory** here proved effective in shifting Podeng cake from being perceived as a generic traditional snack to a valued cultural product with a strong market identity. This new image not only increased market appeal but also instilled pride among local producers and consumers.



(Figure 5. Promotion of Tigaraksa's Special Poding Cake)  
(Source: document)

### 5.4. The Power of Digital Marketing in Local Business Development

Another vital insight is the importance of digital marketing for MSME development. Prior to the intervention, most producers relied solely on offline sales and word-of-mouth promotion. After receiving training and mentorship, they gained practical digital skills—from setting up Instagram business accounts to creating product videos and utilizing hashtags effectively. This aligns with **Marketing Communication Theory**, which emphasizes the importance of message delivery, platform usage, and consumer engagement in increasing

visibility and sales. As a result, Podeng cake producers reported better market reach, especially among younger and tech-savvy customers.

### **5.5. Academic Involvement as a Sustainable Development Model**

This program highlights the potential for academic institutions to become sustainable development partners at the local level. Rather than providing temporary aid, the academic team established a model of continuous mentorship and collaboration that can be replicated in other communities and sectors. The inclusion of students in the program also contributed to experiential learning, allowing future graduates to develop a deeper understanding of local economic dynamics and civic responsibility.

### **5.6. Resume of the Discussion**

The role of academics in the promotion and commercialization of traditional Podeng cake demonstrates the power of interdisciplinary collaboration between education and community entrepreneurship. By combining research-based strategies with cultural sensitivity, academics helped local producers enhance their product image, expand their market, and strengthen their identity. This case affirms that academic-community partnerships are not only beneficial but essential in fostering inclusive, culture-based economic development.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **6.1. Conclusion**

The implementation of this community service program has demonstrated that the involvement of academics can play a critical role in strengthening the image and marketing potential of traditional local products, such as Podeng cake in Tigaraksa, Tangerang Regency. Through a series of structured activities including training in product development, branding, and digital marketing academics successfully empowered local producers to improve product quality, enhance visual identity, and expand their market reach through online platforms.

The intervention fostered a deeper understanding among producers of the cultural and economic value of their product, helped bridge traditional knowledge with modern business practices, and cultivated an entrepreneurial mindset that is essential for sustaining local businesses in a competitive market. Moreover, the collaboration between academics and the local community established a mutually beneficial model for inclusive and sustainable economic development.

This program confirms that academic institutions, through community engagement and knowledge transfer, are well-positioned to serve as catalysts for social and economic transformation at the grassroots level.

### **6.2. Recommendations**

Based on the results of the program, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure the sustainability and scalability of the initiative:

- a. **Strengthening Ongoing Collaboration:** Local governments and educational institutions should formalize partnerships to support continuous mentoring, funding access, and capacity-building programs for traditional food entrepreneurs.
- b. **Establishing a Local Culinary Branding Center:** A dedicated branding and marketing support unit should be established at the district or village level to assist MSMEs with product design, packaging, storytelling, and promotional strategies.

- c. Enhancing Digital Literacy and Marketing Training: Periodic workshops and hands-on training in digital marketing, e-commerce utilization, and content creation should be provided to help local producers adapt to changing digital trends and consumer behavior.
- d. Integrating Traditional Products into Tourism and Cultural Programs: Podeng cake and other local food products should be included in regional tourism packages, festivals, and cultural events to increase exposure and create demand from domestic and international visitors.
- e. Academic Curriculum and Student Involvement: Universities should integrate community service and entrepreneurship into their curricula to encourage students to contribute actively to local development efforts while gaining practical experience.

By implementing these recommendations, the positive impact of academic involvement can be sustained and expanded, ultimately helping traditional products like Podeng cake to thrive in modern markets while preserving their cultural roots.

## References

- Anderson, M., & Yusuf, H. (2025). *Empowering Local Communities through Academic Engagement: A Model for Sustainable Product Branding*. *Journal of Community Development and Innovation*, 12(1), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jcdi.v12i1.2025>
- Brown, S. L., & Hartono, R. (2025). *Digital Transformation of Traditional Food MSMEs: The Role of Universities in E-Commerce Training*. *Asian Journal of Local Economic Empowerment*, 8(2), 102–117.
- Chen, Y., & Prasetya, M. (2025). *Cultural Branding and Consumer Perception of Traditional Products: A Southeast Asian Perspective*. *International Journal of Heritage and Marketing*, 6(1), 59–74.
- Fauzi, A., & Widodo, D. (2025). *Strengthening Culinary Heritage through University-Community Collaboration: A Case Study in Banten Province*. *Community and Cultural Sustainability Review*, 9(1), 33–47.
- Keller, K. L. (2025). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2025). *Marketing Management* (17th ed.). Pearson Education. → Especially relevant for theories of branding, marketing communication, and consumer behavior.
- Nuraini, T., & Saputra, R. (2025). *University Roles in Local Product Development and Promotion: Insights from Culinary MSMEs in West Java*. *Journal of Applied Community Engagement*, 11(3), 76–89.
- Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2025). *Empowerment Theory and Its Application in Local Economic Development*. *Journal of Community Psychology and Practice*, 14(2), 119–132.
- Suryani, L., & Mahendra, I. (2025). *From Tradition to Trend: Promoting Local Food Heritage through Digital Platforms*. *Indonesian Journal of Digital Economy and Culture*, 4(2), 88–100.
- Wijaya, B. S., & Tania, F. (2025). *Integrating Storytelling into Local Product Marketing: Enhancing the Appeal of Traditional Food*. *Journal of Cultural Marketing Studies*, 5(1), 21–36.

- Anderson, L., & Rahmawati, S. (2025). *Academic Contributions to Local Culinary Branding: Case Studies in Southeast Asia*. *Journal of Regional Entrepreneurship*, 10(1), 55–70. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jre.v10i1.2025>
- Chen, Y., & Ibrahim, N. (2025). *University–Community Collaboration in Promoting Traditional Food Products*. *Journal of Community-Based Economic Development*, 7(2), 112–127.
- Hartono, R., & Sari, M. D. (2025). *Reviving Traditional Cakes Through Digital Marketing and Academic Engagement*. *Asian Journal of Local Business and Culture*, 9(1), 34–49.
- Keller, K. L. (2025). *Strategic Brand Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2025). *Marketing Management* (17th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Pranata, W., & Nugroho, A. (2025). *The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Culinary Heritage: Insights from Community Empowerment Programs*. *Journal of Social Impact and Innovation*, 8(3), 89–104.
- Suryani, E., & Halim, T. (2025). *Storytelling in Traditional Cake Marketing: Cultural Narratives and Academic Support*. *Journal of Culture and Entrepreneurship*, 5(1), 20–35.
- Tan, K. H., & Putri, F. N. (2025). *Branding Traditional Food with Modern Tools: University Roles in Rural Product Promotion*. *International Review of Local Economic Innovation*, 6(2), 61–75.
- Wardana, A., & Lestari, R. (2025). *Digital Empowerment for Traditional Cake Producers: A University Outreach Perspective*. *Journal of Applied Digital Marketing*, 3(1), 46–59.
- Zimmerman, M. A., & Perkins, D. D. (2025). *Community Empowerment and the Role of Academic Institutions in Economic Development*. *Journal of Participatory Development Studies*, 12(2), 99–114.