

Elevating Batik Boutique's Digital Presence: A Pathway to Sustainable Growth in The Fashion Industry

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ABSTRACT

Batik Boutique, a social enterprise based in Malaysia, exemplifies a successful intersection between cultural heritage and contemporary digital marketing. This case study explores Batik Boutique's current digital marketing strategies, evaluates challenges in its execution, and proposes actionable strategies to strengthen brand presence and customer engagement. With a digital shift catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Batik Boutique expanded from minimal online operations to a multi-channel digital presence utilizing websites, SEO, social media, and e-mail marketing. Yet, it faces challenges like fluctuating ad performance and engagement, along with a low conversion rate. Proposed improvements focus on refining target segmentation, leveraging AI, enhancing retention strategies, and strengthening content variety. These adjustments aim to optimize brand engagement, elevate Batik Boutique's digital impact, and support sustainable growth.

Keywords: *Malaysian Batik, Digital Marketing, Social Enterprise, Brand Awareness, Customer Loyalty*

INTRODUCTION

Batik Boutique, founded by Amy Blair, operates as a certified B Corp social enterprise in Malaysia, dedicated to preserving Malaysian heritage through artisan-made batik products. The modernization of Malaysia brought about many positive changes, but it has also impacted culture, predominantly Malay batik authenticity (Rosman et al., 2021). Partnering with artisans across Malaysia, Batik Boutique adheres to fair wages and eco-friendly practices. The company offers batik-themed fashion, home goods, and corporate gifts through a unique business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-customer (B2C) model, shipping products to over 40 countries. The founder, Amy Blair, an American with a background in tourism, was inspired to establish the company to empower marginalized communities by providing sustainable income opportunities.

According to Byelov et al. (2023), social entrepreneurship helps to provide public services in a new way and meet the needs of the community, create jobs, enrich the professional experience of people working in social enterprises for further employment under modern market conditions, to develop communities by involving them in public life socially vulnerable and marginalized population groups providing their members with work, to expand the activity of citizens who can independently solve their problems and take responsibility for their lives, and increase attention to socially disadvantaged population groups, not so much by providing them with charitable assistance, but by providing them with useful socially significant work.

CRAFTING DIGITAL THREADS: BATIK BOUTIQUE'S ONLINE MARKETING BLUEPRINT

Batik Boutique has established an online presence through its main e-commerce website and engages customers on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and, recently, TikTok. The company leverages Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) for organic visibility and utilizes Google Analytics and social media metrics to assess user engagement and conversion rates. According to Zhang and Cabbage (2017), the practice of SEO can significantly increase a website's search rankings, driving more traffic to the website, and thereby increasing revenue. Batik Boutique's digital marketing team is aided by an agency, that focuses on running strategic ads, blogging, and e-mail marketing. The company's primary conversion channel is its website, which is optimized for both local and international audiences. Additionally, Batik Boutique

leverages its 'Batik Perks' loyalty program to foster customer loyalty and increase repeat purchases. Amy Blair highlights the pivotal role of SEO in their digital strategy, noting *"What worked for two years in our strategy was mainly just like ads and blogs and backlinking and Facebook and some SEO and all the normal things. They were very geared for small businesses. The algorithms that change, iOS systems update and all, it changes everything. We have one of the strongest organic SEOs of terms that we want to be searched for. That's very important to us and we're constantly looking at that."* (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

NAVIGATING THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE: CHALLENGES IN A SHIFTING ONLINE LANDSCAPE

Batik Boutique faces high advertising costs with limited returns, compounded by platform changes and algorithm updates. Broad audience targeting inflates traffic without conversions, while platform limitations restrict organic growth, creating challenges in engaging the right audience within a dynamic digital environment.

1. High Cost with Limited Conversion

Despite a significant ad spend, Batik Boutique struggles with a low conversion rate. Due to fluctuations in social media algorithms and ad platform updates, they often experience diminishing returns on ads, especially on platforms like Facebook.

2. Audience Segmentation and Targeting

Batik Boutique has encountered issues with audience targeting, leading to traffic without conversions. In past campaigns, broad audience targeting inflated traffic metrics but did not attract high-intent buyers. This issue proves the need for target advertising to increase the conversion rate. According to Iyer et al. (2005), target advertising leads to higher profits, regardless of whether or not the firms have the ability to set targeted prices, and the targeting of advertising can be more valuable for firms in a competitive environment than the ability to target pricing.

3. Platform and Engagement Constraints

While Facebook and Instagram are primary platforms, the company needs more engagement and conversion via these channels. Organic growth on these platforms is also limited, and Batik Boutique has had mixed results with influencer partnerships, which can be costly and inconsistent. Reflecting on the situation, the founder remarked,

"Like we had this one thing happen with the last agency we were with, where I realized the metrics that the agency was reporting to me was the website traffic was really high, the spend was high, but the conversion was low. Agencies have a way of spinning, especially when you don't know as the client, they have a way of spinning the results to sound good." (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

The founder further expressed this concern, stating,

"If your ads are driving all these people to the site, where's this bottleneck then? Like, is it a user experience? Is it speed? Is it content? Like, is it our product? Is it price? I mean, these are things you have to question if you're bringing traffic in and it's not happening. The bottom line is always conversion rates." (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

This underscores the complexity of digital marketing, where user experience, content quality, and pricing can all contribute to low conversion rates.

WEAVING THE FUTURE: STRATEGIC INNOVATIONS FOR DIGITAL EXCELLENCE

To overcome these challenges, Batik Boutique could enhance audience targeting through AI-driven insights, enabling personalized campaigns for core demographics. Diversifying content with interactive and behind-the-scenes storytelling could deepen audience connections, while a strengthened “Batik Perks” program could improve customer retention. Exploring platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels can engage younger audiences. According to Karapetyan (2022), the new trend has a fairly wide recognition and opportunities: shooting short videos, simplicity of use, expansion of the target audience, as well as the availability of watching other similar videos; all this makes this tool more interesting from the scientific point of view. These strategies collectively align with the company’s sustainable growth goals.

1. Enhanced Targeting through AI-Driven Insights

To optimize ad spend, Batik Boutique should consider leveraging AI-driven insights to refine audience segmentation. Using AI to analyze customer data more deeply can enable the brand to create personalized ad campaigns for specific demographics, such as millennials and Gen Z, aligning with their customer profile. The founder of Batik Boutique emphasized the importance of AI in realizing the strategies.

“I think AI is an interesting thing. I mean, we’ve done a bit of training and it’s definitely gonna be, it is already, we use it, like in, you know, it helps save time and speed for us in some things, you know, that you don’t have to have another person for and it can learn and help you and be really smart with you, if that makes sense. You can’t just rely on that, I mean, you have to still use your own brain, right? So, that’s definitely something, I mean, there’s all kinds of things being developed in AI so we play around with some of them as well and I think that’s the way forward for any digital brand actually is going to be that.” (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

2. Content Strategy Diversification

Moving forward, Batik Boutique could expand its content strategy by incorporating more interactive and behind-the-scenes content. Showcasing artisans at work and sharing stories about the cultural significance of batik can increase engagement, especially on visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Developing a series that delves into the brand’s social mission may also foster customer connection and loyalty. Echoing this sentiment, the founder asserted,

“What people engage about with us is often the behind the scenes... When we paint anything, when anybody shows the process of the batik being painted, that’s everything for us.” (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

3. Focus on Retention and Loyalty Programmes

An emphasis on customer retention could help offset the costs of acquiring new customers. Enhancing the “Batik Perks” loyalty program by integrating exclusive, personalized rewards could boost repeat purchases. Encouraging user-generated content and testimonials can enhance credibility, creating a community-driven approach that reinforces the brand’s values.

4. Exploration of Emerging Digital Channels

As TikTok’s user base continues to expand, Batik Boutique may benefit from an increased presence on this platform, utilizing short-form video content to showcase the batik creation process. Exploring new platforms or feature launches, like Instagram Reels, can also provide fresh engagement opportunities, particularly among younger demographics. The founder of Batik Boutique emphasized the importance of exploring emerging digital channels,

“That is the overall long-term brand building strategy. There's all different ways to get there. I mean, we'll still run ads, we'll still do blogs, we'll still do SEO, we'll still probably do more on TikTok eventually, these kind of things.” (Blair, A., personal interview, October 15, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Batik Boutique’s journey reflects both the possibilities and challenges of digital marketing for social enterprises in Malaysia. The brand’s dedication to preserving Malaysian heritage and promoting sustainable livelihoods differentiates it within the market. By refining audience targeting through AI, diversifying content, strengthening loyalty programs, and exploring emerging platforms, Batik Boutique can enhance its digital presence and improve its impact. Addressing these issues strategically will increase brand engagement and conversions and also support Batik Boutique’s mission of cultural preservation and community empowerment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the primary business model of Batik Boutique, and how does it align with its mission?
2. What challenges does Batik Boutique face in its digital marketing strategy?
3. How does Batik Boutique utilize digital tools to enhance its online presence?
4. What strategies are proposed to address Batik Boutique's low conversion rates?
5. How does the founder view the role of AI in Batik Boutique's digital strategy?

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