

Puteri Indonesia: Representing the Culture and Spirit of Mustika Ratu in Global Marketing Strategy

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Abstract: *In the global digital era, marketing strategies based on local wisdom are increasingly important, especially for companies from developing countries. This study examines the collaboration between the Puteri Indonesia pageant and PT Mustika Ratu Tbk as an example of utilizing cultural representation to strengthen brand awareness and global market expansion. Using a qualitative case study and documentation analysis from secondary sources, the research finds that Puteri Indonesia effectively enhances brand credibility while functioning as an authentic cultural communicator. The study underscores the importance of aligning brand image with cultural values and maximizing social media to shape global consumer perceptions. These insights offer practical guidance for companies developing culture-based branding strategies and contribute to global marketing literature from a developing country context.*

INTRODUCTION

In this increasingly modern era, marketing is no longer just about selling a product; it also involves building a strong brand identity and emotional appeal for global consumers. One way to build brand identity or branding is by using Brand Ambassadors as brand representatives. According to Doucett (2008), a Brand Ambassador is an individual who has a relationship with a brand, introduces it to the public, and conveys information about the product (Panji & Prasetyo, 2018). Companies utilize Brand Ambassadors to drive consumer interest in their products. Therefore, many companies

choose celebrities or popular figures to increase sales.

Social media plays a crucial role in supporting the role of Brand Ambassadors, particularly in expanding the reach of product marketing globally. Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are often used by Brand Ambassadors as promotional tools to reach a wider audience. This is supported by data from We Are Social, which shows that by 2024, the number of social media users in Indonesia will reach 139 million people, or approximately 49.9 percent of the total population. Furthermore, Indonesians spend an average of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day on social media, ranking 10th in the world in terms of usage time. This data demonstrates the immense potential of social media as an effective promotional tool for Brand Ambassadors. (Widi, 2023)

In addition to the role of Brand Ambassadors, local culture is also a crucial factor in promoting products to the international market. Products containing elements of local wisdom are often more appealing to global consumers because they reflect a country's identity and distinctive characteristics (Gareta & Wibisono, 2018). This local wisdom can take the form of designs featuring traditional motifs, the use of textiles, rattan, and regional wood, or the utilization of traditional ingredients and recipes from a country. This is particularly attractive because the global market has diverse and distinct needs from the local market. Local Indonesian products, with their uniqueness and authenticity, are able to meet these needs and attract the attention of international consumers. Examples include handicrafts, traditional textiles, traditional foods, and even natural skincare products.

One example of a brand that emphasizes local wisdom is PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk. This company is known as a producer of a wide range of products based on cultural heritage, such as traditional herbal medicine, cosmetics, and body care (Atmadi, 2013). Based on Javanese cultural values, which are at the core of its corporate philosophy, PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk has not only successfully maintained and preserved ancestral traditions but has also expanded its business to penetrate the international market. This success demonstrates how integrating local wisdom with appropriate business strategies can provide strong competitiveness on the global stage. This local wisdom is also demonstrated by Puteri Indonesia, the Brand Ambassador of PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk.

The Puteri Indonesia Foundation is an organization that organizes one of the most prestigious beauty pageants in Indonesia. This contest aims to select women who meet the 5B criteria: Brain (intelligence), Beauty (beauty), Behavior (personality), Brave (courage), and Be Right (being right). The selected finalists not only serve as ambassadors for the nation domestically, but are also given the opportunity to represent Indonesia in a global beauty pageant. This foundation was founded by Dr. Hj. B.R.A. Mooryati Soedibyo, S.S., M.Hum., and is supported by PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk, a company also known for upholding local cultural values in each of its products (Januar & Alrianingrum, 2022). In this context, Indonesia's cultural diversity, encompassing various ethnicities, languages, and customs, is an important element reflected in the organization of this beauty pageant. This competition not only showcases physical beauty but also serves as a means to

symbolically celebrate cultural diversity. As expressed by Parameswaran (2001) in Abrahams et al. (2024), international beauty pageants can be compared to traditional culture because they both contain ritualistic elements and are part of modern cultural performances. Thus, the Puteri Indonesia pageant is in line with the vision of PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk's efforts to elevate and promote local wisdom as a national identity worthy of pride. Abrahams et al. (2024)

Brand Ambassadors are considered an effective strategy for increasing brand awareness, as they serve to remind consumers of the existence and launch of new products, as well as strengthen public awareness of the brand. Izzmatika and Halida (2024) also demonstrate that selecting appropriate Brand Ambassadors aligned with the brand image can build trust and create a positive image, as was the case with Scarlett products, which ultimately led to increased consumer purchase intention (Love et al., 2024). While various previous studies have highlighted the important role of Brand Ambassadors in global marketing strategies, there is still limited discussion of cultural representations from developing countries and their impact on domestic sales. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring how cultural representations presented through the Puteri Indonesia pageant can shape consumer perceptions and support increased sales of Mustika Ratu products in the international market.

To maintain objectivity in the analysis process, this study adopted a qualitative approach with a documentary study method as its primary foundation. Data analysis will be conducted thematically to uncover patterns of cultural representation and brand perceptions that emerge in the context of global marketing. The data used are sourced from secondary documentation, including official company reports, media publications, and academic literature relevant to culture-based marketing strategies. The main focus of this research is to explore the strategic role of cultural representation in driving sales growth in international markets, with a case study centered on the collaboration between Mustika Ratu and the Puteri Indonesia pageant. Through this study, it is hoped that significant contributions will emerge in the form of practical insights for companies from developing countries in designing global brand strategies rooted in local wisdom, while enriching the international business literature from a rarely explored non-Western perspective.

Literatur Review

Promotion

According to Firmansyah (2019), promotion has four main objectives: introducing a product or company to the public, persuading consumers to be interested, changing and shaping consumer behavior, and reminding consumers of the product or company. Puri et al. (2023) state that promotion is a form of marketing communication, a series of activities carried out by marketers to convey information, influence, persuade, or remind target consumers about the company and the products it offers. The main goal of these activities is to encourage consumers to accept, purchase, and become loyal to the product,

which ultimately contributes to increased company sales. Implementing sales promotions involves a number of important activities, such as setting the selling price, planning distribution costs, and managing other costs that support the marketing process.

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has a wide variety of interpretations. According to Fitzpatrick, IMC is a strategy that combines various communication functions in an integrated approach to achieve efficiency through synergy. This allows organizations to deliver messages consistently with a unified voice and perspective (Fitzpatrick, 2005). Meanwhile, according to Rismayanti (2016), Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has developed as a strategic approach used by marketers to design and implement marketing communications in a more integrated, consistent, and efficient manner. This approach not only plays a role in shaping brand image, but is also effective in driving increased sales and expanding the reach of the company's target market.

Brand Identity

Aaker (1995) explains that a brand not only serves as a symbol for a product, but also as a representation of the values, culture, and character that a company wishes to convey to its consumers. Brand identity consists of elements such as visual symbols, brand personality, cultural associations, and narratives that shape public perception of the brand.

According to Surachman (2008), there are six levels of brand understanding, including:

1. Attributes

Each brand has a number of distinctive characteristics. These attributes need to be designed and managed properly so that consumers can recognize and understand the characteristics of a brand. For example, KFC is known as a fast food restaurant that offers delicious, safe, and reliable products, as well as efficient service.

2. Benefits

Brands not only offer attributes, but also benefits that consumers feel. Consumers buy the benefits offered, not just physical attributes. Therefore, producers need to be able to turn attributes into tangible benefits, both functionally and emotionally.

3. Brand Value

Brand values also contain certain values that consumers consider important. Brands that have high value are often seen as classy and able to represent the identity and status of their users.

4. Culture

A brand can reflect a particular culture. For example, the Mercedes brand represents a German culture known for discipline, work efficiency, and a commitment to

high quality.

5. Personality

Brands also describe specific personalities. It is expected that consumers who use a brand will exhibit a personality that matches the brand's image.

6. Brand User

Shows who the target consumer is. Because of this, marketers often feature public figures or celebrities in brand campaigns to portray the ideal profile of the product's users.

Brand Ambassador

A brand ambassador is an individual or group assigned by an organization or company to promote a brand, product, or service. They are responsible for representing the company's identity through appearance, attitude, values, and ethics that align with the brand's image. The primary role of a brand ambassador lies in their ability to implement effective promotional strategies to encourage increased frequency and volume of product purchases by consumers. The selection of a brand ambassador typically takes into account the individual's positive image, with the hope that this image will reflect the overall brand and contribute to increased consumer interest in the products offered (Prastiwi et al., 2020).

Brand ambassadors serve as a promotional tool that supports marketing communication strategies by establishing an emotional connection between the brand and consumers. Through this approach, companies can build a strong brand image, reach their target market more effectively, understand consumer preferences, and increase their competitiveness in the marketplace. The synergy between effective marketing communications and the presence of brand ambassadors can provide a significant competitive advantage for a company's success. According to Purwati and Cahyanti (2022), brand ambassadorship is a strategy often used by businesses, involving public figures or well-known celebrities to promote their products.

Source Credibility Theory

The Source Credibility Theory, developed by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley in Communication and Persuasion (1953), states that communication effectiveness is greatly influenced by the level of credibility the communicator possesses in the eyes of the audience. This theory assumes that the higher the audience's perception of a communicator's credibility, the greater their influence in shaping and changing their attitudes. This credibility encompasses aspects such as the communicator's expertise, honesty, and attractiveness. According to Elita et al. (2024), credibility is not automatically inherent in the communicator but rather is formed by how the audience interprets and assesses the communicator's characteristics based on their appearance,

demeanor, and delivery. Therefore, successful communication depends heavily on the match between the communicator's character and the audience's expectations of the message.

According to Umeogu (2012), source credibility is influenced by three main aspects: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Expertise refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived as possessing knowledge and experience relevant to the message being conveyed, thus being viewed as a valid source of information. Trustworthiness refers to the audience's perception of the communicator's honesty, integrity, and goodwill. When a communicator is perceived as honest and morally credible, the message is more readily accepted (Schouten et al., 2020). Meanwhile, attractiveness relates to the extent to which the communicator is perceived by the audience as attractive, whether physically, emotionally, or due to shared values and background. As explained by McGuire (1985) and developed by Ohanian (1990), this aspect encompasses familiarity, likability, and similarity. These three dimensions collectively shape the perception of credibility, which can influence communication effectiveness in marketing contexts and other persuasive campaigns.

Brand Awareness

According to Durianto et al. (2004), brand awareness refers to the ability of potential consumers to recognize and recall a brand as belonging to a specific, relevant product category. This means that consumers are aware of the brand's presence when considering similar product options. Increasing brand awareness is a crucial strategy for expanding a company's market reach, particularly in a competitive business environment with numerous strong and well-known competitors. In this context, increasing brand awareness cannot be achieved in isolation but requires the support of various elements, such as an integrated marketing communications strategy and the use of supporting figures such as Brand Ambassadors. The presence of these supporting elements helps companies reach a wider range of consumers, build emotional connection, and create a positive brand perception in consumers' minds.

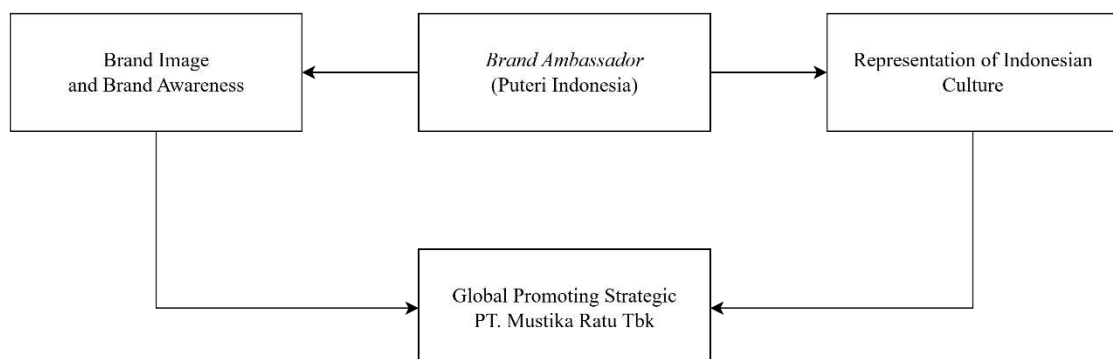


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework above illustrates how PT. Mustika Ratu Tbk's global

marketing strategy is influenced by three main elements: brand image and brand awareness, the role of brand ambassadors (Puteri Indonesia), and the representation of Indonesian culture. These three aspects are interrelated and contribute to strengthening the Mustika Ratu brand's position in the international market. Brand ambassadors act as a bridge that not only increases brand awareness but also represents Indonesian cultural values, thus making the marketing strategy more authentic and relevant to the global market that increasingly values cultural aspects in product consumption.

METHOD

In relation to the problems raised in this study, the researcher applied a qualitative approach. As explained by Mulyana (2013), a qualitative approach aligns with epistemological principles that emphasize the study of phenomena in their natural context, and seeks to understand and interpret the meanings and symbols inherent in human experience. Meanwhile, according to Afrizal (2014), a qualitative approach is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of words, both written and spoken, as well as directly observed behavior. In the context of this research, the researcher used a qualitative descriptive method to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied, with an emphasis on detailed descriptions. As stated by Sugiyono (2016), qualitative descriptive research is based on the post-positivist paradigm and aims to study objects in their natural conditions, without going through an experimental process.

This research uses a case study design with a descriptive-qualitative approach. Case studies were chosen because they allow for in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon: how marketing communication strategies involving brand ambassadors like Puteri Indonesia are used to shape the global brand image of Mustika Ratu. According to Yusuf (2016), a case study is a research approach conducted in-depth, comprehensive, intensive, structured, and holistically on a specific individual, event, social setting, or group. This research involves collecting data and information through various methods and techniques, utilizing a variety of information sources. The goal is to comprehensively understand how the individual, event, or social environment operates and functions effectively within the appropriate context.

This study uses secondary data as the primary source. The researcher conducted data collection to obtain relevant information for this study. Data collection was conducted through several techniques, including in-depth interviews with research subjects, namely Puteri Indonesia fans or pageant lovers, who are Mustika Ratu's target audience. The data sources consist of:

1. National and international scientific journals relevant to the topics of marketing communication, IMC, brand ambassadors, and cultural representation.
2. Online news articles from trusted media that discuss Mustika Ratu's promotional activities and strategies and the work of Puteri Indonesia.

3. Official *YouTube* videos as well as from news and entertainment media channels featuring brand ambassador Mustika Ratu in various promotional activities.
4. Social media content (*Instagram, Twitter, TikTok*) from the official account of Mustika Ratu, Yayasan Puteri Indonesia, and the brand ambassadors involved.

The criteria for selecting sources are based on relevance to the focus of the research, the credibility of the publisher or platform, and the up-to-date of the information. Data in the form of text, images, and videos is then collected, classified by thematic category, and transcribed (for video) to facilitate the analysis process.

In the data collection process, the researcher applies a triangulation technique to ensure the validity of the information obtained. Source triangulation is carried out by comparing and reviewing data from various sources such as observation results, online documentation, as well as content from social media and videos. This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of how brand ambassadors contribute to shaping *brand awareness*, particularly through their involvement in various communication channels and digital interactions that support a positive brand image in the midst of market competition.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Puteri Indonesia beauty pageant has a long history that reflects the cultural, social, and nationalist transformations in Indonesia. As one of the oldest beauty pageants still active in Indonesia, Puteri Indonesia was originally designed to select outstanding women who represent the 5Bs: Brain, Beauty, Behavior, Brave, and Be Right. Since its inception, Puteri Indonesia has served not only as a beauty competition but also as a platform for promoting Indonesian culture and national identity. Abrahams et al. (2024) explain that this pageant serves as a vehicle for introducing ethnic diversity, traditional clothing, and cultural arts from various provinces. Through segments such as traditional costume parades and artistic performances, each contestant brings stories, values, and cultural richness from their respective regions. Even the presence of international beauty queens on the final night and their wearing of kebayas emphasizes the symbolism of national pride held by Puteri Indonesia. Not only does this pageant showcase visual aspects, but it also instills educational values, nationalism, and the preservation of cultural heritage amidst modernity and globalization.

Over time, Puteri Indonesia has undergone significant transformation due to the influence of globalization. According to researchers such as Banet-Weiser (1999) and reinforced by research by Abrahams et al. (2024), beauty standards that initially tended to follow Western norms have begun to evolve to become more inclusive and diverse. This contest no longer only emphasizes certain physical characteristics, but rather accepts and celebrates the various forms of beauty of Indonesian women, from skin color, hair style, to the unique character of each individual. Globalization has also expanded the audience reach through mass media and digital technology, making this contest a transnational

spectacle that simultaneously introduces Indonesian culture to the international world. Furthermore, the government's involvement in this contest also strengthens the legitimacy of Puteri Indonesia as a symbol of national development. Support from state figures such as ministers and governors who attend as judges confirms that Puteri Indonesia is not merely entertainment, but also an instrument of cultural diplomacy and national character building. Thus, Puteri Indonesia continues to develop as a dynamic stage for cultural representation, bringing together local values with global exposure in order to shape an inclusive and proud national identity.

The majority of Puteri Indonesia finalists continued their journey by pursuing careers in the Indonesian entertainment industry and achieved popularity and success. This is also proven by Noviandi (2018) several names such as Artika Saridevi, Melanie Putri, and Raline Shah as real examples of how this event not only produces cultural ambassadors, but also opens up broad opportunities for finalists to contribute in the fields of art, media, and entertainment. This further confirms that Puteri Indonesia is a strategic platform in shaping Indonesian women figures who not only represent cultural values and national identity, but are also able to compete professionally in the public sphere.

According to Dianawati (2025), the journey of the finalists and winners of Puteri Indonesia did not end after the selection process was over. Many of them continued their journey by achieving success in various fields. This success is inseparable from the rigorous selection process and intensive quarantine period that shaped the finalists' character, resilience, and public speaking and leadership skills. This experience became a valuable asset that enabled them to continue working and contributing in various sectors, while also demonstrating that Puteri Indonesia not only produces attractive figures, but also resilient women who are ready to face the challenges of the professional world.

According to Umeogu (2012), source credibility is influenced by three main aspects: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Referring to this theory, Puteri Indonesia encompasses more than these three aspects, as seen from the 5B concept and Puteri Indonesia's track record in the eyes of the general public.

Since its inception, Puteri Indonesia has been closely associated with PT. Mustika Ratu. In addition to being the main sponsor, Mustika Ratu has also become a close part of Puteri Indonesia. Mustika Ratu products, which represent local wisdom, demonstrate the identity of the Indonesian nation and represent local culture. According to Winanto (2019), Puteri Indonesia assists Mustika Ratu in building digital content. Puteri Indonesia plays a strategic role in building digital content for Mustika Ratu as the main brand that houses it. As representatives of intelligent, cultured, and inspiring Indonesian women, the finalists and winners of Puteri Indonesia are ideal faces in conveying the values of the Mustika Ratu brand in the digital realm. Through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other social media, they actively produce and share content that showcases a healthy lifestyle, natural beauty, and the preservation of local culture that aligns with Mustika Ratu's identity.

This collaboration creates authentic, locally inspired digital content that remains

globally relevant. The presence of the Indonesian Princesses in Mustika Ratu's digital campaign not only increases brand awareness and engagement but also strengthens the brand's image as a product grounded in local wisdom and women's empowerment. This demonstrates that the Indonesian Princesses are not only symbols of beauty but also strategic communication assets in Mustika Ratu's digital marketing. Research and other sources indicate that wherever the Indonesian Princesses are present, the name Mustika Ratu is closely associated with them. This demonstrates that Brand Ambassadors are no longer merely promotional communicators but also represent the soul of the product and company. The Indonesian Princesses demonstrate their credibility, which can be the lifeblood of a brand.

Looking back, the credibility of Puteri Indonesia was once doubted in the 1990s. According to Januar and Alrianingrum (2022), in 1996, Puteri Indonesia was banned by the Soeharto-era government. The reigning Puteri Indonesia at that time was Alya Rohali. Alya was banned because of her participation in the Miss Universe pageant. The government believed that Indonesian women should not wear swimsuits to represent Indonesia. However, Puteri Indonesia was held again in 2000 and Bernika Ivanda was chosen as Puteri Indonesia. Indonesia began to become aware of the pageant industry in 2005 with the creation of a fanbase account called Indonesia Pageant (IP). That year, Puteri Indonesia was won by Artika Saridevi, who also represented Indonesia at the 2006 Miss Universe pageant in Bangkok, Thailand (Harian Kompas, 2020).

Artika Saridevi was then successful in entering the Top 15 of Miss Universe. Artika's success managed to make Indonesians proud of her achievement. Since then, Indonesians feel that Puteri Indonesia is not just a beauty contest but also a showcase for Indonesia. The success that Puteri Indonesia has achieved even continued with the 2016 victory of Miss Grand International, represented by a Medan girl named Ariska Putri Pertiwi. One year later, Puteri Indonesia also managed to reach the top placement at the Miss International 2017 pageant held in Japan. Kevin Liliana, Puteri Indonesia Lingkungan at that time, successfully won the Miss International 2017 pageant.

In 2024, Puteri Indonesia made extraordinary history by winning two international crowns. Harastha Haifa Zahra, Puteri Indonesia 2024, won the Miss Supranational 2024 crown held in Poland. That same year, Ketut Permata Juliastrid Sari also brought Indonesia's name to the world by winning the Miss Cosmo pageant in Vietnam (CNN Indonesia, 2024).

According to Setianingsih (2025), the Puteri Indonesia pageant does not only focus on beauty, but also serves as a strategic platform for the younger generation, especially women, to actualize themselves and make real contributions to society. Behind the glittering stage, the Puteri Indonesia pageant carries a strong spirit of change, empowerment, and social advocacy. The finalists are expected to not only be charming in appearance, but also reflect the character of Indonesian women who are strong, intelligent, highly dedicated, and have a concern for social issues and the nation's progress.

The selection process for this event was comprehensively designed to test various aspects of the finalists' personalities and abilities. This began with the Preliminary Competition, which showcased dresses made from traditional textiles, and the National Costume Competition, which showcased the cultural representation and icons of each province. The intellectual intelligence assessment focused on Motion Challenges, where participants presented advocacy ideas based on real data and evidence. Meanwhile, the Deep Interview session involved experts such as psychologists and micro-expression experts to assess the finalists' character and mental readiness. Ultimately, at the Grand Final, four finalists were crowned Puteri Indonesia, Puteri Indonesia Lingkungan, Puteri Indonesia Pariwisata, and Puteri Indonesia Pendidikan, each with a strategic advocacy role they carry out to bring positive influence to Indonesia.

It is through this long process that the winner of Puteri Indonesia is considered credible and can become a brand image. This was also explained by Chocky Sitohang, the MC of the Puteri Indonesia Selection, in Priherdityo (2016). The role of Puteri Indonesia has certainly been effective, because Puteri Indonesia has given a lot to Indonesia in the international arena. Indonesia won several best national costumes which actually improved and maintained its position in the international arena. It was a promotional opportunity and on the other hand, it also made Indonesia proud.

PT Mustika Ratu optimally utilizes promotional opportunities through strong cultural representation to introduce its products to the international market. Puteri Indonesia, known for its credibility in the field of communication and its role as a cultural symbol, is considered very aligned with Mustika Ratu's image of upholding Indonesian local wisdom. Through the integration of cultural, visual, and digital approaches, Puteri Indonesia serves as a strategic communication tool that helps Mustika Ratu instill brand values, expand market reach, and strengthen the nation's positive image globally. This relationship is also strengthened by positive public perception of Puteri Indonesia, thus creating consumer trust in Mustika Ratu products. In the context of modern marketing, the presence of Puteri Indonesia keeps the Mustika Ratu brand relevant and sustainable, because it is able to represent authentic and competitive Indonesian women. Therefore, this collaboration is an example of a successful global marketing strategy based on culture.

Conclusion

The collaboration between Puteri Indonesia and PT Mustika Ratu Tbk demonstrates that global marketing strategies rooted in cultural representation can successfully strengthen a brand's position in the international market. As a Brand Ambassador, Puteri Indonesia not only represents physical beauty but also embodies cultural values, intelligence, and leadership, which enhance brand credibility and appeal. The integration of cultural, visual, and digital communication has proven effective in building brand awareness and engagement through social media platforms. This partnership shows that strengthening local identity can serve as a competitive advantage

in the global era. Therefore, this model can serve as a reference for local companies in developing sustainable, culture-based branding strategies to expand their global reach.

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