



Smart Branding: Integration Of AI In The Marketing Strategy Of Bali MSME Cultural Products

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ABSTRACT

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has provided a great opportunity for culture-based Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to strengthen their marketing strategies in the digital era. This study aims to analyze the influence of AI Integration on marketing performance with smart branding as a mediating variable, as well as examine the role of cultural brand identity in strengthening the competitiveness of cultural MSME brands in Bali. Using an explanatory quantitative approach, data was collected through a survey of 150 cultural MSME actors who actively use digital media. The analysis was carried out using Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through the SmartPLS 4 application. The results of the study show that AI Integration has a significant positive effect on smart branding, which further improves cultural brand identity and marketing performance. These findings confirm that AI not only serves as an automation tool, but also as a strategic enabler in connecting local cultural values with the needs of modern markets. Furthermore, smart branding has proven to be a bridge between technological capabilities and the preservation of cultural values, strengthening brand image and customer loyalty. Theoretically, this study expands the application of Dynamic Capability Theory by affirming AI as a new form of dynamic capability in culture-based brand management. Practically, the results provide guidance for Balinese cultural MSMEs in optimizing AI to create an adaptive, authentic, and sustainable branding strategy.

INTRODUCTION

AI technologies such as generative AI can significantly improve the efficiency and quality of visual content creation for MSMEs. Tools like canva AI and prome AI help generate engaging and professional promotional materials at a lower cost, which is especially important for MSMEs that

aim to improve their branding and market presence (Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025). However, challenges remain in AI's ability to fully understand the nuances of brand identity, which is critical for cultural products. Incorporating elements of local culture into digital marketing strategies is very important for MSMEs. This includes using regional norms, traditional languages, symbols, and culturally relevant messages to increase brand loyalty and market penetration (Rizkita, Winarno, Suwono, & Malek, 2025).

For Balinese cultural products, utilizing this cultural insight can be a strategic advantage in digital marketing efforts. The tourism sector in Bali has seen significant benefits from AI integration, especially in optimizing business activities and improving service quality. AI systems can process data quickly, providing a competitive advantage and improving the customer experience (Indaryanto, Harijadi, & Sinaga, 2023). This approach is adaptable for MSMEs dealing with cultural products to optimize their marketing strategies and increase customer engagement. MSMEs in Bali have adopted various survival strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic, including leveraging ICT for market penetration and shifting marketing efforts from offline to online platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp (Widiastini, Arsa, Syah, & Hajarrahmah, 2023). These strategies highlight the importance of digital transformation and the potential role of AI in enhancing online marketing efforts.

MSMEs often face resource constraints that can hinder the full adoption of AI technology. Ensuring that AI solutions are tailored to the specific needs and capacities of MSMEs is critical to successful integration (Wulandari & Diko, 2024). AI's ability to understand and integrate cultural nuances into marketing strategies is still evolving. For MSMEs that deal with cultural products, this is an important aspect that needs to be carefully considered to maintain cultural authenticity and relevance (Ertz & Kordi, 2025).

The development of digital technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), has brought major changes in the world of marketing. In Indonesia, especially in Bali, culture-based MSMEs are the backbone of the creative economy that represents local values such as art, tradition, and spirituality (Avianto, Ulumuddin, Marjanto, Sudrajat, & Atmadiredja, 2024). However, in the midst of a competitive digital era, many cultural MSME players still rely on conventional promotion methods and have not optimized the potential of AI in building their brand identity (Huda, Frisilia, Azis, & Yanuary, 2025). The application of AI in marketing strategies such as machine learning for tourist trend analysis, chatbots for customer service, or image recognition for cultural packaging design provides opportunities for MSMEs to strengthen smarter branding strategies (Huda et al., 2025). Through smart branding, AI not only serves as an automation tool, but also as a creative mechanism capable of connecting local cultural values with global market preferences (Avianto et al., 2024).

Despite this great potential, most MSMEs in Bali still face limitations in understanding how AI can be effectively integrated to strengthen cultural brand identity and improve marketing performance (Indaryanto et al., 2023; Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025). Many previous studies have emphasized digital marketing adoption or social media marketing, but not many have highlighted the integration of AI in the context of branding local cultural products (Wulandari & Diko, 2024). In fact, branding that reflects cultural values is an important element to maintain Bali's uniqueness in the global market.

AI has significantly transformed digital marketing by improving operational efficiency, personalization, and strategic optimization (Wulandari & Diko, 2024). AI technology is used for performance measurement, automation, customer segmentation, and personalized targeting, which are critical for effective marketing strategies (Wulandari & Diko, 2024). Incorporating elements of local culture into digital marketing practices increases brand loyalty and market penetration (Potwora, Vdovichena, Semchuk, Lipyh, & Saienko, 2024). This is especially relevant for Balinese MSMEs, who can leverage their rich cultural heritage in their marketing strategies. One of the significant challenges for MSMEs in Bali is the digital literacy gap among creative product practitioners (Rizkita et al., 2025). Limited access to digital resources and formal training

also hinders the effective implementation of AI in marketing strategies (Lubis et al., 2025). The use of AI in marketing raises ethical concerns, especially regarding data privacy and security (Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025; Wulandari & Diko, 2024). These concerns need to be addressed to maintain consumer trust and ensure responsible adoption of AI.

AI-driven marketing strategies can significantly increase customer engagement and conversion rates (Rizkita et al., 2025). For Balinese MSMEs, this means better targeting and personalized marketing efforts that resonate with local and international customers. Digital technologies, including AI, can help MSMEs overcome traditional barriers and expand their market reach (Lubis et al., 2025). This includes leveraging e-commerce and social media platforms for wider market access. However, previous research in the field of MSME marketing has mostly focused on digital marketing and social media marketing strategies such as the use of Instagram, influencers, or digital content-based campaigns (Setini et al., 2025). Although this approach has proven to be effective in increasing brand visibility, these studies are still limited to the digital communication aspect and have not highlighted the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a key factor in local culture-based branding strategies. Especially in the context of Balinese tourism MSMEs that rely on traditional values and local wisdom, research on the integration of AI in strengthening cultural brands is still relatively rare.

In addition, most studies on cultural branding have so far placed more emphasis on the dimensions of tradition, symbolism, and cultural identity, without examining how smart technology can support the process of shaping such brand image. (Liu & Chen, 2024). In fact, AI has great potential to strengthen cultural values through consumer data analysis, content personalization, and the development of brand narratives that are more adaptive to modern market dynamics (Said & Soi, 2025). This gap shows the need for a new approach that combines technology and culture as the foundation for developing branding strategies in the digital age (Alammal & Al Mubarak, 2023; Ortega, 2025). Research on the application of AI in MSMEs is also generally focused on aspects of operational efficiency or product innovation, not on how AI can shape differentiation strategies and cultural brand perceptions in the minds of consumers (Lubis et al., 2025; Said & Soi, 2025). Therefore, this study seeks to shift the focus from the perspective of efficiency to the strategic role of AI in creating symbolic value and cultural appeal through the concept of Smart Branding.

In addition, empirical studies on AI in the MSME sector in Indonesia are still mostly conceptual or in the form of single case studies, so they do not provide a comprehensive quantitative picture of the relationship between variables (Bork, 2022; Sloane & Silva, 2019). This research is here to fill this gap by developing an empirical model that integrates AI Integration, Smart Branding, Cultural Brand Identity, and Marketing Performance. This model is expected to be tested using the Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, so as to strengthen academic evidence related to the application of smart technology in culture-based marketing strategies in the digital economy era.

Balinese MSMEs must integrate cultural elements into their AI-based marketing strategies to increase authenticity and appeal (Lubis et al., 2025; Widiastini et al., 2023). This can involve the use of traditional symbols, local languages, and culturally relevant messages. There is a need for capacity-building initiatives to improve digital literacy and technical skills among MSME practitioners (Avianto et al., 2024). This includes training programs and workshops focused on AI and digital marketing. Developing and adhering to ethical guidelines for the use of AI in marketing is essential. This includes ensuring data privacy, transparency, and addressing algorithmic bias (Alammal & Al Mubarak, 2023; Ortega, 2025; Rizkita et al., 2025). Future trends show promising advances in integrating AI with augmented reality and virtual reality (AR/VR) to create immersive marketing experiences (Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025). Developing AI solutions tailored to the context of local culture can improve user acceptance and effectiveness (Liu & Chen, 2024).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dynamic Capability Grand Theory

Dynamic Capability Theory (Ge & Dong, 2009) Explain the organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes through integration, development, and reconstruction of internal and external competencies. In the context of MSMEs in Bali, this theory confirms that the ability to adopt and integrate new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a form of dynamic capability that allows companies to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing digital business environment (Xue, Ye, & Lan, 2007). Dynamic capabilities are defined as the firm's processes that use resources to integrate, reconfigure, gain, and release resources to match and even create changes in the business environment (Kianto & Ritala, 2010). The theory aims to explain how firms can sustain competitive advantages, especially in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments (Ge & Dong, 2009).

Dynamic capabilities are formed through three main mechanisms (Schwarz, Rohrbeck, & Wach, 2020): 1) Sensing (the ability to recognize opportunities and threats); 2) Seizing (the ability to take advantage of opportunities through innovation), and 3) Reconfiguring (the ability to adjust and transform organizational resources). In this study, AI Integration plays a manifestation of sensing and seizing capabilities because it allows MSMEs to identify new market opportunities, understand consumer trends, and optimize branding strategies. Smart Branding Strategy is a concrete form of reconfiguring capabilities where AI is used to update the way organizations communicate cultural values and strengthen brand image (Huda et al., 2025). Thus, the theory of dynamic capabilities becomes the conceptual basis that connects technology, innovation, and marketing performance in the context of cultural products (Wiratama et al., 2025); (Surlimna et al., 2025).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration

The integration of AI in marketing includes the use of machine learning algorithms, data analysis, and automation to support decision-making as well as personalization of promotional strategies (Davenport et al., 2020). For cultural MSMEs in Bali, AI enables more efficient management of customer information, automated visual content development, and sentiment analysis of brands. AI is an enabler in increasing efficiency, creativity, and speed of adaptation to the dynamic tourist market. AI facilitates the creation of highly targeted and accurate ads, optimizing returns and reducing waste (Harshitha, Sailaja, & Judgi, 2025; A. Hassan, Mohammed, & Seyadi, 2024). By analyzing a broad data set, AI can optimize ad campaigns, forecast demand, and determine optimal pricing strategies (A. Hassan et al., 2024; Jain, 2025). AI can drive sustainable marketing strategies by aligning marketing activities with environmental, social, and economic goals (Adileh, 2025; Arantes & Costa, 2024; El Hassani & Azdimousa, 2025). This includes leveraging AI for sustainable product development and supply chain optimization (Abbasi & Esmaili, 2024). The future of AI in marketing promises advancements in personalized campaigns and advanced predictive analytics, ensuring continuous innovation and competitive advantage (Singhal, Singh, Sharma, & Kumar, 2024; Turlacu, Goga, Dinu, & Orzan, 2025).

Smart Branding Strategies

The concept of smart branding describes a branding strategy powered by artificial intelligence to optimize value communication, product differentiation, and customer experience (Hendrayati, Achyarsyah, Marimon, Hartono, & Putit, 2024); (Hidayat et al., 2025). In the context of Balinese culture, smart branding means combining elements of tradition (such as local symbols, ethnic motifs, and cultural narratives) with interactive and adaptive digital technology. This strategy helps MSMEs create relevant and modern brand experiences without losing cultural authenticity. AI technologies such as machine learning and predictive analytics enable businesses to gain deep insights into customer behavior, predict preferences, and deliver personalized

experiences (Diatmika & Rahayu, 2025; Liu & Chen, 2024; Said & Soi, 2025). This leads to more effective customer segmentation and targeted marketing campaigns tailored to individual needs (Huda et al., 2025; Indaryanto et al., 2023). AI-based systems can automate content creation, allowing for the customization of messages to specific audiences, thereby increasing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns (Wulandari & Diko, 2024). This personalization extends to real-time adaptive content, which increases customer satisfaction and loyalty (Potwora et al., 2024).

AI predictive algorithms enable dynamic pricing strategies, ensuring cost-effective and competitive pricing (Singhal et al., 2024; Turlacu et al., 2025). AI-based chatbots and virtual assistants automate repetitive tasks, improve customer interaction, and foster satisfaction and loyalty (Islam et al., 2024; Jain, 2025). These tools provide efficient customer service and improve overall marketing productivity. AI improves operational efficiency by automating data capture and analysis, offering personalization, and communication automation (Kubovics, 2024). This streamlines processes and allows for better resource allocation (Hidayanti, Iswanto, Ningsih, & Mehmood, 2025). AI supports market research, strategy development, and actionable plan execution through data analysis and understanding customer behavior (Singhal et al., 2024).

Cultural Brand Identity

Cultural Brand Identity is a concept that describes the extent to which a brand reflects the values, symbols, and cultural heritage of the society in which the brand grows. Cultural brand identity is formed not only from visual aspects such as logos or packaging designs, but also from narratives, philosophies, and emotional experiences that reflect local characters. According to Holt (2004), a brand that has a strong cultural identity can become a cultural icon because it is able to represent social values and the collective aspirations of society. In line with that, Keller (2013) explained that brand identity is a combination of visual, verbal, and value elements that shape consumers' perception of brand personality. In the context of cultural MSMEs in Bali, Cultural Brand Identity is a strategic factor to maintain the authenticity and attractiveness of cultural products in the midst of an increasingly competitive digital market. Products such as handicrafts, traditional culinary, and locally patterned clothing are not only marketed as economic commodities, but also as symbols of cultural heritage that have high aesthetic and spiritual value (Avianto et al., 2024). Cultural elements such as traditional symbols, regional languages, traditional colors, and the Tri Hita Karana philosophy are characteristics that strengthen the brand identity in the eyes of consumers.

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology plays an important role in strengthening Cultural Brand Identity through Smart Branding strategies. Through message personalization, cultural trend analysis, and design automation, AI helps MSMEs display brand narratives that are creative and relevant to local values (Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025). This technology allows brands to reach global markets without losing their cultural roots, making local culture a unique differentiating force (Rizkita et al., 2025). However, challenges remain in AI's ability to understand the nuances of cultural identity in depth, so collaboration between cultural values and technology is the main key to the success of marketing strategies (Wulandari & Diko, 2024).

Marketing Performance

Marketing Performance describes the extent to which an organization is able to achieve preset marketing goals, such as increased sales, customer loyalty, and brand awareness. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), marketing performance is the result of the effectiveness of marketing strategies in creating value for customers and strengthening a company's competitive position in the market. Meanwhile, Morgan et al. (2019) emphasized that marketing performance can be viewed from two perspectives, namely financial performance (such as revenue growth and profitability) and non-financial performance (such as brand perception,

satisfaction, and customer loyalty). In the context of MSMEs, marketing performance is measured through the ability of business actors to build relationships with consumers, expand market share, and maintain brand image consistency in the midst of limited resources (Homburg et al., 2012). Success in this aspect is not only measured by increased sales, but also by success in creating brand awareness and sustainable customer engagement (customer engagement).

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the implementation of Smart Branding have brought significant changes to the way MSMEs manage and evaluate their marketing performance. AI enables real-time consumer data collection, customer behavior analysis, as well as predictions of market trends that help with more accurate marketing decision-making (Davenport et al., 2020; Dwivedi et al., 2021). Through AI-driven marketing strategies, MSMEs can increase the effectiveness of digital campaigns, personalize brand communications, and create a more relevant customer experience, ultimately improving marketing performance. In the context of cultural MSMEs in Bali, marketing performance not only reflects economic results, but also the extent to which cultural products can maintain authentic value and attract the interest of modern consumers. Through a strong Cultural Brand Identity and the use of AI technology, MSMEs are able to expand their global market reach without sacrificing the authenticity of local culture. This is in line with the findings of Hudson et al. (2021) and Luo et al. (2020) who affirm that technology-based branding strategies can improve customer interaction and drive brand loyalty, especially in industries that rely on emotional differentiation such as cultural products.

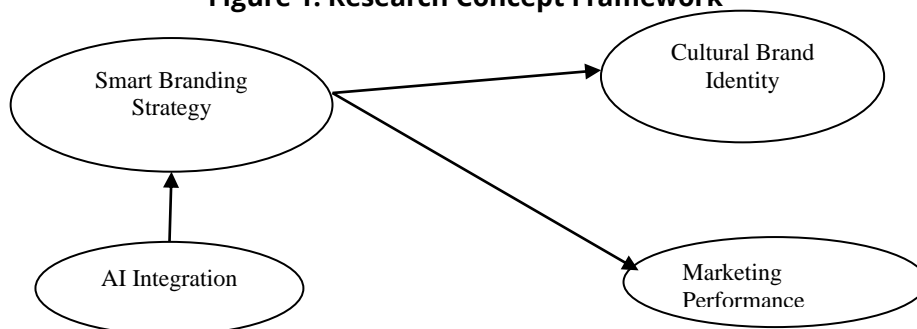
Intervariable Relationships and Hypothesis Development

1. H1: AI Integration has a positive effect on Smart Branding Strategy in cultural MSMEs in Bali.
2. H2: Smart Branding Strategy has a positive effect on Cultural Brand Identity in cultural MSMEs in Bali.
3. H3: Smart Branding Strategy has a positive effect on Marketing Performance in cultural MSMEs in Bali.
4. H4: Smart Branding Strategy mediates the relationship between AI Integration and Cultural Brand Identity in cultural MSMEs in Bali.
5. H5: Smart Branding Strategy mediates the relationship between AI Integration and Marketing Performance in cultural MSMEs in Bali.

Based on the Dynamic Capability Theory, the adoption and integration of AI by Balinese cultural MSMEs is a form of organizational ability to respond to changes in the global business environment while maintaining local uniqueness.

AI Integration supports the development of a Smart Branding Strategy by enabling data-driven, adaptive, and innovative branding practices. Smart Branding then plays a key role in strengthening Cultural Brand Identity and improving Marketing Performance by effectively communicating cultural values while enhancing brand competitiveness. Overall, the model highlights Smart Branding as a bridge between technological capabilities and both cultural authenticity and marketing outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Concept Framework



Source: Prepared author (2025)

METHODS

This study uses an explanatory quantitative approach, which is research that aims to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between variables through hypothesis testing (Ferdinand, 2014). This method was chosen because it is suitable for measuring the influence of AI Integration on Smart Branding, Cultural Brand Identity, and Marketing Performance empirically, as well as to test the mediating role of Smart Branding. The Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) approach is used because it is able to measure complex latent relationships with a relatively small sample number (Ferdinand, 2014; Hair, 2021).

This research was conducted on culture-based MSMEs in Bali Province, especially in the handicrafts, traditional culinary, and culture-based creative products sectors. The object of the research includes MSME actors who have used or plan to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) in their digital marketing activities. The population in this study is all culture-based MSME actors in Bali who actively market their products digitally. The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with the following criteria: 1) MSMEs engaged in the cultural or creative field, 2) using digital media, 3) understanding AI technology, and 4) being willing to be a respondent. The sample size is 150 respondents. Primary data was obtained through questionnaires to MSME owners or managers. Secondary data is used to support research contexts, such as agency reports and scientific literature related to AI, branding, and local culture. Data was collected using an online questionnaire (Google Form) and light interviews for clarification. The questionnaire used a Likert scale of 1–5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

This study uses four main variables with key indicators from various theoretical sources. The AI Integration (X) variable is measured through three main indicators, namely automated content usage, customer analytics, and promotional automation as described by (Ertz & Kordi, 2025). Smart Branding (M) variables include indicators of digital storytelling, message personalization, and brand consistency referring to (de Jong & Lu, 2022; Tonthongkam, Srisawang, Thammasiri, Boonsringam, & Phonsongkroh, 2023). Meanwhile, the Cultural Brand Identity (Y_1) variable is measured based on cultural authenticity, aesthetic value, and symbolic appeal of the brand, according to the concept put forward by (Casais, 2023). Finally, the Marketing Performance (Y_2) variable includes the indicators of awareness, engagement, and sales increase adapted from (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Data analysis was carried out through stages: (1) Outer Model Test (validity and reliability), (2) Inner Model Test (relationship between variables), and (3) Mediation Test using Bootstrapping. The model is tested with the PLS Algorithm to obtain R^2 , Q^2 , and t-statistic values.

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RESULTS

Respondent Overview

Table 1. Profile of Cultural MSME Respondents

| Aspects | Category | Total (Percentage) | Information |
|-------------------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| Type of Business | Handicrafts | 45% | Traditional carving, silver, weaving, and craft products |
| | Traditional cuisine | 35% | Balinese specialties, herbal drinks, traditional cakes |
| | Cultural creative products | 20% | Clothing, souvenirs, and ornaments with local motifs |
| Utilization of social media | Active on Instagram, TikTok, marketplace | 85% | As the main medium of digital promotion |
| Utilization of AI Technology | Using AI (Canva AI, ChatGPT, Prome AI) | 60% | For content design and digital promotion |
| | Not yet using AI | 40% | Still relying on conventional methods |
| Business Age | < 3 years | 35% | MSMEs are just growing |
| | ≥ 3 years | 65% | MSMEs are established and experienced |
| Digital Marketing Experience | < 2 years | 30% | Still in the early stages of digitalization |
| | ≥ 2 years | 70% | Have adapted to digital marketing |

Source: Processed by researchers (2025)

The respondents of this study are culture-based MSME actors in Bali, covering the handicraft sector, traditional culinary, and creative products such as fashion and souvenirs based on local cultural symbols. Most of the respondents have used social media as their main marketing tool (Instagram, TikTok, and marketplace). Around 60% of respondents admitted to using Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based technologies, such as Canva AI, ChatGPT, and Prome AI to support digital promotion and content design. The distribution of respondents by business age shows that 65% of MSMEs have been operating for more than three years, and 70% of respondents have at least two years of experience in digital marketing. This shows a fairly high level of adaptation to technological innovations in brand management.

Convergent Validity Test

A convergent validity test is performed to assess whether each indicator is able to reflect the construct it is measuring. The results of the outer loading test showed that all indicators had a > value of 0.70. In addition, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of the entire construct was above 0.50, according to the criteria of Hair et al. (2021). This indicates that all indicators in this study are able to explain more than 50% of the variance of the measured constructs.

Discriminating Validity Test

The discriminant validity test is used to ensure that each construct has a clear distinction from the other. The test was conducted using three approaches: cross-loading, Fornell-Larcker Criterion, and HTMT Ratio. All indicators show the highest loading value in their respective constructs (> 0.70). The square root value of AVE of each construct is greater than the correlation between constructs, and the entire HTMT value < 0.90. Thus, the constructs of AI Integration, Smart Branding, Cultural Brand Identity, and Marketing Performance are declared to have good discriminant validity.

Construct Reliability Test

The reliability of the construct was evaluated based on the values of Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's Alpha (CA). The criteria used were CR > 0.70 and CA > 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021). All variables in this study met these criteria, showing high internal consistency between indicators.

Table 2. Test Validity and Reliability

| Variables / Indicators | Outer Loading | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Composite Reliability | Cronbach's Alpha | Explanation |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| AI Integration | | 0.681 | 0.872 | 0.796 | Valid and Reliable |
| AI1 | 0.812 | | | | |
| AI2 | 0.859 | | | | |
| AI3 | 0.836 | | | | |
| Smart Branding | | 0.694 | 0.889 | 0.824 | Valid and Reliable |
| SB1 | 0.871 | | | | |
| SB2 | 0.832 | | | | |
| SB3 | 0.808 | | | | |
| Cultural Brand Identity | | 0.703 | 0.901 | 0.842 | Valid and Reliable |
| CBI1 | 0.874 | | | | |
| CBI2 | 0.825 | | | | |
| CBI3 | 0.839 | | | | |
| Marketing Performance | | 0.678 | 0.885 | 0.817 | Valid and Reliable |
| MP1 | 0.782 | | | | |
| MP2 | 0.824 | | | | |
| MP3 | 0.866 | | | | |

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by researchers (2025)

Structural Model Test Results (Inner Model)

Internal model analysis is used to test the relationship between latent variables (research hypothesis). The test was conducted through bootstrapping with 5,000 resampling and a significance level of 0.05 (t-statistic > 1.96).

Table 3. Path Coefficient and Hypothesis Testing

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Path Coefficient | t-Statistic | p-Value | Conclusion |
|------------|---|------------------|-------------|---------|------------|
| H1 | AI Integration → Smart Branding | 0.58 | 8.12 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H2 | Smart Branding → Cultural Brand Identity | 0.67 | 10.45 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H3 | Smart Branding → Marketing Performance | 0.52 | 7.33 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H4 | AI Integration → Cultural Brand Identity (via Smart Branding) | 0.39 | 6.98 | 0.000 | Supported |
| H5 | AI Integration → Marketing Performance (via Smart Branding) | 0.35 | 6.21 | 0.000 | Supported |

Source: SmartPLS output, processed by researchers (2025)

DISCUSSION

The Influence of AI Integration on Smart Branding

The results of the study show that AI Integration has a significant effect on Smart Branding, with a strong positive path coefficient. These findings confirm that the higher the level of AI implementation, the stronger the ability of MSMEs to develop smart, innovative, and efficient branding strategies. These results support the theory of Dynamic Capability (N. Hassan et al., 2025), which states that organizations that are able to dynamically configure technology resources will have better adaptive and innovative capabilities. In the context of MSMEs, AI is a new form of dynamic capability that allows businesses to adjust promotional messages, manage digital content, and analyze consumer behavior quickly. These findings are in line with research by (Alammal & Al Mubarak, 2023), which affirms that AI drives the creation of efficiency and personalization in digital marketing strategies. For Balinese cultural MSMEs, the use of tools such as Canva AI and ChatGPT helps create visual content that reflects cultural values in an attractive way, strengthening brand story and brand identity in the digital space (Diatmika & Rahayu, 2025; Hendrayati et al., 2024; Huda et al., 2025; Potwora et al., 2024; Wulandari & Diko, 2024).

The Influence of Smart Branding on Cultural Brand Identity

The next finding shows that Smart Branding has a significant effect on Cultural Brand Identity. This means that a technology-based branding strategy is able to strengthen the cultural values represented by the brand. These results expand on the findings of (Said & Soi, 2025;

Wulandari & Diko, 2024), who stated that brand identity is formed from symbols, values, and cultural narratives that are consistently communicated to the public. In the context of Bali, Smart Branding facilitates MSME actors to transform cultural heritage into a modern form of visual communication without losing its authenticity (Hendrayati et al., 2024; Said & Soj, 2025). This research is also in line with (Lazzeretti et al., 2022; Shin et al., 2023), who show that digital interaction and storytelling are able to increase emotional attachment between consumers and brands. By utilizing AI, MSME actors can present more contextual and interesting content, so that cultural brand image is not only maintained, but also strengthened in the digital market values (Diatmika & Rahayu, 2025; Liu & Chen, 2024; Widiastini et al., 2023).

The Influence of Smart Branding on Marketing Performance

The results of the analysis show that Smart Branding has a positive effect on Marketing Performance, which includes increasing brand awareness, customer engagement, and customer loyalty. AI-based branding strategies help MSMEs efficiently manage brand image and convey messages that are relevant to consumer needs. These results are consistent with research by (Lubis et al., 2025; Potwora et al., 2024), which affirm that the application of digital technology in branding strategies strengthens the relationship between brands and customers and increases the effectiveness of promotions. In addition, these findings support the theory of Dynamic Capability, where Smart Branding is a form of dynamic capability that combines creativity, technology, and analytics to improve marketing performance (Shahzad et al., 2023). In the context of Balinese cultural MSMEs, Smart Branding helps business actors present competitive brands in the global market, without losing their local characteristics (Chen, 2010; Morgan et al., 2009). Through this approach, brands are not only known for their products, but also for the cultural values they carry.

The Influence of AI Integration on Cultural Brand Identity through Smart Branding

The mediation analysis shows that Smart Branding mediates the relationship between AI Integration and Cultural Brand Identity significantly. This means that the integration of new AI has an impact on strengthening cultural brand identities when managed through intelligent and contextual branding strategies. These findings support the views of (Indriani & Kumalasari, 2025; Liu & Chen, 2024), who affirm that AI has a strategic role in linking technological innovation with cultural values through branding mechanisms. In Balinese cultural MSMEs, AI is used to translate cultural values such as traditional symbols, the Tri Hita Karana philosophy, and local aesthetic elements into a digital narrative that is able to attract modern consumers (Diatmika & Rahayu, 2025). Thus, Smart Branding becomes a bridge between technological intelligence and cultural preservation (Giantari et al., 2025).

The Influence of AI Integration on Marketing Performance through Smart Branding

The latest results show that AI Integration has an indirect effect on Marketing Performance through Smart Branding. AI supports improving marketing performance not by replacing human roles, but by strengthening intelligent, efficient, and data-driven branding processes. These findings reinforce the research results of (Oka & Subadra, 2024; Rosyaadah et al., 2025), who stated that the use of AI in marketing strategies contributes to increased promotional effectiveness and customer loyalty when integrated in the context of branding. In the case of Balinese MSMEs, the use of AI to analyze customer behavior and organize promotional strategies helps increase competitiveness and foster a positive perception of cultural brands (Avianto et al., 2024; Ertz & Kordi, 2025). In line with Dynamic Capability Theory (Hendrayati et al., 2024), AI provides new capabilities for organizations to learn and adapt to market changes (Alammal & Al Mubarak, 2023). Smart Branding serves as a translation mechanism, transforming AI-based data and analysis into symbolic value that strengthens brand image and marketing performance.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this study expands the application of Dynamic Capability Theory in the context of culture-based marketing. The findings show that AI Integration can be seen as a new form of dynamic capability that enables organizations, especially cultural MSMEs, to adapt to the changing digital environment quickly and effectively. Through the use of AI, business actors are able to build and strengthen smart branding strategies that are not only technologically efficient, but also relevant to local cultural values. Thus, this research enriches the treasure of literature on organizational adaptive capabilities in the era of digital transformation, especially in the field of marketing based on local wisdom.

From a practical perspective, the results of the study provide concrete guidance for MSME actors in Bali in implementing AI technology to strengthen brand identity and increase the effectiveness of digital promotions. AI integration can be leveraged to create engaging visual content, manage customer data, and tailor promotional messages to make them more personalized and contextual. This helps MSMEs not only increase competitiveness in the digital market, but also maintain the uniqueness and authentic value of the cultural products offered.

Meanwhile, in terms of policy, this study emphasizes the need for support from local governments and related institutions in providing digital literacy training programs and AI adoption that are tailored to local cultural characteristics. This effort is important so that the digital transformation of MSMEs is not only oriented towards technological efficiency, but also pays attention to cultural sustainability and the empowerment of local communities. With an adaptive and contextual policy approach, cultural MSMEs in Bali can transform sustainably and be highly competitive at the national and global levels.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays an important role in strengthening Smart Branding strategies in culture-based MSMEs in Bali. The application of AI in marketing activities is able to increase the effectiveness of brand communication, while maintaining Cultural Brand Identity through creative and authentic digital content. The results of the analysis also show that Smart Branding has a significant effect on marketing performance, both directly and as a mediator between AI Integration and outcome variables. This means that the success of cultural marketing is not only determined by the value of tradition, but also by the adaptive ability to utilize technology. Theoretically, these findings strengthen the Dynamic Capability Theory, where AI becomes a new form of dynamic capability that encourages MSMEs to adapt and compete in the digital era without losing the authenticity of their local culture.

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