

# From Final Project to Real Solution: The Story of the Birth of the Plaza Serang Bahagia App

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**UPNVJ Public Relations** — Who would have thought that a final assignment could develop into a tangible work that directly impacts MSMEs? That's exactly what five alumni of the Bachelor of Information Systems study program at the Veteran National Development University Jakarta (UPNVJ): Gracia Hotmauli, Zuhrah Zulfaa, Roosyidah Alya Rakhman, Muhammad Fikri Rahmayandi, and Gabriel Maheswara Santoso, did. From the classroom to the city of Serang, they introduced the Plaza Serang Bahagia app, a digital platform to empower local MSMEs.

The UPNVJ Public Relations team interviewed representatives to learn about the development of the Plaza Serang Bahagia app. At the UPNVJ Public Relations Studio, Roosyidah Alya Rakhman (familiarily known as Alya) and Gracia Hotmauli (familiarily known as Gracia) enthusiastically shared their stories from the app's initial development to its launch.

## **The Beginning: From Campus Project to Real Action**

According to Alya, this app was born out of a need to complete a final assignment in lieu of a thesis. "In the Information Systems undergraduate program, there's a final assignment in the form of an application project. Coincidentally, we joined a project with a lecturer who was already collaborating with the Serang MSMEs Office. That's where the idea for *Plaza Serang Bahagia* emerged," she explained. Beyond fulfilling graduation requirements, this app also addresses the local government's real need to encourage MSMEs to enter the digital realm.

## **Behind-the-Scenes Challenges**

However, the journey to building the app wasn't always smooth. Gracia recalls that one of the biggest obstacles was communication. "There was a period of 2-3 months where we didn't communicate with the Serang MSMEs Office. The distance meant we couldn't visit them often. But eventually, we decided to visit in person to ensure the *project* was progressing," she said.

On the other hand, budget constraints also posed a challenge. The team had to be creative in finding low-cost app development options, while the faculty provided transportation support. Thankfully, the supervisor was always there to bridge communication with partners in Serang.

## **App Face: Connecting Sellers and Buyers**

Plaza Serang Bahagia essentially operates like a typical *e-commerce platform*. The difference is that its sellers are exclusively MSMEs supported by the Serang MSMEs Agency. Buyers? Anyone, even from out of town.

Alya explained, "We developed two platforms. First, an Android app for buying and selling transactions. Second, a web platform specifically for sellers and admins, a kind of *back office* with a dashboard for monitoring sales and marketing strategies."

### **More Than Just an App: An Educational Touch**

The team doesn't stop at system development; they also actively provide hands-on training. Every week, they train MSMEs on how to use the app, from product registration to strategies for maximizing digital sales. The enthusiasm of the business owners is palpable. "The sellers hope this app can be used long-term, as it truly supports their businesses," said Alya.

### **Message to the Next Generation**

For Gracia and Alya, this experience taught them a valuable lesson. "Don't be afraid to start something. At first, we were hesitant and pessimistic, but it turned out to be a real application," said Gracia. Alya added, "There will definitely be challenges, but if you stick with it, there's always a way out."

They sent this message specifically to junior students in the Faculty of Computer Science, so that they would not be afraid of facing big projects.

### **From Campus to Country**

Plaza Serang Bahagia is proof that student work can transcend the classroom. From a final project, this application has become a tool for empowering MSMEs, part of a digital ecosystem that strengthens the local economy.

Behind the scenes of this app lies a spirit of collaboration, courage to face challenges, and a genuine desire to provide tangible benefits. For these five alumni, Plaza Serang Bahagia is more than just an app, but a symbol of the joy of a learning process that begins on campus and bears fruit in the community.

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