

Creative Economy-Based Marketing Innovation Strategy to Increase the Competitiveness of Women's MSMEs

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of marketing innovation strategies based on the creative economy to enhance the competitiveness of women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bali, Indonesia. Focusing on traditional culinary businesses, the research highlights the challenges these entrepreneurs face in digital marketing, packaging innovation, and international market readiness. Using a qualitative approach, the study involved in-depth interviews and observations with five female MSME owners. The findings show that while digital platforms like Instagram and Facebook are utilized, there is a lack of strategic content and storytelling techniques. Limited design knowledge and capital restrict packaging development, even though these traditional products possess strong cultural appeal. The study emphasizes the importance of combining local cultural values with modern marketing and design innovations. Story-based marketing, when integrated with digital tools, has the potential to expand market reach and strengthen product identity. Strategic recommendations include digital marketing training, collaborative packaging design development, and government support in infrastructure and access to capital. This research contributes to the discourse on

women entrepreneurship, creative economy, and cultural heritage in marketing.

Keywords: Women MSMEs, marketing innovation, creative economy, digital marketing, packaging design, cultural heritage, storytelling strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) managed by women have an important role in supporting Indonesia's economy and strengthening women's empowerment, especially in regions rich in cultural traditions. Female MSMEs are not only a source of income for families but also play a strategic role in preserving local culture through products based on traditional wisdom, such as typical culinary. In many cases, women MSME entrepreneurs also act as key drivers in their communities, creating jobs, and improving social welfare, especially for vulnerable groups. Women entrepreneurs who manage MSMEs in the traditional culinary sector, face great challenges to survive and thrive in the midst of fierce competition. They are often limited to conventional marketing methods, so they have not optimally taken advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology and modern marketing strategies. Limited skills in the use of social media, e-commerce platforms, as well as the implementation of

digital advertising are the main obstacles in increasing the competitiveness of their products, both in the local and global markets. (Dewi & Santoso, 2023; Jannah & Ekaria, 2023; Bobek et al., 2022; Dwivedi & Pawsey, 2023)

In addition to technological challenges, aspects of product innovation and packaging design are also important concerns. Attractive and representative packaging is not just an aesthetic element but also a visual communication tool that can reflect cultural identity. Women MSME entrepreneurs often face obstacles in accessing training or collaboration to develop packaging designs that are modern and in accordance with the tastes of the international market. In fact, the combination of local cultural values with modern design innovations can provide a significant competitive advantage. One approach that can provide a solution to this problem is a storytelling-based marketing strategy. Through this approach, traditional products can be promoted by upholding inherent cultural and historical values, thereby creating an emotional connection with consumers. However, many MSME women entrepreneurs do not have the ability or resources to develop interesting and relevant narratives. Considering the central role of women in MSMEs and the challenges they face, this study aims to explore the application of marketing innovation, creative economy, and story-based marketing in the context of women's MSMEs. The results of the research are expected to provide in-depth insights into the opportunities and obstacles that exist, as well as strategic recommendations to increase the competitiveness of women MSMEs while preserving local culture through tradition-based products (Abdul Wahab et al., 2022)

MATERIALS & METHODS

A qualitative method with a constructiveness epistemology approach is used in this study to explore the understanding and implementation of creative economy-based marketing innovation strategies in increasing the competitiveness of women MSMEs. This

research includes two main approaches, namely literature study and empirical study. In data collection, interview techniques, participatory research, observation and literature studies were used. Interviews were conducted with 5 female entrepreneurs who run local food MSMEs, which aimed to obtain direct information from MSME actors related to marketing strategies. Participatory research and observation are carried out to obtain a more in-depth picture of daily practices in MSME management, while literature studies provide a theoretical basis that supports further analysis. After the data is collected, the next step is data processing through several stages, namely data reduction, data classification, and data presentation.

RESULTS

1. Interview Results

This study aims to explore the application of marketing innovation theory, creative economy, and story-based marketing in the context of female micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bali. Using in-depth interview methods and direct observation, the study involved five local food entrepreneurs in Bali as participants who had businesses between three and six years. The interview process provides an in-depth overview of the challenges, needs, and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs in developing their businesses, especially related to digital marketing innovations, product packaging, and international market potential.

One of the main findings in interviews and observations is the obstacles faced in the use of digital technology as a means of marketing. Although social media such as Instagram and Facebook have been used, entrepreneurs feel that their utilization is not optimal. They generally only upload product photos without adding strategic elements such as engaging content or story-based marketing that can grab consumers' attention. Limited knowledge related to digital marketing strategies, including the use of paid advertising and e-commerce platforms,

is a challenge for them. Entrepreneurs are realizing the importance of specialized training to effectively manage social media accounts, create creative content, and reach a wider market.

In addition to the challenges in digital marketing, product and packaging innovation is also the focus of attention. Products such as klepon, sirat, and laklak that already have a distinctive taste are considered to have great potential, but simple packaging design is an obstacle to attracting consumers, especially tourists and markets outside the region. Entrepreneurs realize that attractive packaging can increase the appeal of products, but limited capital and design knowledge are the main barriers. They emphasized the importance of modern packaging that is not only practical but also able to represent Balinese cultural identity. Packaging designs that are in accordance with current market trends are considered to be able to increase the competitiveness of their products in the local and international markets.

In the context of international market opportunities, most entrepreneurs realize that their products have strong cultural values and can attract global consumers, especially with the increasing number of tourists coming to Bali. However, to be able to penetrate the international market, a more effective marketing strategy is needed as well as product and packaging adjustments to make it delivery-friendly. Storytelling-based marketing about products that elevate Balinese cultural values is seen as a potential strategy to attract global consumers. With product innovation, attractive packaging, and strengthening digital marketing, entrepreneurs are optimistic that their products can be introduced to a wider market, both domestically and internationally.

Overall, the results of this study emphasize the need for mentoring and training that focuses on digital marketing, product innovation, and packaging development. This support is expected to be able to overcome the challenges faced and at the same time maximize the existing

opportunities, so that women MSMEs can be more competitive and competitive in a wider market.

2. Marketing Innovation in the Context of MSMEs

Marketing innovation has become an important focus for businesses looking to improve competitiveness and adapt to rapidly changing market conditions. These innovations include a range of strategies and practices that leverage digital technologies to improve marketing effectiveness and customer engagement. The integration of digital devices into marketing strategies not only facilitates the optimization of marketing processes, but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability among companies.

One of the fundamental aspects of marketing innovation is aligning digital strategies with organizational capabilities. Naidoo emphasized that marketing innovation serves as an important resource for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to overcome crises and improve performance. This perspective is supported by Vuttichat, who highlights that a well-defined digital marketing strategy allows SMEs to identify areas of improvement and innovate effectively, thereby increasing their market reach and competitiveness. Furthermore, Riyoko's findings suggest that effective marketing innovation is positively correlated with overall business performance, reinforcing the idea that innovation is essential for maintaining a competitive advantage (Naidoo, 2010; Vuttichat & Patchara, 2023; Riyoko, 2023).

In the context of MSMEs, continuous innovation in digital marketing practices is essential to maintain competitiveness. Risdwiyanto emphasized that digital marketing strategies tailored to specific target markets can significantly improve the scalability and effectiveness of marketing efforts. This sentiment is echoed by Utomo et al., who show that integrating digital marketing with innovation improves marketing performance in small food processing companies. The need for MSMEs

to adopt creative and innovative digital marketing strategies was also highlighted by Vania, who argued that creativity in digital marketing can result in substantial improvements in business sustainability. Therefore, marketing innovation, especially through the lens of digital transformation, is essential for businesses looking to thrive in today's competitive landscape. The interaction between digital technology, customer engagement, and organizational capabilities creates fertile ground for innovative marketing practices that can drive business success. The adoption of digital technologies not only enhances marketing capabilities but also empowers women entrepreneurs by providing them with the tools necessary to compete in the market. Murdiati's research illustrates that university involvement can help women in generating business income by recommending new marketing opportunities and implementing cutting-edge technology. This support is especially important in developing economies where women-owned SMEs often face significant barriers. Additionally, Madison et al.'s work shows that women entrepreneurs can leverage their networks to drive innovation and support each other, thereby improving their collective ability to use digital technologies (Risdiyanto et al., 2023; Utomo et al., 2023; Vania & Fikriah, 2023; Murdiati et al., 2023; Madison et al., 2022)

Despite the obvious benefits, women-owned SMEs often face challenges in adopting digital marketing strategies. For example, it identifies barriers such as resource limitations and digital skills gaps that can hinder the effective adoption of digital technologies. However, the potential for digital transformation to improve competitiveness is considerable, as Ge et al. argue, who argue that innovative technologies can significantly encourage women's entrepreneurship, especially in challenging economic conditions such as the COVID-19 crisis. This sentiment was echoed by Dewa, who emphasized that innovation is essential for SMEs to remain relevant and

thrive in a rapidly changing market landscape. (Nazaruddin et al., 2024; Ge et al., 2022; Dewa et al., 2023)

3. Creative Economy and Women's MSMEs

The creative economy is a multifaceted concept that utilizes creativity, knowledge, and cultural values to generate economic value through innovative products and services. This sector has significant implications for culture-based industries, especially in the context of women micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) engaged in the culinary and handicraft sectors. By blending cultural heritage with innovative practices, these companies can harness the potential of the creative economy to enhance their growth and sustainability. The creative economy, as defined by John Howkins, emphasizes the economic value derived from creative outcomes, which can be very beneficial for MSMEs who often rely on unique cultural narratives and local wisdom to differentiate their products in the market. The integration of local wisdom into creative economy activities not only preserves cultural heritage but also encourages innovation, thus creating a strong foundation for the development of the creative industry. This is especially relevant in areas rich in cultural diversity, where the unique attributes of local products can be highlighted to attract domestic and international markets. (Jannah & Ekaria, 2023; Dewi & Santoso, 2023)

In addition, the creative economy serves as a catalyst for job creation and income growth, contributing to the development of the broader economy. The potential of female MSMEs to thrive in this environment is underscored by the need for supportive policies that increase access to resources, technology, and markets. By fostering an ecosystem that values creativity and innovation, governments can empower these companies to not only survive but thrive in a competitive market. Furthermore, the intersection between creativity and technology plays an important role in the evolution of the creative economy. The

increasing use of digital platforms has allowed MSMEs to reach a wider audience, thereby increasing their visibility and marketability. The ability to leverage technology for creative expression and product development can significantly amplify the impact of women's MSMEs in the creative economy. The creative economy presents significant opportunities for women MSMEs in culture-based industries. By promoting products that embody cultural values while embracing innovation, these companies can contribute to economic growth and social inclusion. The strategic integration of local wisdom, technology, and supportive policies will be crucial in realizing the full potential of the creative economy for these businesses (Arbidane et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2023; Mikhaylova, 2021; Dellyana et al., 2023)

4. Cultural Theory and Tradition in Marketing

Local cultures and traditions play a very important role in influencing consumer decisions, especially in markets that value cultural values. Cultural heritage, which includes both tangible and intangible elements, plays a major role in shaping consumer behavior, especially in relation to the selection of products that reflect their identity and cultural heritage. This influence is seen in various sectors, such as tourism, culinary, and local crafts, where consumers are looking for experiences that are authentic and appropriate to their cultural background. Therefore, in marketing culture-based products, it is important to integrate local cultural values in marketing strategies.

The commodification of cultural heritage has become an important focus in urban entrepreneurship, where cities leverage their historical and cultural assets to attract consumers and stimulate economic growth. Previous research stated that urban heritage is not only a relic of the past, but also a dynamic element that can improve the city's economy through tourism and consumption. This view is in line with the findings, which suggest that consumers, particularly in

immigrant communities, are often at the crossroads between their cultural heritage and the culture of the country in which they live, influencing their consumption choices. This duality suggests that products related to cultural heritage can appeal to a wide range of consumer groups, as they want to maintain a connection with their cultural roots while adapting to new cultures. (Kizgin et al., 2018)

Additionally, the quality of experiences associated with cultural heritage significantly affects consumer satisfaction levels and their intention to further interact with the product or service. Brida et al. suggest that improving customer service and building strong partnerships can strengthen visits to cultural and heritage sites, which in turn will increase economic benefits. This emphasis on experience quality highlights the importance of aligning marketing strategies with consumers' expectations for an authentic and enriching cultural experience. Cultural heritage is also related to sustainable development, as discussed in previous research, which shows how local communities can harness their cultural heritage to drive inclusive economic growth. This approach not only provides economic benefits, but also fosters a sense of identity and belonging among consumers, which increases their loyalty to products related to that cultural heritage. The economic aspect of cultural heritage is also seen as a very important public good for regional development policies. This approach emphasizes the importance of strategic planning in promoting cultural heritage as a valuable asset to the local economy (Bridaa et al., 2012; Vegheş, 2018)

In the culinary context, the culinary traditions of a region, such as those found in Kelantan, greatly affect consumer perception and acceptance of local cuisine. Wahab et al. explain how cultural heritage shapes consumer attitudes towards food, highlighting the importance of authenticity and tradition in culinary tourism. This is in line with a broader trend where consumers are increasingly looking for authentic

experiences that reflect their cultural heritage, as found by Yoon and Kim, which shows that national imagery and cultural perception have a significant influence on consumer behavior. As such, local cultures and traditions greatly influence consumer decisions, especially in markets that value cultural heritage. The interplay between cultural identity, consumer behavior, and economic development highlights the

importance of recognizing and promoting cultural heritage as a key component in consumer engagement and marketing strategies. Understanding these dynamics will help businesses to better meet the preferences of consumers who are increasingly looking for authentic cultural experiences. (Abdul Wahab et al., 2022; Yoon & Kim, 2021) as follows:

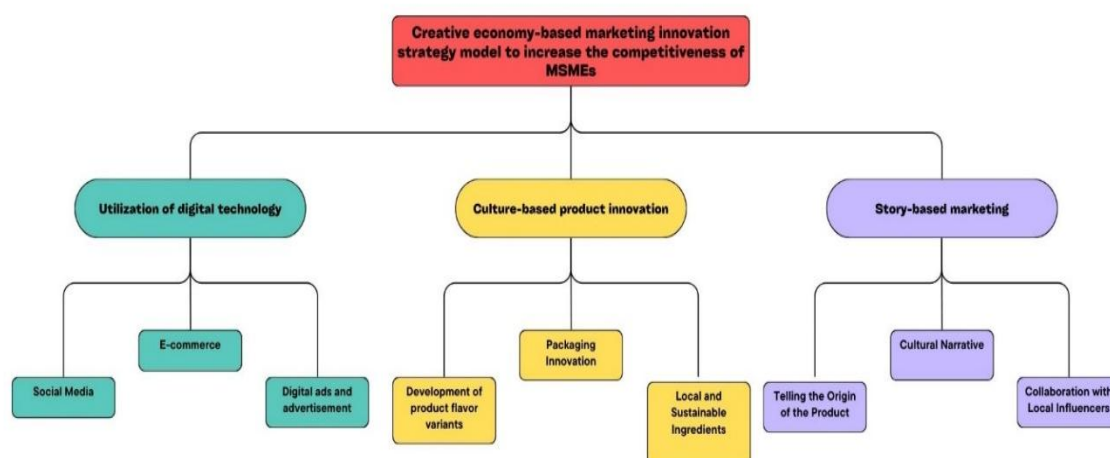


Figure 1. Creative Economy-Based Marketing Innovation Strategy Model

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that marketing innovation plays a vital role in enhancing the competitiveness of women-owned MSMEs, particularly in the traditional culinary sector of Bali. The use of digital marketing tools such as Instagram and Facebook is present, yet lacks strategic planning and implementation. This aligns with Vania & Fikriah (2023), who argue that creative digital marketing significantly influences business sustainability. Most entrepreneurs in the study acknowledged the importance of story-based marketing but lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to implement it effectively.

Packaging innovation emerged as another key challenge. Despite the unique and culturally rich nature of the products, such as *klepon*, *sirat*, and *laklak*, many still use basic packaging that does not reflect their cultural value. This is consistent with the findings of

Saputra et al. (2023), which emphasize the integration of local wisdom with modern design to create appealing cultural products. When done properly, packaging not only enhances the aesthetic value but also becomes a medium of cultural expression that resonates with both local and international markets.

In terms of market expansion, the potential to enter international markets is high due to Bali's strong cultural branding and global tourism appeal. However, without sufficient digital literacy, marketing capacity, and export-ready packaging, this potential remains underutilized. Ge et al. (2022) highlighted that innovative digital technology can significantly empower women entrepreneurs, especially during crises such as COVID-19. The entrepreneurs in this study expressed optimism but were constrained by limited capital and technical know-how, mirroring the structural barriers

often faced by MSMEs in developing economies (Murdiati et al., 2023).

The creative economy framework provides a promising approach by fusing culture, creativity, and commerce. The integration of traditional narratives through storytelling can foster emotional bonds with consumers and differentiate products in saturated markets. This approach supports the commodification of culture discussed by Kizgin et al. (2018), where products serve both economic and identity functions for consumers. In culinary tourism, storytelling enriches the customer experience, making products more memorable and culturally meaningful (Wahab et al., 2022).

Therefore, the integration of digital transformation, creative design, and cultural marketing offers a comprehensive strategy to empower women MSMEs. The presence of government and academic support is crucial to facilitate this transformation. Training in digital marketing, collaborative design initiatives, and policy support in financing and infrastructure can create an enabling ecosystem. Ultimately, this study reinforces the importance of localized innovation strategies that are culturally grounded yet globally oriented.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the application of marketing innovations, creative economy, and story-based marketing in the context of women's micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Bali, especially in the traditional culinary sector. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with five traditional Balinese culinary entrepreneurs, several significant challenges and opportunities were found. First, the use of digital technology such as Instagram and Facebook social media has begun, but it is not yet optimal, especially in the implementation of story-based marketing strategies that attract consumer attention. The main obstacle faced is the limited knowledge of digital marketing strategies, such as the use of paid advertising and e-commerce platforms. Second, the limitations of product

innovation and packaging design are also a challenge, where traditional products such as klepon, sirat, and laklak have great market potential but are hampered by simple packaging. Entrepreneurs realize the importance of packaging that is attractive, practical, and able to represent Balinese cultural identity to increase product competitiveness. Third, international market opportunities are wide open given the strong cultural value of women's MSME products in Bali, and story-based marketing that highlights culture is seen as an effective strategy to reach global consumers. Based on these findings, mentoring and training focusing on digital marketing, product innovation, and packaging design are key to helping female MSMEs improve their competitiveness and expand their markets.

The results of this study confirm that marketing innovation, especially through digital strategies, is a crucial element in increasing the competitiveness of women MSMEs in Bali. Well-defined marketing innovations allow MSMEs to identify areas of improvement and develop more effective strategies. Digital transformation, such as the optimization of social media and e-commerce platforms, has great potential to increase customer engagement and market reach. However, the limitations of digital skills and resources are a significant obstacle, so systematic assistance is needed so that MSMEs can utilize technology optimally. In the context of the creative economy, women's MSMEs in Bali have great potential to combine cultural values with product innovation. Products based on local wisdom can have a unique appeal if they are supported by packaging designs that are modern, attractive, and represent Balinese cultural identity. Support in the form of packaging design training and access to capital will help MSMEs realize their creative economic potential, which can ultimately increase income and encourage sustainable economic growth. In addition, the integration of culture and tradition in marketing strategies plays a crucial role in shaping product identity and attracting

consumers. Story-based marketing that highlights Balinese cultural values not only strengthens the product identity but also opens up opportunities for local products to be known in the international market. Commoditization of cultural heritage through interesting narratives can create added value and increase the attractiveness of women's MSME products in Bali, both in the domestic and global markets.

Based on the results of the research, some recommendations that can be submitted are, first, the need for intensive digital marketing training to increase the understanding of female MSME entrepreneurs regarding digital marketing strategies, such as social media management, creative content creation, the use of paid advertising, and the use of e-commerce platforms. Second, encouraging packaging design innovation through collaboration between MSMEs and local designers to create packaging that is attractive, functional, and able to represent cultural identity. Third, the development of story-based marketing strategies that raise local cultural values and traditions, so that MSME products can have greater appeal in the domestic and international markets. Fourth, the need for policy support from the government and stakeholders in the form of access to capital, continuous training, and strengthening digital infrastructure to support the development of women's MSMEs. In addition, this strategy development model can also be replicated in other locations and other countries by simply adjusting existing local cultural values and traditions, so that it can strengthen the product's identity and increase its attractiveness in the global market. By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that women MSMEs can overcome the various challenges they face, take advantage of existing opportunities, and increase their competitiveness, both in the local and international markets.

Declaration by Authors

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