

Optimization of Community-Based Marketing Strategies as a Lever for Local MSME Competitiveness through Collaborative Approaches, Digital Engagement, and Socio-Cultural Values

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Abstract. This study aims to analyze the optimization of community-based marketing strategies as a lever for enhancing the competitiveness of local MSMEs, emphasizing the importance of collaborative approaches, the utilization of digital engagement, and the integration of socio-cultural values. The method employed is a literature review with a qualitative and descriptive analysis approach, where data were collected from Google Scholar and credible websites within the period of 1986–2025. Out of a total of 50 articles identified, only 35 were selected through a strict screening process based on relevance and quality. The analysis results show that community-based marketing strategies can strengthen consumer loyalty, expand market reach, and create authentic product differentiation by highlighting local cultural values. Cross-sectoral collaborative approaches have been proven to support MSME capacity building, while digital engagement accelerates interaction and connectivity with consumers. This study asserts that the combination of community, collaboration, digitalization, and culture represents a sustainable strategy relevant to enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs in Indonesia.

Keywords: MSMEs, Community-Based Marketing, Collaboration, Digital Engagement, Socio-Cultural Values.

1. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have long been recognized as the backbone of Indonesia's economy due to their significant contribution to job creation, income distribution, and local economic growth. However, in the midst of increasingly competitive markets and the penetration of global products, the competitiveness of local MSMEs often lags behind large corporations and imported goods that have greater access to resources [1]. This condition has driven the need for marketing strategies rooted in community strength, digital engagement, and the use of local socio-cultural values. By leveraging existing social capital within society, MSMEs can enhance consumer loyalty and strengthen their position in both domestic and global markets through the adoption of community-based marketing approaches.

Community-based marketing emphasizes the role of interactions among individuals within a social group as the main driver of successful product and service promotion [2]. This concept is grounded in trust, shared identity, and collective values that encourage consumers to act as active promoters. Within the MSME context, such strategies are highly relevant as limited promotional capital can be compensated by community participation in expanding product awareness. Moreover, the emotional bonds and cultural closeness between producers and consumers within a community can foster more sustainable loyalty compared to the massive advertising campaigns carried out by large companies.

The development of digital technology further enhances the effectiveness of community-based marketing strategies. Digital engagement through social media, marketplaces, communication applications, and e-commerce platforms creates new opportunities for MSMEs to build and maintain relationships with consumer communities. Digital engagement is not only a promotional tool but also opens up two-way interactions where consumers can provide feedback, criticism, and recommendations that can serve as valuable input for product improvement [3]. In this context, effective utilization of digital engagement can transform consumer behavior from mere transactions into long-term relationships based on interaction and experience.

Local socio-cultural values represent an important dimension that is often overlooked in MSME marketing strategies. In reality, MSME products typically maintain a strong connection to local cultural identity, whether through design, raw materials, or the historical narratives that shape them. By incorporating these values into their marketing strategies, MSMEs can create authentic product differentiation that is difficult for competitors to replicate [4]. Furthermore, socio-cultural value-based approaches reinforce brand image and motivate consumers to purchase products as a form of appreciation for the preservation of local culture. This demonstrates that the combination of community, digital engagement, and socio-cultural values can serve as a key lever to strengthen MSME competitiveness.

A collaborative approach is also a crucial aspect in strengthening community-based marketing strategies. Collaboration between MSMEs, government, academics, large corporations, and community organizations can open access to training, technology, and broader marketing networks [5]. Such synergy enables MSMEs to accelerate their adaptation to changing market trends while simultaneously improving product and service quality. For instance, collaboration with universities can generate innovations in design or research-based branding strategies, while cooperation with the government can help expand markets through local economic empowerment programs. A collaborative approach should therefore be regarded as a strategic instrument in reinforcing MSME competitiveness.

The literature highlights that the strength of communities lies in the creation of collective narratives that foster social awareness. In the context of marketing, this means that consumers can become active advocates in disseminating stories about MSME products, particularly when these narratives resonate with the socio-cultural values they uphold. Previous studies also affirm that community involvement in marketing activities can generate a stronger word-of-mouth effect compared to commercial promotion, as it is driven by trust and emotional closeness [6], [7]. Thus, the optimization of community-based marketing is not only a business strategy but also a sustainable social strategy.

Despite its vast potential, the implementation of community-based marketing strategies within MSMEs faces several challenges. These include low digital literacy among MSME actors, limited resources to fully utilize digital platforms, and unequal access to technology across regions [8], [9]. Additionally, weaknesses still exist in designing marketing messages that can effectively integrate community strength, cultural values, and commercial appeal in a balanced manner. Therefore, research on optimizing this strategy becomes highly relevant to explore the best models that MSMEs can adopt, particularly when considering the diversity of socio-cultural contexts in Indonesia.

Based on this literature review, it can be understood that optimizing community-based marketing strategies supported by collaborative approaches, digital engagement, and socio-cultural values holds significant potential in strengthening the competitiveness of local MSMEs. However, there remains a knowledge gap regarding how these strategies can be effectively formulated in accordance with local market characteristics and the capabilities of MSME actors. This study aims to analyze and develop a concept of community-based marketing strategy optimization oriented toward local MSME competitiveness by leveraging cross-sectoral collaboration, digital engagement, and the reinforcement of socio-cultural values as the foundation for sustainability.

1.1. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are business entities that play a vital role in Indonesia's economy due to their contributions to job creation, economic equality, and the strengthening of the national economic structure through the utilization of local potential. MSMEs serve as the backbone of the real sector and as a platform for product innovation rooted in local wisdom, enabling them to compete in both domestic and global markets [10]. However, limitations in capital, access to technology, managerial literacy, and market connectivity often become major obstacles to enhancing competitiveness. Therefore, innovative and collaborative strategies are needed to enable MSMEs to grow by optimizing community strength, utilizing digital technology, and integrating local cultural values that form the unique identity of their products.

1.2. Community-based Marketing

Community-based marketing is a strategy that emphasizes participation, interaction, and emotional bonds within a particular social group to build consumer loyalty and strengthen brand image [11], [12]. In the context of MSMEs, this approach is highly relevant because limited promotional resources can be compensated by the strength of the community, which acts as an agent of information dissemination and recommendations through word of mouth, both offline and online. The advantage of this strategy lies in the involvement of consumers as active participants in promoting products due to their sense of belonging to the identity and values embedded within the community. Thus, community-based marketing creates not only transactional relationships but also sustainable social relationships.

1.3. Collaboration

Collaboration in MSME development is a form of strategic partnership among various stakeholders, including government, academia, the private sector, and local communities, aimed at improving business capacity and expanding marketing reach [13]. Through a collaborative approach, MSMEs can gain access to training, technology, funding, and market networks that were previously difficult to reach. This concept aligns with the Triple Helix model, which emphasizes the synergy among actors in fostering innovation and economic growth. In practice, collaboration allows MSMEs to improve product quality, enhance managerial skills, and strengthen competitiveness through business incubation programs, community festivals, and cross-sectoral promotions involving multiple parties.

1.4. Digital Engagement

Digital engagement refers to active interaction between MSMEs and consumers through digital platforms such as social media, marketplaces, communication applications, or interactive websites, which serve as spaces for promotion, interaction, and service [14], [15]. The use of digital engagement enables MSMEs to expand market reach, enhance customer experience, and create two-way interactions that encourage consumer participation in product development. In the digital transformation era, digital engagement is not merely a promotional tool but also an instrument for building virtual communities that can strengthen brand loyalty. With the right strategy, digital engagement can serve as a lever for MSME competitiveness, as it connects local identity with global markets through engaging and interactive narratives.

1.5 Socio-cultural Values

Socio-cultural values are a set of norms, traditions, symbols, and local identities inherent in a community, which can serve as a basis for differentiation in MSME marketing strategies [16]. Local products such as handicrafts, traditional cuisine, and regional textiles often carry unique cultural strength, thus creating added value and authenticity that are difficult for competitors to replicate. By integrating socio-cultural values into branding and promotional strategies, MSMEs offer emotional experiences tied to identity, pride, and the preservation of local culture. This makes socio-cultural values an essential aspect in creating sustainable competitive advantages while strengthening the position of MSMEs in both national and international markets.

2. Method

This study employed a literature review method with a qualitative approach oriented toward descriptive analysis. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on collecting, examining, and synthesizing information from various scholarly sources to gain an in-depth understanding of the concept of optimizing community-based marketing strategies as a lever for local MSME competitiveness through collaborative approaches, digital engagement, and socio-cultural values. Descriptive analysis was conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of research trends, concept relevance, and the interrelation between theory and practice, thereby producing a structured and holistic understanding. The data used in this study were obtained from Google Scholar as well as several credible websites relevant to the topic, such as reputable international journals, official news portals, and scholarly articles from trusted research institutions. The data collection period was limited to the years 1986 to 2025 to ensure that the information used remained up-to-date and aligned with the latest developments in digitalization trends, cross-sectoral collaboration, and socio-cultural dynamics influencing MSME marketing strategies. The data collection process was carried out through systematic searches using keywords such as community-based marketing, digital engagement, collaborative approach, cultural values in marketing, and MSME competitiveness. At the initial stage, 50 articles and scientific publications were identified as relevant to the research topic. Subsequently, a strict selection process was conducted based on inclusion criteria, namely alignment with the research focus, publication quality, data recency, and contribution to the development of MSME theory and practice. From this selection process, only 35 articles were deemed to meet the criteria and were used as the primary sources in the research analysis. The collected data were then processed using descriptive analysis techniques by conducting in-depth readings, identifying key themes, comparing findings across studies, and synthesizing information to uncover patterns, gaps, and opportunities for the development of community-based marketing strategies.

3. Result and Discussion

Community-based marketing has strong conceptual roots in Civic Engagement Theory, introduced by [17], which emphasizes the importance of active public participation in strengthening social bonds while supporting the sustainability of various activities, including in business. This theory explains that communities are not merely beneficiaries or target markets but also key actors who play an active role in promoting, supporting, and maintaining the existence of local products amid increasingly intense competition. In the context of MSMEs in Indonesia, this is highly relevant given that most MSMEs grow and develop through the support of social networks grounded in community closeness, whether in the form of social groups, associations, or consumer collectives. Research on brand community further reinforces this, suggesting that community involvement creates unique added value for a brand through shared identity and continuous interaction [18]. This finding strengthens the argument that, for MSMEs, building emotional relationships with communities can serve as a differentiation strategy that is difficult for competitors to replicate. This is evident in many cases of local MSMEs, where community involvement acts as a driving force in sustaining competitiveness and expanding market penetration. In line with this, it has been emphasized that a community-based approach strengthens the position of MSMEs amid shifting consumer behavior that increasingly prioritizes shared values, sustainability, and local identity [19].

Digital engagement in the MSME context can be understood through the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which posits that the adoption of technology is heavily influenced by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use [20]. This helps explain why MSMEs adopt social media, marketplaces, and digital applications as spaces for social interaction and as tools to build emotional bonds with consumers. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp Business enable MSMEs to deliver customer experiences that are more personal, interactive, and participatory. Digital engagement plays a vital role in expanding market reach, enhancing customer experience quality, and fostering long-term relationships based on active consumer participation [21]. In practice, Deandra Batik MSME in Lampung serves as a concrete example of successful digital engagement implementation. By leveraging interactive content on Instagram and creative promotions on TikTok, the business significantly increased brand awareness, reached consumers from various regions and even international markets, all with far more efficient marketing costs compared to conventional methods. This success demonstrates that digital engagement is not merely about establishing a presence in digital spaces but about how MSMEs manage digital interactions to create both social and economic value sustainably [22].

The collaborative approach in MSME development can be associated with the Triple Helix Model, which underscores the importance of synergy between academia, government, and industry in fostering a sustainable innovation ecosystem [23]. From a community-based marketing perspective, this model is relevant because it enables MSMEs to gain broader access to academic knowledge, policy support, and industrial market networks. Such collaboration strengthens promotional strategies through shared resource utilization. MSMEs that actively collaborate with universities and local governments are able to improve product quality, access funding opportunities, and expand marketing networks through structured business incubation programs [24]. For example, culinary MSMEs in Bandung collaborating with the city government's Creative Hub successfully leveraged community events, creative festivals, and digital platforms as effective promotional channels. Through such collaboration, MSMEs were able to reach a wider consumer base at both the national and international levels [25]. This proves that Triple Helix-based collaboration is a practical strategy to enhance MSME competitiveness while supporting sustainable local economic growth.

Socio-cultural values in marketing can be understood through Cultural Capital Theory, where culture is viewed as a symbolic resource with the power to enhance the economic value of a product through the representation of identity, social legitimacy, and status symbols [26]. In the context of MSMEs, particularly local-based ones, products that embody cultural elements such as batik, tenun ikat, woodcarving, or traditional cuisine possess added value through identity and authenticity that are difficult to imitate. Research by [27] on craft product marketing in Bali found that strategically curated cultural narratives successfully increased interest from international consumers seeking authenticity, as they perceived the products as representations of cultural experiences. An interesting case study can be seen in Penglipuran Tourism Village in Bali, where local MSMEs successfully positioned cultural values as a core element of community-based marketing to attract tourists while simultaneously preserving socio-cultural sustainability. This achievement reflects the preservation of local cultural identity, demonstrating that community-based marketing not only enhances MSME competitiveness but also reinforces cultural positions within the currents of the global economy [28].

In practice, community-based marketing strategies are closely related to Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM), a phenomenon studied in depth by [29], in which recommendations or testimonials from community members are perceived as more credible than formal commercial advertising. WOMM works because of the social trust that is built within the community, making the messages conveyed feel more authentic and convincing. Research by [30] demonstrates that WOMM has a long-term impact on consumer loyalty and

market growth, due to its organic and recurring nature from one consumer to another. This is clearly evident in the case of coffee MSMEs in Aceh, where coffee enthusiasts actively promote local coffee through community gatherings, coffee festivals, and digital content on social media. The role of these communities has succeeded in expanding the market reach of Aceh coffee to the national, and even international level, with a promotional power that does not require large costs compared to corporate advertising [31]. The advantage of WOMM makes MSMEs more resilient in competing with global products, as they possess social capital in the form of strong communities committed to supporting local products as a symbol of shared identity.

Nevertheless, the implementation of community-based strategies and digital engagement is not without significant challenges. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory explains that the success of innovation adoption is influenced by several key factors: compatibility with user needs, level of complexity, and the degree to which it can be observed and replicated [32]. In the MSME context, obstacles often arise due to low digital literacy, limited financial resources, and a lack of skills in managing digital communities. These challenges become more complex for MSMEs in rural areas, where technological infrastructure is limited. Data from the Central Statistics Agency, as cited by The Jakarta Post, shows that only 43.73% of MSMEs in rural districts marketed their products online, far behind the 57.46% of MSMEs in urban areas with better access to digital infrastructure [33]. This gap highlights that digital engagement is not yet evenly distributed and calls for collaborative strategies involving government, educational institutions, and the private sector to provide intensive support. With digital literacy training, access to financing for technology, and strong support from local communities, rural MSMEs can better optimize community-based marketing strategies in an inclusive and sustainable way.

An integrative approach that combines community involvement, digital engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and the strengthening of socio-cultural values has proven to be an effective formula for enhancing the competitiveness of local MSMEs in Indonesia. A report by the Boston Consulting Group, cited by [34], shows that MSMEs that successfully combine these four aspects achieve, on average, 1.1 times higher revenue compared to MSMEs relying solely on offline sales. Furthermore, they have 2.1 times greater opportunities to access the national market and 4.6 times greater opportunities to export products abroad, indicating that the integration of community-based strategies and digitalization has a significant impact on market expansion. A relevant case study can be found in “Kopi Tuku” MSME in Indonesia, which successfully built its brand identity through the involvement of coffee enthusiast communities, leveraged social media for consistent digital interactions, and established close collaborations with both government and private sectors to expand its business reach. Beyond that, Kopi Tuku incorporated the cultural value of local coffee drinking traditions as its main attraction, differentiating its products from foreign brands. This combination of strategies strengthened Kopi Tuku’s positioning as a representation of urban culture [35]. Such success proves that optimizing community-based marketing strategies, supported by digital engagement and collaboration, can serve as a reference model for other MSMEs in Indonesia seeking to expand their markets while preserving local identity.

Based on the theoretical framework, previous research findings, and evidence from real case studies, it can be concluded that the optimization of community-based marketing strategies represents a strategic and sustainable approach to enhancing the competitiveness of local MSMEs in Indonesia. Civic Engagement Theory explains the role of community participation in building loyalty and social legitimacy, while the Technology Acceptance Model provides insights into the importance of digital technology adoption in expanding consumer interactions. The Triple Helix Model highlights the need for collaboration between government, academia, and industry to create a supportive ecosystem for MSMEs, while Cultural Capital Theory emphasizes how cultural values serve as symbolic capital that strengthens the appeal of local products. Meanwhile, Word of Mouth Marketing underscores the power of communities in organically and sustainably expanding promotion. Empirical research consistently shows that community-based strategies enhance loyalty, expand domestic and international markets, and strengthen product identity. Real case studies from Lampung, Bandung, Bali, Aceh, and Indonesia in general (Kopi Tuku) demonstrate the practical effectiveness of this strategy. Therefore, this research provides practical implications that community-based strategies—integrated with digital engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and socio-cultural values—can serve as a model for developing Indonesian MSMEs toward sustainable competitiveness.

Figure 1. Key Findings of Community-Based Marketing for MSMEs

Aspect / Theory	Key Insights	Supporting Case / Evidence
Civic Engagement Theory	Communities are not just target markets but active actors who strengthen MSME sustainability through participation, identity building, and loyalty.	Coffee enthusiast communities supporting local MSMEs; Kopi Tuku leveraging coffee culture.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Digital engagement adoption is driven by perceived usefulness & ease of use; social media enables interactive, participatory consumer relationships.	Deandra Batik (Lampung) used Instagram & TikTok to expand brand awareness and reach international markets efficiently.
Triple Helix Model (Collaboration)	Collaboration among academia, government, and industry provides MSMEs access to knowledge, funding, incubation, and wider networks.	Bandung Creative Hub culinary MSMEs expanded through festivals, events, and government-backed creative platforms.
Cultural Capital Theory	Socio-cultural values act as symbolic capital, enhancing authenticity, identity, and market differentiation of MSME products.	Penglipuran Tourism Village (Bali) MSMEs marketed crafts and local traditions to attract international tourists.
Word of Mouth Marketing (WOMM)	Peer-to-peer recommendations build stronger trust than advertising, ensuring long-term loyalty and organic market growth.	Aceh coffee promoted through community gatherings & festivals, reaching national and international markets.
Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Challenges)	MSME digital adoption faces barriers: low digital literacy, limited financial resources, and poor infrastructure in rural areas.	BPS data: Only 43.73% rural MSMEs online vs. 57.46% urban MSMEs (Jakarta Post).
Integrative Strategy (Community + Digital + Collaboration + Culture)	Combining all approaches increases MSME competitiveness, loyalty, and export opportunities.	Boston Consulting Group: MSMEs with integrated strategies gain 1.1× higher revenue, 2.1× national market access, 4.6× export chances; Kopi Tuku success as national model.

4. Conclusion

This study affirms that community-based marketing strategies are an effective approach to enhancing the competitiveness of local MSMEs, particularly when combined with cross-sector collaboration, the utilization of digital engagement, and the integration of socio-cultural values. Theories such as Civic Engagement, Technology Acceptance Model, Triple Helix, Cultural Capital, and Word of Mouth Marketing provide a conceptual foundation that reinforces the relevance of this strategy. Findings from previous research and case studies in Indonesia demonstrate that community involvement fosters consumer loyalty, expands market reach, and differentiates products through cultural identity. Thus, optimizing this strategy can serve as a sustainable lever for MSMEs to compete in both local and global markets.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the MSME marketing literature by emphasizing the combination of community, collaboration, digital engagement, and socio-cultural values as critical drivers of competitiveness. The practical implication is that MSME actors should maximize communities as a marketing base, enhance digital skills, and integrate cultural identity into branding strategies. For government and academia, this study highlights the importance of mentorship, training, and empowerment programs oriented toward digitalization and cultural strengthening. For society at large, the findings emphasize that community support for MSMEs is not only an economic contribution but also a means of preserving cultural values and reinforcing social identity.

However, this study has limitations, as it is based on a literature review with a qualitative, descriptive approach, and therefore does not involve direct field data. The data sources are limited to credible articles and publications between 1986–2025, making the findings dependent on the availability of recent literature and not yet empirically testing strategies within specific MSMEs. Furthermore, the scope is focused on the Indonesian context in general, which does not fully capture the variations of MSME conditions across regions with diverse community characteristics, levels of digitalization, and cultural values.

Future research is recommended to employ empirical approaches, such as field case studies or quantitative methods using primary data, to examine the relationships between variables more deeply. MSME actors are encouraged to build sustainable community ecosystems through the use of social media and strategic collaborations with government, academia, and the private sector. Governments should expand MSME access to digital literacy programs, provide supporting infrastructure, and facilitate cultural-based promotions in global markets. Moreover, there is a need for community-based mentoring models that focus on integrating socio-cultural values, ensuring that MSME marketing strategies become more authentic, competitive, and sustainable.

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