



Marketing Strategy of MSME Products as an Effort to Improve the Economy of Local Communities in Belawa Tourism Village, Cirebon Regency

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Abstract

Background. Effective and innovative marketing strategies can be a key factor in increasing income and fostering economic growth in the Tourism Village. MSMEs are an important sector in supporting the development of tourist villages because they serve as drivers of the community's economy by leveraging local potential. Therefore, the right marketing strategy is needed.

Aims. The urgency of the research arises from the obstacles faced, including limited human resources, insufficient training, limited innovation in marketing, and low use of digital media for promoting MSME products.

Method. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, including interviews, observations, documentation, and literature reviews. The study's results show that MSMEs' marketing strategy in Belawa Tourism Village remains conventional and has not been integrated with digital strategies.

Conclusion. MSME actors rely more on direct sales to tourists and word-of-mouth promotions. However, there is significant potential for growth through social media-based marketing strategies, product quality improvements, and strengthened local branding.

Implementation. Village government support and training for MSME actors are urgently needed to improve product competence and competitiveness.

Keywords: Marketing, MSMEs, Tourism Villages, Cirebon



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INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector is one of the driving forces of the regional economy and can have a significant impact on improving people's welfare. In the context of sustainable tourism development, tourism villages are a concrete example of *community-based tourism*. Through the development of tourist villages, the community not only serves as a beneficiary but also as the main actors in managing and utilizing their local potential. One of the important components

in the development of tourism villages is the presence of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), which serve as the economic driver of the community by providing local products with market value, such as typical culinary items, handicrafts, and processed agricultural products.

Belawa Tourism Village in Cirebon Regency has potential for natural and cultural tourism that could attract tourists. The presence of MSMEs in this village also supports tourism activities, both through the provision of souvenir products and tourism support services. However, this potential has not been fully utilized. One of the main obstacles faced by MSME actors is the limited availability of human resources (HR) to manage product marketing effectively. Most MSME actors still use conventional marketing strategies, such as direct sales to tourists and word-of-mouth promotions, without making the most of digital media, which is now the main means of promoting tourism and local products.

In addition, the lack of training and assistance from related parties impairs MSME actors' ability in product innovation, packaging, and the use of information technology. This condition contributes to the low competitiveness of local products and their limited market reach. In fact, in today's digital era, the implementation of creative and technology-based marketing strategies is a key factor in increasing sales and expanding consumer networks.

Thus, an effective and innovative marketing strategy is an urgent need for MSME actors in Belawa Tourism Village to strengthen the position of local products in the tourism market and increase community income. Through the implementation of the right marketing strategy, it is hoped that MSMEs will not only be able to survive in the midst of increasingly fierce competition, but also make a real contribution to encouraging village economic growth.

Based on this background, this study was conducted to analyze the marketing strategies for MSME products in Belawa Tourism Village and examine the extent to which these strategies can improve the local community's economy. This research also aims to identify the obstacles faced and formulate recommendations for marketing strategies that are relevant to the local conditions and potential of the tourism village.

This research has high urgency because it directly supports strengthening the local economy through the development of the MSME sector and village tourism, two sectors that are the backbone of the community's economy in rural areas. Belawa Tourism Village has great potential both in terms of natural resources and locally superior products produced by the community. However, this potential has not been fully realized due to limitations in effective, sustainable marketing strategies. Most MSME players still rely on traditional selling methods, with little use of digital media and branding to reach a wider market.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research has high urgency because it directly supports strengthening the local economy through the development of the MSME sector and village tourism, two sectors that are the backbone of the community's economy in rural areas. Belawa Tourism Village has great potential, both in its natural resources and in the locally superior products produced by the community. However, this potential has not been fully realized due to limitations in effective, sustainable marketing strategies. Most MSME players still rely on traditional selling methods, with little use of digital media and branding to reach a wider market.

Marketing Mix

The marketing mix is an important concept in marketing strategies that are used to influence consumer decisions. Through the marketing mix, companies can combine various marketing elements in an integrated manner. According to Kotler (2016), a marketing mix is a set of marketing tools that a company uses to achieve its marketing goals.

The marketing mix consists of four main elements, known as the 4Ps, namely product, price, place, and promotion.

1. **Product.** Products are the main element in the marketing mix because they are directly related to consumer needs and desires. Quality products will provide added value for consumers. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), a product is everything that can be offered to the market to get attention, buy, use, or consume so that it can satisfy the needs or desires of consumers.
2. **Price.** Price is a factor that consumers pay close attention to in determining purchasing or visiting decisions. Pricing must be adjusted to product quality and consumer purchasing power. According to Kotler and Keller (2016), price is a number of values that must be paid by consumers to obtain a product or service.
3. **Place.** The place or location of the business plays an important role in providing convenience and comfort for consumers. A strategic location will affect consumers' interest in visiting. According to Tjiptono (2015), place is related to the location of the business and the ease of consumers in obtaining products or services.
4. **Promotion.** Promotion is a means of communication between companies and consumers. Through promotions, companies can convey information and attract consumers' attention. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2018), promotion is an activity companies use to communicate the benefits of products and persuade consumers to be interested in buying or

using them.

Promotion Strategy

A promotional strategy is needed to ensure promotional activities run in a directional and effective manner. Promotional strategies help companies in determining the media and forms of promotion that suit the target market. According to Tjiptono (2015), a promotion strategy is the planning and control of marketing communication by the company to convey information and build a positive image in consumers' minds.

Community Empowerment

According to Suharto (2005), community empowerment is also understood as a process of a series of activities to strengthen weak groups in society, including individuals who experience poverty. And as a goal, empowerment refers to the state that a social change wants to achieve, namely a society that is empowered, has power or knowledge and ability to meet its life needs, both physical, economic, and social such as self-confidence, conveying aspirations, having a livelihood, participating in social activities, and being independent in carrying out their life tasks.

Tourism Village

Tourism Village is a rural area with special attractions that can become a tourist destination. In tourist villages, residents still preserve their original traditions and culture. Several supporting activities, such as farming systems, gardening, and traditional foods, also contribute to coloring the existence of the tourist village itself. In addition to these factors, original and well-maintained environmental factors are important for a tourist village (Zakaria, 2014).

Tourism villages are a form of tourism development that emphasizes the contributions of communities in rural areas and the preservation of the rural environment. Tourism villages offer products with cultural value and strong traditional characteristics (Fandeli, Baiquni, Dewi, 2013). Likewise, according to Inskip (2013), rural tourism is characterized by tourists living in a traditional atmosphere, staying in the village to learn about life in the countryside.

Another definition of Tourism Village, according to Zakaria & Suprihardjo (2014) and Salsabila & Puspitasari (2023), is a form of tourism sector development that focuses on developing and utilizing existing potentials as tourism products to attract tourists.

State of the art is to analyze previous research that has been done before, using concepts

that are in line with and almost the same as current research.

Research Name and Year	Research Title	Research Results
Dwi Septi Haryani and Selvi Fauzar (2021)	The Effectiveness of Instagram Social Media as a Promotional Media for Chacha Flowers MSMEs	The purpose of this study is to find out how effective the marketing of Chacha MSME products is <i>Flowers</i> through Instagram social media. Concept AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) can be used to measure how effective a promotion is.
Mega Afifah (2021)	The Role of an Instagram Account @kebunrefugiamagetan As a Promotional Media in Improving Interest of Visitors to Magetan Refuge Gardens	Know the many interesting things such as photos and videos uploaded through Instagram making it attractive to the general public to come to visit the tourist area
Laqma Dica Fitriani (2023)	The Utilization of <i>Social Media Marketing Tools</i> as a Means of Marketing MSME Products	Improving the skills and knowledge of FnF MSMEs regarding <i>the application of Social Media Marketing Tools</i> as a means of business marketing <i>online</i> .

Based on the literature review and previous research, this research fills in the following research gaps:

1. Limitations of MSME Studies in the Context of Tourism Villages
 - a. Previous research (e.g., related to Instagram and MSME social media marketing) has focused more on individual MSMEs or single tourist destinations, rather than on the MSME ecosystem in tourist villages.
 - b. This gap is filled with the analysis of MSMEs as an integral part of the village tourism system.
2. Lack of Qualitative Field Studies on Village MSMEs
 - a. Many previous studies have been quantitative or oriented towards measuring the effectiveness of social media.
 - b. This research fills the gap with a qualitative descriptive approach based on interviews, observations, and documentation, so as to describe the real condition of MSMEs in depth.
3. Lack of Research on Barriers to Digital Marketing Implementation
 - a. Previous studies have generally emphasized *the success of* digital marketing, not

structural barriers and HR capacity.

- b. This research fills the gap by identifying real obstacles such as limited human resources, capital, and mentoring.
4. MSMEs Have Not Been Integrated with Tour Packages in Previous Studies
 - a. Most of the research separates the MSME study and the study of tourism village management.
 - b. This research fills the gap by showing the importance of integrating MSME products into tour packages as a sustainable marketing strategy.
 5. Lack of Contextual Studies in the Cirebon Region
 - a. Research on MSMEs in tourist villages in the Cirebon area is still very limited.
 - b. This study enriches local and regional literature related to the marketing strategy of MSMEs based on Cirebon's local potential.

METHODS

The research method used is a qualitative, descriptive approach. This study aims to describe the marketing strategy for MSME products in Belawa Village, with the aim of improving the local community's economy. Data was collected through interviews, observations, and documentation.

Data Collection Techniques

The data sources in this study are primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained by researchers firsthand, immediately. Primary data were collected through interviews to address the research problems identified. Primary data were collected through interviews to address the research problems identified. The selection of resource persons was conducted using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Using this purposive sampling method will make it easier for researchers to select respondents for the sample, as they can choose them more specifically during the sampling process (Sekaran, U., & Bougie, 2016). Meanwhile, snowball sampling is a sampling technique that uses data sources, initially comprising primary and secondary data. Primary data is information obtained from primary sources, namely informants and resource persons. Secondary data is information obtained not directly from sources, but from third parties (Wardiyanta, 2010).

Primary data was obtained from observations and related informants, including Secerah Pagi Non-Governmental Organizations as Key Informants, and Supporting Informants such as the Government, Academics, the Community, Entrepreneurs/Businesses, and Media Actors.

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Primary data was obtained using three data collection techniques, namely (1) Observation; (2) Indept interviews; and finally (3) Literature Studies. The secondary data used in this study is as supporting data that strengthens the primary data. Data collection was carried out continuously and systematically through direct observation of MSME activities in Cikuya, in-depth interviews with Mr. Eman, Mr. Arief, Mrs. Wiwi, Mrs. Juju, and Mrs. Ety. The data collection process also includes documentation of MSME production activities.

Data Analysis Techniques

In this study, the analysis of the study uses the Miles & Huberman interactive analysis model. According to (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2013), the data analysis of this interactive model has 3 components, namely (1) Data reduction, (2) Data presentation, and (3) Conclusion drawn/verification

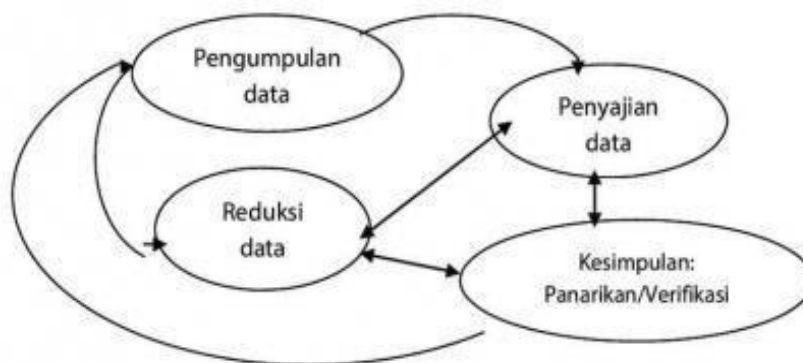


Figure 2: Interactive Components of the Model

Source: Miles & Huberman, 1992

DISCUSSION

Overview of Belawa Tourism Village

Belawa is a village in Lemahabang sub-district, Cirebon, West Java, Indonesia. Belawa Village is one of the villages located on the hills of Ciwado, surrounded by a beautiful canyon, with an altitude of 171 meters above sea level, is one of the agricultural areas that produce mangoes and bananas. In addition, Belawa Village has potential in the field of tourism, including natural tourism, conservation tourism, and education of rare turtles, one of the ancient animals native to Cirebon, which is one of the leading tourism destinations in Cirebon Regency, West Java Province. It is said that the ancestors of the Cirebon people came from the area with the discovery of one of the relics of prehistoric artifacts, in one of the plantation areas there is a stone grave (Spiti) which has been researched by a team of Archaeologists from the Bandung

Archaeological Center (Balarbandung) at the end of 2013 led by an expert, namely Lutfi Yondri, where according to the results of the carbon test on the soil layer there is bronze weathering, so it is estimated that the ancestors of the Cirebon people lived in the Bronze Age era 5,000 - 1,000 BC. In addition, there are still various interesting stories about Belawa Village.

The sub-district area along the Pantura route lies in the lowlands, with altitudes between 0 and 10 m above sea level, while the southern part has altitudes between 11 and 130 m above sea level. Climate and rainfall factors in Cirebon Regency are influenced by its natural conditions, which are mostly coastal and hilly, especially in the northern, eastern, and western areas, while the southern part is hilly. Cirebon Regency is traversed by 18 rivers that have their headwaters in the south. Rivers - Rivers in Cirebon Regency that are relatively large include Cisanggarung, Ciwaringin, Cimanis, Cipager, Pekik, and Kalijaga. In general, these large rivers are used for irrigation of rice fields, bathing, washing, and as public toilets.

Overview of MSMEs in Belawa Tourism Village, Cirebon Regency, shows that MSMEs are growing alongside the development of village tourism activities. The growing MSMEs are dominated by Cirebon culinary businesses, processed agricultural products (such as processed mangoes, bananas, and snack products), and simple crafts that reflect local identity. Most MSMEs are managed by households and community groups at the micro and small business scale.

Based on field observations, MSMEs in Belawa Tourism Village remain traditional in business management, product packaging, and marketing. Production is carried out in limited quantities and adjusts to the number of tourist visits. MSME business activities are an additional source of income for the community, especially during tourist visits, village activities, and *certain events*.

MSME Product Marketing Strategy

The marketing strategy for MSME products at Belawa Tourism Village is still dominated by conventional marketing. MSME actors market their products directly to tourists who visit tourist villages, either through simple stalls, production houses, or during village activities. Product promotion is mostly carried out through word-of-mouth communication, both between tourists and through recommendations from tourism village managers. The use of digital media, such as social media, marketplaces, and online promotion platforms, remains very limited. Only a small number of MSME actors have used social media such as WhatsApp and Facebook, even though it has not been done in a planned and sustainable manner.

From the aspect of the marketing mix, it can be explained as follows:

- 1 **Product:** MSME products have local uniqueness but remain limited in variety and innovation. The product packaging remains simple and does not fully reflect Belawa Tourism Village's branding identity. Based on the interview results, product variations were determined through observation of MSME products, then adjusted to the local market's characteristics. This aligns with the theory of Kotler and Keller (2016), which holds that products must provide value and satisfaction to meet consumer needs. These findings indicate that the product aspect has supported interest in visits, especially in encouraging the desire to return. Thus, the product is a key supporting factor in the promotion strategy.
- 2 **Price:** The price of the product is relatively affordable and adjusts to the purchasing power of tourists. Pricing is determined by considering the target market, so the price is fixed. The price of MSME products ranges from 10,000 to 30,000, depending on the packaging. However, the results of interviews with MSME managers indicate that price promos do not have a significant effect on the increase in visitor numbers. This is supported by visitor interviews, which show that price promos play a supporting or additional role, not as the main reason for visiting. This finding aligns with Tjiptono's (2019) view that prices and sales promotions can attract consumers' attention but are not always the main factors when consumers prioritize experience and atmosphere.
- 3 **Place:** The distribution of products is still limited in the tourist village area and has not reached a wider market outside the village area. Belawa Village is located in Lemahabang District, Cirebon Regency, West Java. The results of visitor interviews show that the atmosphere and comfort of Belawa village have a significant influence on the decision to visit and revisit, driven by its potential. These findings align with consumer behavior theory (Engel, Blackwell, & Miniard, 2019), which holds that the physical environment and the atmosphere of a place can influence consumer attitudes and decisions.
- 4 **Promotion:** Promotion is carried out directly and has not utilized digital media as the main marketing tool. So the researcher suggested promoting through social media. The promotion of MSME products focuses on digital channels, especially Instagram, and on collaborations with culinary influencers. The promotional content displayed highlights the natural atmosphere, and the experience of visitors to Belawa Village. This is in line with Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick's (2019) digital marketing theory, which states that content.



Figure 1: Introduction of MSME Products

Obstacles to Marketing MSME Products

Based on the results of interviews with MSME actors and tourism village managers, there are several main obstacles in marketing MSME products in Belawa Tourism Village, including:

1. Limited Human Resources (HR): MSME actors still have limited knowledge and skills in marketing, especially digital marketing.
2. Lack of Training and Mentoring: Training related to branding, packaging, and digital marketing is still very limited.
3. Limited Business Capital: Limited business capital affects the ability of MSME actors to improve the quality of products and packaging.
4. Lack of Integration with Tour Packages: MSME products have not been fully integrated in village tour packages, so the opportunity to increase sales has not been maximized.

The results of the study show that the marketing conditions of MSME products in Belawa Tourism Village align with previous research, which found that MSMEs in tourist village areas continue to use traditional marketing strategies. This condition limits the market reach of products and contributes to a low increase in people's income. In the context of tourism village development, the marketing strategy for MSME products should adopt an integrated marketing approach that combines conventional and digital marketing. The use of social media such as *Instagram*, *Facebook*, and *WhatsApp Business* can be the first step to expand market reach. In addition, strengthening product branding by enhancing Belawa Tourism Village's local identity is important to increase product attractiveness.



Figure 2. MSME Product Training

The integration of MSME products into village tour packages is also an effective strategy. Through educational, cultural, and culinary tour packages, MSME products can be positioned as part of the tourism experience, so that they not only function as souvenir products, but also as tourist attractions. Thus, implementing an innovative, digital-based, and integrated marketing strategy with tourism village management is expected to increase the competitiveness of MSME products and make a real contribution to improving the local community's economy.

The main novelty of this research lies in the context, focus, and integrative approach that have not been widely studied in previous research, namely:

1. The Specific Context of Belawa Tourism Village

- a. This study specifically examines MSMEs in Belawa Tourism Village, Cirebon Regency, which has unique characteristics in the form of a combination of natural tourism, conservation, education, and local history.
- b. Unlike previous research that generally focused on urban MSMEs or digital promotion in general, this study places local community-based tourism villages as the main focus.

2. Analysis of MSME Marketing Strategies in the Framework of Local Economic

Empowerment

- a. The research not only assesses the effectiveness of promotion, but also links the marketing strategy of MSMEs to improving the economy of the local community.
 - b. MSMEs are positioned as instruments of village economic empowerment, not just business units.
3. Empirical Findings on the Dominance of Conventional Marketing
- a. This study empirically reveals that MSME marketing is still dominated by direct sales and word of mouth, even though tourism villages have great digital marketing potential.
 - b. These findings reinforce the evidence of a gap between digital potential and actual practice in the field.
4. Integration of the Marketing Mix Concept with the Reality of Tourism Village MSMEs
- a. The study examines the marketing mix (4P) contextually and applicatively to MSMEs in tourist villages, not only as a theoretical concept.
 - b. The results show that products and the atmosphere of places are more dominant in influencing travelers' decisions than prices, which is a new contextual finding.
5. Integrated Strategy Recommendations
- Novelty also emerged from recommendations for digital marketing development, local branding, and the integration of MSME products into village tour packages, which were adjusted to the limitations of human resources and village MSME capital.

CONCLUSION

1. MSME products have local uniqueness, but are still limited to variety and innovation. The product packaging remains simple and does not fully reflect Belawa Tourism Village's branding identity. Based on the interview results, product variations were determined through observation of MSME products. Thus, the product is a key supporting factor in the promotion strategy.
2. The price of the product is relatively affordable and adjusts to the purchasing power of tourists. Pricing is determined by considering the target market, so the price is fixed. The price of MSME products ranges from 10,000 to 30,000, depending on the packaging. However, the results of interviews with MSME managers indicate that price promos do not have a significant effect on the increase in visitor numbers. This is supported by visitor interviews, which show that price promos play a supporting or additional role, not as the

main reason for visiting.

3. Product distribution places are still limited in the tourist village area and have not reached a wider market outside the village area. Belawa Village is located in Lemahabang District, Cirebon Regency, West Java. The results of visitor interviews show that the atmosphere and comfort of Belawa village have a significant influence on the decision to visit and revisit, driven by its potential.
4. Promotions are carried out directly and have not utilized digital media as the main marketing tool. So the researcher suggested promoting through social media. The promotion of MSME products focuses on digital channels, especially Instagram, and on collaborations with culinary influencers. The promotional content displayed highlights the natural atmosphere and visitors' experience at Belawa Village.
5. The obstacle faced is Limited Human Resources (HR): MSME actors still have limited knowledge and skills in marketing, especially digital marketing. Lack of Training and Mentoring: Training in branding, packaging, and digital marketing remains very limited. Limited Business Capital: Limited business capital hinders MSME actors' ability to improve product and packaging quality. Lack of Integration with Tour Packages: MSME products have not been fully integrated in village tour packages, so the opportunity to increase sales has not been maximized.

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