

RESEARCH ARTICLE



Community-based approach to strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of Aren Samosa Hot culinary enterprises in Padang City

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) are a vital sector in fostering national economic growth, creating employment opportunities, and alleviating poverty. Nevertheless, globalization and changing consumer behavior compel MSMEs to continually strengthen their competitiveness and ensure long-term sustainability. In response to these challenges, this community service program focuses on optimizing the Aren Samosa Hot MSME in Padang City. The program aims to build business capacity by enhancing product innovation, reinforcing marketing strategies, and increasing awareness of the importance of quality and standardization. The activities were conducted through a structured socialization approach comprising four stages: preparation, implementation, evaluation, and reporting. The program is expected to help the Aren Samosa Hot MSME expand its market share, improve product competitiveness, and strengthen business resilience in facing market dynamics and global economic challenges. Moreover, this initiative fosters stronger collaboration between higher education institutions and local communities to promote sustainable economic empowerment.

KEYWORDS

Socialization; MSMEs; competitiveness; sustainability; community empowerment

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1. Introduction

High unemployment rates and limited job opportunities in various regions in Indonesia have encouraged some people to think creatively and independently in creating business opportunities. In this situation, there is a drive to build one's own business or become an entrepreneur as a solution to economic problems and dependence on the formal sector. This entrepreneurial spirit provides a promising alternative, not only for creating personal economic independence, but also for opening up job opportunities for others. According to Coulter (2000), entrepreneurship is often associated with the process of forming or growing a new business that is oriented towards profit, value creation, and the formation of new, unique, and innovative products or services. This

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means that entrepreneurship is not limited to trading or running a regular business, but includes creative and innovative processes in creating new value for the market. This innovation can take the form of products, services, business models, or marketing approaches that are different from what already exists.

Based on data from the Statistics Indonesia (BPS) as of February 2024, there are approximately 56.56 million entrepreneurs in Indonesia. Of this number, 51.55 million are start-up entrepreneurs, while the remaining 5.01 million are classified as established entrepreneurs. This means that around 91.14% of entrepreneurs in Indonesia are still in the early stages or are just starting their businesses, while only 8.86% can be categorized as stable and sustainable business actors. This data shows that the majority of entrepreneurs in Indonesia are still in a phase that is vulnerable to various challenges, such as access to capital, limited managerial knowledge, marketing, and adaptation to digitalization. The low proportion of established entrepreneurs indicates that capacity building and mentoring for start-up entrepreneurs is crucial.

This phenomenon shows that although the number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia is very large, the resilience and competitiveness of their businesses are not yet evenly distributed. Many of them are still stuck in traditional business patterns and have not been able to maximize the potential of their products and markets optimally. On the other hand, rapid changes in market dynamics, developments in digital technology, and increasingly complex consumer demands require MSME players to continue to innovate.

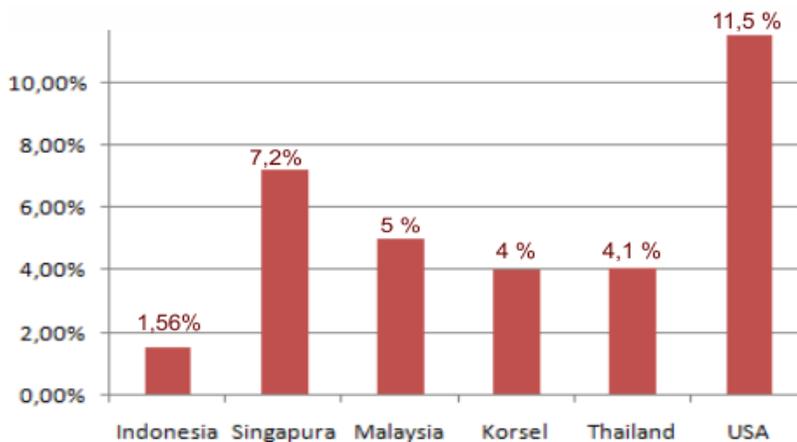


Figure 1. Comparing the number of entrepreneurs in Indonesia with other countries

Furthermore, when compared globally, the level of entrepreneurship in Indonesia is still very low. Figure 1 shows that the proportion of entrepreneurs in the United States has reached 11.5 to 12 percent of the total population, in Singapore 7 percent, and in developed countries such as China and Japan around 10 percent. Meanwhile, Indonesia has only reached around 0.24 percent of its total population of 238 million. This figure

shows a significant gap in the ratio of entrepreneurs compared to other countries that have already advanced their creative economy and small business sectors. This condition is an important indicator that empowerment-based entrepreneurship coaching and development programs need to be carried out consistently and sustainably, involving educational institutions, the government, and local communities, especially for MSMEs that have unique and distinctive products such as Aren Samosa Hot in Padang City.

Aren Samosa Hot is a culinary business that combines innovation in snack products. It combines distinctive local flavors with modern culinary techniques. Samosa has cultural roots in South Asia and the Middle East, but has now become a popular snack in various countries, including Indonesia. Local innovations to the samosa are also developing, as seen in Aren Samosa Hot. This business has great potential to penetrate a wider market. However, this potential has not been matched by adequate business management strategies, product packaging, and product competitiveness in an increasingly competitive market.

Aren Samosa Hot is one of the culinary choices of local residents located on Jl. Dr. Sutomo, RW.04, Simpang Haru, Lubuk Begalung District, Padang City. This triangular-shaped snack is fried until crispy and filled with minced chicken. *Aren Samosa Hot* has succeeded in presenting an attractive and unique product differentiation in the local snack market. As a small and medium enterprise (SME) that grew from a local entrepreneurial initiative, this business is an example of a micro-enterprise with great potential for development. Its strategic location, directly across from the Kartika High School area and close to the center of community activities, has made *Aren Samosa Hot* quite well-known in the surrounding area.



Figure 2. Initial Visit to Aren Samosa Hot

Figure 2 shows the initial activities of the community service team. The team conducted an initial survey of this MSME and held preliminary discussions with the owner of Aren Samosa Hot Small and Medium Enterprise. From initial observations, it was found that there were still several problems and challenges that needed to be

resolved, such as business management, marketing strategy optimization, and production capacity development. Therefore, assistance and training in the areas of business management, branding, and maximizing marketing strategies are important to improve competitiveness and sustainability. This community service program is not only social in nature but also practical and solution-oriented. This activity is expected to provide practical education and training on strategies to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs, effective business management, and a sustainable approach to small business development. This community service is also a tangible form of contribution from universities in fostering and assisting MSMEs to grow into established businesses, strengthen the local economy, and encourage the emergence of new entrepreneurs in the city of Padang.

2. Literature Review

Community-based approaches offer a vital framework for strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of microenterprises, particularly in the culinary sector. These micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in local economies, both as generators of employment and as vehicles for cultural expression. The literature highlights several interrelated factors that contribute to enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of these enterprises.

Firstly, the integration of financial management, digital marketing, and innovation significantly influences micro-business growth within the culinary landscape. Naim emphasizes the critical importance of financial management practices in fostering growth and navigating competitive environments, notably within Jakarta's culinary sector (Naim, 2024). This aligns with Wibowo and Widayat's findings on the implications of financial literacy and inclusion for culinary MSMEs in Surakarta, where improved financial practices directly link to enhanced performance (Wibowo & Widayat, 2023). Furthermore, Nurlina et al. found that improved digital skills correlate with better performance metrics in culinary MSMEs in Padang City, underscoring the potential of digital literacy in facilitating effective business strategies (Nurlina et al., 2023).

The development of social capital also emerges as a key theme. Muniady et al. highlight the roles of cognitive and relational social capital in enhancing micro-enterprise performance, providing substantial proof of its importance in Malaysia's MSME landscape (Muniady et al., 2015). This integrates seamlessly with findings from Widyawati et al., which underscore how social and organizational health constructs impact competitive advantages within culinary SMEs in Samarinda City (Widyawati et al., 2023). The synergy of these elements fosters a robust community support network, vital for sustaining relationships that promote business resilience.

Moreover, the strategic use of community resources through capacity-building initiatives such as design training can enhance branding and market viability. As demonstrated by Saputri et al., community-centered approaches to visual branding training contribute to the economic viability of MSMEs by improving market acceptance and brand visibility (Saputri et al., 2023). This aspect of community engagement ties into the notion that local resources and stakeholder collaboration are crucial for microenterprises to flourish, as identified in the literature (Zheng, 2021).

Additionally, the implications of environmental factors and technological advancements cannot be overlooked. Haseeb et al. discuss how technological and social challenges affect sustainable business performance, indicating that adapting to these challenges can yield a competitive edge (Haseeb et al., 2019). Furthermore, Atmadja et al. emphasize the importance of accessing financial resources as a crucial component for the sustainability and competitive positioning of women-owned microenterprises in Indonesia (Atmadja et al., 2016).

Finally, it is imperative to highlight the role of public policy in facilitating the growth of culinary MSMEs. Semil emphasizes that government interventions and policies geared toward supporting local culinary businesses are essential for enhancing their competitive capacity in the face of market competition (Semil et al., 2020).

In summary, the community-based approach to bolstering competitiveness and sustainability in culinary microenterprises involves a multifaceted strategy that integrates financial literacy, social capital development, community engagement, and governmental support. Collectively, these elements form a robust framework for the advancement and resilience of culinary MSMEs, ensuring their continued contribution to local economies and cultures.

3. Methods

3.1. Implementation Method

The implementation method of the community service program was to disseminate material on "Increasing the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Aren Samosa Hot MSME Businesses in Padang City."

According to KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia), there are several definitions of analysis as follows: Investigation of an event (writing, action, etc.) to find out the actual circumstances (causes, facts, etc.).

According to Komaruddin (2001), analysis is the activity of thinking to break down a whole into its components so that the characteristics of the components, their relationships with each other, and their respective functions in an integrated whole can be identified.

Qualitative analysis is research that is descriptive in nature and tends to use analysis. The process and meaning of the subject's perspective are emphasized in qualitative research. Theoretical foundations are used as a guide to focus the research and correspond to the facts in the field, as is the case with qualitative data research methods. In addition, theoretical foundations can also be useful for providing a general overview of the research background and as material for discussing the research results.

3.2. Educational Method

According to Brown (in Ahmadi, 2004: 74), education is a conscious control process whereby changes in behavior are produced within a person through a group. Meanwhile, John Dewey defines education as the process of forming fundamental intellectual and emotional skills towards nature and fellow human beings. Thus, education can influence people, behavior, and ways of thinking in carrying out "Improving the Competitiveness and Sustainability of Aren Samosa Hot MSME Businesses."

3.3. Socialization Method

According to Sutaryo (2004), socialization is a process of introducing a system to someone. It also involves how that person determines their response and reaction. Socialization is determined by the social, economic, and cultural environment in which the individual lives. In addition, socialization is also determined by the interaction of experiences and personality. Through socialization, humans as biological beings become cultured humans, capable of performing their functions appropriately as individuals and as members of a group.

The community service program was carried out in the form of direct socialization to the owners and employees of Aren Samosa Hot MSME. The material presented was expected to increase knowledge and understanding so that it could then be used as information for evaluation and improvement for partners in increasing sales volume.

After the material was presented, it was followed by a question and answer discussion between the presenter and the participants. The discussion was held so that the participants could better understand the material presented. Through analysis and discussion, socialization is not only a transfer of knowledge but also a sharing of experiences and problems currently faced by Aren Samosa Hot Padang MSMEs.

4. Results

The results of the program titled “Socialization of Competitiveness and Business Sustainability Improvement for Aren Samosa Hot MSMEs in Padang City” demonstrate significant contributions to the development of participating enterprises. First, MSME actors were able to improve their creative skills through the guidance provided by the Community Service Team, enabling them to create new product variations and enhance the quality of existing offerings. This was supported by improvements in production management, where technical and managerial assistance helped entrepreneurs increase efficiency and product quality, allowing them to better meet market demands and generate more profitable outcomes. In addition, the program encouraged product diversification, resulting in new variations of Aren Samosa Hot products that aligned more closely with consumer preferences and market trends.

Furthermore, participants gained valuable knowledge and skills in marketing strategies, both offline and online, which contributed to increasing product visibility and strengthening sales performance. The integration of these skills with improved production management and product innovation also helped entrepreneurs expand their customer base and enhance competitiveness. Ultimately, the program played an important role in fostering economic stability for MSME actors in Padang City by increasing business income and ensuring more sustainable operations. These outcomes highlight the effectiveness of community-based interventions in empowering local businesses and strengthening their resilience in the culinary sector.

The outcomes achieved in this Socialization are carried out in several stages as follows:

1. Initiation stage

From initial observations, it was found that there were still several problems and challenges that needed to be resolved, such as business management, marketing strategy optimization, and production capacity development. Therefore, assistance and training in the fields of business management, branding, and marketing strategy maximization are important to improve competitiveness and sustainability. Community service programs that are not only socialization but also applicable and solution-oriented. This activity is expected to provide education and practical training on strategies to increase the competitiveness of MSMEs, effective business management, and a sustainable approach to small business development. This community service is also a tangible form of contribution from universities in fostering and assisting MSMEs to grow into established businesses, strengthening the local economy, and encouraging the emergence of new entrepreneurs in the city of Padang.

2. Implementation stage

After the material was presented, the participants who attended the socialization enthusiastically asked various questions. The majority of questions focused on the

mechanism of marketing their products. In product marketing, there are several important things that need to be considered so that the marketing strategy runs effectively and achieves the desired goals. Some key points include: target market, product quality, price, promotion, and analysis.

The key points that SME entrepreneurs need to consider in marketing their products revolve around four essential aspects: target market, product quality, pricing, and promotion. First, identifying the right target market is crucial for ensuring that products reach the intended audience effectively. Entrepreneurs must determine who their primary consumers are by considering factors such as age, gender, location, and interests. Beyond identification, it is important to understand the specific needs and preferences of the target market so that products offered can serve as the right solutions. Furthermore, segmenting the market into smaller groups with distinct characteristics enables entrepreneurs to develop more tailored and effective marketing strategies that enhance customer engagement and satisfaction.

Equally important is maintaining high product quality, as it directly influences customer trust and brand reputation. A quality product ensures consumer satisfaction, while reliable after-sales service strengthens customer loyalty by addressing complaints and resolving issues promptly. Pricing also plays a central role, as it should reflect the value of the product and align with customer expectations. Conducting competitor research helps entrepreneurs set prices that are both competitive and sustainable, while creative strategies such as discounts, bundling, or tiered pricing can make the product more appealing. Finally, effective promotion is vital to increase product visibility and reach the target market. Entrepreneurs should select appropriate promotional channels—ranging from social media and online advertising to content marketing and word-of-mouth—to maximize outreach and strengthen their market presence.

5. Discussion

Community-based micro enterprises within the culinary sector face a multifaceted challenge that necessitates a profound comprehension of their target market. This understanding not only enriches their competitiveness but also bolsters sustainability in a highly dynamic industry.

The nexus between product quality, pricing, and promotion is paramount in determining the competitiveness of culinary micro enterprises. High product quality is instrumental in cultivating consumer trust, promoting repeat purchases, and establishing loyalty. Specifically, community-driven quality control mechanisms can be invaluable in mitigating production inconsistencies and enhancing product reliability (Zeithaml, 1988).

In conjunction with quality, pricing strategies must strike a balance between affordability and competitiveness. Products must reflect value while remaining accessible, particularly for consumers in low

Promotion emerges as a critical element in this triadic relationship. Utilizing digital platforms and community-based networks offers a cost-effective means to reach broader audiences and fortify brand recognition. As highlighted by Tiago & Verissimo (2014), leveraging these avenues allows micro enterprises to engage with potential customers efficiently and effectively, thereby enhancing visibility and market reach.

Integrating product quality, pricing, and promotional strategies within a community-centric framework significantly amplifies the performance of culinary micro enterprises. This cohesive approach not only seeks to improve current business metrics but also underpins the sustainable growth of these enterprises in the long run. The research presented by Yunus et al., (2010) reinforces the importance of community engagement in fostering sustainability, indicating that micro enterprises that harness local resources and consumer relationships are better positioned to thrive amid market challenges.

6. Conclusion

Aren Samosa Hot is a culinary business that combines innovation in snack products. It combines distinctive local flavors with modern culinary techniques. Samosa has cultural roots in South Asia and the Middle East, but has now become a popular snack in various countries, including Indonesia. Local innovations in samosas are also evolving, as seen in Aren Samosa Hot. This business has significant potential to penetrate a broader market. Through outreach efforts, it is hoped that the competitiveness and sustainability of the Aren Samosa Hot SME in Padang City can be enhanced. This is expected to elevate the marketing strategies of SME operators to a higher level, maximizing profits by focusing on target markets, product quality, and market pricing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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