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Development Strategy of Local Culinary MSMEs @pisangpunbu: Enhancing Competitiveness Through Sesame Fried Banana Innovation in Makassar

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Keywords

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ABSTRACT

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in the economic development of local communities. However, they often face challenges related to financing, legality, management, and innovation. This study examines the development strategy of a local culinary enterprise through a case study of @pisangpunbu in Makassar, which promotes sesame fried banana innovation. The business grew from a small-scale home-based venture with limited capital but succeeded in sustaining and expanding through product innovation, packaging, and digital marketing strategies, particularly on TikTok. Although production remains manual, product quality and taste consistency are the main priorities. Family support and entrepreneurial spirit serve as the foundation for maintaining the business. Major challenges include fluctuating raw material prices and limited production tools, which are overcome through adaptation and self-learning. This study demonstrates that simple innovation, strong branding, and digital engagement can be key success factors for local culinary MSMEs in improving market competitiveness. Future support from government training programs and facilities is vital for sustainable business development

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I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play a significant role in supporting economic growth and development both at the national and regional levels. According to Irawan (2018), MSMEs contribute through job creation, production of affordable goods and services for low-income communities, and as potential sources of foreign exchange through non-oil commodities. Recognizing this strategic role, central and regional governments continuously promote the development of MSME sectors through ongoing training and capacity-building programs.

Despite substantial governmental support, program implementation particularly those under the Ministry of Cooperatives and MSMEs continues to face various field-level challenges. In the era of globalization and digitalization, culinary MSMEs encounter the challenge of remaining relevant, competitive, and sustainable. One major issue is the high degree of product homogeneity in the market.

According to Bank Indonesia (2015), MSMEs face several key challenges: (1) limited access to financing, with around 60–70% of MSMEs still unserved by banks; (2) low quality of human resources and reliance on conventional equipment without quality control systems; (3) legal issues, as most MSMEs operate as sole proprietorships; and (4) weak accountability, particularly in financial administration and business management. Traditional food products, though culturally rich, often lack innovation in taste, presentation, or packaging.

Therefore, innovation becomes the key to increasing competitiveness. As Bessant and Tidd (2020) state, innovation in MSMEs need not involve advanced technology; rather, incremental innovation—simple modifications providing real added value—is often more feasible. Moreover, empowering MSMEs to face global competition is essential so that they can survive against imported products. This requires the creation of a favorable domestic investment climate to strengthen local markets (Sudaryanto, 2013).

Lestari and Widayanto (2015) note that competition among MSMEs and large industries is intensifying, especially in innovation, quality, and distribution. Hence, entrepreneurs must create superior products to attract consumers. Sutoni (2018) adds that a region's natural resources can serve as its flagship products, considering factors such as availability, government support, and uniqueness. One such example is the sesame fried banana MSME in Makassar, an innovative take on a traditional snack. Fried bananas are familiar across Indonesia and widely sold by street vendors and MSMEs. However, to stay competitive, innovation is needed to add value and increase appeal.

This study thus aims to explore strategies for developing local culinary MSMEs through a case study of @pisangpunbu, focusing on product innovation, quality management, and social media utilization as marketing channels. The study contributes theoretically to micro-entrepreneurship literature and offers practical insights for MSME owners aiming to strengthen market competitiveness.

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II. BACKGROUND OF THE SESAME FRIED BANANA BUSINESS

@pisangpunbu began as a simple entrepreneurial initiative, initially created for family enjoyment. The owner experimented with making fried bananas topped with sesame as a variation of the common version. Surprisingly, the experiment was well-received by family members and neighbours, inspiring the owner to start selling the product more seriously. The business began at home with minimal capital but a strong determination to grow.

This phenomenon reflects the effectuation approach proposed by Sarasvathy (2015), emphasizing that entrepreneurs do not wait for perfect resources but start from what they already have time, skills, and social networks to create opportunities (Sarasvathy et al., 2020). In Indonesia's MSME context, especially in the food sector, this approach serves as a critical foundation for locally rooted entrepreneurship.

Choosing fried banana as the main product reflects market orientation and value innovation. Recent studies show that innovation in micro-scale food businesses is not dependent on high technology but on creating differentiated value through taste, appearance, and storytelling (Tidd & Bessant, 2020). Fried bananas are popular among all age groups in Makassar, but most vendors sell similar products typically served with chili sauce. The owner of @pisangpunbu introduced sesame-topped fried bananas, adding a distinctive aroma, visual appeal, and savory crunch that differentiates the brand.

The initial capital ranged from Rp500,000 to Rp700,000, used to purchase basic materials (bananas, flour, sesame, cooking oil) and simple tools (containers, packaging, LPG). With limited funds, the owner started small-scale production, gradually promoting the product through social media and direct sales. The initial response was positive, and profits were reinvested into the business.

The owner's guiding principle is to start with what you have and keep learning. This aligns with entrepreneurial learning, described by Rae (2020) as continuous learning through action a key success factor for MSMEs in the digital era. Although still small, the owner remains committed to maintaining product quality, uniqueness, and market reach for sustainable growth.

III. PRODUCTION PROCESS AND PRODUCT INOVATION

Production at @pisangpunbu remains manual and is managed directly by the owner—from selecting ingredients to mixing batter, frying, and packaging. Bananas are chosen based on natural ripeness to ensure sweetness and consistent flavor. Premium sesame is used to produce a distinct fragrance when fried.

Such craft-based production represents artisanal quality valued in today's creative economy. According to Park & Yoon (2020), manual skill-based production enhances sensory quality and provides authentic value appreciated by both local and global consumers. In an era dominated by mass-produced foods, consumers increasingly value handcrafted products with unique stories.

Currently, the available product is the original sesame variant, but the owner is experimenting with new versions, such as caramel-coated sesame fried bananas and frozen products that customers can fry at home. This represents sustained incremental innovation (Bessant & Tidd, 2020), ideal for micro-enterprises with limited resources but a desire to remain market-relevant. Frozen versions also reflect product modularity strategies that expand markets without major production changes (Lee et al., 2019).

The owner maintains strict quality control, measuring ingredients precisely and tasting each production batch to ensure consistent flavor. Despite operating on a small scale, the owner believes quality builds trust and encourages repeat purchases.

IV. MARKETING STRATEGY AND BRANDING

The target market for @pisangpunbu includes all age groups, but the majority of consumers are young people and housewives who enjoy snacks during leisure time. This segment is considered promising due to their openness to new food trends. According to Syahrial & Puspita (2021), younger consumers seek not only good taste but also aesthetic and relatable value—making simple innovations like sesame fried bananas appealing and easily viral on social media. Housewives represent a loyal segment, inclined to repurchase consistent and accessible products (Setyawati & Nugroho, 2020).

For marketing, the owner relies heavily on social media, especially TikTok, for promotion and audience engagement. Uploaded content includes simple production processes, customer testimonials, and daily activities—building emotional connection with followers. Currently, @pisangpunbu's TikTok account has over 2,000 followers, providing significant product exposure. Kusuma & Utomo (2022) note that MSMEs active on TikTok experience faster sales growth than those relying solely on Instagram or Facebook.

Promotional programs such as “buy three, get one free,” special discounts, and incentives for content sharing reflect consumer co-creation strategies (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2018; Aprilia et al., 2023). The owner actively interacts with followers by replying to comments and building a sense of community, turning @pisangpunbu into not just a business but a digital community. This community-based marketing approach strengthens brand identity and organic growth (Rahmadani & Yuliana, 2020).

V. CHALLENGES AND ADAPTATION

The major challenges faced by @pisangpunbu include maintaining operational consistency and product quality amid fluctuating raw material prices and supply issues.

Weather conditions affect banana availability, and price volatility of oil and sesame complicates production planning. These reflect common realities among Indonesian food MSMEs, which are highly vulnerable to supply chain disruptions (Widyastuti & Hartini, 2020).

Internally, maintaining motivation during slow sales periods is also difficult. The owner strives to stay positive, viewing each challenge as a learning opportunity. Rather than seeing other sellers as competitors, they are regarded as motivation to improve quality. According to Neck et al. (2019), such psychological challenges are integral to developing an entrepreneurial mindset a resilient, solution-oriented way of thinking.

Early-stage struggles included low sales and limited market response, requiring exploration to find a sustainable business model (Stokes & Wilson, 2020). The owner learned promotional content strategies and networked with other entrepreneurs, embodying community-based learning, which accelerates innovation for micro-enterprises (Rahman & Prabowo, 2021). Through this approach, @pisangpunbu functions not only as a product-based business but also as a platform for self-development. The combination of quality orientation, experiential learning, and perseverance forms the enterprise's core strength.

VI. SUPPORTS AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Support for @pisangpunbu primarily comes from family and close friends, providing motivation, promotional help, and product advice. Formal assistance from government institutions has not yet been received. As Welter & Baker (2020) note, informal social networks often serve as the main resource for small business resilience when formal support is lacking.

The owner hopes to access entrepreneurial training, mentorship, and financial aid tailored to MSMEs. Medium- and long-term plans include opening a physical store, expanding online sales nationwide, and improving packaging quality for better market presentation.

To scale up operations, key priorities include:

1. Acquiring better production equipment to increase output efficiently.
2. Strengthening promotional activities via social media and influencer collaboration.
3. Enhancing packaging and branding for professional competitiveness in online markets.

Ultimately, the owner envisions elevating @pisangpunbu from a home-based venture to a professional enterprise, while maintaining its signature taste and authenticity. For the owner, entrepreneurship is not merely about profit but about learning, creativity, and realizing personal dreams. True satisfaction comes from customer appreciation and the joy of creating with sincerity. The owner believes one does not need perfect conditions to start a business. Even small, imperfect beginnings can become strong foundations when supported by consistency, gratitude, and a willingness to learn. The message for aspiring entrepreneurs: *start with what you have, keep moving forward, and grow through experience and confidence.*

VII. CONCLUSION

@pisangpunbu exemplifies organic entrepreneurial growth from a household idea into a distinctive culinary brand. By introducing sesame-topped fried bananas, it has captured consumer attention through unique flavor, aroma, and presentation. Manual production reflects the owner's dedication to maintaining quality and consistency. Meanwhile, digital marketing especially on TikTok has significantly boosted visibility and reach. Family support and a strong learning motivation form the foundation of this business. Despite challenges such as limited equipment, fluctuating prices, and lack of external support, the owner demonstrates resilience and adaptability. The enterprise's success lies not only in sales but in customer satisfaction, innovation, and commitment to continuous improvement.

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