

Creative Resilience of Situ Gintung Market Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Post-Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted businesses worldwide, particularly micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). This study explores the creative resilience of MSMEs in Situ Gintung Market, South Tangerang, Indonesia, in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. By examining the strategies employed by these enterprises, this research aims to shed light on their ability to adapt, innovate, and sustain their businesses during and after the crisis. This qualitative study utilizes interviews and observations to collect data from a sample of MSMEs operating in Situ Gintung Market. The findings reveal that these businesses faced multiple difficulties during the pandemic, including reduced customer traffic, supply chain disruptions, and financial constraints. However, the MSMEs demonstrated remarkable creativity and resourcefulness in navigating these challenges. One of the key creative strategies adopted by the MSMEs was diversification. They expanded their product offerings to include essential items, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene products, which were in high demand during the pandemic. This diversification allowed them to tap into new customer segments and maintain revenue streams. Additionally, the MSMEs leveraged technology to adapt to changing consumer behaviours. They swiftly transitioned to online platforms, developing e-commerce websites, and utilizing social media channels to reach customers. By embracing digital solutions, they were able to overcome physical restrictions and expand their market reach beyond the local area. Collaboration emerged as another crucial aspect of creative resilience. The MSMEs formed partnerships and cooperatives within the market, pooling resources and sharing knowledge. These collaborative efforts enabled them to reduce costs, collectively negotiate with suppliers, and collectively market their products and services. Furthermore, the MSMEs engaged in creative marketing techniques to attract customers. They organized virtual events, utilized influencer marketing, and implemented captivating visual displays in their physical stores. These strategies helped create a unique and engaging customer experience, driving footfall and sales. In conclusion, the MSMEs in Situ Gintung Market showcased remarkable creative resilience in response to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Their ability to diversify their product offerings, embrace technology, collaborate, and implement creative marketing techniques played a pivotal role in sustaining their businesses during the crisis. This research highlights

the importance of creativity and innovation in building resilience within MSMEs and provides valuable insights for policymakers, entrepreneurs, and researchers seeking to support and promote the growth of MSMEs post-pandemic.

Keywords: *MSMEs; Situ Gintung Market; Creative Resilience; Post-Covid-19 Pandemic*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of communication and information technology has significantly impacted various aspects of people's lives. Similar to the concept of natural selection, technological progress has gradually replaced outdated methods that are no longer relevant to the current era. One example is the development of marketing models through social media, which has become immensely popular today. The contemporary marketing models heavily leverage social media as the primary platform for product promotion. Social media has become a highly effective mass communication phenomenon, unrestricted by space and time. Watie (2016) describes mass communication as a form of communication that involves a large number of people with extensive reach. For Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), harnessing the power of this new media phenomenon can provide added value.

According to Purnomo (2019), social media and online marketplaces can serve as concepts that facilitate MSMEs in accessing a broader market. However, to leverage this wider market access, MSMEs need to actively utilize social media platforms. Additionally, the strength of MSME products in Indonesia lies in the diversification of products across regions, reflecting cultural diversity. The potential of products stemming from this cultural diversity should be utilized as a unique selling point and branding opportunity. Therefore, this research aims to illustrate and analyze the benefits and advantages of marketing through social media. Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Lestari, Syafaruddin, and Suryana (2020), the use of social media in MSME marketing can enhance brand awareness, reach a broader target market, increase customer interactions, and provide opportunities for more effective promotions. Thus, marketing through social media can provide significant benefits for MSMEs in expanding market reach and strengthening brand image.

Previous research conducted by Permadi et al., as cited in the Journal of Utilizing Social Media as the Primary Platform for MSME Product Marketing, stated that although MSMEs have proven to have resilient capabilities in facing economic crises over a decade ago, it is undeniable that the current Covid-19 pandemic has reduced people's purchasing power. This decline is a result of the majority of the population reducing outside interactions due to government campaigns encouraging them to stay at home and adhere to health protocols, even leading to issues of lockdowns and widespread restrictions. These issues have indirectly caused economic growth stagnation. In such situations, many consumers have shifted towards digital

purchases (Arianto, 2020). Therefore, the development of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) becomes imperative, as they are one of the pillars supporting national economic development. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI, 2020) on MSME performance during the pandemic revealed that 94.69% of businesses experienced a decrease in sales. In terms of sales methods, more than 75% of businesses with offline/physical sales experienced a decline in sales, followed by 40.17% of businesses with online sales, and 39.41% of businesses with both offline and online sales methods.

The government continues to amplify the spirit of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) for both new and established entrepreneurs to transition to digital platforms. However, digital transformation for MSMEs is not always easy. Singgih (2007) found that many MSMEs face difficulties in using and leveraging technology, which remains a crucial issue. This is still relevant today, as data from Bank Indonesia (BI) shows that only 13 percent of the total 64.2 million MSMEs in Indonesia have entered the digital market (Kompas.com, 2021). Thus, there are still many MSMEs in Indonesia that have not adopted digital platforms in their businesses. This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia but is also observed in SMEs in Finland. A lack of knowledge about digital marketing is one of the reasons why a majority of Finnish SMEs studied by Taiminen and Karjaluto stated that SMEs in Finland have not fully utilized the potential of digital media (Taiminen & Karjaluto, 2015). Therefore, the data indicates that many MSMEs in Indonesia and other countries have yet to tap into their full digital potential, especially considering the conditions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic has resulted in numerous changes across various aspects of life. One significant impact is the economic crisis affecting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The challenges of operating businesses during the pandemic have forced many operations to temporarily halt. Throughout the pandemic, there has been a shift in consumer behavior from offline to online for goods and services. This has made it difficult for MSMEs to reach their targets when the economy is disrupted. In facing these changes, MSMEs need to adapt to survive and thrive amidst the "new normal" circumstances.

MSMEs play a crucial role in both local and national economies. Generally, MSMEs serve as key players in economic activities, provide the largest employment opportunities, contribute to local economic development and community empowerment, create new markets and sources of innovation, and contribute to the balance of payments. Moreover, MSMEs have a specific role in generating employment opportunities and income for the poor, distributing income, reducing poverty, and participating in rural economic development. One previous study conducted by Bahtiar, R. A. (2021) titled "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Sector and its Solutions" discusses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the MSME sector in Indonesia and suggests solutions to mitigate these impacts.

Research related to the topic of MSMEs becomes important to conduct given that the Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in late 2019 has become a global problem, including in Indonesia. The impact of this pandemic is felt in various sectors, including the economy, society, and politics. Almost all MSMEs, especially micro-enterprises, face challenges in meeting their obligations to banks. MSMEs that are able to sell online have better resilience compared to those relying solely on offline sales. However, MSMEs are slowly recovering from the pandemic's impact. MSME entrepreneurs are adapting to market developments and starting to pay attention to the management and utilization of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, marketplaces, and others. Currently, MSME entrepreneurs have adapted to the digital ecosystem, which has had a significant impact on their income.

The increase in the number of MSMEs transitioning to the digital realm provides a strong foundation for Indonesia to optimize its digital economic potential. In line with this, the digital economy value in Indonesia is predicted to increase significantly, reaching 8 times its current value within the next 10 years, reaching IDR 4,531 trillion by 2030. However, these efforts require expanding market access, improving the quality of human resources in management and production, and enhancing the quality and quantity of production. With the resurgence of MSMEs, Indonesia's economy will also be driven to develop.

One interesting group of MSMEs to study is the MSMEs in Situ Gintung Market, Ciputat, South Tangerang. Located in a strategic area known as a culinary and souvenir center in South Tangerang, this market has regained its vibrancy after being affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The traders, who are MSME entrepreneurs grouped in an association, have resumed offline activities, including organizing bazaars.

The research question in this study is: What are the creative efforts made by MSME entrepreneurs in Situ Gintung Market, South Tangerang, to survive during and after the Covid-19 pandemic?

The objective of this research is to identify the creative steps taken by MSMEs in Situ Gintung Market when facing the Covid-19 pandemic and during the post-pandemic period.

METHOD

The method used by the researcher in this study is descriptive, with a qualitative approach. The researcher conducted interviews with three MSME entrepreneurs in Situ Gintung Market. Additional sources were obtained through internet searches and literature studies related to similar topics in scholarly journals.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted, starting with several observations at Situ Gintung Market, followed by interviews with key informants who were MSME entrepreneurs at Situ Gintung Market. They were all female, named Achyani Dini (43), Supyarini (63), and Indiana Ayuningtyas (21). On average, they had been running their businesses for 8 years. The clear description is as follows:

NO	Q	A	B	C
		INFORMASI RESPONDEN & UMKM		
1.	Nama	Achyani Dini (43)	SUPYARINI (63)	INDIANA AYUNINGTYAS (21)
2.	Jenis Kelamin	Wanita	Wanita	Wanita
3.	Pendidikan Terakhir	SMA	D3 keperawatan.	SMK
4.	Pekerjaan	Ibu Rumah Tangga	PNS	Usaha Minuman Sehat Beer Peltok
5.	Nama UMKM	The Mada Shop	Rini handycraft	Paguyuban Pasar Gintung
6.	Jenis UMKM	Fashion & Craft	Craft / kriya	Minuman Herbal
7.	Lama melakukan usaha UMKM ini (dalam hitungan tahun)	8 Tahun	8 Tahun	8 Tahun

When asked about their efforts as MSME entrepreneurs during the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the researcher found several unique aspects that differentiated them.

The first question was about how they, as MSME entrepreneurs, used their creativity to face the challenges during the pandemic. The first key informant mentioned that she tried to sustain her business by selling products that were in high demand during the pandemic, such

as masks and mask straps. The second key informant stated that she always aimed to create new innovations, similar to what the third key informant described, which involved offering products both online and offline. They utilized a dedicated Instagram account created by the Situ Gintung Market association, which served as an e-commerce platform for the MSME entrepreneurs.

Regarding the strategies they employed as creative solutions to navigate the economic uncertainty, each of them had different approaches. The first key informant mentioned that she always followed market demand and conducted consumer research to map out their buying

behavior. The second key informant emphasized the importance of maintaining product quality, while the third key informant focused on creating creative content on online platforms, especially TikTok.

As MSME entrepreneurs, all three of them leveraged technology and innovation to optimize their businesses during the pandemic. They utilized social media platforms for selling and advertising their products. They promoted their products on digital platforms, including social media and various MSME communities.

When asked if they took any creative steps to adjust their products or services to the changing market needs, the first key informant mentioned conducting market research and surveys. The second key informant stated that she implemented different and unique discount promotions for each of her products. Meanwhile, the third key informant offered health beverages, specifically "beer pletok," to the community groups she was involved in.

They all utilized social media and digital marketing as creative tools to promote their businesses during the pandemic. They made the most of their own social media accounts and those owned by the Situ Gintung Market association. The second key informant mentioned continually learning and keeping up with the current trends on TikTok, trying new things, and adapting to new digital technologies. The third key informant also mentioned their efforts to explore the TikTok platform, using it as a means of advertising through TikTok Shop or TikTok Live, and reaching out to community groups in Tangsel (South Tangerang).

When the researcher asked for examples of how they creatively developed new products or services in response to emerging demands during the pandemic, the first key informant mentioned that there was high demand for mask straps. Therefore, they created simple video advertisements showcasing different types of mask straps. The second key informant answered similarly, packaging their handicraft products in an appealing manner accompanied by videos. The third informant mentioned that as their products were herbal beverages, they provided testimonials from satisfied customers during the pandemic.

Regarding the adoption of innovative business models to create alternative sources of income during the pandemic, the first key informant mentioned diversifying their business by not only focusing on fashion and crafts but also entering the culinary sector. This means diversifying

their business. The second and third informants emphasized their efforts to create new and innovative products to attract buyers, utilizing the available online media and adapting to the evolving landscape of social media platforms.

From the questions and answers provided, the researcher analyzed using the Social Learning Theory by Alfred Bandura.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) agrees with the beliefs of Behaviorist Learning Theory regarding behavioral changes influenced by external factors and stimuli. However, this theory adds two other elements, namely:

1. The process of knowledge acquisition occurs between stimuli and responses.
2. Behavior is learned from the environment through observational processes.

According to Bandura, the environment shapes a person's behavior, and conversely, behavior shapes the environment. In other words, there is a process in which the world and a person's behavior mutually influence each other.

The researcher observed that the MSME entrepreneurs, who were housewives and civil servants, learned from their social environment separately. With the changes in digital technology, their communication skills were transformed. Initially, they paid little attention to utilizing digital technology and promotional and marketing communication aspects. However, they learned and struggled continuously, even during the post-pandemic period of COVID-19.

Furthermore, the researcher also asked about the collaborations or creative partnerships undertaken by the MSME entrepreneurs to strengthen their competitiveness in the face of the pandemic's impact. The first key informant answered that they employed marketing strategies in collaboration with other MSME entrepreneurs who were involved in related products. The second key informant mentioned collaborating with malls to sell their products with good quality and attractiveness. Meanwhile, the third key informant opted to create new innovations to offer different variations.

When asked about their experiences as MSME entrepreneurs during the pandemic, and how they creatively maintained relationships with customers amidst social restrictions and physical distancing, the key informants answered that they maintained communication at least

once a week. They also focused on maintaining product quality, introducing new innovations, and establishing good relationships with customers to ensure they could still enjoy the products despite physical and social restrictions. This situation initially left the MSME entrepreneurs feeling powerless. However, their sense of powerlessness led to the emergence of creativity, innovation, and a willingness to learn about new developments in the digital communication world, which they had never encountered before. This resilience in creativity emerged as a result.

From their explanations, it is evident that this research has discovered simple yet meaningful findings in the development of research on MSMEs in Indonesia, specifically in Tangerang Selatan, within the UMKM community of Pasar Situ Gintung. Furthermore, the creative opportunities discovered by the MSME entrepreneurs to transform their entire business model in response to the pandemic were embraced. They made efforts to utilize any available opportunity to stay connected and engaged with consumers on social media platforms.

This creative resilience involved the utilization of creativity by MSME entrepreneurs to find new solutions in dealing with disrupted supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic. The key informants consistently updated through social media, staying informed about economic developments, particularly the future of MSMEs amidst the challenging times of the pandemic. They actively sought out better markets, expanded their networks or networking with fellow MSMEs, and for the health beverage business, they implemented strategies to experiment with new variations.

The question regarding whether the MSME entrepreneurs initiated any creative efforts to provide social benefits or assist the community during the pandemic was answered by the first key informant stating that they had not done so. The second key informant mentioned employing housewives or unemployed teenagers to be trained in creating craft products that could be sold and utilized. Meanwhile, the third key informant had not taken any initiatives in this regard.

When asked about financial challenges and how they, as MSME entrepreneurs, overcame them with creative solutions such as accessing capital or diversifying income, the responses were as follows: the first key informant answered that they continued to advertise

and promote their products. The second key informant mentioned that a portion of the income had to be allocated to purchasing raw materials for the products. The third key informant stated that there had been no changes in the past and at present, they merely offered more products.

Regarding creative opportunities, the question asked was whether the MSME entrepreneurs had identified any creative opportunities to leverage new trends or emerging market demands resulting from changes in consumer behavior during the pandemic. All three key informants answered affirmatively, stating that people preferred to shop online.

Exploring the issue of creativity among MSME entrepreneurs in creating unique and distinctive customer experiences within the limited situation caused by the pandemic, different approaches were taken. The first key informant answered negatively, stating that there were no such experiences. The second key informant mentioned persuading buyers or potential customers. Meanwhile, the third informant mentioned attempting to convince consumers that their product was good and then proceeded to create content collaboratively with customers.

Continuing with the question regarding examples of cases in which the MSME entrepreneurs successfully transformed their physical businesses into online businesses or created hybrid business models through creative approaches, the first key informant answered negatively, stating that there were no such cases. The second key informant answered positively, while the third key informant mentioned that there were indeed such cases, as it aligned with the current trend, particularly through the e-commerce platform GO-FOOD.

Towards the end of the interview, the researcher asked how they, as MSME entrepreneurs, overcame barriers or uncertainties in running their businesses with creative solutions. All three informants answered by emphasizing the importance of remaining innovative and optimistic about the quality and success of their products. The third informant also added the importance of maintaining enthusiasm.

The last question was regarding the creative steps taken by the MSME entrepreneurs to strengthen their presence in the local market after the pandemic. The key informants answered by continuing to promote through media, bazaars, and other channels, accompanied by persistence, patience, and maintaining personal interactions. The third key informant added that they personally approached customers to offer their health beverage product, bir pletok, to maintain a sense of community and personal connection. These responses demonstrate the

differences in approaches taken by each MSME business, including cultural or societal considerations.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the three case studies involving MSME entrepreneurs before and after the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that each entrepreneur has employed different communication strategies. Each MSME entrepreneur has their own unique characteristics. The approaches used include interpersonal communication by directly approaching customers, utilizing individual social media platforms, leveraging the social media presence of the UMKM community in Pasar Situ Gintung, and engaging in group communication within the UMKM community. Additionally, participating in bazaars to showcase their products is another strategy adopted. Another significant strategy is adapting to technology by venturing into the digital communication realm, which is completely new to them. However, they have taken these steps to survive the challenging circumstances during the pandemic.

The forms of communication employed include persuasive communication, bringing their products closer to potential customers and consumers, ensuring the sustainability and desirability of their products, and encouraging their consumption or purchase. This demonstrates that while different MSME businesses may operate in similar sectors, their approaches vary significantly, including considerations of culture and tradition such as maintaining the tradition of personal interaction.

An interesting observation made by the researcher is that the MSME entrepreneurs have also learned something new from their changing social environment due to the massive impact of social media during the pandemic. This aligns with Alfred Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which the three key informants from Pasar Situ Gintung effectively implemented by learning to use TikTok as a promotional tool for their products.

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