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Harnessing local creativity for technological advancement: Uncovering MSME innovations rooted in Sumbawa cultural wisdom

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Abstract: This study explores how local creativity and cultural wisdom contribute to strengthening the innovation capacity of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Sumbawa, Indonesia, and identifies strategic approaches to improve their production and marketing performance in the digital era. A qualitative descriptive method was employed, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and direct field observations involving MSME actors, cultural stakeholders, and local government officials. Thematic analysis was conducted using a reflexive approach, and data triangulation was applied to ensure validity and analytical rigor. The findings reveal that the incorporation of cultural elements—such as traditional weaving, herbal products, and culinary heritage—enables MSMEs to create culturally distinctive and market-relevant innovations. Additionally, the use of digital marketing tools, including social media and e-commerce platforms, has helped expand market access and improve consumer engagement. Nevertheless, challenges remain, particularly in terms of digital skills and limited infrastructure. The study concludes that the alignment of cultural identity with innovation-driven strategies, supported by capacity-building and institutional collaboration, enhances the competitiveness and sustainability of rural-based MSMEs. These results offer valuable insights into how traditional knowledge and local resources can be effectively utilized to drive inclusive, culture-based economic development in a globalized context.

Keywords: Cultural wisdom, Local creativity, MSME innovation, Technological advancement.

1. Introduction

In the context of globalization and rapid technological progress, local creativity and cultural wisdom have emerged as critical components in fostering innovation across various sectors. Far beyond their symbolic and historical value, cultural traditions function as dynamic sources of inspiration and strategic assets in addressing contemporary development challenges [1]. Local creativity—embodied in community-based ideas, values, and practices—offers unique potential for technological innovation. For instance, traditional Indonesian arts such as *batik* and *wayang* have inspired modern design patterns and product concepts, illustrating how indigenous knowledge systems can be integrated into advanced technological applications [2]. Establishing synergistic collaborations between traditional cultural knowledge and modern technology is therefore essential. Such integration not only enhances the cultural relevance and sustainability of innovation but also opens new pathways for the development of competitive products and services in the global market [3].

The creative economy subsector plays a significant role in the national economy, contributing 7.44% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 14.28% to employment, and 13.77% to total exports. However, based on a survey conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic among Micro, Small, and Medium

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Enterprises (MSMEs), the findings reveal a sharp disparity in business performance. Only 1.6% of business actors reported an increase in sales turnover of more than 30%, while 2.2% experienced a moderate increase of less than 30%. In contrast, the majority faced a substantial decline: 63.9% of MSMEs experienced a decrease in turnover exceeding 30%, and 31.7% reported a decline of less than 30%. Meanwhile, only 0.6% of respondents indicated no significant change in their business turnover during the pandemic period [4].

The increasingly boundless nature of entrepreneurial creativity has indirectly influenced the optimal utilization of resources, transforming previously non-commercial assets into high economic value commodities [5]. The diverse natural and cultural resources of the Sumbawa region represent a significant competitive advantage that can be leveraged to enhance regional competitiveness [6]. Various sources of capital derived from nature—such as maritime, plantation, agriculture, and mining sectors—are critical factors that can support sustainable economic development. These abundant natural resources have the potential to generate substantial income if managed effectively and efficiently, without resorting to overexploitation. Effective resource management requires strong capabilities in planning, implementation, organization, and supervision, as well as the strategic application of soft skills and human resources, supported by sufficient technological proficiency. Natural resource utilization becomes effective when the outputs align with organizational goals and efficient when those resources are fully utilized without waste. In this context, eco-efficiency emerges as a key principle, emphasizing the sustainable and prudent use of natural materials in production processes that yield economic benefits without causing environmental harm [7].

Small-scale entrepreneurs are widely recognized for producing highly creative products [8]. However, it is undeniable that throughout their business journey, these entrepreneurs often encounter significant challenges—particularly in the current global era—where they face competition from counterparts who are not only innovative and creative but also technologically adept and proficient in information technology. The shift in marketing and promotional strategies from conventional methods to modern approaches, particularly through the use of social media platforms, has significantly enhanced product visibility and consumer reach [9]. This transformation has, in turn, contributed to increased demand and purchasing power in both local and global markets. In marketing communication, the selection of appropriate media for delivering advertising messages plays a vital role. Media choices are typically based on factors such as the type of product, target consumer segments, message delivery strategies, advertising budgets, and cost-efficiency. As a result, digital and online-based media have become essential tools for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in reaching broader audiences, including the possibility of engaging consumers on a more personal level.

MSMEs in Sumbawa offer a diverse range of high-potential products, including a distinctive culinary tourism sector that highlights the unique flavors and presentation styles of Sumbawa's traditional cuisine. These culinary offerings serve as a significant attraction for both local and visiting consumers. However, further attention, structured guidance, and improved stall or space arrangements are needed to enhance the overall appeal and provide a more comfortable experience for visitors. With adequate support in these areas, MSMEs in Sumbawa Regency have the potential to grow not only in terms of production capacity but also in their marketing effectiveness.

Based on the aforementioned issues, this study aims to address two primary research questions. First, how can local creativity and cultural wisdom in Sumbawa be leveraged to strengthen the innovation capacity of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in responding to global competition and technological advancement? Second, what strategic approaches are necessary to enhance the production, marketing, and consumer engagement of MSMEs in Sumbawa, particularly through the optimization of local resources and the use of digital-based promotional strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Creative Economy

The creative economy represents a new wave of economic development that emerged in the early 21st century, where intellectual capital takes precedence over material wealth in generating income, employment opportunities, and overall well-being [4]. At its core, the creative economy is driven by creativity and innovation. The rapid growth of this sector continues to intensify alongside advancements in innovation and the technologies currently in use. This development is closely linked to the quality of human resources who serve as key actors in the creative economy industry—individuals capable of applying, adapting, and combining raw materials and available technologies [10]. The value of this process increases significantly when it involves the use of unique media or materials that are rare and not easily found elsewhere. The distinctiveness of products generated through creative economic processes contributes to higher market value, as they offer unique characteristics that differentiate them from conventional goods [11].

The creative economy has evolved into a significant driver of global economic growth, characterized by the fusion of human creativity, knowledge, technology, and cultural assets [12]. This sector includes a wide range of industries such as arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, software, and digital media, where the economic value is primarily derived from intellectual property and creative content. In 2023, global exports of creative services reached \$1.5 trillion, more than doubling the \$677 billion from creative goods, indicating a sharp global demand for creative services, especially in software, R&D, and digital content [13].

The development of the creative economy is closely tied to digital transformation and the increasing use of artificial intelligence in content creation and distribution. These technologies enable creators to access broader markets and engage global audiences more effectively [14]. However, they also raise concerns related to intellectual property rights, privacy, and equitable access, highlighting the need for robust regulatory frameworks.

Furthermore, the creative economy contributes significantly to inclusive and sustainable development by supporting cultural diversity and generating employment. As Rodríguez-Insuasti, et al. [13] note, integrating creative industries into national development strategies not only promotes innovation but also empowers local economies, particularly through micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) that harness local knowledge and cultural heritage.

2.2. Innovation in the Creative Economy

Innovation plays a pivotal role in the creative economy, particularly in enhancing the competitiveness of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In Indonesia, product innovation has been identified as a key driver for MSMEs aiming to expand into international markets [15]. Highlights that MSMEs in the creative sector can significantly benefit from product innovation, effective marketing strategies, and collaborations with creative industries to support their international expansion.

The digital era has introduced both opportunities and challenges for MSMEs in Indonesia. Innovation, particularly in the realms of product and process improvements, has emerged as a crucial factor in enabling MSMEs to remain competitive [16]. Conducted a study exploring how innovation drives competitiveness in MSMEs, focusing on the impact of digital transformation on their business practices. Their findings reveal that innovation, particularly through digital adoption, significantly enhances MSME competitiveness by improving efficiency, customer engagement, and market reach.

Furthermore, the integration of technology with creativity, termed "createch," is revolutionizing fields like gaming, fashion, and education. A report by the UK government indicates that the fusion of creativity and technology has the potential to generate significant economic value and create numerous new jobs [17]. However, the industry faces challenges from under-investment in education, funding difficulties, and insufficient public research and development spending.

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2.3. Technology Development

The rapid development of technology has had a transformative impact on various sectors, including manufacturing, healthcare, and infrastructure. In the context of Industry 4.0, the integration of digital technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), big data, cloud computing, blockchain, and artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally altered traditional business models and operational processes [17]. Conducted a systematic review highlighting the key role of these technologies in enhancing sustainability and efficiency, particularly in transportation construction projects. Their study emphasizes the need for standardization and a collaborative human-technology approach to fully leverage the potential of Industry 4.0 technologies in achieving sustainability goals.

Explored the role of smart manufacturing technologies, concluding that their implementation leads to increased operational efficiency and improved product quality [14]. Reviewed the literature on environmentally sustainable software design and development, identifying guidelines and techniques to reduce energy consumption and carbon footprints in software applications [18]. Their findings call for integrating sustainability considerations into the software development lifecycle to mitigate the environmental impact of digital technologies.

2.4. Culture of Sumbawa

Geographically, Sumbawa Regency is situated in a strategically advantageous position, located within the tourism "golden triangle" connecting the islands of Bali, Lombok, and Komodo. The regency is endowed with abundant natural resources, including fertile agricultural and livestock land, and has been designated as a rice granary and livestock development area within West Nusa Tenggara Province. In addition, it possesses significant forest resources, biodiversity in terms of flora and fauna, as well as mineral wealth such as gold and copper. The region also holds potential in industrial sectors and marine resources, with a coastline extending approximately 900 kilometers [19]. The total land area of the regency covers 8,493 km², while its maritime area spans 4,912.46 km². The total population is 452,746, consisting of 228,717 males and 224,029 females. Indigenous Sumbawa ethnic groups constitute approximately 68.66% of the population, while the remaining residents come from various ethnic backgrounds, including Balinese, Sasak (Lombok), Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, Mbojo (Bima/Dompu), Buginese, Makassarese, Minangkabau, Sumbanese/Timorese, and Arab communities.

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Sumbawa play a crucial role in sustaining the local economy by contributing significantly to job creation, poverty alleviation, and the optimal utilization of local resources. These enterprises are characterized by their strong integration of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage, with many leveraging traditional skills such as weaving, culinary arts, herbal medicine, and handicrafts to produce unique, value-added products. The incorporation of cultural elements into business practices provides Sumbawan MSMEs with a distinct competitive edge, especially in niche markets that appreciate authenticity and local identity [20].

The entrepreneurial values of the Sumbawan people are rooted in local wisdom, guided by the cultural-religious philosophy of *Syara' Barenti ko Kitabullah*, which promotes a harmonious balance between customary law, Islamic teachings, and the Qur'an. This integration reinforces ethical business conduct and community-based entrepreneurship in the region [21].

Furthermore, Probosari, et al. [22] emphasize the importance of knowledge management in strengthening competitive strategies among traditional weaving MSMEs in Sumbawa. Their findings reveal that effective organizational design and knowledge-based practices significantly enhance differentiation and cost leadership, empowering local enterprises to innovate while preserving cultural identity. Despite these advantages, MSMEs in Sumbawa face considerable challenges, including limited access to capital, inadequate infrastructure, low digital literacy, and limited market exposure. Many MSMEs remain informal and lack structured business planning or digital marketing strategies, hindering their potential for broader market expansion.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach with a case study design. A qualitative approach was chosen as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the integration of local cultural wisdom and innovation in MSMEs. The case study design is appropriate as it facilitates the examination of real-world phenomena within their specific context [23].

The population for this study consists of all MSMEs in Sumbawa that incorporate local cultural wisdom into their products and business practices. Using purposive sampling, the study selects 15 MSMEs from diverse sectors such as culinary, handicrafts, weaving, and herbal medicine, which integrate cultural elements as a primary value proposition and innovation in their business processes. This sampling method is suitable for obtaining insights from individuals with relevant expertise and experiences [24].

Data will be collected through multiple methods: 1) Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with 15 key informants, including MSME owners, local cultural leaders (*adat leaders*), and government officials involved in local economic development and tourism. These interviews aim to gather in-depth information on how MSMEs in Sumbawa integrate cultural wisdom into product innovation and marketing strategies [25]. 2) Participatory Observation: Direct observations will be conducted in selected MSMEs to analyze how cultural elements are applied in production, branding, and consumer interaction [26]. 3) Document Analysis: Secondary data will be gathered from government reports, policy documents, and academic publications related to local economic development, MSME support, and creative industries.

Purposive sampling will be employed to select informants who have deep knowledge of local culture and are directly involved in MSMEs that integrate cultural elements into their products and business operations. This sampling technique ensures that the informants are relevant to the study's objectives [24].

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, a method outlined by Braun and Clarke [27]. The analysis process will include the following steps: 1) Familiarization with the data: Reviewing and reading the interview and observation data. 2) Coding: Identifying relevant segments of data and categorizing them into major themes such as *cultural-based innovation*, *local wisdom*, and *digital marketing strategies*. 3) Theme development: Organizing the identified codes into themes that can address the research questions. 4) Verification and validation: Member checking will be conducted by sending a summary of the interview results to the participants for confirmation and ensuring the accuracy of data interpretation.

Based on the data analysis, strategic approaches to improve the production, marketing, and consumer engagement of MSMEs in Sumbawa will be developed. These strategies will focus on: 1) Optimizing Local Resources: Examining how MSMEs can maximize the utilization of local natural resources and cultural elements in creating innovative products with a competitive edge. 2) Digital-Based Promotion: Identifying how MSMEs in Sumbawa can use digital platforms to expand their markets, increase consumer engagement, and improve their competitiveness in the global market.

The study will adhere to ethical considerations such as providing clear information to participants, ensuring confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent prior to data collection. Ethical guidelines will be followed to ensure participants' rights and privacy are respected throughout the study.

4. Discussion of the Result

Discussion on How Can Local Creativity and Cultural Wisdom in Sumbawa Be Utilized to Strengthen the Innovation Capacity of MSMEs in Facing Global Competition and Technological Advancements.

The research findings reveal that local creativity and cultural wisdom play a pivotal role in enhancing the innovation capacity of MSMEs in Sumbawa. The integration of local culture, traditional knowledge, and indigenous practices into business processes offers several advantages in responding to global competition and technological advancements;

Cultural Integration in Product Development: Many MSMEs in Sumbawa have successfully integrated local cultural elements into their products. For instance, traditional crafts like weaving, batik, and wood carving are not only preserved but also innovatively adapted for modern markets. These unique products, which carry cultural and historical significance, allow MSMEs to differentiate themselves in the global market. Local culinary arts, such as Sumbawa's traditional food, have also been transformed into marketable products, such as packaged food for tourists, thereby combining local cultural identity with innovation to meet consumer demand.

Utilization of Indigenous Knowledge for Innovation: Indigenous knowledge related to agriculture, herbal medicine, and sustainable resource management has been effectively applied in various sectors. For example, local MSMEs producing herbal cosmetics and natural wellness products leverage the rich biodiversity of Sumbawa to create high-quality, environmentally friendly products. The application of such knowledge allows MSMEs to offer products that appeal to the growing global demand for sustainability, organic goods, and traditional healing methods. By incorporating such wisdom into product innovation, MSMEs in Sumbawa are able to maintain a competitive edge in both local and international markets.

Technology Adoption: The research further identifies that MSMEs in Sumbawa are increasingly adopting digital technologies to support their business operations. Many businesses, especially in the handicraft and food sectors, have utilized social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) to promote their products. These platforms allow MSMEs to connect with a wider audience, not just locally but globally, ensuring their products reach a diverse market segment. Additionally, the use of e-commerce platforms helps MSMEs scale their operations beyond the local market. This technological integration, when combined with cultural elements, has proved to be an effective strategy to boost innovation and global competitiveness.

Utilization of Local Resources by MSMEs in Sumbawa.				
Resource Type	Examples of Use	Impact on MSMEs	Challenges Faced	
Agricultural Products	Rice, corn, vegetables, and fruits	Creation of processed organic food products for local & export markets	Limited access to modern farming techniques and equipment	
Marine Resources	Fish, seaweed, coral, and other marine products	Development of seafood products, eco-tourism activities	Overfishing and environmental degradation	
Herbal and Medicinal Plants	Aloe vera, turmeric, ginger, and other herbs	Production of herbal medicines, cosmetics, and wellness products	Lack of large-scale production facilities	
Handicrafts	Traditional weaving, wood carving, batik, and pottery	High-value local products marketed to global consumers	Limited marketing skills and lack of international networks	

Table 1.

As indicated in Table 1 MSMEs in Sumbawa have made considerable strides in utilizing local agricultural and marine resources to create value-added products. However, there are challenges such as limited access to advanced production technologies and environmental sustainability concerns that need to be addressed.

Discussion on Strategic Approaches Are Necessary to Improve Production, Marketing, and Consumer Engagement for MSMEs in Sumbawa, Specifically in Optimizing Local Resources and Digital-Based Promotion Strategic approaches to improving production, marketing, and consumer engagement for MSMEs in Sumbawa. The findings suggest that MSMEs can benefit from specific strategies aimed at enhancing their operational efficiency, market reach, and consumer relations;

Optimizing Local Resources: MSMEs in Sumbawa are well-positioned to optimize local resources, such as agricultural products, natural materials, and marine resources. However, the research identifies a need for more efficient resource management practices. For instance, local farmers and fishermen can collaborate with MSMEs to create sustainable, value-added products. One example is the creation of processed seafood or organic agricultural products that cater to health-conscious consumers. Additionally, utilizing locally sourced materials for handicrafts and textiles not only preserves local culture but also supports sustainable development. MSMEs that focus on sourcing materials locally can lower production costs, reduce environmental impact, and create products with higher local value.

Digital-Based Promotion: Digital marketing strategies have proven to be vital for MSMEs in expanding their reach. The research shows that many businesses in Sumbawa are already leveraging platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to promote their products. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in terms of digital literacy and marketing techniques. To enhance the visibility of MSMEs, more training and workshops on digital marketing and e-commerce could be provided. Furthermore, MSMEs should take advantage of online marketplaces to access broader markets. By creating attractive, easy-to-navigate online stores, MSMEs can engage with both local and international customers, offering convenience and accessibility.

Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration: Another significant finding is that strategic partnerships with local tourism agencies, cultural organizations, and other stakeholders can significantly boost MSME visibility and product demand. For example, joint marketing efforts between MSMEs and tourism agencies could lead to the creation of cultural tourism packages that incorporate local crafts, food, and experiences. This not only helps to market MSMEs' products but also creates a larger ecosystem for cultural and economic development. Collaborative efforts also foster resource sharing, joint branding, and community engagement, all of which contribute to the growth of MSMEs in Sumbawa.

Engaging Consumers Through Storytelling and Brand Identity: One of the most effective ways to engage consumers is through storytelling. By emphasizing the rich cultural heritage behind their products, MSMEs in Sumbawa can build strong emotional connections with consumers. Telling the story of how a product is made, the traditions it represents, and the artisans who create it can be a powerful marketing tool. This approach not only promotes the uniqueness of local products but also fosters consumer loyalty and advocacy. Additionally, the creation of a strong brand identity rooted in local culture helps MSMEs stand out in the marketplace, which is critical for attracting both local and international consumers.

Platform/ Strategy	Purpose	Number of MSMEs Using	Effectiveness	Challenges
Instagram	Product promotion, building brand identity	45% of MSMEs	Increased visibility and consumer engagement	Limited digital marketing skills and content creation
Facebook	Networking, customer interaction, and product advertising	40% of MSMEs	Enhanced customer base, ability to target global audiences	Difficulty in managing ad budgets and measuring ad performance
E-commerce Platforms	Selling products online, reaching international markets	30% of MSMEs	Increased sales, access to international markets	High competition, logistical challenges in shipping abroad
WhatsApp Business	Customer service, direct communication	35% of MSMEs	Improved customer service and sales conversion rates	Limited features for larger businesses, reliance on mobile phones
TikTok	Engaging younger audiences, viral marketing	10% of MSMEs	Ability to create viral content, expanding reach	Difficulty in content creation, lack of understanding of platform dynamics

 Table 2.

 Digital Marketing Strategies Adopted by MSMEs in Sumbawa.

According to Table 2, a significant number of MSMEs are already adopting social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to promote their products. The use of e-commerce platforms also allows MSMEs to reach global markets, though they face challenges related to competition and logistics.

MSMEs in Sumbawa can improve their production, marketing, and consumer engagement by focusing on optimizing local resources, adopting digital marketing strategies, forming strategic partnerships, and using storytelling to connect with their consumers. These approaches will enable MSMEs to scale their operations, expand their market reach, and enhance their competitiveness in a globalized world.

Table 3.

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Strategic Approaches to	improve r roduction	and marketing.

Strategic Approach	Focus Area	Example from MSMEs in Sumbawa	Outcome
Optimizing Local Resources	Sourcing materials locally	Collaboration with local farmers for organic products	Increased product quality, reduced production costs
Digital Marketing & E- commerce	Promotion and sales channels	Launching Instagram and Facebook ads for local handicrafts	Increased sales, broader market reach
Strategic Partnerships	Collaboration with tourism & cultural sectors	Partnering with travel agencies to offer cultural experiences and products	Expanded market opportunities, increased product exposure
Storytelling & Brand Identity	Building emotional connection with consumers	Highlighting traditional Sumbawan cultural heritage through product packaging and marketing	Increased brand loyalty and consumer engagement

Able 3 reveals that MSMEs can significantly benefit from optimizing local resources, leveraging digital platforms, forming strategic partnerships, and developing a strong brand identity. These strategies collectively enhance the production capacity, marketing effectiveness, and consumer engagement of MSMEs.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the integration of local creativity and cultural wisdom significantly enhances the innovation capacity of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Sumbawa, particularly in the face of global competition and technological advancement. By embedding traditional knowledge, indigenous practices, and cultural identity into product development and branding, MSMEs are able to create unique, value-added products that resonate with market demands for authenticity, sustainability, and differentiation. The adoption of digital technologies—such as social media, ecommerce platforms, and mobile-based communication—has further amplified the visibility and market reach of these enterprises. Strategic approaches, including the optimization of local resources, digitalbased promotion, cross-sector collaboration, and culturally rooted storytelling, have proven effective in strengthening production, marketing, and consumer engagement. However, to fully realize this potential, challenges such as limited digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient institutional support must be addressed through coordinated efforts among stakeholders. Overall, MSMEs in Sumbawa hold strong potential to drive inclusive and culturally grounded economic development by aligning local creative assets with innovation-driven strategies in the global digital economy.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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