Empowering micro-entrepreneurs through community communication networks in Pangandaran's tourism sector

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ABSTRACT

Though micro-MSMEs are being more acknowledged as important engines of local economic growth, especially in tourism-oriented areas, there is still little knowledge of how community communication networks operate as tools of social empowerment, especially in settings characterized by internal migration, digital inequality, and resource asymmetry. This paper looks at how such networks enable indigenous and migrant micro-MSME players in Pangandaran, a fast-growing coastal tourism area in Indonesia. The study uses a qualitative case study method to grasp the complexity of community dynamics set against the background of unequal access to resources and possibilities among commercial actors. Data were gathered using in-depth interviews with 20 key informants and 4 community representatives, supplemented by participant observation and community document analysis. The research found, via thematic analysis, that communication networks are also platforms for empowerment by means of training, resource access, and social solidarity in addition to channels for corporate information exchange and promotion. Especially during the COVID-19 crisis, when tactics like product diversification and internet marketing became vital, these networks have supported corporate adaptation. Still, there are ongoing issues, including low digital literacy, unequal information access, and intra-community conflicts hindering group development. The results highlight the need to enhance community capacities by means of inclusive communication policies, digital literacy projects, and conflict resolution tools. Local governments, community-based organizations, and legislators trying to create strong and inclusive economic ecosystems in tourism-dependent areas will find these ideas useful.

Keywords: coastal tourism, community communication networks, digital literacy, micro SMEs, social empowerment

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INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have long been recognized as one of the mainstays of national economic growth in many developing nations, including Indonesia (Novitasari, 2022). Their influence goes beyond job creation and rising Gross Domestic Product (GDP); they also promote social stability and grassroots economic independence. In the tourism industry, MSMEs play even more important roles as drivers of creative economies based on local identity and regional potential in addition to being service providers and cultural preservers (Mere et al., 2023). Tourism-driven MSMEs are crucial drivers of transformation in archipelagic countries like Indonesia, where regional development inequalities are prevalent. Tourism not only propels economic expansion but also encourages entrepreneurship, infrastructure development, and cultural interaction. But especially in places where the tourism sector interacts with internal migration, local customs, and unequal access to opportunity, this change process is seldom equal or linear.

Pangandaran Regency in West Java is one such example. Known for its ecological beauty and well-liked sites, including Pangandaran Beach, Green Canyon, and Batu Karas, the area has seen a fast increase in micro-enterprises in tourism-related industries like culinary services, homestays, handicrafts, and local transportation. A distinctive characteristic of Pangandaran's MSME scene is the coexistence of local business owners and migrant immigrants, who can vary in access to resources, social capital, and business tactics. This results in a vibrant socio-economic system where cooperation and rivalry happen at the same time. Community communication networks—both formal and informal channels used to share knowledge, foster trust, market goods, and access possibilities—lie at the center of these entrepreneurial dynamics. Although these networks help people engage in economic activity, they also reflect and support current disparities. According to Adawiyah (2016), the social standing of an entrepreneur influences their integration into more general economic systems and access to empowerment projects. Although such networks can be empowering, especially for those without institutional support, they may also marginalize people not rooted in dominant local systems.

An increasing amount of research backs the need for communication in community empowerment and development. Hayati (2010) emphasizes the need for participatory communication in promoting sustainable local development. Social networks and personal communication, according to Liu et al. (2021), are also crucial in enhancing group identity and social capacity. These studies, on the other hand, mostly ignore how variations in entrepreneurial background, such as being a local vs a newcomer, affect access to and use of communication networks in tourism sectors. Unlike Liu et al.'s emphasis on cohesion, the present work highlights intra-community diversity and demonstrates how it generates uneven communication flows and fragmented empowerment results. Furthermore, most development communication research has not adequately covered the micro-level dynamics of community networks in post-crisis tourist environments. Entrepreneurs in Pangandaran have had to deal with natural disasters like the 2006 tsunami as well as worldwide upheavals like the COVID-19 epidemic. Under such circumstances, community communication networks are vital for emotional support, strategic adaptation, and resource sharing; they are more than just information channels. Knowing these roles helps guide local policy initiatives to strengthen economic resilience in communities reliant on tourism.

Empirical results from in-depth interviews with MSME players in Pangandaran reveal that these networks not only give business information but also social anchors that offer emotional security and promote involvement in the community. Community connections help local businesses—like souvenir sellers, snack makers, and stick craftsmen—gain training, marketing

prospects, and larger company networks. On the other hand, newcomers—like restaurant owners or fish floss makers—often depend more on peer assistance among fellow migrants, particularly because of challenges accessing local groups or formal programs. This paradox highlights a larger trend: local players are more ingrained in offline, traditional networks, usually depending on word-of-mouth (WOM) and market ties. By use of WhatsApp, Instagram, and Shopee, migrant business owners demonstrate more digital agility and reach extension. These variations draw attention to both generational and technological gaps, hence underlining the need for varied empowerment approaches depending on degrees of digital literacy, institutional confidence, and access to communication infrastructure.

Still, digital adaptation is inconsistent. Though the digital economy offers visibility and scalability, not all business owners gain equally. Local MSME players are disproportionately affected by structural hurdles such as insufficient digital infrastructure, low literacy, and restricted internet access. According to Kumar et al. (2024), socio-demographic factors and infrastructure preparedness usually decide ICT adoption in MSMEs. Therefore, projects for community empowerment ought to include focused computer literacy courses to bridge this disparity. Beyond digital hurdles, socio-cultural dynamics also influence the effectiveness of empowerment initiatives. Although inclusivity is sometimes stressed, the reality on the ground is one of in-group bias, knowledge hoarding, and hidden conflicts. Cultural values, as Iskandarini (2014) points out, can either support or hinder empowerment depending on whether solidarity is enhanced or shattered. Tensions between locals and migrants, especially in shared commercial areas, can foster distrust and limit cooperation in Pangandaran. This fits Fernández-Salinero & de la Riva (2014), who discovered that opinions of injustice in resource allocation could shatter community solidarity.

This study thus aims to look at how community communication networks provide social empowerment for local and migrant micro-MSME players in Pangandaran. This study investigates how communication practices influence access, cooperation, and resilience inside a culturally varied tourism sector using a qualitative descriptive method guided by ethnography of communication. The research adds fresh ideas to the areas of development communication, grassroots entrepreneurship, and inclusive policy design, providing useful consequences for other communities under social complexity, negotiating economic transformation.

These results highlight a vital understanding: community communication networks are not just enablers of economic activity but also venues for social negotiation where inclusion and exclusion are always under question. The study, therefore, emphasizes the need to create empowerment models that not only give access to resources but also mediate social issues and repair trust gaps between different players. Given these empirical and theoretical factors, the current work aims to address the following essential question: Particularly in light of the variety in origin and digital capacity, how do community communication networks support the social empowerment of micro MSME players in Pangandaran's tourism industry? A qualitative descriptive method supplemented by the ethnography of communication and narrative research answers this question. The study shows how social meanings, strategies, and identities are formed in the context of tourism entrepreneurship by hearing the lived experiences of MSME players.

The peculiarity of this study is in its attempt to combine viewpoints from community communication, digital literacy, and social empowerment to offer a comprehensive knowledge of MSME dynamics in a tourism-dependent economy. Although other studies have sought to separate these aspects, this one provides a holistic and context-sensitive examination of how, depending on their structure and access, communication networks can either empower or marginalize. The work

thus adds to the more general body of knowledge on community-based economic resilience and development communication. Practically, the study provides evidence-based advice for local governments, community organizations, and tourism stakeholders trying to promote inclusive and flexible local economies. This involves establishing communication forums to reduce intergroup conflicts, supporting cooperative platforms, and funding local digital literacy initiatives. The final goal is to assist the development of strong, communicative, and cohesive MSME communities able to flourish under social and economic transformation.

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative study employing the case study technique from Creswell & Poth (2018) was used for this work. Researchers may investigate the phenomenon of social empowerment in micro MSME communities in the Pangandaran tourism area using the case study method. This method allows researchers to comprehensively grasp different activities, social relationships, communication patterns, and the difficulties communities experience in the context of their actual lives.

Using purposive sampling, the study participants were chosen considering various criteria: micro MSME actors actively involved in business in the Pangandaran tourist area, directly connected to the local community and newcomers, and who have experienced business dynamics before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The informants were local business individuals from many different professions, including souvenir merchants, stick artisans, small food stall operators, clothes merchants, and tour service providers. From the migrant group, the informants were tour service managers from outside Pangandaran, accessory merchants, fish floss makers, vegetable wholesalers, and Padang restaurant proprietors. Bringing the total amount of critical informants to 20, 10 informants represented each of these groups. Furthermore, to improve the validation of data on community dynamics, further interviews were held with local community members, including Kompepar, the Baraya community, HPAT, and PEPES, with one representative each.

In-depth interviews using semi-structured guidelines meant to investigate in-depth the informants' personal experiences about community dynamics, communication patterns, roles in empowerment, and barriers and challenges encountered in business activities constituted the data collecting process in this study. Apart from thorough interviews, the researcher also did participant observations to get a true image of social interactions, promotional activities, and members' engagement in different community activities. Community papers, including activity brochures, WhatsApp group discussions, social media, and community reports, added more data to help clarify the context of the information gathered from interviews and observations.

Data collection's endpoint was decided in this study using the concept of data saturation (Bajari, 2015). Data saturation is said to be reached when the data gathered from informants no longer offers fresh and repetitive information. In-depth interviews with 20 key informants and additional interviews with four community representatives helped this study reach the saturation threshold. Two qualitative research specialists examined the interview guide for validity and piloted it with two non-sample MSME participants to guarantee clarity, cultural sensitivity, and relevance before official data gathering. Every participant gave informed consent; all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to maintain answer richness and accuracy. The data collecting method ran on until theoretical saturation—the point at which no fresh topics or pertinent information appeared. Team talks and memo writing verified saturation by regularly

spotting repetition in participants' narratives about communication techniques, empowering experiences, and encountered hurdles.

Thematic analysis, following Braun & Clarke (2006), was used for data analysis. This approach was selected since it allows for thorough and methodical exploration, identification, and presentation of meaning patterns from qualitative data. Starting with familiarisation with the data via interview transcription, identification of initial codes, formulation of initial themes, review of themes based on the research data as a whole, definition and naming of agreed themes, and writing of a narrative and interpretive analysis report, thematic analysis comprises several stages. These themes were not pre-defined but emerged inductively through close engagement with the data, supported by triangulation with observation notes and community documents. The final thematic framework served as the foundation for the presentation and discussion of the research findings. A table of the key themes from data analysis, which will serve as a guide in the conversation on the research outcomes, follows.

Table 1. Categorisation of themes

Main Theme	Sub Theme
Community Communication Network	Business information exchange, business promotion, interpersonal communication
Social Empowerment Activities	Business training, capital and marketing support, social solidarity
Adaptation and Resilience Strategies	Post-pandemic business adaptation, coping with economic crisis, social media utilisation
Structural and Cultural Barriers	Limited access to information, low digital literacy, rivalry in the community

Source: Researcher's analysis

Considering the primary research question—specifically, how community communication networks influence the social empowerment of local micro MSME actors and newcomers in the Pangandaran tourist area—these themes will serve as the foundation for the presentation of the findings and discussion of the study.

The researcher applied a data triangulation approach in this study to guarantee the quality and trustworthiness of the analytical findings. There were many different types of triangulation, including source triangulation and method triangulation. Comparing data from in-depth interviews with local MSME actors and newcomers with the findings of interviews with other informants from related communities allowed for source triangulation. Combining interview data with participant observations and community documentation, including WhatsApp group discussions, community social media, and pertinent activity documents, produces method triangulation. This triangulation technique guarantees that the data shown is not only personal opinion but rather a deeper, objective truth on the function of community communication networks in the social empowerment of MSME players in the Pangandaran tourism area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Community Communication Network as a Forum for Information Exchange, Business Promotion, and Interpersonal Communication

The study results indicate that local micro MSME players and newcomers to the Pangandaran tourism area exchange information and business development activities mostly

through community communication networks, which therefore play a major role. Relevant communication theories are applied in this regard to examine how the MSME community in Pangandaran generates shared meaning, solidarity, and emotional attachment through intensive communication activities among its members (Craig, 1999; Griffin, 2012; Petrick et al., 2004; West & Turner, 2010).

Interviews with micro MSME players from both local groups and newcomers show that most business people get vital information about business prospects, exhibitions, training programs, and government support schemes mostly via informal community-based communication channels. For example, local trader community WhatsApp group chats are often used by groups of souvenir merchants to exchange tourism event schedules, organize promotional discounts, and spread information about social activities. Particularly in organizing cooperative promotional activities and negotiating bureaucratic processes, this informal digital arena has become a vital communication infrastructure complementing face-to-face encounters.

Migrant business actors—such as restaurant owners and vegetable wholesalers—also rely much on informal networks, particularly among other migrants, to obtain knowledge about affordable suppliers, larger marketing possibilities, and local regulatory information. What stands out, though, is the multi-functional character of social media platforms—especially WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook—which are digital venues for community-building and social solidarity as well as marketing tools.

For many MSME players, WhatsApp is more than a commercial coordination tool; it provides a platform for emotional support, reminders about communal prayer or cultural festivities, and fast response during crises like illness or unexpected company closures. In this regard, WhatsApp groups strengthen a feeling of shared duty and mutual care, particularly between elder local traders and younger migrant businesspeople who perhaps lack strong family links in the area. On the other hand, Facebook and Instagram let micro-business owners market their goods outside the local area while also building community awareness. For instance, when one MSME player shares another's goods on Facebook posts or Instagram stories, this behavior is usually returned as part of a reciprocal upliftment culture. These exchanges increase visibility as well as personal connections, hence generating a networked solidarity beyond background or origin distinctions.

These digital contacts in reality close distances between local players and newcomers, hence lowering social distance and promoting inclusive involvement in the economic life of the community. Though they were not originally from Pangandaran, several informants said that by participating in social media discussions, they began to feel more accepted and supported. Therefore, social media is a virtual community center and a digital marketplace where relationships of trust, compassion, and reciprocity are nurtured together with commercial growth.

This fact is relevant to Rogers' (2014) innovation diffusion theory, which holds that community networks are a key way to hasten the spread of innovation information, both in the form of products, marketing strategies, and the adoption of digital media in entrepreneurship. Business people learn new information about digital promotion techniques via social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, as well as online marketplaces like Tokopedia and Shopee, by means of interpersonal interactions in the community (Lim & Chung, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Particularly in confronting social changes brought about by economic digitalisation, this expertise therefore becomes a provision for MSME players in raising corporate competitiveness.

Results of field observations further indicate that micro MSME players are positively influenced by community-based marketing communication. Community-based word-of-mouth

(WOM) techniques prove to be a successful way to present services or items to visitors. Given its great credibility, Kotler & Keller (2006) argue that WOM is one of the most trusted kinds of marketing communication by consumers, so this community-based marketing communication fits this perspective. For Pangandaran MSMEs, this approach not only increases market reach but also fosters more consumer loyalty than traditional promotional tactics done separately.

From the standpoint of digital entrepreneurship, the results of this study are pertinent to the idea of digital entrepreneurship suggested by Kraus et al. (2023). Some newcomers to MSMEs in Pangandaran were found to have greater digital literacy than local players, hence they are faster to use social media in their marketing efforts. MSME players develop a social learning process in their community, which gives the group a special vitality. Local organizations that were first unacquainted with digital platforms started to be motivated to attempt to adapt after witnessing the success of newcomers who utilized social media. In keeping with Giddens' (1984) theory of social change, this occurrence shows a slow process of social change in which interaction between various social groups can be a catalyst for the adaptation of new behaviour (Tucker, 1998).

The study's findings, meanwhile, revealed disparities in the use of digital communication networks between local groups and migrants. Among local MSMEs, the common barriers are low digital literacy and poor communication technology infrastructure (Kumar et al., 2024). These difficulties, according to this report, suggest the necessity for intervention in the shape of community-organized intensive digital literacy training and local government. Conversely, migrant MSME players with greater digital literacy confront difficulties in the shape of small local social networks that require more work to establish local customer confidence.

Research findings on the subject of community communication networks generally indicate that community communication in the Pangandaran tourism region is a strategic medium in local social and economic development as well as a platform for the sharing of business information. Activities of communication in the micro-MSME community generate a space for constructive social interaction that can inspire the development of cooperative promotion ideas, creative information interchange, and social solidarity among its members.

These results lead one to believe that community communication networks play a major role in empowering micro MSMEs, particularly in motivating local business actors and newcomers to adjust to the difficulties of marketing digitalisation and the continuous socio-economic changes. Increasing the communication ability of the community, both by enhancing digital literacy and establishing inclusive and fair social networks, would help to continue this beneficial effect.

Social Empowerment Activities through Training, Capital and Marketing Support, and Social Solidarity in the MSME Community

Research findings show that social empowerment projects in the MSME sector of Pangandaran's tourist area are not only programmatic but also naturally arise from the community itself via activities including entrepreneurial training, capital and marketing platform access facilitation, and social solidarity reinforcement, especially between local business actors and migrant newcomers. Particularly in crisis times, these projects are not only essential in improving technical skills and market exposure but also very helpful in promoting adaptable tactics and corporate resilience.

Among the most notable ways to empower people is entrepreneurial training. Planned by local communities in partnership with government agencies, NGOs, and tourism cooperatives (e.g., Kompepar and HPAT), such training sessions emphasize digital marketing strategies, financial management, product packaging, and crisis-response tactics. In-depth interviews showed

that both local and newcomer MSME players found these initiatives beneficial not just for developing technical skills but also for enhancing entrepreneurial attitude and mental preparation, particularly during the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 epidemic.

Studies like Wahyudin (2012) and Subekti et al. (2022) reinforce the need for regular and contextualized training by underlining the influence of community-led entrepreneurship education in strengthening local economic resilience. Moreover, Putra & Isnawijayani (2025) found that training oriented on social media marketing greatly helps to increase MSME market reach and income, hence complementing the results of this research.

Community-based empowerment is still mostly predicated on access to money and marketing avenues outside of training. Although some MSME players have been able to get government loans or work with nearby banks, many others—especially local business owners—struggle because of low financial literacy or a lack of digital documentation knowledge needed for internet applications. Conversely, migrant business owners are more nimble in using e-wallets, digital banking, or crowdfunding platforms and typically have prior knowledge of urban financial systems. Febrian & Kristianti (2020) reflect this difference as they underline how financial expertise and information availability help MSME development.

A striking example that developed during the epidemic was souvenir makers, who once depended mostly on walk-in tourism, starting to move to bundled internet sales using WhatsApp and Shopee. Digital illiteracy has a significant decline in income. On the other hand, migrant food companies like Padang eateries or snack makers rapidly varied their menus and added delivery options like GrabFood and GoFood. Their quicker adoption was mostly attributable to current digital literacy and more general internet networking. Especially for people over 40 or with no formal education, this relative trend highlights the need to narrow the digital gap by means of focused training for local players. Regarding marketing assistance, the MSME sector actively coordinates group projects, including cross-sector product exhibits, craft bazaars, and gourmet festivals. These activities generate direct exposure to both local and visiting markets and lower promotional expenditures. In line with results from Parwez (2017) and Van Tuyen et al. (2023), observational data verify that these group activities not only increase personal visibility but also promote a feeling of shared accomplishment and rivalry.

Social solidarity, though, is the deepest and sometimes overlooked aspect of community-based empowerment. Many instances emerged throughout the COVID-19 epidemic where MSME players pooled resources, jointly marketed one another's goods online, or even set up common emergency funds to assist underprivileged members. Not planned by official organizations, these gestures of solidarity sprang from real individual relationships enhanced by everyday communication, both offline and online. Digital lifelines were WhatsApp and Facebook Groups. One example is the "Baraya Pangandaran" network, which lets vendors collaboratively negotiate lower rates from suppliers, set up rotating home-based delivery systems, and share leads on new customers. A souvenir vendor remembered how, under the travel prohibition, a colleague restaurant owner used Instagram to promote her dried fruit items, causing unanticipated orders from Jakarta-based consumers. Social media's reciprocal marketing of this sort is a major driver of MSMEs' ongoing visibility and income during crises.

Such results confirm the theoretical stance of Corner et al. (2017), who argue that social solidarity is a strategic intangible asset for entrepreneurial resilience. Research by Otrachshenko et al. (2022) and Ratten (2022) further confirms that robust informal networks, particularly when enhanced by digital interaction, allow quicker economic recovery among micro-entrepreneurs. In Pangandaran, MSMEs reported feeling "less alone" in confronting uncertainty, which was clear

not only in economic terms but also in psychosocial well-being. Ultimately, inclusive adaptation and long-term company resilience are mostly fostered by social empowerment initiatives in Pangandaran's MSME community, comprising training, digital and financial support, cooperative marketing, and solidarity activities. Empowerment initiatives, therefore, have to close the digital gap between local and newcomer entrepreneurs and make use of current social media platforms as commercial and social resources if they are to optimize these effects. Local governments and community groups should thus formalize peer-sharing systems, offer mobile-based digital mentoring, and support cross-learning conferences that enable contact across experience levels and corporate backgrounds.

Adaptation and Resilience Strategies for Micro-MSMEs in Facing Crises and Utilisation of Social Media in the Pangandaran Tourism Area

The findings of this study reveal that micro MSME actors in the Pangandaran tourism area apply different adaptation and resilience tactics, particularly in response to the effects of the COVID-19 epidemic and fluctuations in the dynamic economic situation. These strategies are product adaptability, business diversification, the use of digital technology, and social media communication optimization. Diverse products and services according to market needs throughout the pandemic are one of the key changes micro MSME players—both local and newcomers—make. For instance, culinary entrepreneurs have begun offering delivery services, internet sales, and more durable processed food goods. Research results by Pratama & Mardiawan (2022) support this approach; product and service variety has been shown to help preserve company continuity during the epidemic.

Moreover, MSME participants have changed their marketing by depending more on digital channels, including WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and online stores like Shopee and Tokopedia. Data from interviews in this study indicates that social media is a primary approach that can boost company visibility rather than just a supplementary marketing medium. This situation fits the findings of a Mahfud et al. (2020) study, indicating that heavy social media activity during the epidemic raises sales and the presence of MSME businesses.

Conversely, the findings of field observations revealed that for newcomers to MSMEs with superior digital backgrounds and understanding of local players, the best use of social media is more beneficial. To promote their goods, local companies depend more on offline networks and human communication techniques. This situation indicates a digital literacy deficit that should be filled by educational efforts from appropriate groups and organizations. Research by Nurfitriya et al. (2022) supports this conclusion; digital literacy was the key element influencing micro MSME players' performance in adjusting to an ever-more digital corporate environment.

Apart from digital-based adaptation, the resilience approach that also shows up in this study is the community's capacity to build an internal support system. MSME communities exchange resources collectively, including raw materials, marketing networks, and knowledge on government aid rules and economic stimulus. This fosters group business resiliency and builds a supportive atmosphere. Bullough & Renko's (2013) study supports the results of this one, indicating that community solidarity is a key component in the resilience of micro MSMEs by showing that socio-economically strong groups are better equipped to withstand crises than those that run autonomously.

Though these adaptation and resilience plans have shown to be successful in the near term, particularly for local players, there are long-term issues in the shape of restricted digital infrastructure and low digital literacy in general. Santos et al. (2023) earlier studies found

comparable barriers in the development of MSMEs toward sustainable digital entrepreneurship: insufficient digital technology and community literacy issues.

Intensive efforts to raise the ability of MSME players via ongoing digital literacy training, improvement of strategic alliances among the MSME community, local governments, and the business sector, and continual digital literacy training would help to solve these issues. These actions are consistent with the advice given by earlier Subekti et al. (2023) studies, which underlines the need for cross-sector cooperation in facilitating the digital transformation of MSMEs as the foundation for long-term business adaptation.

The results of this study indicate that while micro MSMEs in Pangandaran's adaptation and resilience strategy have been effective in enabling companies to survive the pandemic crisis, they still confront major structural issues in terms of digital literacy and communication infrastructure. Thus, the pragmatic advice that can be followed is to enhance efforts to empower digital-based communities by means of thorough digital literacy courses, therefore improving the adaptability of goods and services, and enhancing community communication networks to assist the group resilience of enterprises.

Structural and Cultural Obstacles in Micro-SME Communities in the Pangandaran Tourism Area

The dynamics of micro MSME enterprises in Pangandaran revealed some notable structural and cultural barriers in this study. Among these challenges are low digital literacy, limited access to information, and competition among local businesspeople. From a structural standpoint, micro MSME players, particularly those from local communities, experience significant challenges due to restricted information access. Often, important information about marketing prospects, entrepreneurial training, capital aid programs, and government legislation arrives late for local enterprises in comparison to newcomers. This trend is consistent with Glinka et al. (2023) study results, showing that unequal access to information may create unequal chances between local companies and outsiders or entrepreneurs with more connections. The study indicates that a strong and organised community is required to function as an information bridge for its members.

Apart from restricted information access, the study points out insufficient digital literacy as a major barrier for local micro MSME players. Low digital literacy hinders MSME players' use of digital technologies for marketing, promotion, and business network expansion. Previous studies by Sundah et al. (2021) underline this limitation by showing that low digital literacy stops micro MSMEs from maximising the possibilities of digital marketing to assist in increasing the reach of their products. To bridge this digital literacy gap, the report advises continuous training and mentoring.

Other results of this study, meanwhile, reveal cultural obstacles in the shape of competition among local business people that can impede cooperation and togetherness. High commercial competitiveness, closeness of product kinds, and disparity in accessing public amenities like company sites and product advertising give rise to this rivalry. This situation fits studies by Ayala & Manzano (2014), which revealed that internal competition inside the MSME community is a key barrier to creating successful business cooperation. The paper underlines that by promoting the ideals of togetherness in the community and applying more equitable policies in the allocation of resources and business prospects, rivalry has to be overcome.

Rivalry in the framework of this research was also discovered to result from a less favorable view between local enterprises and newcomers. Local players can feel threatened by the arrival of

newcomers deemed more capital- and market-access competitive. The study by Fernández-Salinero & de la Riva (2014) revealed a comparable occurrence: a feeling of injustice in the allocation of business prospects and promotional resources often sets off tensions between local enterprises and newcomers. The study indicates that a community mediation strategy is essential to foster improved solidarity and collaboration among groups.

Previous studies by Shu et al. (2018) and Markman & Baron (2003) advise the need for the community as an agent of social transformation to address these challenges. Strong and inclusive communities can be good channels for spreading knowledge, offering consistent digital literacy training, and fostering forums for conversation among community members to lower competition and foster more social solidarity.

The results of this study lead one to believe that micro MSME players in Pangandaran confront structural and cultural obstacles. An integrated approach overcoming these challenges would involve developing community capacity, offering more equitable and open access to information, rigorous digital literacy training, and mediation in handling internal community rivalries. These actions are meant to improve a more suitable and inclusive business environment for micro MSME players, both local and newcomers, in the Pangandaran tourist area.

CONCLUSION

This paper finds that micro MSME players in Pangandaran's tourism sector are empowered significantly by community communication networks. These networks not only enable the sharing of business information and promotional tactics but also act as a vehicle for social empowerment by means of entrepreneurial training, financing and marketing support, and development of social solidarity. Results show that while local players and immigrants have varying digital adaptation issues and capacities, these networks help both. Although local participants still depend on conventional networks and have digital literacy and information access restrictions, newcomers are more flexible in using digital platforms. These differences affect how every organization creates company resilience, particularly during emergencies like the COVID-19 epidemic. Moreover, cultural hurdles (inter-group rivalry and mistrust) and structural (digital divide, information gaps) impede best cooperation among MSME players. Notwithstanding these, the study indicates that community networks can be transforming agents in attaining sustainable and inclusive economic empowerment under enhanced communication systems, better digital literacy, and inclusive policies. All things considered, the study confirms that community communication networks are the foundation of group resilience, adaptation, and empowerment in many different socio-economic contexts, not only information exchange. Strengthening these networks should hence be a strategic goal for local governments, community groups, and tourism interests in Pangandaran.

These results have far-reaching consequences outside Pangandaran. Other tourism-dependent areas, particularly in developing nations with significant internal migration and informal economic systems, can have comparable patterns of segmented resource access, unequal digital capabilities, and community dynamics influenced by origin-based trust. The results might also speak to other industries, including creative sectors, agritourism, or informal urban retail, where business survival and innovation are more strategically influenced by communication networks and grassroots solidarity. Future studies could follow various significant paths. First, longitudinal studies could assist in tracking how communication networks develop over time and under changing regulatory or technology environments. Second, cross-regional or cross-sectoral comparative research might investigate how various kinds of communities—urban vs. rural,

agrarian vs. coastal—mobilize communication differently in pursuit of empowerment. Third, studies could look at how gender, age, or religion shapes inclusion or exclusion inside MSME communication networks and how certain interventions, such as digital literacy campaigns and participatory planning forums, affect these networks' ability to support fair and sustainable economic resilience.

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